

A name immortal greater than the greatest :
Free citizens have struck at kings ere now ;
Cæsars have fallen, and even patrician hands
Have crush'd dictators, as the popular steel
Has reach'd patricians : but, until this hour,
What prince has plotted for his people's freedom ?
Or risk'd a life to liberate his subjects ?
For ever, and for ever, they conspire
Against the people, to abuse their hands
To chains, but laid aside to carry weapons
Against the fellow nations, so that yoke
On yoke, and slavery and death may whet,
Not glut, the never-gorged Leviathan
Now, my lord, to our enterprise ; — 'tis great,
And greater the reward ; why stand you rapt ?
A moment back, and you were all impatience !

Doge. And is it then decided ? must they die ?

I. Ber. Who ?

Doge. My own friends by blood and courtesy,
And many deeds and days — the senators ?

I. Ber. You pass'd their sentence, and it is a just one.

Doge. Ay, so it seems, and so it is to you ;

You are a patriot, plebeian Gracchus —
The rebel's oracle, the people's tribune —
I blame you not — you act in your vocation ;
They smote you, and oppress'd you, and despised you ;
So they have me : but you ne'er spake with them ;
You never broke their bread, nor shared their salt ;
You never had their wine-cup at your lips ;
You grew not up with them, nor laugh'd, nor wept,
Nor held a revel in their company ;
Ne'er smiled to see them smile, nor claim'd their smile
In social interchange for yours, nor trusted
Nor wore them in your heart of hearts, as I have :
These hairs of mine are grey, and so are theirs,
The elders of the council : I remember
When all our locks were like the raven's wing,
As we went forth to take our prey around
The isles wrung from the false Mahometan ;
And can I see them dabbled o'er with blood ?
Each stab to them will seem my suicide. ¹

I. Ber. Doge ! Doge ! this vacillation is unworthy
A child ; if you are not in second childhood,
Call back your nerves to your own purpose, nor
Thus shame yourself and me. By heavens ! I'd
rather

Forego even now, or fail in our intent,
Than see the man I venerate subside
From high resolves into such shallow weakness !
You have seen blood in battle, shed it, both
Your own and that of others ; can you shrink then
From a few drops from veins of hoary vampires,
Who but give back what they have drain'd from
millions ?

Doge. Bear with me ! Step by step, and blow on
blow,

I will divide with you ; think not I waver :
Ah ! no ; it is the *certainty* of all
Which I must do doth make me tremble thus.

¹ [The unmix'd selfishness of the motives with which the Doge accedes to the plot perpetually escapes him. Not that he is wholly untouched by the compunctious visitings of nature. But the fearful unity of such a character is broken by assigning to it the throbbings and the pangs of human feelings, and by making him recoil with affright from slaughter and desolation. In the roar and whirlwind of the mighty passions which precede the acting of a dreadful plot, it is wholly unreasonable and out of keeping to put into his mouth the sentimental effusions of affectionate pity for his friends,

But let these last and lingering thoughts have way,
To which you only and the Night are conscious,
And both regardless ; when the hour arrives,
'Tis mine to sound the knell, and strike the blow,
Which shall unpeople many palaces,
And hew the highest genealogic trees
Down to the earth, strew'd with their bleeding fruit,
And crush their blossoms into barrenness :
This will I — must I — have I sworn to do,
Nor ought can turn me from my destiny ;
But still I quiver to behold what I
Must be, and think what I have been ! Bear with me.

I. Ber. Re-man your breast ; I feel no such remorse,
I understand it not : why should you change ?
You acted, and you act, on your free will.

Doge. Ay, there it is — you feel not, nor do I,
Else I should stab thee on the spot, to save
A thousand lives, and, killing, do no murder ;
You feel not — you go to this butcher-work
As if these high-born men were steers for shambles !
When all is over, you'll be free and merry,
And calmly wash those hands incarnadine ;
But I, outgoing thee and all thy fellows
In this surpassing massacre, shall be,
Shall see and feel — oh God ! oh God ! 'tis true,
And thou dost well to answer that it was
" My own free will and act," and yet you err,
For I will do this ! Doubt not — fear not ; I
Will be your most unmerciful accomplice !
And yet I act no more on my free will,
Nor my own feelings — both compel me back ;
But there is *hell* within me and around,
And like the demon who believes and trembles
Must I abhor and do. Away ! away !
Get thee unto thy fellows, I will hie me
To gather the retainers of our house.

