

The Beauty Stone
An Original Romantic Musical Drama in Three Acts
written by Arthur Wing Pinero
and J. Comyns Carr
music by Arthur Sullivan

The Characters

Philip, Lord of Mirlemont
Guntran of Beaugrant
Simon Limal (*a Weaver*)
Nicholas Dircks (*Burgomaster of Mirlemont*)
Peppin (*a dwarf*)
A Seneschal
A Lad of the Town
Baldwyn of Ath
The Lords of Sirault, Velaines, and St. Sauveur
The Devil
Laine (*the Weaver's daughter*)
Joan (*the Weaver's wife*)
Jacqueline
Loyse, from St. Denis
Isabeau, from Florennes
Barbe, from Bovigny
A Shrewish Girl
A Matron
Saïda

Knights, Dames, Pages, Aldermen, Soldiers, Townsfolk, Country-
folk, Dancers, Lute-players, Serving-men, and the rest.

The story is laid in the Flemish town of Mirlemont in the
beginning of the 15th century.

ACT I.

Scene 1. — The Weaver's Home.

Scene 2. — The Market-place.

ACT II.

Scene 1. — A Hall in the Castle.

Scene 2. — The Weaver's Home.

Scene 3. — Between the Castle and the North Gate.

ACT III.

Scene 1. — The Terrace of the Castle.

Scene 2. — The Market-place.

ACT I.
Scene 1.

The home of SIMON LIMAL, the weaver – a sombre, wretched-looking dwelling. At the back is a window-opening, giving a view of a narrow alley leading to the market-place; and on the left of the window is the street-door. On the right of the room there is a flight of steep steps leading to the entrance to a loft; and below the steps stands the weaver's loom. On the left of the room is the hearth; below the hearth is a poor shrine containing an image of the Virgin; and, below that, a door admitting to a bed-chamber. In the centre stands a table and chair, and on each side of the hearth is a stool.

There is sunshine without, and a narrow shaft of light streams through a little window which is seen in the roof of the loft.

SIMON LIMAL is at the loom, JOAN is making a fire with sticks. They are a feeble, prematurely-aged pair – ragged, poverty-stricken, bent with toil.

DUET. – SIMON and JOAN.

SIMON. Click, clack, click, clack –
For ever the shuttle flies!
Here in the gloom
From out the loom
It groans and rattles and cries!
Oh, would the day were ended
when the end of the daylight dies!
Click, clack, click, clack –
For ever the shuttle flies!

SIMON. Wife, where is Laine?
JOAN. Gone to buy bread and to draw water.

JOAN. Click, clack, click, clack –
The night and the day are one!
The moon may sleep
On the castle keep,
But our travail outstays the sun!
Yea, when the daylight is ended our day is only begun!
Click, clack, click, clack –
The night and the day are one!

BOTH. Across the narrow street
The crooked shadows meet,
And the sound of falling feet
Echoes faintly and grows dumb;
And the moonbeams creep and crawl
Down each gable to the wall.
Ah, could night but end it all,
We would pray the night were come!
Click, clack, click, clack!

SIMON. Why dost thou send Laine abroad at such a time?
JOAN. Gramercy! have I done ill?
SIMON. The town is aflame with preparation for the Show of Beauty that is to be held in the market-place an hour beyond noon. Beauty! a murrain upon beauty, say I!
JOAN. Nay, if we curse everything we lack, thy shuttle will cease to fly and my sticks to crackle.
SIMON. Aye, but it is harder upon our child that upon us who are waxing old. And to-day there is like to be mockery in the streets, and bitter jesting, at the sight of maid so uncomely as Laine, and a cripple into the bargain.
JOAN (*putting on her hood*). Holy Saints protect her! I will go forth.

From the distance come the sounds of uproar and mocking laughter.

SIMON. Hark!
JOAN (*looking out of the window*). A crowd of idle lads and girls.
SIMON. They come nearer!
JOAN. To jeer at thee and me, I trow.
SIMON (*fetching his staff*). My staff!
JOAN. Let it rest; we are well used to being flouted at for the most toil-bent and broken couple in Mirlemont.
SIMON (*at the window*). See! they are making fine sport of something in their midst.
JOAN. That impish dwarf, Peppin, is one of them.
SIMON. And that good-for-naught, Jacqueline.
JOAN. There's mischief where she is.
SIMON. Somebody has stumbled – fallen!
JOAN. A girl!
SIMON. They raise her – hurry her hither.
JOAN (*with a cry*). It is Laine!

LAINE is seen to pass the window accompanied by JACQUELINE. JOAN opens the door, and LAINE stumbles in, carrying a broken pitcher. LAINE is a poorly-clad slip of a girl with a little, wan, pinched face, framed in a tightly fitting cap. One of her shoulders is hunched, and she hobbles with the aid of a crutch. SIMON and JOAN bear her tenderly to a seat as a mob of lads and girls, in holiday attire, appear in the alley. A few follow JACQUELINE into the room, others thrust their heads in at the window. A youth commences to ply SIMON's loom vigorously, while PEPPIN – a hideous, big-headed dwarf – swarms up the steps leading to the loft, and sits there surveying the scene. JACQUELINE – a ragged young woman with a towzled head and bright, mischievous eyes – does her best to keep the crowd at bay.

CHORUS.

Hobble, hobble, now we've caught her,
Scuttling homeward like a rat,

Limping Laine, the weaver's daughter!
By St. Joseph, look at that!

JOAN. Aye, 'tis Laine, our crippled daughter!
By St. Joseph, look at that!

WOMEN. Saints above us, what a couple!
MEN. Sooth he's fashioned like a sickle,
WOMEN. All his back is bent and double, –
MEN. – and his legs are not a pair!
CHORUS. Lo! her skin is made of leather that
 has soaked too long in pickle,
 And her eyes are hung in cobwebs! see,
 there's mildew in her hair!

SIMON. Holy Mother! have a care!
CHORUS. That's her father! And the other?
 That's her mother!
 What a pair!
SIMON. Holy Mother! would ye dare?

CHORUS. Nay, sir Weaver, spare your cudgel, and
 when next your crooked daughter
 Limps and hobble o'er the cobbles, with
 her body turned askew,
Patch and mend her ere ye send her to
 the gossips' well for water,
Lest we take her crutch and rend
 her! Holy Mother, what a crew!

SIMON. Carrion kites, what would ye do?
CHORUS. Holy Mother, what a crew!

JOAN. Wretches!
SIMON. Fiends!
LAINE. Look! they have made me break the pitcher.
JOAN. Grieve not for that; thy mother has thee safe.
SIMON. Out of my house, all of ye! (to JACQUELINE.) And you,
 you wastrel, you plague o' the town, get you gone
 speedily, lest I forget thou'rt a woman, and snap thine
 arm with my staff!

