

Mar. That's false! A truer, nobler, trustier heart,
More loving, or more loyal, never beat
Within a human breast. I would not change
My exiled, persecuted, mangled husband,
Oppress'd but not disgraced, crush'd, overwhelm'd,
Alive, or dead, for prince or paladin
In story or in fable, with a world
To back his suit. Dishonour'd! — *he* — dishonour'd!
I tell thee, Doge, 'tis Venice is dishonour'd;
His name shall be her foulest, worst reproach,
For what he suffers, not for what he did.
'Tis ye who are all traitors, tyrant! — ye!
Did you but love your country like this victim
Who totters back in chains to tortures, and
Submits to all things rather than to exile,
You'd fling yourselves before him, and implore
His grace for your enormous guilt.

Doge. He was
Indeed all you have said. I better bore
The deaths of the two sons Heaven took from me,
Than Jacopo's disgrace.

Mar. That word again?

Doge. Has he not been condemn'd?

Mar. Is none but guilt so?

Doge. Time may restore his memory — I would
hope so.

He was my pride, my — but 'tis useless now —
I am not given to tears, but wept for joy
When he was born: those drops were ominous.

Mar. I say he's innocent! And were he not so,
Is our own blood and kin to shrink from us
In fatal moments?

Doge. I shrank not from him:
But I have other duties than a father's;
The state would not dispense me from those duties;
Twice I demanded it, but was refused:
They must then be fulfill'd.¹

Enter an Attendant.

Att. A message from
"The Ten."

Doge. Who bears it?

Att. Noble Loredano.

Doge. He! — but admit him. [Exit Attendant.]

Mar. Must I then retire?

Doge. Perhaps it is not requisite, if this
Concerns your husband, and if not — Well, signor,
Your pleasure! [To LOREDANO entering.]

Lor. I bear that of "the Ten."

Doge. They
Have chosen well their envoy.

Lor. 'Tis *their* choice

Which leads me here.

Doge. It does their wisdom honour,
And no less to their courtesy. — Proceed.

Lor. We have decided.

Doge. We?

Lor. "The Ten" in council.

Doge. What! have they met again, and met with-
apprising me? [out]

¹ [The interest of this play is founded upon feelings so peculiar or overstrained, as to engage no sympathy; and the whole story turns on incidents that are neither pleasing nor natural. The younger Foscari undergoes the rack twice (once in the hearing of the audience), merely because he has chosen to feign himself a traitor, that he might be brought back from undeserved banishment, and dies at last of pure dotage on this sentiment; while the elder Foscari submits, in profound and immovable silence, to this treatment of his son, lest, by seeming to feel for his unhappy fate, he should

Lor. They wish'd to spare your feelings,
No less than age.

Doge. That's new — when spared they either?
I thank them, notwithstanding.

Lor. You know well
That they have power to act at their discretion,
With or without the presence of the Doge.

Doge. 'Tis some years since I learn'd this, long
before

I became Doge, or dream'd of such advancement.
You need not school me, signor: I sate in
That council when you were a young patrician.

Lor. True, in my father's time; I have heard him
and

The admiral, his brother, say as much.
Your highness may remember them; they both
Died suddenly.

Doge. And if they did so, better
So die than live on lingeringly in pain. [days out.]

Lor. No doubt: yet most men like to live their
Doge. And did not they?

Lor. The grave knows best: they died,
As I said, suddenly.

Doge. Is that so strange,
That you repeat the word emphatically? [death

Lor. So far from strange, that never was there
In my mind half so natural as theirs.

Think you not so?
Doge. What should I think of mortals?

Lor. That they have mortal foes.

Doge. I understand you;
Your sires were mine, and you are heir in all things.

Lor. You best know if I should be so.

Doge. I do.
Your fathers were my foes, and I have heard
Foul rumours were abroad; I have also read
Their epitaph, attributing their deaths
To poison. 'Tis perhaps as true as most
Inscriptions upon tombs, and yet no less
A fable.

Lor. Who dares say so?
Doge. I! — 'Tis true

Your fathers were mine enemies, as bitter
As their son e'er can be, and I no less
Was theirs; but I was *openly* their foe:
I never work'd by plot in council, nor
Cabal in commonwealth, nor secret means
Of practice against life by steel or drug.
The proof is, your existence.