Doubt not, Saint Mark's great bell shall wake all
Venice,

Except her slaughter'd senate : ere the sun
Be broad upon the Adriatic there
Shall be a voice of weeping, which shall drown
The roar of waters in the cry of blood !
I am resolved — come on.

I. Ber. With all my soul !
Keep a firm rein upon these bursts of passion ;
Remember what these men have dealt to thee,
And that this sacrifice will be succeeded
By ages of prosperity and freedom
To this unshackled city : a true tyrant
Would have depopulated empires, nor
Have felt the strange compunction which hath wrung
you

To punish a few traitors to the people.
Trust me, such were a pity more misplaced
Than the late mercy of the state to Steno.

Doge. Man, thou hast struck upon the chord which
jars

All nature from my heart. Hence to our task !
[*Exeunt.*]

whom he thinks of rather too late to give these touches of remorse and mercy any other character than that of hypocritical whining. The sentiments are certainly good, but lamentably out of time and place, and remind of Scarron's remark upon the moralizing Phlegyas in the infernal regions, —

" Cette sentence est vrai et belle,
Mais dans enfer de quoi sert-elle ?"

Yet, though wholly repugnant to dramatic congruity, the passage has great poetic power. — *Ecl. Rev.*]

ACT IV.

SCENE I. ¹

Palazzo of the Patrician LIONI. LIONI laying aside the mask and cloak which the Venetian Nobles wore in public, attended by a Domestic.

Lioni. I will to rest, right weary of this revel,
The gayest we have held for many moons,
And yet, I know not why, it cheer'd me not ;
There came a heaviness across my heart,
Which, in the lightest movement of the dance,
Though eye to eye, and hand in hand united
Even with the lady of my love, oppress'd me,
And through my spirit chill'd my blood, until
A damp like death rose o'er my brow ; I strove
To laugh the thought away, but 't would not be :
Through all the music ringing in my ears
A knell was sounding as distinct and clear,
Though low and far, as e'er the Adrian wave
Rose o'er the city's murmur in the night,
Dashing against the outward Lido's bulwark :
So that I left the festival before
It reach'd its zenith, and will woo my pillow
For thoughts more tranquil, or forgetfulness.
Antonio, take my mask and cloak, and light
The lamp within my chamber.

Ant. Yes, my lord :
Command you no refreshment ?

Lioni. Nought, save sleep,
Which will not be commanded. Let me hope it,
[*Exit ANTONIO.*]

Though my breast feels too anxious ; I will try
Whether the air will calm my spirits ; 'tis
A godly night ; the cloudy wind which blew
From the Levant hath crept into its cave, [ness !
And the broad moon has brighten'd. What a still-
[*Goes to an open lattice.*]

And what a contrast with the scene I left,
Where the tall torches' glare, and silver lamps'
More pallid gleam along the tapestried walls,
Spread over the reluctant gloom which haunts
Those vast and dimly-latticed galleries
A dazzling mass of artificial light,
Which show'd all things, but nothing as they were.
There Age essaying to recall the past,
After long striving for the hues of youth
At the sad labour of the toilet, and
Full many a glance at the too faithful mirror,
Prank'd forth in all the pride of ornament,
Forgot itself, and trusting to the falsehood
Of the indulgent beams, which show, yet hide,
Believed itself forgotten, and was fool'd.
There Youth, which needed not, nor thought of such
Vain adjuncts, lavish'd its true bloom, and health,
And bridal beauty, in the unwholesome press
Of flush'd and crowded wassailers, and wasted
Its hours of rest in dreaming this was pleasure,
And so shall waste them till the sunrise streams