CROWD. Ha, ha, ha, ha!
LAINE. Nay, father, scold not poor Jacqueline. But for her
 coming to my aid I had not only broken the pitcher,
 methinks; they pressed about me so roughly.
SIMON. Say you!
JACQ. True, I am for as much fun as any man or maid in
 Mirlemont, but I will take no share in teasing a girl
 because her face is pinched, her nose is sharp, and her
 back awry. (To the crowd.) Pigs! swine of all colours!
CROWD (threateningly). Ah-h-h-h!

A handsome, shrewish-looking, dark girl detaches herself from the crowd and approaches JACQUELINE.

THE GIRL (to JACQUELINE). Thou rag-heap, thou art not over well-favoured thyself; thou dost wisely to ply thy tongue in behalf of this ugly tribe.

CROWD. Ha, ha!

THE GIRL. But once wag tongue at me, and I'll teach thee – !

JACQ. Ho, ho, ho! Who speaks here? – the Beauty of Mirlemont! (to the girl.) Yea, I hear thou offerest thyself to-day as candidate for the prize of loveliness. Why, thou lank, bony thing, dost thou imagine that lord Philip will award the wreath of rose-buds and the girdle of virgin silver to thee? To thee, when all the pretty ones from Bovigny, and from St. Hubert, and from Lenalède, and from the whole country-side, are trooping into the town! Beshrew me, but the Lord of Mirlemont is at least a true judge of what is passable in woman. Holy Mother! regard thyself!

THE GIRL. I'll scratch thine eyes out!

JACQ. Best tear out thine own ere thou competest for this prize, lest thy squint should disqualify thee.

THE GIRL (seizing JACQUELINE). Ah – !

SIMON (coming between them). Peace, cats!

A LAD (to JACQUELINE). Nay, Jacqueline, let us have no bad blood at holiday time. Remember, you promised us pure fun –

JACQ (to the crowd). Cease baiting cripples then. Away! let us to the house of old Peter Thilbrugge, the miser, and hurl stones through his windows!

CROWD (joyously). Ah-h-h-h!

The crowd gradually disperses. As PEPPIN is clambering out of the window, JACQUELINE gives him a push, and he falls. The crowd disappears, laughing.

LAINÉ (embracing JACQUELINE). I thank thee, dear Jacqueline.

JOAN. Ah, Jacqueline, if thou but hadst a mother – !

SIMON. Thou hast served us a good turn, jade that thou art. I cannot repay thee –

JACQ. Canst thou not! Give me thy staff.

SIMON (giving her his staff). For what?

JACQ. That I may break the dwarf's skull. I'll learn him to be impudent to Laine again! Whoop!

She runs out, gleefully.

JOAN (to LAINÉ). Why, what has Peppin, the dwarf, said or done to thee?

LAINÉ (sitting, gazing into the fire). They bade him kiss me, and – though in sooth he made a wry face at the task – he was for obeying them.

SIMON. Kiss thee!

JOAN. Put his lips to thine!

LAINÉ. Yea. For they said that no straight and fair man would ever kiss a maid so unshapely as I, and that I ought to

thank God and the Saints for being kissed even by a dwarf.

JOAN (*aside to SIMON*). Oh, good man – !

SIMON (*aside to JOAN*). Tush! she will soon forget this insult, as she hath forgot many others. Let us leave her for a while, wife. Close and bar the shutters. Will fetch another pitcher and go to the well with thee.

LAINE. Listen, mother! here comes one of the strange girls who offer themselves for the lord Philip's prize.

A pretty, fair girl, crowned with lilies, is seen to pass the windows, accompanied by her parents and a small following of friends.

CHORUS.

Maidens and men of Mirlemont town,
Hither we come at your call!
Ye have bidden the fairest, then needs must ye own
We bring ye the fairest of all!
White lilies she wears for a crown,
For her cheek as a lily is white,
And straight as a lily she grows,
Straight and slender and tall;
Yet day shall not draw to its close
Ere the lily be changed to the rose,
For shall ye not crown her to-night
The fairest of all?

LAINE. Didst thou note her face? hath she beauty?

SIMON (*shaking his fist at the window as he goes up the steps to the loft*). Beauty! beauty! beauty!

LAINE (*weeping upon JOAN's shoulder*). Oh, alack-the-day!

JOAN. Hush! weep not!

LAINE. Mother, the Lord of Mirlemont doth forget how many ill-looking maids are within his township, or he would not shame them in this fashion. Oh, but none so ill-looking as I! none so ill-looking as I!

JOAN. The lord Philip! he cares naught so that he may feast his eyes on what is fair and delicate. Malison on him!

LAINE. Nay, mother, it can only be that he wishes to pleasure the townsfolk by this show of beauty.

JOAN. Why, prithee!

LAINE. Because – how long is 't ago? – once, while I was drawing water at the well, I heard two old wives whisper that the lord Philip loves this eastern lady that dwells in the castle.

JOAN. Yea, and the gossips now declare that he wearies of her sorely. But thou'rt a child, and a poor innocent; give no ear to their rede, one way or another.

LAINE. Yet I would I could become a little brown moth to-day, for an hour, that I might flutter about the steps of the town-hall and gain a close peep at the lord Philip and the lady Said.

JOAN. Foolish wench!
LAINE. Nay, not at her then, but at him. In sooth he is very gallant-looking.
JOAN. A sluggard, a dreamer; with a soft tongue, a heavy eye, and an idle sword. Gallant-looking! Where was our gallant when John the Fearless assembled the brave lords of Flanders about his standard at St. Omer? Why, snug within the castle of Mirlemont, listening to his olive-skinned dame singing to her lute, or watching her as she danced, waving her veils, in the sunlight upon the terrace. Where is he now when the Lord of Pieruels and the rebel-rats from Liège are laying waste the land and driving forth the good Prince Bishop like kine to the marsh? Why, dallying in our market-place, crowning with a wreath of blossom, and clasping with a girdle of virgin silver, the prettiest maid that simpers under his glances!

SIMON *(descending the steps, carrying a pitcher)*. Hey, wife, what is all this coil?
JOAN *(closing and barring the shutters)*. I am but chiding the child for being so deject over this mummary in the market-place.
SIMON *(to LAINE)*. Come, girl, after all, Heaven's gate will not open more readily to cherry cheeks than to thy white face.
LAINE *(wistfully)*. Yea, father, but one has to die first to prove it. Meanwhile, a maid must needs be beautiful, or 'tis but dreary waiting.
SIMON. Waiting is waiting, girl, for comely or crooked.
LAINE. Nay, love maketh the waiting easier.
SIMON. Love!
LAINE. So I have bethought me. And on earth the crooked and unsightly may not hope to be loved; therefore the waiting is irksome.
JOAN *(approaching her)*. Gramercy! do we not love thee?
LAINE *(embracing them)*. Truly. I am ungrateful.
SIMON *(to JOAN)*. Come, wife. *(At the open door, to LAINE.)* Fasten up the door, and open to none but us.