Lor. I fear not.

Doge. You have no cause, being what I am; but
were I

That you would have me thought, you long ere now
Were past the sense of fear. Hate on; I care not.

Lor. I never yet knew that a noble's life
In Venice had to dread a Doge's frown,
That is, by open means.

Doge. But I, good signor,
Am, or least was, more than a mere duke,
In blood, in mind, in means; and that they know

be implicated in his guilt — though he is supposed guiltless.
He, the Doge, is afraid to stir hand or foot, to look or speak,
while these inexplicable horrors are transacting, on account
of the hostility of one Loredano, who lords it in the council
of "the Ten," nobody knows why or how; and who at last
"enmeshes" both father and son in his toils, in spite of their
passive obedience and non-resistance to his plans. They are
silly flies for this spider to catch, and "feed fat his ancient
grudge upon." — JEFFREY.]

Who dreaded to elect me, and have since
Striven all they dare to weigh me down: be sure,
Before or since that period, had I held you
At so much price as to require your absence,
A word of mine had set such spirits to work
As would have made you nothing. But in all things
I have observed the strictest reverence;
Not for the laws alone, for those you have strain'd
(I do not speak of you but as a single
Voice of the many) somewhat beyond what
I could enforce for my authority,
Were I disposed to brawl; but, as I said,
I have observed with veneration, like
A priest's for the high altar, even unto
The sacrifice of my own blood and quiet,
Safety, and all save honour, the decrees,
The health, the pride, and welfare of the state.
And now, sir, to your business.

Lor. 'Tis decreed,
That, without farther repetition of
The Question, or continuance of the trial,
Which only tends to show how stubborn guilt is,
("The Ten," dispensing with the stricter law
Which still prescribes the Question till a full
Confession, and the prisoner partly having
Avow'd his crime in not denying that
The letter to the Duke of Milan's his),
James Foscari return to banishment,
And sail in the same galley which conveyed him.

Mar. Thank God! At least they will not drag
him more

Before that horrid tribunal. Would he
But think so, to my mind the happiest doom,
Not he alone, but all who dwell here, could
Desire, were to escape from such a land.

Doge. That is not a Venetian thought, my daughter.

Mar. No, 'twas too human. May I share his exile?

Lor. Of this "the Ten" said nothing.
Mar. So I thought!

That were too human, also. But it was not
Inhibited?

Lor. It was not named.

Mar. (to the Doge). Then, father,
Surely you can obtain or grant me thus much:
[To LOREDANO.]

And you, sir, not oppose my prayer to be
Permitted to accompany my husband.

Doge. I will endeavour.

Mar. And you, signor?
Lor. Lady!

'Tis not for me to anticipate the pleasure
Of the tribunal.

Mar. Pleasure! what a word
To use for the decrees of —

Doge. Daughter, know you
In what a presence you pronounce these things?

Mar. A prince's and his subject's.
Lor. Subject!

Mar. Oh!

It galls you: — well, you are his equal, as
You think; but that you are not, nor would be,
Were he a peasant: — well, then, you're a prince,
A princely noble; and what then am I?

Lor. The offspring of a noble house.

Mar. And wedded

1 [See *ante*, p. 203.]

2 ["The blackest leaf, his heart, and blankest his brain." — MS.]

To one as noble. What, or whose, then, is
The presence that should silence my free thoughts?
Lor. The presence of your husband's judges.

Doge. And
The deference due even to the lightest word
That falls from those who rule in Venice.

Mar. Keep

Those maxims for your mass of scared mechanics,
Your merchants, your Dalmatian and Greek slaves,
Your tributaries, your dumb citizens,
And mask'd nobility, your sbirri, and
Your spies, your galley and your other slaves,
To whom your midnight carryings off and drownings,
Your dungeons next the palace roofs, or under
The water's level; your mysterious meetings,
And unknown dooms, and sudden executions, [and
Your "Bridge of Sighs!," your strangling chamber,
Your torturing instruments, have made ye seem
The beings of another and worse world!

Keep such for them: I fear ye not. I know ye;
Have known and proved your worst, in the infernal
Process of my poor husband! Treat me as
Ye treated him: — you did so, in so dealing
With him. Then what have I to fear from you,
Even if I were of fearful nature, which
I trust I am not?