¹ [The fourth act opens with the most poetical and brilliantly written scene in the play — though it is a soliloquy, and altogether alien from the business of the piece. Lioni, a young nobleman, returns home from a splendid assembly, rather out of spirits ; and, opening his palace window for air, contrasts the tranquillity of the night scene which lies before him, with the feverish turbulence and glittering enchantments of that which he has just quitted. Nothing can be finer than this picture, in both its compartments. There is a

On sallow cheeks and sunken eyes, which should not
Have worn this aspect yet for many a year.
The music, and the banquet, and the wine —
The garlands, the rose odours, and the flowers —
The sparkling eyes, and flashing ornaments —
The white arms and the raven hair — the braids
And bracelets ; swanlike bosoms, and the necklace,
An India in itself, yet dazzling not
The eye like what it circled ; the thin robes,
Floating like light clouds 'twixt our gaze and heaven ;
The many-twinkling feet so small and sylphlike,
Suggesting the more secret symmetry
Of the fair forms which terminate so well —
All the delusion of the dizzy scene,
Its false and true enchantments — art and nature,
Which swam before my giddy eyes, that drank
The sight of beauty as the parch'd pilgrim's
On Arab sands the false mirage, which offers
A lucid lake to his eluded thirst,
Are gone. — Around me are the stars and waters —
Worlds mirror'd in the ocean, goodlier sight
Than torches glared back by a gaudy glass ;
And the great element, which is to space
What ocean is to earth, spreads its blue depths,
Softened with the first breathings of the spring ;
The high moon sails upon her beauteous way,
Serenely smoothing o'er the lofty walls
Of those tall piles and sea-girt palaces,
Whose porphyry pillars, and whose costly fronts,
Fraught with the orient spoil of many marbles,
Like altars ranged along the broad canal,
Seem each a trophy of some mighty deed
Rear'd up from out the waters, scarce less strangely
Than those more massy and mysterious giants
Of architecture, those Titanian fabrics,
Which point in Egypt's plains to times that have
No other record. All is gentle : nought
Stirs rudely ; but, congenial with the night,
Whatever walks is gliding like a spirit.
The tinklings of some vigilan guitars
Of sleepless lovers to a wakeful mistress,
And cautious opening of the casement, showing
That he is not unheard ; while her young hand,
Fair as the moonlight of which it seems part,
So delicately white, it trembles in
The act of opening the forbidden lattice,
To let in love through music, makes his heart
Thrill like his lyre-strings at the sight ; — the dash
Phosphoric of the oar, or rapid twinkle
Of the far lights of skimming gondolas,
And the responsive voices of the choir
Of boatmen answering back with verse for verse ;
Some dusky shadow checkering the Rialto ;
Some glimmering palace roof, or tapering spire,
Are all the sights and sounds which here pervade
The ocean-born and earth-commanding city —
How sweet and soothing is this hour of calm !
I thank thee, Night ! for thou hast chased away
Those horrid bodements which, amidst the throng,
I could not dissipate ; and with the blessing

truth and a luxuriance in the description of the rout, which mark at once the hand of a master, and raise it to a very high rank as a piece of poetical painting ; — while the moonlight view from the window is equally grand and beautiful, and reminds us of those magnificent and enchanting lookings forth in " Manfred," which have left, we will confess, far deeper traces on our fancy, than any thing in the more elaborate work before us. — JEFFREY.]

Of thy benign and quiet influence,—
Now will I to my couch, although to rest
Is almost wronging such a night as this——¹

[A knocking is heard from without.
Hark! what is that? or who at such a moment?²

Enter ANTONIO.

Ant. My lord, a man without, on urgent business,
Implores to be admitted.

Lioni. Is he a stranger?
Ant. His face is muffled in his cloak, but both
His voice and gestures seem familiar to me;
I craved his name, but this he seem'd reluctant
To trust, save to yourself; most earnestly
He sues to be permitted to approach you.

Lioni. 'Tis a strange hour, and a suspicious bearing!
And yet there is slight peril: 'tis not in
Their houses noble men are struck at; still,
Although I know not that I have a foe
In Venice, 'twill be wise to use some caution.
Admit him, and retire; but call up quickly
Some of thy fellows, who may wait without.—
Who can this man be?—

[Exit ANTONIO, and returns with BERTRAM muffled.