SIMON and JOAN depart. LAINE secures the door. The room is now in darkness save for the shaft of light coming from the opening to the loft.

LAINE. Ungrateful; in sooth, that am I. *(Standing before the shrine.)* And yet —

SONG. — LAINE.

Dear Mary Mother, unto thee I bring
A poor maid's prayer!
I am a crooked, wan, misshapen thing,
And may not dare
To lift mine eyes to thine, lest haply so
Thy heart should find no pity left to spare

For all my woe!
 Mother of Jesu, at they feet I cry;
 I do but crave for love
 That so my heart may live,
 Else what am I?
 Nay, and if God above
 Hath naught of love to give,
 I fain would die!

To Him who gave the rose its vermeil hue
 'Twere vain to pray
That He should make this body straight and new
 And fair alway.
Sooth, that were vain, yet thou canst bid God send—
 Whereas the night-time endeth every day —
My day may end!
 Mother of Jesu, at they feet I cry;
 For well I wis 'tis so;
 Love sorts but with the fair,
 And naught am I!
 Wherefore I fain would go,
 Praying but this one prayer,
 That I may die!

As LAINE ends her appeal, one of the shutters becomes transparent and a diabolical-looking face, with a red glow upon it, is seen leering at her. After a moment the face vanishes, and there are three distinct raps upon the door.

LAINE *(opening the shutters and looking out)*. Who knocks?
A VOICE *(without)*. PAX HUIC DOMUI ET OMNIBUS HABITANTIBUS IN EÂ!

The room is now light again. She unbolts the door and admits the DEVIL. He is in the guise of a friar. He limps slightly, has a forked, red beard and long finger-nails, but is of genial demeanour.

DEVIL. Good morrow, daughter.
LAINE. I was bid to open to none, father; but we did not look for a holy visitor.
DEVIL. Nay, I would not have thee disregard an injunction. Always obey those placed above thee. Yet, hearing there is adversity and heaviness of heart beneath this roof, I would fain leave behind me a few words of blessed consolation.
LAINE. I thank thee, father.
DEVIL *(smacking his lips)*. But first give me a cup of water.
LAINE. We have no water till my father and mother return from the well. *(Showing him the broken pitcher.)* I grieve more than ever I have broken my pitcher. See, 'tis bottom-less.
DEVIL. Nay, 'twill content me.

He puts the mouth of the pitcher to his lips, and takes a deep draught.

LAINE. Father! do you mock me, as others do?

DEVIL. Mock thee, my daughter!

He turns the mouth of the pitcher downwards; a stream of water flows from it.

LAINE. Oh, Holy Saints!

DEVIL. (*replacing the pitcher upon the table*). Yea, we cannot be too thankful to *them*.

LAINE. Father, thou'rt a stranger in Mirlemont, I trow. We have no such good man here as you must be, for the Saints to give thee water from a bottomless pot.

DEVIL. Alack, I am but a sinner, my daughter, or they would make it wine. (*Sitting.*) But truly I am a stranger, as you remark. I have travelled a great distance, having some curiosity to examine the fine cities of Flanders and Brabant. Though, sooth, a little town like thy Mirlemont amuses me more.

LAINE. We call not Mirlemont little.

DEVIL. That is one of the things that amuse me in Mirlemont. (*With enjoyment.*) Another, that they chase their cripples here at holiday time.

LAINE. (*hiding her face*). Oh, father!

DEVIL. Ha, ha! I did perceive them hunting thee as I entered at the North Gate. (*In an altered tone.*) And so, out of tender sympathy for thee, I begged to know thy dwelling-place. (*Rising.*) You and thy worthy parents are named the Ugly Family by the good folk of Mirlemont, I learn?

LAINE. Yea, and answer to it aptly.

DEVIL. (*limping towards her*). Well, there is much virtue among the ugly.

LAINE. Truly, we are virtuous, Heaven take count of it.

DEVIL. That should make you all vastly content.

LAINE. I would be more content, father, but for my lameness.

DEVIL. I limp a little also, daughter, as you have observed. How came you to halt?

LAINE. I had a fall when I was a baby.

DEVIL. Strange; I had a nasty fall, too, in early manhood. (*Slyly.*) Ahem! thou wert at thy devotions, my daughter, when I struck upon the door?

LAINE. How know'st thou that?

DEVIL. I heard the pious murmur as I stood without. That's right; pray, pray, pray. There's nothing like it.

LAINE. Father, thy knocking fell upon my ears as though it were in answer to my prayer.

DEVIL. H'm! thou wert praying for some special dispensation, wert thou not?

LAINE. Why, did my words reach thee?

DEVIL. But faintly.

LAINE. I confess, father; I do desire to die; pleaseth God to take me.

DEVIL. To die! before thou hast lived!

LAINE. I have lived long enough.
DEVIL. Nay, thou hast never been beautiful.
LAINE. Father – !
DEVIL. Therefore thou hast never been loved, as young maids should be loved. Therefore, being ugly and unloved, I say thou hast not lived.
LAINE. Father, these are my own wicked thoughts!
DEVIL. Wicked!
LAINE. Are they not so?
DEVIL. Nay.
LAINE. (*unsteadily*). Oh – !
DEVIL. H'm, well mayst thou regard my visit as an answer to thy prayer. For look! (*taking from his pouch a little bag.*) I chance to carry this upon me –
LAINE. What is't?
DEVIL. My daughter, the little pebble lying within this bag is the instrument by which a strange miracle may be wrought.
LAINE. What fashion of miracle?
DEVIL. One that maketh an ugly item of humanity most beauteous.
LAINE. Beauteous!
DEVIL. Surpassingly beauteous.
LAINE. (*after a pause, frightened*). Nay, I will not believe that!

He seizes her by the wrist.

LAINE. Oh! Father, thy nails are long and sharp; they cut into me! father – ! Ah, here come my parents! tell them not of my prayer –

JOAN and SIMON appear without.

RECITATIVE (QUARTET).

SIMON (*looking in*).

Who stands within?

JOAN. Hush! 'tis a Holy Friar.

JOAN and SIMON enter.

DEVIL. Chide not this simple maid; the fault was mine!

JOAN. No fault, in sooth!

SIMON. 'Twas not 'gainst such as thee
Our door was barred!

JOAN. Yet, holy father, say
How comes it that the light of Heaven hath crept
To our dark home?

DEVIL. My children, I have heard
Ye stand in little favour in this town;
Wherefore I thought to pause upon my way
And proffer comfort. Sooth, and as ye came,
In pleasant converse with yon crippled child

I chanced to shew her this!

He holds up the bag containing the stone, which now glows with supernatural light. SIMON and JOAN shrink back, half in terror.

SIMON and JOAN. What is it? Speak!