Doge. You hear, she speaks wildly.

Mar. Not wisely, yet not wildly.

Lor. Lady! words
Utter'd within these walls I bear no further
Than to the threshold, saving such as pass
Between the Duke and me on the state's service.
Doge! have you aught in answer?

Doge. Something from
The Doge; it may be also from a parent.

Lor. My mission here is to the Doge.

Doge. Then say
The Doge will choose his own ambassador,
Or state in person what is meet; and for
The father —

Lor. I remember mine. — Farewell!
I kiss the hands of the illustrious lady,
And bow me to the Duke. [Exit LOREDANO.]

Mar. Are you content?
Doge. I am what you behold.

Mar. And that's a mystery.
Doge. All things are so to mortals; who can read
them

Save he who made? or, if they can, the few
And gifted spirits, who have studied long
That loathsome volume — man, and pored upon
Those black and bloody leaves, his heart and brain,²
But learn a magic which recoils upon
The adept who pursues it: all the sins
We find in others, nature made our own;
All our advantages are those of fortune;
Birth, wealth, health, beauty, are her accidents,
And when we cry out against Fate, 'twere well
We should remember Fortune can take nought
Save what she gave — the rest was nakedness,
And lusts, and appetites, and vanities,
The universal heritage, to battle
With as we may, and least in humble stations,
Where hunger swallows all in one low want,³
And the original ordinance, that man

3 ["Where hunger swallows all — where ever was
The monarch who could bear a three days' fast?" — MS.]

Must sweat for his poor pittance, keeps all passions
Aloof, save fear of famine! All is low,
And false, and hollow—clay from first to last,
The prince's urn no less than potter's vessel.
Our fame is in men's breath¹, our lives upon
Less than their breath; our durance upon days,
Our days on seasons; our whole being on
Something which is not us!—So, we are slaves,
The greatest as the meanest—nothing rests
Upon our will; the will itself no less
Depends upon a straw than on a storm;²
And when we think we lead, we are most led,
And still towards death, a thing which comes as much
Without our act or choice, as birth, so that
Methinks we must have sinn'd in some old world,
And *this* is hell: the best is, that it is not
Eternal.

Mar. These are things we cannot judge
On earth.

Doge. And how then shall we judge each other,
Who are all earth, and I, who am call'd upon
To judge my son? I have administer'd
My country faithfully—victoriously—
I dare them to the proof; the *chart* of what
She was and is: my reign has doubled realms;
And, in reward, the gratitude of Venice
Has left, or is about to leave, me single.

Mar. And Foscari? I do not think of such things,
So I be left with him.

Doge. You shall be so:
Thus much they cannot well deny.

Mar. And if
They should, I will fly with him.

Doge. That can ne'er be.
And whither would you fly?

Mar. I know not, reckon not—
To Syria, Egypt, to the Ottoman—
Any where, where we might respire unfetter'd,
And live nor girt by spies, nor liable
To edicts of inquisitors of state. [husband,

Doge. What, wouldst thou have a renegade for
And turn him into traitor?

Mar. He is none!
The country is the traitress, which thrusts forth
Her best and bravest from her. Tyranny
Is far the worst of treasons. Dost thou deem
None rebels except subjects? The prince who
Neglects or violates his trust is more
A brigand than the robber-chief.

Doge. I cannot
Charge me with such a breach of faith.

Mar. No; thou
Observ'st, obey'st, such laws as make old Draco's
A code of mercy by comparison.

Doge. I found the law; I did not make it. Were I
A subject, still I might find parts and portions
Fit for amendment; but as prince, I never
Would change, for the sake of my house, the charter
Left by our fathers.

Mar. Did they make it for
The ruin of their children?

Doge. Under such laws, Venice
Has risen to what she is—a state to rival
In deeds, and days, and sway, and, let me add,
In glory (for we have had Roman spirits

¹ ["What's fame? a fancied life in others' breath,
A thing beyond us, ev'n before our death."—POPE.]

Amongst us), all that history has bequeath'd
Of Rome and Carthage in their best times, when
The people sway'd by senates.

Mar. Rather say,
Groan'd under the stern oligarchs.