Ber. My good lord Lioni,
I have no time to lose, nor thou—dismiss
This menial hence; I would be private with you.

Lioni. It seems the voice of Bertram—Go,
Antonio. [Exit ANTONIO.

Now, stranger, what would you at such an hour?

Ber. (discovering himself). A boon, my noble pa-
tron; you have granted
Many to your poor client, Bertram; add
This one, and make him happy.

Lioni. Thou hast known me
From boyhood, ever ready to assist thee
In all fair objects of advancement, which
Beseech one of thy station; I would promise
Ere thy request was heard, but that the hour,
Thy bearing, and this strange and hurried mode
Of suing, gives me to suspect this visit
Hath some mysterious import—but say on—
What has occurred, some rash and sudden broil?—
A cup too much, a scuffle, and a stab?—
Mere things of every day; so that thou hast not
Spilt noble blood, I guarantee thy safety;
But then thou must withdraw, for angry friends
And relatives, in the first burst of vengeance,
Are things in Venice deadlier than the laws.

Ber. My lord, I thank you; but—
Lioni. But what? You have not
Raised a rash hand against one of our order?
If so, withdraw and fly, and own it not;
I would not slay—but then I must not save thee!
He who has shed patrician blood—

Ber. I come
To save patrician blood, and not to shed it!
And thereunto I must be speedy, for
Each minute lost may lose a life; since Time
Has changed his slow scythe for the two-edged sword,

¹ [This soliloquy is exquisite, and increases our regret that, with such powers of pleasing, Lord Byron should not always have condescended to please.—HEBER.]

² [The soliloquy of Lioni is a fine instance of repose, as the painters term it, amidst the horrors of the scene, and of that obscure but ruthless presentiment of evil, of which Shakspeare frequently made a use somewhat similar. Yet this splendid passage, with reference to the romantic character

And is about to take, instead of sand,
The dust from sepulchres to fill his hour-glass!—
Go not thou forth to-morrow!

Lioni. Wherefore not?—
What means this menace?

Ber. Do not seek its meaning,
But do as I implore thee;—stir not forth,
Whate'er be stirring; though the roar of crowds—
The cry of women, and the shrieks of babes—
The groans of men—the clash of arms—the sound
Of rolling drum, shrill trumpet, and hollow bell,
Peal in one wide alarm!—Go not forth
Until the tocsin's silent, nor even then
Till I return!

Lioni. Again, what does this mean?
Ber. Again, I tell thee, ask not; but by all
Thou holdest dear on earth or heaven—by all
The souls of thy great fathers, and thy hope
To emulate them, and to leave behind
Descendants worthy both of them and thee—
By all thou hast of bless'd in hope or memory—
By all thou hast to fear here or hereafter—
By all the good deeds thou hast done to me,
Good I would now repay with greater good,
Remain within—trust to thy household gods,
And to my word for safety, if thou dost
As I now counsel—but if not, thou art lost!

Lioni. I am indeed already lost in wonder;
Surely thou ravest! what have I to dread?
Who are my foes? or if there be such, why
Art thou leagued with them?—thou! or if so leagued,
Why comest thou to tell me at this hour,
And not before?

Ber. I cannot answer this.
Wilt thou go forth despite of this true warning?

Lioni. I was not born to shrink from idle threats,
The cause of which I know not: at the hour
Of council, be it soon or late, I shall not
Be found among the absent.

Ber. Say not so!
Once more, art thou determined to go forth?

Lioni. I am. Nor is there aught which shall im-
pede me!

Ber. Then Heaven have mercy on thy soul!—
Farewell! [Going.

Lioni. Stay—there is more in this than my own
safety [thus:
Which makes me call thee back; we must not part
Bertram, I have known thee long.