DEVIL. Well may ye ask, for hidden here doth lie
A little stone hewn from a sunken rock
Whose giant shadow rising from the deep
Empurples the blue sea! Yet long ago,
In Holier days, it reared its sacred head
Moss-mantled o'er the wave; and on its crest
Once trod the Virgin's feet. And since that hour
This little particle of precious stone –
A relic rescued from the wreck of time –
Hath so much virtue, that on man or maid,
Whoe'er it be who owns it, there doth fall
The gift of perfect beauty!

SIMON. Beauty!

JOAN. Beauty!

LAINÉ. Yea, truly 'twas of beauty that he spake
E'en as ye came.

SIMON. Ah, prithee, tell me then,
How falls this miracle!

JOAN. Aye, tell us that!

The DEVIL produces the stone, through which is threaded a fine cord.

DEVIL. Draw anear and ye shall hear!
Tremble not, 'tis naught to fear!
On the bare breast of man or maid
Naked shall this stone be laid;
Snug and secret must it lie
Hidden close from every eye,
For one and only one shall own
The mystic virtues of this stone.

SIMON. Father, bestow it! Aye, bestow it here!
No home in Flanders is so waste and drear,
Lacking a comely presence: we are worn,
And bent with years and toiling night and morn!
Our child is sickly, hapless was she born!
Bestow it here!

DEVIL. Weaver, thou didst not heed me; I have shewn
This wondrous gift is not for all to own,
But whoso wears it, he or she alone,
May hope to win
The beauty that lies hidden deep within
This glittering stone.

ENSEMBLE.

JOAN and SIMON.
Though that should be, yet on our knees we pray,
Grant to this darkened house the light of day!
O, hear our prayer!

In pity hear us! let but Heaven's sweet ray
Make one face fair!

LAINÉ.

Ah, Holy Mother, little need had they
To crave this lamp to light them on their way
Had I been fair!
Wherefore I too would kneel to thee to-day –
O, hear our prayer!

DEVIL.

Weaver, thou didst not heed me; I have shewn
This wondrous gift is not for all to own,
But whoso wears it, he or she alone,
May hope to win
The beauty that lies hidden deep within
This glittering stone.

DEVIL (*giving stone to SIMON*).

Take it! 'tis thine! My blessing go with it.

LAINÉ, JOAN, and SIMON.

Father, we thank thee! day hath dawned at last!

SIMON (*exulting*). Oh, wife, wife!

JOAN. Oh, good man! our child!

SIMON. Our child! (*Rushing to LAINÉ.*) To thy bed-chamber! Tear
open thy bodice! (*Pressing the stone into her hand.*)
Lay this upon thy poor breast! haste thee!

LAINÉ. Mother!

SIMON. Go!

He thrusts her from the room.

SIMON (*embracing JOAN*). Sweetheart!

JOAN (*after a pause*). Nay, good man, art certain we have
done well?

SIMON. Wife?

JOAN. Something in this mislikes me. (*Making for the door of
LAINÉ's bed-chamber.*) My child!

DEVIL (*intercepting her*). Woman, what wouldst thou?

JOAN. Pardon, father, but this miraculous stone may bring ill
upon us rather than good. Stand aloof, I prithee.

DEVIL. Meddle not.

JOAN. Nay, but what if others learn what 'tis my girl carries
upon her bosom?

DEVIL. Truly 'tis an object to be carefully guarded. For in
sooth beauty is a possession man delighteth in stealing
from woman, woman from man. H'm! yea, good people, you
had best be discreet.

SIMON. And, father, I do bethink me – is this the only piece
of beauty stone in mortal hands?

DEVIL. It is, my son.

SIMON. How long hast had it in thy keeping?

DEVIL. Sith thou wast pretty to look upon, weaver.

SIMON. And never bestowed it till now?

DEVIL. Aye, often.

JOAN (*clinging to SIMON*). Hear him!
SIMON. Then how come it in thy pouch to-day?
DEVIL. H'm, a sage question! I'll answer thee. In one odd
 fashion or another, this beauty stone, as thou hast
 dubbed it, hath always returned to my charge.

RECITATIVE. — DEVIL.

Since it dwelt in that rock whose hallowed crest
Lies sunk in Orient sea,
This stone it hath pressed full many a breast
Of gallant and proud ladye.
For all have sued for this glittering thing,
And squire and lord and clown;
Yea, once lay next the heart of a king
Who counted it more than his crown!

SONG. — DEVIL.

I gave it away to a love-lorn maid
Who wept, for her heart was free;
And lo, when this stone in her breast was laid,
She grew passing fair to see!
And a knight rode by, and he knelt and prayed,
"For thy beauty life were freely paid —
Now what wilt thou give to me?"
"Sir Knight, I have naught!" laughed she,
"Sir Knight, I have naught for thee!"
But still at her feet, as he made his moan,
From out her bosom she drew the stone;
And that knight rode forth — but he rode alone,
And he laughed, for his heart was free!
And they buried a maiden all skin and bone;
And so it befell,
At the toll of the bell,
This stone had come back to me.
And anon it sped over sea and land,
It journeyed o'er land and sea,
It hath lodged in many a fair maid's hand —
Yet it ever comes back to me.

Then it passed to a miser of grisly hue,
With a beard that fell to his knee;
And he cuddled his gold, yet he fain would woo
A lady of high degree!
And he laughed when he saw how fair he grew —
Yet ever she sighed as he came to sue,
"Nay, what wilt thou give to me?"
"Rich gems have I none," groaned he,
"I have naught but my love for thee!"
And at night, as he lay and dreamed of gold,
She drew from his gaberdine's innermost fold
This glittering stone — and his heart grew cold;
But she laughed, for her heart was free!
And they buried a miser withered and old;

And so it befell,
At the toll of the bell,
This stone had come back to me.
And anon it sped over sea and land,
It journeyed o'er land and sea,
It hath lodged in many a withered hand –
Yet it always comes back to me.

As the DEVIL concludes his history of the stone, there is a faint cry from LAINE's room, and a low, distant rumble of thunder.

JOAN and SIMON (*still clinging to each other*). Holy Paul!
DEVIL (*at the door leading to the alley – in a loud voice*).
VOX QUIBUS DEUS BENEDIXIT BENEDICITE!

He disappears, as LAINE enters and stands before her parents, erect and wondrously beautiful. She has abandoned her little cap, and her hair, encircling her head like a glory, falls luxuriantly to her waist; and upon her arm she carries her useless crutch as though she were bearing a lily.

End of Scene 1.

Scene 2.

The Market-place of Mirlemont. On the left stands the town-hall approached by a flight of steps; and on the other side of the market-place, facing the town-hall, there is an inn, bearing the sign of the "Golden Head." From above the town-hall there runs a broad street; and on the right, in the distance, is the mouth of a narrow alley. There are other outlets from the market-place upon either side. The sun shines brilliantly.