Doge. Perhaps so;
But yet subdued the world: in such a state
An individual, be he richest of
Such rank as is permitted, or the meanest,
Without a name, is alike nothing, when
The policy, irrevocably tending
To one great end, must be maintain'd in vigour.

Mar. This means that you are more a Doge than
father.

Doge. It means, I am more citizen than either.
If we had not for many centuries
Had thousands of such citizens, and shall,
I trust, have still such, Venice were no city.

Mar. Accused be the city where the laws
Would stifle nature's!

Doge. Had I as many sons
As I have years, I would have given them all,
Not without feeling, but I would have given them
To the state's service, to fulfil her wishes
On the flood, in the field, or, if it must be,
As it, alas! has been, to ostracism,
Exile, or chains, or whatsoever worse
She might decree.

Mar. And this is patriotism?
To me it seems the worst barbarity.
Let me seek out my husband: the sage "Ten,"
With all its jealousy, will hardly war

So far with a weak woman as deny me
A moment's access to his dungeon.

Doge. I'll
So far take on myself, as order that
You may be admitted.

Mar. And what shall I say
To Foscari from his father?

Doge. That he obey
The laws.

Mar. And nothing more? Will you not see him
Ere he depart? It may be the last time. [see

Doge. The last!—my boy!—the last time I shall
My last of children! Tell him I will come. [Exeunt.

ACT III.

SCENE I.

The Prison of JACOPO FOSCARI.

Jac. Fos. (solus). No light, save yon faint gleam,
which shows me walls

Which never echo'd but to sorrow's sounds,
The sigh of long imprisonment, the step
Of feet on which the iron clank'd, the groan
Of death, the imprecation of despair!
And yet for this I have return'd to Venice,
With some faint hope, 'tis true, that time, which wears
The marble down, had worn away the hate
Of men's hearts; but I knew them not, and here
Must I consume my own, which never beat
For Venice but with such a yearning as

² ["the will itself dependent
Upon a storm, a straw, and both alike
Leading to death."—MS.]

The dove has for her distant nest, when wheeling
High in the air on her return to greet
Her callow brood. What letters are these which
[Approaching the wall.

Are scrawl'd along the inexorable wall?¹
Will the gleam let me trace them? Ah! the names
Of my sad predecessors in this place,
The dates of their despair, the brief words of
A grief too great for many. This stone page
Holds like an epitaph their history;
And the poor captive's tale is graven on
His dungeon barrier, like the lover's record
Upon the bark of some tall tree, which bears
His own and his beloved's name. Alas!
I recognise some names familiar to me,
And blighted like to mine, which I will add,
Fittest for such a chronicle as this,
Which only can be read, as writ, by wretches.²
[He engraves his name.

*Enter a Familiar of "the Ten."*³

Fam. I bring you food.

Jac. Fos. I pray you set it down;
I am past hunger: but my lips are parch'd—
The water!

Fam. There.

Jac. Fos. (after drinking). I thank you: I am better.

Fam. I am commanded to inform you that
Your further trial is postponed.

Jac. Fos. Till when?

Fam. I know not.—It is also in my orders
That your illustrious lady be admitted.

Jac. Fos. Ah! they relent, then,—I had ceased
to hope it:
'T was time.

Enter MARINA.

Mar. My best beloved!

Jac. Fos. (embracing her). My true wife,
And only friend! What happiness!

Mar. We'll part

No more.

Jac. Fos. How! wouldst thou share a dungeon?

Mar. Ay,

The rack, the grave, all—any thing with thee,
But the tomb last of all, for there we shall
Be ignorant of each other, yet I will
Share that—all things except new separation;
It is too much to have survived the first.
How dost thou? How are those worn limbs? Alas!
Why do I ask? Thy paleness—

Jac. Fos. 'Tis the joy

Of seeing thee again so soon, and so
Without expectancy, has sent the blood
Back to my heart, and left my cheeks like thine,
For thou art pale too, my Marina!

Mar. 'Tis
The gloom of this eternal cell, which never
Knew sunbeam, and the sallow sullen glare
Of the familiar's torch, which seems akin⁴

¹ [For Mr. Hobhouse's account of the state dungeons of
Venice, see APPENDIX: Historical Notes to Childe Harold,
No. I.]