Ber. From childhood, signor,
You have been my protector: in the days
Of reckless infancy, when rank forgets,
Or, rather, is not yet taught to remember
Its cold prerogative, we play'd together;
Our sports, our smiles, our tears, were mingled oft;
My father was your father's client, I
His son's scarce less than foster-brother; years
Saw us together—happy, heart-full hours!
Oh God! the difference 'twixt those hours and this!
Lioni. Bertram, 'tis thou who hast forgotten them.

of the poem, is adventitious, and obviously transplanted from the mind of the poet. It is the habitual cast of thought, tinged with misanthropy, which is peculiar to Lord Byron, and does not adapt itself to the situation or feelings of the personages of his poem. It is the cool contemplation of a mind raised above the storms of human life, and the perturbation of its passions, and viewing, as from "a peculiar mount," the strife and conflicts of a world in which it disdains to mix.—Ecl. Rev.]

Ber. Nor now, nor ever; whatso'er betide,
I would have saved you: when to manhood's growth
We sprung, and you, devoted to the state,
As suits your station, the more humble Bertram
Was left unto the labours of the humble,
Still you forsook me not; and if my fortunes
Have not been towering, 'twas no fault of him
Who oftentimes rescued and supported me
When struggling with the tides of circumstance
Which bear away the weaker: noble blood
Ne'er mantled in a nobler heart than thine
Has proved to me, the poor plebeian Bertram.
Would that thy fellow senators were like thee!

Lioni. Why, what hast thou to say against the
senate?

Ber. Nothing.
Lioni. I know that there are angry spirits

And turbulent mutterers of stifled treason,
Who lurk in narrow places, and walk out
Muffled to whisper curses to the night;
Disbanded soldiers, discontented ruffians,
And desperate libertines who brawl in taverns;
Thou herdest not with such: 'tis true, of late
I have lost sight of thee, but thou wert wont
To lead a temperate life, and break thy bread
With honest mates, and bear a cheerful aspect.
What hath come to thee? in thy hollow eye
And hueless cheek, and thine unquiet motions,
Sorrow and shame and conscience seem at war
To waste thee.

Ber. Rather shame and sorrow light
On the accursed tyranny which rides!
The very air in Venice, and makes men
Madden as in the last hours of the plague
Which sweeps the soul deliriously from life!

Lioni. Some villains have been tampering with
thee, Bertram;

This is not thy old language, nor own thoughts;
Some wretch has made thee drunk with disaffection:
But thou must not be lost so; thou wert good
And kind, and art not fit for such base acts
As vice and villainy would put thee to:
Confess—confide in me—thou know'st my nature—
What is it thou and thine are bound to do,
Which should prevent thy friend, the only son
Of him who was a friend unto thy father,
So that our good-will is a heritage
We should bequeath to our posterity
Such as ourselves received it, or augmented;
I say, what is it thou must do, that I
Should deem thee dangerous, and keep the house
Like a sick girl?

Ber. Nay, question me no further.
I must be gone.—

Lioni. And I be murder'd!—say,
Was it not thus thou said'st, my gentle Bertram?
Ber. Who talks of murder? what said I of murder?—
'Tis false! I did not utter such a word.

Lioni. Thou didst not; but from out thy wolfish eye,
So changed from what I knew it, there glares forth
The gladiator. If my life's thine object,
Take it—I am unarm'd,—and then away!
I would not hold my breath on such a tenure
As the capricious mercy of such things
As thou and those who have set thee to thy task-work.

¹ ["On the accursed tyranny which {faints
rides."—MS.]

Ber. Sooner than spill thy blood, I peril mine;
Sooner than harm a hair of thine, I place
In jeopardy a thousand heads, and some
As noble, nay, even nobler than thine own.

Lioni. Ay, is it even so? Excuse me, Bertram;
I am not worthy to be singled out
From such exalted hecatombs—who are they
That are in danger, and that make the danger?

Ber. Venice, and all that she inherits, are
Divided like a house against itself,
And so will perish ere to-morrow's twilight!

Lioni. More mysteries, and awful ones! But now,
Or thou, or I, or both, it may be, are
Upon the verge of ruin; speak once out,
And thou art safe and glorious; for 'tis more
Glorious to save than slay, and slay i' the dark too—
Fie, Bertram! that was not a craft for thee!

How would it look to see upon a spear
The head of him whose heart was open to thee,
Borne by thy hand before the shuddering people?
And such may be my doom; for here I swear,
Whate'er the peril or the penalty
Of thy denunciation, I go forth,
Unless thou dost detail the cause, and show
The consequence of all which led thee here!