Many of the townsfolk – men, women, and children – are already assembled; others join them, appearing from different directions; greetings are exchanged; the people gather in knots to discuss the merits of the candidates for the prize of beauty. A few soldiers mix with the crowd, flirting with the young women; the inn drives a good trade; there is continual movement and bustle. A body of pikemen are lounging about the steps of the town-hall, and in the doorway stand certain of the aldermen and office-holders of the town.

CHORUS.

MAIDENS. The bells are ringing o'er Mirlemont town,
Lord Philip rides forth on his way!
ALL. The bells are ringing o'er Mirlemont town,
Lord Philip rides forth on his way!
From his saddle-bow hangs a rosebud crown,
And a silver cord that shall girdle the gown
Of her who is fairest to-day.

MAIDENS. Then tell us, ye burghers of Mirlemont town,

Who is it that rules ye to-day?
MEN. Lord Philip, he rules o'er burgher and clown;
From his castle gate he comes riding down
With his gallants in proud array.
MAIDENS. Sir Burghers, we tell ye nay,
'Tis not to a gallant ye pray;
Who rules ye now was never a lord,
She needs no spear and she bears no sword
Who wins with a smile or a frown,
With soft eyes hazel or gray,
With tresses golden or brown –
'Tis Beauty that rules ye to-day,
Ye Burghers of Mirlemont town!
ALL. With soft eyes hazel or gray, etc.

*The Competitor crowned with lilies enters, with her supporters.
They make for the inn, singing as they go.*

COMPETITOR'S FRIENDS. [8 sopranos]

Maidens and men of Mirlemont town,
Hither we come at your call!
Ye have bidden the fairest, then needs must ye own
We bring ye the fairest of all!
White lilies she wears for a crown,
For her cheek as a lily is white,
And straight as a lily she grows,
Straight and slender and tall;
Yet day shall not draw to its close
Ere the lily be changed to the rose,
For shall ye not crown her to-night
The fairest of all?

MEN. If this indeed be Beauty's Queen –
MAIDENS. We say not so! We say not so!
MEN. Then every maiden lank and lean,
With waxen cheek and eyes of green,
May win that wreath of budding rose.
MAIDENS. In sooth 'tis not of her we speak –
MEN. Then bid her go! Then bid her go!
MAIDENS. Yet look again; for though her cheek
Be all too white, that blush ye seek
Hath fled to warm her ruddy nose!

ALL. Ha! ha! ha! ha!

Amidst jeers and laughter the Competitor and her friends go into the inn.

ENSEMBLE.

{ **COMPETITOR'S FRIENDS.**
Maidens and men of Mirlemont town,
Hither we come at your call!
Ye have bidden the fairest, then needs must ye own

{
CHORUS. We bring ye the fairest of all!
}
Welcome, ye strangers, to Mirlemont town,
Hither ye come at our call!
Ye have bidden the fairest, then needs must ye own
Ye bring not the fairest of all!
}

Then there is a hubbub, and PEPPIN, the dwarf, rushes in, flying in terror from JACQUELINE, who pursues him. They are followed by the mischievous lads and girls of the first scene. PEPPIN trips and falls, and JACQUELINE belabours him with the weaver's staff. He is rescued by the bystanders, as NICHOLAS DIRCKS, the burgomaster, enters from the "Golden Head."

NICHOLAS. How now, rude people! Know ye not how to bear yourselves when at any moment ye may be within hearing of the lord Philip?

JACQ. Faith, if our behaviour liketh not the lord Philip, let him hie where Lord of Mirlemont should be at the hour of this telling – with his kith and kind at the tails of the Liége rebels.

NICHOLAS. Holy St. Bavon! what sedition is here?

A MATRONLY WOMAN. Worse than sedition, most honourable Burgomaster. Yon she-devil, saving your presence, hath cudgelled the poor dwarf till I doubt he hath a whole bone in's body.

PEPPIN howls; JACQUELINE cuffs him soundly.

NICHOLAS *(to JACQUELINE).* Peace, unmannerly wench!

JACQ. Sooth, I have but made the manikin pay the price for trying to buss Laine Limal, the weaver's crippled daughter, an hour ago.

NICHOLAS. Beshrew me, a pretty pass! Shall dwarven be denied the small privilege of saluting gallantly such females as are halt and hump-backed? Let heaven's afflicted herd together, an' we be merciful. Hence, trollop, lest I have thee whipped for inhumanity!

JACQ. Whip –! whip me! nay, all Mirlemont could not do it!

NICHOLAS *(to the bystanders).* Stand aloof. I do espy the brave Guntran; I would speak with him.

Those attracted by the riot disperse. GUNTRAN OF BEAUGRANT – grizzled and well on in years, but still upright and stalwart – appears on the steps of the town-hall.

NICHOLAS. God save thee, Sir Guntran!

GUNTRAN *(with a grunt – descending the steps).* Ugh! for what?

NICHOLAS. 'Mongst other favours, for the witnessing of the glorious show of beauty that the lord Philip hath commanded. I have the maids mustered at this most respectable hostelry, the "Golden Head" –

GUNTRAN. Ugh!

NICHOLAS. But the lord Philip! 'tis well past the appointed time.

GUNTRAN. Was card-playing with the lady Saida and her demoiselles when I rode from the castle.

NICHOLAS. Alack!

GUNTRAN (*contemptuously*). Bid thy beauties sup milk, lest their skins shrink from fasting and delay.

NICHOLAS. Will do't.

He re-enters the inn. The DEVIL, dressed gaily in red, his habit fashioned in the Italian mode, comes from among the crowd and confronts GUNTRAN.

DEVIL. Heaven save you, sir!

GUNTRAN. Again! thou'rt the second to utter that prayer within a dozen breaths. Heaven save you, sir, to pray for my salvation.

DEVIL. Amen. Sir Guntran of Beaugrant?

GUNTRAN. None other.

DEVIL. The right hand of the lord Philip of Mirlemont?

GUNTRAN. Nay, I would not dub myself so for as much wealth as poor soldier could dream.

DEVIL. Why, prithee?

GUNTRAN. Because the right hand of the lord Philip is shamed.

DEVIL. Shamed!

GUNTRAN. Sir, it grasps no sword – (*abruptly*) but who art thou?

DEVIL (*producing some letters*). Antonio, Count of Foscano in Lombardy. I bear letters from those that love me, who commend me to all of high estate in Flanders. (*Giving the letters to GUNTRAN.*) I do desire you, present these to the Lord of Mirlemont.

GUNTRAN. That will I. What quest is thine, sir Count, in Flanders, in these troublous days?

DEVIL. Pleasure, pleasure – naught but pleasure.

GUNTRAN. Ha! thou'lt be welcome at Castle Mirlemont.

DEVIL. Spoke with a most reproving frown, as becometh a man of war.