² ["Which never can be read but, as 't was written,
By wretched beings."—MS.]

³ [Lord Byron, in this tragedy, has not ventured upon
further deviation from historical truth than is fully authorised
by the licence of the drama. We may remark, however, that

To darkness more than light, by lending to
The dungeon vapours its bituminous smoke,
Which cloud whate'er we gaze on, even thine eyes—
No, not thine eyes—they sparkle—how they sparkle!
Jac. Fos. And thine!—but I am blinded by the
torch. [here?

Mar. As I had been without it. Couldst thou see
Jac. Fos. Nothing at first; but use and time had
taught me

Familiarity with what was darkness;
And the grey twilight of such glimmerings as
Glide through the crevices made by the winds
Was kinder to mine eyes than the full sun,
When gorgeously o'ergilding any towers
Save those of Venice: but a moment ere
Thou camest hither I was busy writing.

Mar. What? [next
Jac. Fos. My name: look, 'tis there—recorded
The name of him who here preceded me,
If dungeon dates say true.

Mar. And what of him?
Jac. Fos. These walls are silent of men's ends;
they only

Seem to hint shrewdly of them. Such stern walls
Were never piled on high save o'er the dead,
Or those who soon must be so.—*What of him?*
Thou askest.—What of me? may soon be ask'd,
With the like answer—doubt and dreadful surmise—
Unless thou tell'st my tale.

Mar. I speak of thee!
Jac. Fos. And wherefore not? All then shall
speak of me:

The tyranny of silence is not lasting,
And, though events be hidden, just men's groans
Will burst all cerement, even a living grave's!
I do not *doubt* my memory, but my life;
And neither do I fear.

Mar. Thy life is safe.

Jac. Fos. And liberty?

Mar. The mind should make its own.
Jac. Fos. That has a noble sound; but 'tis a sound,
A music most impressive, but too transient:
The mind is much, but is not all. The mind
Hath nerved me to endure the risk of death,
And torture positive, far worse than death
(If death be a deep sleep), without a groan,
Or with a cry which rather shamed my judges
Than me; but 'tis not all, for there are things
More woful—such as this small dungeon, where
I may breathe many years.

Mar. Alas! and this
Small dungeon is all that belongs to thee
Of this wide realm, of which thy sire is prince.

Jac. Fos. That thought would scarcely aid me to
endure it.

My doom is common, many are in dungeons,
But none like mine, so near their father's palace;
But then my heart is sometimes high, and hope
Will stream along those moted rays of light
Peopled with dusty atoms, which afford

after Giacomo had been tortured, he was removed to the
Ducal apartments, not to one of the *Pozzi*; that his death
occurred, not at Venice, but at Canea; that fifteen months
elapsed between his last condemnation and his father's de-
position; and that the death of the Doge took place, not at
the palace, but in his own house.—*Venet. Sketches*, vol. ii.
p. 105.]

⁴ ["Of the familiar's torch, which seems to love
Darkness far more than light."—MS.]

For the only boon I would have ask'd or taken
From him or such as he is.

Lor. He receives them
As they are offer'd.

Mar. May they thrive with him
So much!—no more.

Jac. Fos. Is this, sir, your whole mission?
Because we have brief time for preparation,
And you perceive your presence doth disquiet
This lady, of a house noble as yours.

Mar. Nobler!
Lor. How nobler?

Mar. As more generous!
We say the "generous steed" to express the purity
Of his high blood. Thus much I've learnt, although
Venetian (who see few steeds save of bronze),
From those Venetians who have skimm'd the coasts
Of Egypt, and her neighbour Araby:

And why not say as soon the "generous man?"
If race be aught, it is in qualities

More than in years; and mine, which is as old
As yours, is better in its product, nay—
Look not so stern—but get you back, and pore
Upon your genealogic tree's most green
Of leaves and most mature of fruits, and there
Blush to find ancestors, who would have blush'd
For such a son—thou cold inveterate hater!

Jac. Fos. Again, Marina!

Mar. Again! still, Marina.
See you not, he comes here to glut his hate
With a last look upon our misery?
Let him partake it!

Jac. Fos. That were difficult.