Ber. Is there no way to save thee? minutes fly,
And thou art lost!—thou! my sole benefactor,
The only being who was constant to me
Through every change. Yet, make me not a traitor!
Let me save thee—but spare my honour!

Lioni. Where
Can lie the honour in a league of murder?
And who are traitors save unto the state?

Ber. A league is still a compact, and more binding
In honest hearts when words must stand for law;
And in my mind, there is no traitor like
He whose domestic treason plants the poniard
Within the breast which trusted to his truth.

Lioni. And who will strike the steel to mine?
Ber. Not I;

I could have wound my soul up to all things
Save this. Thou must not die! and think how dear
Thy life is, when I risk so many lives,
Nay, more, the life of lives, the liberty
Of future generations, not to be
The assassin thou miscall'st me;—once, once more
I do adjure thee, pass not o'er thy threshold!

Lioni. It is in vain—this moment I go forth.
Ber. Then perish Venice rather than my friend!
I will disclose—ensnare—betray—destroy—
Oh, what a villain I become for thee!

Lioni. Say, rather thy friend's saviour and the
state's!

Speak—pause not—all rewards, all pledges for
Thy safety and thy welfare; wealth such as
The state accords her worthiest servants; nay,
Nobility itself I guarantee thee,
So that thou art sincere and penitent.

Ber. I have thought again: it must not be—I
love thee—

Thou knowest it—that I stand here is the proof,
Not least though last; but having done my duty
By thee, I now must do it by my country!
Farewell—we meet no more in life!—farewell!

Lioni. What, ho!—Antonio—Pedro—to the
door!
See that none pass—arrest this man!

Enter ANTONIO and other armed Domestics, who seize BERTRAM.

Lioni (continues). Take care
He hath no harm; bring me my sword and cloak;
And man the gondola with four oars—quick—

[Exit ANTONIO.]

We will unto Giovanni Gradenigo's,
And send for Marc Cornaro;—fear not, Bertram;
This needful violence is for thy safety,
No less than for the general weal.

Ber. Where wouldst thou
Bear me a prisoner?

Lioni. Firstly to "the Ten;"
Next to the Doge.

Ber. To the Doge?

Lioni. Assuredly:

Is he not chief of the state?

Ber. Perhaps at sunrise—

Lioni. What mean you?—but we'll know anon.

Ber. Art sure?

Lioni. Sure—as all gentle means can make; and if
They fail, you know "the Ten" and their tribunal,
And that St. Mark's has dungeons, and the dungeons
A rack.

Ber. Apply it then before the dawn
Now hastening into heaven.—One more such word,
And you shall perish piecemeal, by the death
You think to doom to me.

Re-enter ANTONIO.

Ant. The bark is ready,
My lord, and all prepared.

Lioni. Look to the prisoner.
Bertram, I'll reason with thee as we go
To the Magnifico's, sage Gradenigo. [Exeunt.]

SCENE II.

The Ducal Palace.—The Doge's Apartment.

The DOGE and his nephew BERTUCCIO FALIERO.

Doge. Are all the people of our house in muster?

Ber. F. They are array'd, and eager for the signal,
Within our palace precincts at San Polo.¹
I come for your last orders.

Doge. It had been
As well had there been time to have got together,
From my own fief, Val di Marino, more
Of our retainers—but it is too late.

Ber. F. Methinks, my lord, 'tis better as it is:
A sudden swelling of our retinue
Had waked suspicion; and, though fierce and trusty,
The vassals of that district are too rude
And quick in quarrel to have long maintain'd
The secret discipline we need for such
A service, till our foes are dealt upon.

Doge. True; but when once the signal has been
These are the men for such an enterprise; [given,
These city slaves have all their private bias,
Their prejudice against or for this noble,
Which may induce them to o'erdo or spare
Where mercy may be madness; the fierce peasants,
Serfs of my county of Val di Marino,
Would do the bidding of their lord without
Distinguishing for love or hate his foes;
Alike to them Marcello or Cornaro,

¹ The Doge's family palace.