GUNTRAN. Nay, no such fellow am I, or I stood not here talking with thee. Age is in my bones; my time is past. For all, I am inclined to rust in Mirlemont no longer, but to follow my bent an' I cannot follow this lord's.

DEVIL. War is not to the taste of the Lord of Mirlemont, they whisper.

GUNTRAN. No, by St. Jude! and I that taught him arms, and have loved him as my own, live to say't!

DEVIL. H'm! he is for lighter pastimes?

GUNTRAN. Ha!

DEVIL. And those – ? but we talk scandal.

GUNTRAN. The children babble it in Mirlemont. Sir, the mischief lies thus – the lord Philip hath an eye for beauty.

DEVIL. One were blind else. The world is so beautiful.

GUNTRAN. Aye, but it would seem there is naught so beautiful in the world as woman. Therefore he hath an eye for –

DEVIL. Women. Then the gossips speak sooth when they declare this Eastern lady whom he favourites to be most fair?

GUNTRAN. Nay, was – her day is waning. Why, look you, sir Count,

these Orients keep not their bloom as do our Northern dames and demoiselles; and this she was renegade from Cephalonia when Philip of Mirlemont sailed thence in the train of the ransomed John of Nevers – and that's not yestere'en.

DEVIL. Yet your lord delighteth in the lady Saida's company?

GUNTRAN. Yea, till fresher flower perfumes the air. By the finger nails of St. Luke, I would they were all drowned!

DEVIL. All – ?

GUNTRAN. All women.

The town bell rings out merrily.

GUNTRAN (to the DEVIL). The cavalcade entereth the North Gate. Follow an' you will.

He re-enters the town-hall. The aldermen and officials also withdraw into the town-hall, followed by NICHOLAS DIRCKS, who comes out of the inn and bustles across the market-place. The pikemen shoulder their pikes and go off by the street which is above the town-hall. There is a general movement among the townspeople; the majority of them, as if eager to greet the procession, follow at the heels of the pikemen. The market-place is almost deserted.

DEVIL (to himself). And I was on the point of passing by the gates of this Mirlemont, deeming it but a dull hole! Yet within a trice I came upon a vastly interesting cripple; and now – ! Ho, I will have a pretty tangle here, ere I leave 'em. One never knows! Why, I could spend a month in Mirlemont to advantage! (Coming face to face with JACQUELINE.) Holloa!

JACQ. Who are you?

DEVIL. A gentleman travelling for pleasures.

JACQ. Thy attire is not of our cut.

DEVIL. It was botched in Italy.

JACQ. And where were you botched?

DEVIL. H'm! there or thereabouts.

JACQ. Italy is bright and warm, is't not?

DEVIL. Truly.

JACQ. How comfortable it must be to dwell in a place that is always warm!

DEVIL. It becomes monotonous.

JACQ (suspiciously). You call yourself a gentleman.

(Shaking her head.) Pooh! I fear thou'rt bragging.

DEVIL. What sign belies me?

JACQ. Thou wilt stand here chattering with a poor, mop-headed wench such as I.

DEVIL. A gentleman hath no false pride. Tell me, art content to be so low i' the world?

JACQ. Hugely.

DEVIL. Yet thou'rt mightily ragged and skinny.

JACQ (laughing). Ha, ha, ha, ha! Because I will not do the

work they put upon girls that are humble and parentless in these parts. Content! yea, am I not free to lie snug every day till the sun has taken the keen edge off the morning? Whatever I am sharp-set, will not Jorian, the baker, chuck me a loaf of bread? And as for sport, can I not run, leap, fight, with any big-boned lad o' the town?

DUET. — JACQUELINE and the DEVIL.

JACQUELINE. My name is crazy Jacqueline,
I rule a rout that love not labour,
Morn till e'en I dance and sing,
And though I neither toil nor spin,
Yet, should I lack some simple thing,
I sally forth and rob my neighbour!
My castle is a musty stall
In old Dame Clovis' empty stable;
There on the straw my court I keep
With a whiskered rat for seneschal,
And a troop of mice to guard my sleep
Till lazy sunbeams 'gin to peep
With a rosy face o'er the topmost gable.

Then men may call me Ne'er-do-Weel,
And Rag-a-Bag, or Pick-and-Steal —
So let them cry,
I care not, I!
For I can dance from morn till e'en,
And in my kingdom I am Queen!

DEVIL. Then, marry, come here and dance with me,
Thy humour it liketh me well;
There is room for a rogue like thee
In the land where I chance to dwell!
(*aside.*) For this is a truth I tell,
Yet marvel how it should be —
There be few that can dance and sing
In that kingdom where I am King!

ENSEMBLE.

JACQUELINE. Then men may call me Ne'er-do-Weel, etc.

DEVIL. Then, marry, come here and dance with me, etc.

JACQUELINE. But idle folk have work to do —
Pure mischief takes a world of brewing;
Simple fools know naught of this,
Yet true it is, and pity too,
Things will not always go amiss
If no one sees to man's undoing!
And so o' nights, when all is still,
I wander forth and weave a tangle;
I milk the cows and leave them dry,
Then draw the sluices from the mill,
And when I've set things all awry

I laugh to hear the watchman's cry,
As the city bells go jingle-jangle!

Then men may call me Ne'er-do-Weel,
And Rag-a-Bag, or Pick-and-Steal –
I care not, I!
Whate'er they cry,
For I can dance from morn till e'en,
And in my kingdom I am Queen!

DEVIL. Then, marry, come here and dance with me,
For never a maid or man
Was fit to be fellow with thee
Since ever the world began!
(*aside.*) Yet rede this riddle who can,
And the answer I fain would see –
How long would she dance and sing
In that kingdom where I am King?

ENSEMBLE.

JACQUELINE. Then men may call me Ne'er-do-Weel, etc.

DEVIL. Then, marry, come here and dance with me, etc.

DANCE

DEVIL. Ha, ha, ha! thou'rt a merry one!
JACQ. And, sooth, thou'rt a right merry gentleman.
DEVIL (*smacking his lips*). I like you. There's plenty of ripe mischief in ye! mischief! mischief!
JACQ (*wilfully*). Mischief! ha, ha! I pray so.
DEVIL. Pray so, do ye! H'm! have half a mind to take thee.
JACQ. Take me! (*Going.*) I wish you good morrow, sir gentleman.
DEVIL (*following her*). Stay! Hast ever been in love?
JACQ. Tuh! not I; nor shall.
DEVIL. Ha! hast no fancy for men, eh?
JACQ. Why, I hate 'em, as such.
DEVIL. That's right! that's capital! thou'rt the playfellow for me! (*Leading her back.*) The direst mischief i' the world is done by the women that hate men. And I – I hate women.
JACQ (*releasing herself*). So saith the baker, yet I keep my distance when I go for the bread.
DEVIL. Ha, ha! nay, I say sooth – I do most cordially hate women, as such. Come nearer! (*Wheedlingly.*) Don't be frightened of a gentleman.
JACQ (*approaching him cautiously*). What would you?
DEVIL (*looking into her face*). Upon my travels I have often lacked a young, fresh companion to jest with. Wilt be my page, vixen?
JACQ. I! I am no boy.
DEVIL. Nor of the other sex, sith thou hatest men. Yea, thou shalt be my page.
JACQ (*endeavouring to avoid his gaze, faintly*). Let me

hence! prithee!
DEVIL. Thou shalt lead an easy life, lazy-bones. Thou shalt lie late; eat and drink till thou'rt surfeited. I will teach thee the lute –
JACQ (in a tremble). What art thou? I – I fear thee!