Mar. Nothing more easy. He partakes it now—
Ay, he may veil beneath a marble brow
And sneering lip the pang, but he partakes it.
A few brief words of truth shame the devil's servants
No less than master; I have probed his soul
A moment, as the eternal fire, ere long,
Will reach it always. See how he shrinks from me!
With death, and chains, and exile in his hand
To scatter o'er his kind as he thinks fit:
They are his weapons, not his armour, for
I have pierced him to the core of his cold heart.
I care not for his frowns! We can but die,
And he but live, for him the very worst
Of destinies: each day secures him more
His tempter's.

Jac. Fos. This is mere insanity.

Mar. It may be so; and *who* hath made us mad?
Lor. Let her go on; it irks not me.

Mar. That's false!
You came here to enjoy a heartless triumph
Of cold looks upon manifold griefs! You came
To be sued to in vain—to mark our tears,
And heard our groans—to gaze upon the wreck
Which you have made a prince's son—my husband;
In short, to trample on the fallen—an office
The hangman shrinks from, as all men from him!
How have you sped? We are wretched, signor, as
Your plots could make, and vengeance could desire us,
And how *feel* you?

Lor. As rocks.

Mar. By thunder blasted:
They feel not, but no less are shiver'd. Come,

¹ [If the two Foscari do nothing to defeat the machinations
of their remorseless foe, Marina, the wife of the younger, at
least revenges them, by letting loose the venom of her tongue

Foscari; now let us go, and leave this felon,
The sole fit habitant of such a cell,
Which he has peopled often, but ne'er fitly
Till he himself shall brood in it alone.¹

Enter the DOGE.

Jac. Fos. My father!
Doge (embracing him). Jacopo! my son—my son!
Jac. Fos. My father still! How long it is since I
Have heard thee name my name—*our* name!

Doge. My boy!
Couldst thou but know—

Jac. Fos. I rarely, sir, have murmur'd.
Doge. I feel too much thou hast not.

Mar. Doge, look there!
[*She points to LOREDANO.*]

Doge. I see the man—what mean'st thou?
Mar. Caution!

Lor. Being

The virtue which this noble lady most
May practise, she doth well to recommend it.

Mar. Wretch! 'tis no virtue, but the policy
Of those who fain must deal perforce with vice:
As such I recommend it, as I would
To one whose foot was on an adder's path.

Doge. Daughter, it is superfluous; I have long
Known Loredano.

Lor. You may know him better.

Mar. Yes; worse he could not.

Jac. Fos. Father, let not these
Our parting hours be lost in listening to
Reproaches, which boot nothing. Is it—is it,
Indeed, our last of meetings?

Doge. You behold
These white hairs!

Jac. Fos. And I feel, besides, that mine
Will never be so white. Embrace me, father!

I loved you ever—never more than now.
Look to my children—to your last child's children:
Let them be all to you which he was once,
And never be to you what I am now.
May I not see *them* also?

Mar. No—not here.

Jac. Fos. They might behold their parent any
where.

Mar. I would that they beheld their father in
A place which would not mingle fear with love,
To freeze their young blood in its natural current.
They have fed well, slept soft, and knew not that
Their sire was a mere hunted outlaw. Well,
I know his fate may one day be their heritage,
But let it only be their *heritage*,
And not their present fee. Their senses, though
Alive to love, are yet awake to terror;
And these vile damps, too, and yon *thick green* wave
Which floats above the place where we now stand—
A cell so far below the water's level,
Sending its pestilence through every crevice,
Might strike them: *this is not their* atmosphere,
However you—and you—and, most of all,
As worthiest—you, sir, noble Loredano!
May breathe it without prejudice.

Jac. Fos. I have not

Reflected upon this, but acquiesce.
I shall depart, then, without meeting them?

upon their hateful oppressor, which she does without stint or
measure; and in a strain of vehemence not inferior to that of
the old queen Margaret in Richard the Third.—JEFFREY.]

Doge. Not so: they shall await you in my chamber.

Jac. Fos. And must I leave them—all?

Lor. You must.

Jac. Fos. Not one?

Lor. They are the state's.

Mar. I thought they had been mine.

Lor. They are, in all maternal things.

Mar. That is,

In all things painful. If they're sick, they will
Be left to me to tend them; should they die,
To me to bury and to mourn; but if
They live, they'll make you soldiers, senators,
Slaves, exiles—what you will; or if they are
Females with portions, brides and *bribes* for nobles!
Behold the state's care for its sons and mothers!