A Gradenigo or a Foscari;
They are not used to start at those vain names,
Nor bow the knee before a civic senate;
A chief in armour is their Suzerain,
And not a thing in robes.

Ber. F. We are enough;
And for the dispositions of our clients
Against the senate I will answer.

Doge. Well,
The die is thrown; but for a warlike service,
Done in the field, commend me to my peasants:
They made the sun shine through the host of Huns
When sallow burghers slunk back to their tents,
And cower'd to hear their own victorious trumpet.
If there be small resistance, you will find
These citizens all lions, like their standard;
But if there's much to do, you'll wish, with me,
A band of iron rustics at our backs.

Ber. F. Thus thinking, I must marvel you resolve
To strike the blow so suddenly.

Doge. Such blows
Must be struck suddenly or never. When
I had o'er-master'd the weak false remorse
Which yearn'd about my heart, too fondly yielding
A moment to the feelings of old days,
I was most fain to strike; and, firstly, that
I might not yield again to such emotions;
And, secondly, because of all these men,
Save Israel and Philip Calendaro,
I know not well the courage or the faith:
To-day might find 'mongst them a traitor to us,
As yesterday a thousand to the senate;
But once in, with their hilts hot in their hands,
They must on for their own sakes; one stroke struck,
And the mere instinct of the first-born Cain,
Which ever lurks somewhere in human hearts,
Though circumstance may keep it in abeyance,
Will urge the rest on like to wolves; the sight
Of blood to crowds begets the thirst of more,
As the first wine-cup leads to the long revel;
And you will find a harder task to quell
Than urge them when they have commenced, but till
That moment, a mere voice, a straw, a shadow,
Are capable of turning them aside.—
How goes the night?

Ber. F. Almost upon the dawn.

Doge. Then it is time to strike upon the bell.
Are the men posted?

Ber. F. By this time they are;
But they have orders not to strike, until
They have command from you through me in person.

Doge. 'Tis well.—Will the morn never put to rest
These stars which twinkle yet o'er all the heavens?
I am settled and bound up, and being so,
The very effort which it cost me to
Resolve to cleanse this commonwealth with fire,
Now leaves my mind more steady. I have wept,
And trembled at the thought of this dread duty;
But now I have put down all idle passion,
And look the growing tempest in the face,
As doth the pilot of an admiral galley:

Yet (wouldst thou think it, kinsman?) it hath been
A greater struggle to me, than when nations
Beheld their fate merged in the approaching fight,
Where I was leader of a phalanx, where
Thousands were sure to perish—Yes, to spill
The rank polluted current from the veins
Of a few bloated despots needed more

To steel me to a purpose such as made
Timoleon immortal, than to face
The toils and dangers of a life of war.

Ber. F. It gladdens me to see your former wisdom
Subdue the furies which so wrung you ere
You were decided.

Doge. It was ever thus
With me; the hour of agitation came
In the first glimmerings of a purpose, when
Passion had too much room to sway; but in
The hour of action I have stood as calm
As were the dead who lay around me: this
They knew who made me what I am, and trusted
To the subduing power which I preserved
Over my mood, when its first burst was spent.
But they were not aware that there are things
Which make revenge a virtue by reflection,
And not an impulse of mere anger; though
The laws sleep, justice wakes, and injured souls
Oft do a public right with private wrong,
And justify their deeds unto themselves.—
Methinks the day breaks—is it not so? look,
Thine eyes are clear with youth;—the air puts on
A morning freshness, and, at least to me,
The sea looks greyer through the lattice.

Ber. F. True,

The morn is dappling in the sky.¹

Doge. Away then!
See that they strike without delay, and with
The first toll from St. Mark's, march on the palace
With all our house's strength: here I will meet
you—

The Sixteen and their companies will move
In separate columns at the self-same moment—
Be sure you post yourself at the great gate:
I would not trust "the Ten" except to us—
The rest, the rabble of patricians, may
Glut the more careless swords of those leagued with us.
Remember that the cry is still "Saint Mark!
The Genoese are come—ho! to the rescue!
Saint Mark and Liberty!"—Now—now to action!