He grips her arm.

JACQ. Ah – ! (Wincing.) Truly thou'rt a gentleman, for labour hath not blunted thy nails.
DEVIL. Go. At five on the great dial, rummage beneath the straw where thou sleepest; thou wilt find boy's attire. By sundown present thyself at the castle as the Count of Foscano's page.
JACQ (humbly). Oh, pardon me, my lord – but folks do know me here as a mere girl.
DEVIL. After thou hast knotted the ties of thy new shoon, look you into a mirror; thou'lt not know thyself. (Playfully.) Shall call thee Jacques; (pinching her ear) mischievous little Jacques. Go.
JACQ (leaving him, unsteadily – with a last effort). I will not obey thee.
DEVIL (harshly). Wilt not! (Pointing towards the left.) The castle, at sundown!

She departs. He turns on his heel and enters the town-hall. The bells, silent upon JACQUELINE's singing, now ring out another peal. The populace troop back to the market-place. NICHOLAS DIRCKS comes from the town-hall in a great bustle. Servants bring a throne-chair and some smaller seats from the town-hall, and place them upon the ground in front of the steps.

NICHOLAS. Come, knaves! range your seats deftly, and begone. (To the crowd.) Stand aloof there, they that would not have heads cracked by the lord Philip's most gallant pikemen!

CHORUS.

The bells are ringing o'er Mirlemont town,
Lord Philip he waits in the hall,
And before him they bear a rose-bud crown
And a silver cord that shall girdle the gown
Of her who is fairest of all!

Two trumpeters come from the town-hall, and, standing upon the steps, blow blasts from their trumpets. The pikemen follow and force the crowd back until there is a clear way between the town-hall and the inn. The aldermen reappear, accompanied by a page who carries the wreath of flowers and the silver girdle. Then comes PHILIP; he descends the steps, followed by SAIDA, GUNTRAN, the DEVIL, and by some knights and dames of his retinue. PHILIP, though not in his first youth, is young and handsome, but is moody, restless, and impatient. SAIDA is a dark, sinuous, woman with flashing eyes. Her beauty, still sumptuous and alluring, is

touched by time. PHILIP drops languidly into the throne-chair. SAIDA sits at his elbow upon a lower seat, slightly behind him. The DEVIL stands near her. The trumpeters blow two more blasts.

NICHOLAS. Ho, Philip, Lord of Mirlemont, of Renaix, and of Acquelle! please Heaven and the Saints to grant thee long life! Lo you now! we, the Burgomaster, and the aldermen, and the office-holders of Mirlemont, have, at thy command, by proclamation, summoned hither the most personable females that do dwell within or without thy proper township. And truly these trusty eyne have ne'er before been so feasted and regaled –

PHILIP. Good Burgomaster, but these beauties wither whiles you discourse.

SAIDA (to herself). Would they could!

DEVIL (to SAIDA). Eh, madam?

SAIDA. I spake not, sir.

NICHOLAS (at the inn door). Will display them instantly. (Loudly.) Ho, beauties, come forth!

He enters the inn.

GUNTRAN (to PHILIP). Prithee be at ease; this cattle hath been well fed, waiting your presence.

PHILIP (rising in anger). Peace, Guntran!

SAIDA (joining him as he paces to and fro). Guntran saith wisely – cattle. And must thou do thy branding, in sight of all!

PHILIP. Why, thy tongue is as rough as Guntran's. Come, sweet gossip! I tell thee 'tis but wisdom to freshen the sense upon what this dull world holds of loveliness; the zest of life droops else. Therefore, an't will not pleasure thee, grudge me not the sight of this posse of simple maids with their sun-kissed faces and lips like the ripe fruit o' the earth.

SAIDA. The low-born wenches!

PHILIP. Nay, beauty maketh its own degree.

SAIDA (in his ear). Am I not beautiful enow for thee? Thou didst once swear so.

PHILIP. Truly. Yet, because a man wears a rare flower in's jerkin, shall he not glance at humbler blossoms by the wayside?

SAIDA (intensely). My love, I cannot bear thee – to glance.

PHILIP. Tush! Paragon, what has thou to fear? Ah! cometh the show.

NICHOLAS returns, followed by the maidens competing for the prize of beauty. PHILIP and SAIDA return to their places, while NICHOLAS busies himself in marshalling the competitors. Then, under his direction, certain of them advance, in turn, and pass before PHILIP.

**SCENE. – SONGS OF THE COMPETITORS,
and CHORUS.**

NICHOLAS. Know ye all, both great and small,
That, by lord Philip's sweet command,
This day within our City wall
By summons we have bidden all
The fairest maidens in our land!
Then note them well, for here they stand –
Loyse, the fair, from St. Denis,
And Isabeau from far Florennes,
With Barbe who comes from Bovigny
To feast the eyes of greedy men;
And Gabrielle, the chosen maid
From that sweet city, St. Hubert,
And Colinette from Lenalède,
Who counts herself the fairest there;
With many more who fain would own
Yon budding wreath and silver zone.

PHILIP. Peace! Let us be on, or ere the day be flown
Our budding roses shall be overblown.

NICHOLAS. Sir, by your leave! Sweet maid, I call on thee!

LOYSE. I am Loyse from St. Denis:
Fairest there beyond compare,
So men say.

CHORUS. So men say!

LOYSE. Yet their praise is naught to me,
If to-day

Philip, Lord of Mirlemont, deems
another maid more fair.
Thou alone canst tell me true,
Thou canst answer yea or nay,
Are mine eyes of that deep blue
The rains of April grant to May;
Shines my hair like ripened wheat;
Can it be my red lips meet
Like coral laid on ivory,
Aye, and that my little feet
Move so very daintily?
For this and more do all men say,
Men who dwell at St. Denis,
Else I might not dare to pray
That to-day
Beauty's crown should fall on me.

CHORUS. And what if it be true that
her eyes are softest blue,
And her lips like winter berries
shyly peeping through the snow,
That she wears a smaller shoe than
some other maidens do?
Yet for all she is not fairest; therefore,
prithee, let her go.