Lor. The hour approaches, and the wind is fair.

Jac. Fos. How know you that here, where the genial
wind

Ne'er blows in all its blustering freedom?

Lor. 'Twas so

When I came here. The galley floats within
A bow-shot of the "Riva di Schiavoni."

Jac. Fos. Father! I pray you to precede me, and
Prepare my children to behold their father.

Doge. Be firm, my son!

Jac. Fos. I will do my endeavour.
Mar. Farewell! at least to this detested dungeon,
And him to whose good offices you owe

In part your past imprisonment.

Lor. And present

Liberation.

Doge. He speaks truth.

Jac. Fos. No doubt! but 'tis
Exchange of chains for heavier chains I owe him.
He knows this, or he had not sought to change them.
But I reproach not.

Lor. The time narrows, signor.

Jac. Fos. Alas! I little thought so lingeringly
To leave abodes like this: but when I feel
That every step I take, even from this cell,
Is one away from Venice, I look back
Even on these dull damp walls, and—

Doge. Boy! no tears.

Mar. Let them flow on: he wept not on the rack
To shame him, and they cannot shame him now.
They will relieve his heart—that too kind heart—
And I will find an hour to wipe away
Those tears, or add my own. I could weep now,
But would not gratify yon wretch so far.
Let us proceed. Doge, lead the way.

Lor. (to the Familiar). The torch, there!

Mar. Yes, light us on, as to a funeral pyre,
With Loredano mourning like an heir.

Doge. My son, you are feeble; take this hand.

Jac. Fos. Alas!

Must youth support itself on age, and I
Who ought to be the prop of yours?

Lor. Take mine.

Mar. Touch it not, Foscari; 'twill sting you.
Signor,

Stand off! be sure, that if a grasp of yours
Would raise us from the gulf wherein we are plunged,
No hand of ours would stretch itself to meet it.
Come, Foscari, take the hand the altar gave you;
It could not save, but will support you ever.

[*Exeunt.*]

ACT IV.

SCENE I.

A Hall in the Ducal Palace.

Enter LOREDANO and BARBARIGO.

Bar. And have you confidence in such a project?
Lor. I have.

Bar. 'Tis hard upon his years.
Lor. Say rather

Kind to relieve him from the cares of state.

Bar. 'Twill break his heart.

Lor. Age has no heart to break.
He has seen his son's half broken, and, except
A start of feeling in his dungeon, never

Swerved.

Bar. In his countenance, I grant you, never;
But I have seen him sometimes in a calm
So desolate, that the most clamorous grief

Had nought to envy him within. Where is he?
Lor. In his own portion of the palace, with
His son, and the whole race of Foscari.

Bar. Bidding farewell.
Lor. A last. As soon he shall

Bid to his dukedom.

Bar. When embarks the son?
Lor. Forthwith—when this long leave is taken. 'Tis
Time to admonish them again.

Bar. Forbear;
Retrench not from their moments.

Lor. Not I, now
We have higher business for our own. This day

Shall be the last of the old Doge's reign,
As the first of his son's last banishment,
And that is vengeance.

Bar. In my mind, too deep.

Lor. 'Tis moderate—not even life for life, the rule
Denounced of retribution from all time;
They owe me still my father's and my uncle's.

Bar. Did not the Doge deny this strongly?
Lor. Doubtless.

Bar. And did not this shake your suspicion?
Lor. No.

Bar. But if this deposition should take place
By our united influence in the Council,
It must be done with all the deference

Due to his years, his station, and his deeds.
Lor. As much of ceremony as you will,
So that the thing be done. You may, for aught
I care, depute the Council on their knees,
(Like Barbarossa to the Pope,) to beg him

To have the courtesy to abdicate.
Bar. What, if he will not?

Lor. We'll elect another,
And make him null.

Bar. But will the laws uphold us?
Lor. What laws?—"The Ten" are laws; and if
they were not,

I will be legislator in this business.
Bar. At your own peril?

Lor. There is none, I tell you,
Our powers are such.

Bar. But he has twice already
Solicited permission to retire,
And twice it was refused.

Lor. The better reason
To grant it the third time.