Ber. F. Farewell then, noble uncle! we will meet
In freedom and true sovereignty, or never!

Doge. Come hither, my Bertuccio—one embrace—
Speed, for the day grows broader—Send me soon
A messenger to tell me how all goes
When you rejoin our troops, and then sound—sound
The storm-bell from Saint Mark's!

[Exit BERTUCCIO FALIERO.]

Doge (solus). He is gone,²
And on each footstep moves a life.—'Tis done.
Now the destroying angel hovers o'er
Venice, and pauses ere he pours the vial,
Even as the eagle overlooks his prey,
And for a moment, poised in middle air,
Suspends the motion of his mighty wings,
Then swoops with his unerring beak.—Thou day!
That slowly walk'st the waters! march—march on—
I would not smite i' the dark, but rather see
That no stroke errs. And you, ye blue sea-waves!

¹ ["The night is clearing from the sky."—MS.]

² [At last the moment arrives when the bell is to be sounded,
and the whole of the conspiring bands are watching in im-
patience for the signal. The nephew of the Doge, and the
heir of his house (for he is childless), leaves Faliero in his
palace, and goes to strike with his own hand the fatal
summons. The Doge is left alone; and English poetry, we
think, contains few passages superior to that which follows.
—LOCKHART.]

I have seen you dyed ere now, and deeply too,
With Genoese, Saracen, and Hunnish gore,
While that of Venice flow'd too, but victorious;
Now thou must wear an unmix'd crimson; no
Barbaric blood can reconcile us now
Unto that horrible incarnadine,
But friend or foe will roll in civic slaughter.
And have I lived to fourscore years for this?
I, who was named Preserver of the City?
I, at whose name the million's caps were flung
Into the air, and cries from tens of thousands
Rose up, imploring Heaven to send me blessings,
And fame, and length of days—to see this day?
But this day, black within the calendar,
Shall be succeeded by a bright millennium.
Doge Dandolo survived to ninety summers
To vanquish empires, and refuse their crown;
I will resign a crown, and make the state
Renew its freedom—but oh! by what means?
The noble end must justify them—What
Are a few drops of human blood? 'tis false,
The blood of tyrants is not human; they,
Like to incarnate Molochs, feed on ours,
Until 'tis time to give them to the tombs
Which they have made so populous.—Oh world!
Oh men! what are ye, and our best designs,
That we must work by crime to punish crime?
And slay as if Death had but this one gate,
When a few years would make the sword superfluous?
And I, upon the verge of th' unknown realm,
Yet send so many heralds on before me?—
I must not ponder this. [A pause.]

Hark! was there not

A murmur as of distant voices, and
The tramp of feet in martial unison?
What phantoms even of sound our wishes raise!
It cannot be—the signal hath not rung—
Why pauses it? My nephew's messenger
Should be upon his way to me, and he
Himself perhaps even now draws grating back
Upon its ponderous hinge the steep tower portal,
Where swings the sullen huge oracular bell,³
Which never knells but for a princely death,
Or for a state in peril, pealing forth
Tremendous bodements; let it do its office,
And be this peal its awfulest and last.
Sound till the strong tower rock!—What! silent
still?

I would go forth, but that my post is here,
To be the centre of re-union to
The oft discordant elements which form
Leagues of this nature, and to keep compact
The wavering of the weak, in case of conflict;
For if they should do battle, 'twill be here,
Within the palace, that the strife will thicken:
Then here must be my station, as becomes
The master-mover.—Hark! he comes—he comes,
My nephew, brave Bertuccio's messenger.—
What tidings? Is he marching? hath he sped?
They here!—all's lost—yet will I make an effort.⁴

³ ["Where swings the sullen {iron oracle,
huge oracular bell."—MS.]

⁴ [A relenting conspirator, whom the contemplative Lioni
had formerly befriended, calls to warn him of his danger; and
is gradually led to betray his associates. The plot is crushed
in the moment of its development, and the Doge arrested in
his palace. The scene immediately preceding this catastrophe
is noble and thrilling.—JEFFREY.]

