Cressida.

TROILUS & CRESSIDA. ACT 4. SC. 5.

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once bestowed her perfidious favors; the Greek, for all his valor, was not proof against her charms.

Shortly afterward, during a truce, and a friendly interview of Hector and Troilus with the Greek heroes, on the latter's own ground, Troilus was made aware of Cressida's perfidy, and from a concealed position witnessed certain love passages between her and Diomed, in which she presented her new lover with the very same *gage d'amour* that she had accepted from him when she left Troy. On the morrow, during the engagements by single combat between the most puissant of the Greeks and Trojans, Troilus fought valiantly with his rival, Diomed, who tauntingly displayed Cressida's gift on his helmet; but the rash, unpractised stripling could not cope with the tried skill of the Greek; Diomed succeeded in dismounting the "amorous Trojan," and sent his charger as a trophy to the lady Cressid.

On that same day the valiant Hector—who had gone forth to battle despite the tears and prayers of his wife Andromache, despite the entreaties of his royal father, and the foreboding utterances of the forlorn Cassandra, whose ravings might well have been accepted as inspirations—was treacherously murdered by Achilles, the champion of the Greeks.

In puny contrast with Egypt's queen of voluptuousness—the same in kind, but immeasurably below her in degree—stands Cressida, the type of coquettes of little ambitions and less brains, flirting, jilting, silly wantons, whose insignificant amours lack every quality of sentiment or taste which might appeal to one's toleration—most of all, that intellectual element which may impart even to her sin a certain dignity.

Cressida is but another name for an inconstancy tenfold more hopeless than downright treachery, in that it implies an inherent incapability of being true; the involuntary breaking of her solemn oaths to her lover, uttered in all sincerity perhaps, betrays a nature far more hopelessly depraved than if she had, from the first, meant to deceive him. Selfish love of admiration possesses her completely; her life is devoted to the gratification of a petty vanity, and the study of a very low order of seductions to procure it; not once do her faults rise to the dignity of bad passions, nor are they ever honored with more indignation than a contemptuous disgust. Her penchant for the handsome young Troilus is utterly without taste, "tenderness, passion, or poetry;" it is only the diluted romance of a giddy-pated girl. Her confession of *love* for him, in which she judges him by her own fickleness and wanton exercise of power, is characteristic:

Cres. Boldness comes to me now, and brings me heart:—
Prince Troilus, I have lov'd you night and day,
For many weary months.
Tro. Why was my Cressid then so hard to win?
Cres. Hard to seem won; but I was won, my lord,
With the first glance that ever—Pardon me;—
If I confess much, you will play the tyrant.
I love you now; but not, till now, so much
But I might master it.—In faith, I lie;
My thoughts were like unbridled children, grown
Too headstrong for their mother.—See, we fools!
Why have I blabb'd? Who shall be true to us,
When we are so unsecret to ourselves?
But, though I lov'd you well, I woo'd you not;
And yet, good faith, I wish'd myself a man;
Or that we women had men's privilege
Of speaking first. Sweet, bid me hold my tongue;
For, in this rapture, I shall surely speak
The thing I shall repent. See, see! your silence,
Cunning in dumbness, from my weakness draws

My very soul of counsel: Stop my mouth.
Tro. And shall, albeit sweet music issues thence.
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Cres. My lord, I do beseech you, pardon me—
'Twas not my purpose, thus to beg a kiss;
I am asham'd;—O heavens! what have I done?
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Cres. Pr'ythee, tarry;
You men will never tarry.—
O foolish Cressid!—I might have still held off,
And then you would have tarried.

And even more Cressid-like is her explanation of the mean philosophy that prompted that seeming "stubborn-chastity against all suit," which so captivated her hero-lover:

But more in Troilus thousand fold I see
Than in the glass of Pandar's praise may be;
Yet hold I off. Women are angels, wooing;
Things won are done—joy's soul lies in the doing
That she belov'd knows nought, that knows not this—
Men prize the thing ungain'd more than it is;
That she was never yet that ever knew
Love got so sweet, as when Desire did sue:
Therefore this maxim out of love I teach,—
Achievement is command; ungain'd, beseech.
Then though my heart's content firm love doth bear,
Nothing of that shall from mine eyes appear.

In the parting scene she makes much of her pretty poutings and her spoilt-child petulance; the threatened destruction of her beauty is an exquisite touch of nature, while her high-sounding oaths are ludicrous only to those who have anticipated the sequel:

Cres. O you immortal gods!—I will not go.
Pan. Thou must.
Cres. I will not, uncle: I have forgot my father;
I know no touch of consanguinity;

No kin, no love, no blood, no soul so near me
As the sweet Troilus.—O you gods divine!
Make Cressid's name the very crown of falsehood,
If ever she leave Troilus! Time, Force, and Death,
Do to this body what extremes you can;
But the strong base and building of my love
Is as the very centre of the earth,
Drawing all things to it.—I'll go in, and weep,—
* * * * * * * * * *
Tear my bright hair, and scratch my praised cheeks,
Crack my clear voice with sobs, and break my heart
With sounding Troilus. I will not go from Troy.
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* * * * * * * * *
If I be false, or swerve a hair from truth,
When Time is old and hath forgot itself,
When waterdrops have worn the stones of Troy,
And blind Oblivion swallow'd cities up,
And mighty states, characterless, are grated
To dusty nothing—yet let memory,
From false to false, among false maids in love,
Upbraid my falsehood! * * * *
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Yea, let them say, to stick the heart of falsehood,
As false as Cressid.

We cannot more appropriately conclude our remarks, on a subject that certainly tempts us but little, than by quoting the trenchant description of the sage Ulysses:

Fye, fye upon her!
There's language in her eye, her cheek, her lip—
Nay, her foot speaks; her wanton spirits look out
At every joint and motive of her body.
O, these encounterers, so glib of tongue,
That give a coasting welcome ere it comes,
And wide unclasp the tables of their thoughts
To every ticklish reader! set them down
For sluttish spoils of opportunity,
And daughters of the game.

CRESSIDA.

This fair but frail beauty was the daughter of Calchas, a Trojan priest, who, in the great war between his countrymen and the Greeks—provoked by the abduction of Helen, Menelaus' queen, by Paris, one of the king of Troy's sons—took part with the Greeks, and fled to their camp outside the walls of the "many-gated city," leaving Cressida with her uncle Pandarus.

Prince Troilus, Priam's youngest son, became blindly infatuated with the beautiful Cressida, who secretly returned his passion, but with coquettish dissimulation held herself aloof, despite the well-laid plans of her intriguing uncle to consummate the tender hopes of Troilus. At last, however, beset on every side, Cressida yielded to the importunate suit of her lover, and confessed herself won; but the very next day, the Greeks, moved by the prayers of Calchas, sent a herald to the Trojans, to proffer Antenor, one of the Trojan commanders whom they had taken prisoner, in exchange for Cressida, the priest's daughter; and the offer was joyfully accepted.

Cressida, accordingly, departed for the camp, escorted by Diomed, a Grecian general, on whom, notwithstanding her vows of fidelity to Troilus—himself the most constant of lovers—she at