SAIDA. Aye, let her go! We waste the sunny hours
 Seeking a rose amid these wind-sown flowers.

PHILIP. Rise, little maid, for one and one alone
 Shall win the wreath of roses and wear
 this silver zone.

[In the vocal score, this number concludes here with the following chorus:]

CHORUS. Vainly on thy bended knee
 Thou shalt pray
 Here today
 Wreaths and crowns are not for thee.
 Haste away and get thee home to St. Denis,
 Haste, haste, haste,
 Where they count thee fair to see!

[The libretto continues on here, without the above chorus:]

NICHOLAS. Next, by your grace, in order as they go,
 I summon her men call proud Isabeau!

ISABEAU. In the hills beyond Florennes,
 Where the river grasses grow
 Soft and green –

CHORUS. Soft and green!

ISABEAU. Once the shepherds from the glen
 Crowned me Queen!
 And when I knelt beside the stream,
 And saw this face that floated there –
 With lips like cherries dipped in cream,
 And laughing eyes and raven hair –
 I wondered not those shepherd men
 Had crowned me fairest in Florennes.

CHORUS. And in truth, if that be so, it
 is plain they do not grow
 The fairest maids in Flanders where
 those simple shepherds dwell;
 Or, perchance, for aught we know, it
 was very long ago
 When this maiden first discovered that
 she loved herself so well!

SAIDA. Nay, blame the guilty brook; 'twere hard to scold her
 For deeming true what this false stream had told her.

DEVIL. Aye, yet henceforth each crone should
 warn her daughter,
 Truth lurks in wells but lies in running water.

PHILIP. Yea, many maids are fair, yet one is fairest;
 Enough for thee to win that shepherd's
 crown thou wearest.

NICHOLAS. In truth an ugly wench. Come hither, thou!

BARBE. I am Barbe of Bovigny,
Where all other maidens say
They wonder why –
CHORUS. They wonder why –
BARBE. My lover bid me come to day
That I might try,
Philip, Lord of Mirlemont, to win
that rosy crown from thee.
Yet while he kneels and sighs to me,
"Love, for thy beauty I could die!"
I wonder why
I may not bear that wreath away!

CHORUS. As to this we would reply, it is plain
to every eye
When he praised the maiden's beauty
that his senses must have fled;
And we fancy, by and by, she will weep
and wonder why
Men should choose to go a-wooing when
they never think to wed.

PHILIP (*holding up his hand*). Rest! a pause! (*To those seated around him, with a frown.*) Say you?

SAIDA. Ha! (*To the DEVIL.*) Those from the alley or from the dyke-side – which are the more graceless, sir Count?

PHILIP (*impatiently*). What, are they not passable?

DEVIL. Sooth, sir, I have seen no girl yet, for her freckles.

The knights and the ladies laugh.

SAIDA. Yea, these raw-bones are for a winter's ever, when the candles smoulder and the wood flickers.

DEVIL. E'en then such noses would cast most monstrous shadows.

Another laugh.

PHILIP (*rising angrily*). A truce! (*To NICHOLAS.*) Good Burgomaster, I trow our Flanders maids are richer in virtue than in beauty. Give them ten groats apiece, and set their ill-made faces homeward. I am a-weary.

NICHOLAS. Nay, I do entreat your lordship! In sooth the wenches are but a sorry batch, but 'tis holiday and the folk are here to see thee bestow the wreath and girdle. This is to cheat them of their sport.

DEVIL (*advancing to them*). Sir, may I speak? I do propose, in pure merriment, that sith there is so little beauty to be gathered in Mirlemont we do ensample the town's ugliness. Ha, ha! I have perceived a most knavish dwarf i' the crowd.

NICHOLAS. 'Tis Peppin; an excellent and loathsome dwarf.

DEVIL. Cry therefore an end to this mummary of beauty, and, for sport, let these honest folk witness the betrothal

of this misbegotten little fellow to the uncomeliest maid in Mirlemont. Know you of a fit mate for the dwarf, sir Burgomaster?

NICHOLAS. Truly, do I – one Laine, daughter of the weaver Limal. Their house is in yonder foul alley. By St. Bavon, a choice notion!

PHILIP (to the DEVIL). What! I rode hither to find beauty, and you would make me an instrument in the breeding of monsters.

DEVIL. Ha, ha, ha! for a jest! a jest!

PHILIP. Play out the time then in this grisly fashion, an' you list. (To NICHOLAS.) Give the dwarf's mate fifty – an hundred groats, for portion, (*impatiently*) and let me to horse.

PHILIP *joins SAIDA, who claps her hands delightedly.*

DEVIL (*following PHILIP*). Use despatch, sir Burgomaster.

NICHOLAS (*to the populace*). Ho, worthy people of Mirlemont! the lord Philip doth declare these maids to be of beauty so equal that no one of them may lay her claim to the wreath and girdle offered for prize.

There is a murmur of discontent from the crowd.

NICHOLAS. Hold your peace till you have heard! The Lord of Mirlemont doth graciously bestow upon each and every maid the sum of ten groats.

A murmur of approval.

NICHOLAS. And further, that ye shall not be defrauded of your full sport, the lord Philip, out of the lightness of his heart, doth grant an hundred groats for portion unto the maid, whomsoe'er ye shall deem her to be, that is the ugliest in all Mirlemont, commanding her to appear before him on the instant, and to make her vows of betrothal here in your presence, with the dwarf Peppin Swertz.

Cries of satisfaction and delight.

NICHOLAS. Come forward, Peppin, thou most unsightly knave.

PEPPIN *is pushed forward; he makes his obeisance to PHILIP. From the crowd there is a murmur, gathering in force till it becomes a shout, of "Laine! Laine! Laine Limal!"*

NICHOLAS. Beshrew me, but you follow mine own thought! The weaver's cripple! Laine Limal!

A party of men and girls rush up the alley. Some one in the crowd gives PEPPIN a wreath of coarse blooms with which he struts about in grotesque preparation for the meeting with his betrothed.

FINALE OF ACT I.

CHORUS. Go, bring forth old Simon's daughter!
(*pointing to PEPPIN.*) Here's a lord who counts her fair;
Long in wedlock he hath sought her,
And would crown her golden hair
With this garland he hath wrought her
Out of gems most rich and rare!
Faith, a gallant knight we've brought her;
Come then, greet the happy pair!

From the alley comes LAINE, transcendently beautiful, as at the end of the previous scene. The men and girls follow wonderingly.

PHILIP (*rising from his chair in amazement and admiration.*)
By Our Lady, she is fair!

CHORUS. What is this? Nay, look again!
It is! and yet it cannot be!

PHILIP. Angel face without a stain,
Eyes that muse in ecstasy!

CHORUS. Away! we sought the cripple Laine!
Nay, look again, for this is she!

PHILIP. Sweet, wondering maid, if thou wilt deign
To take thy crown, it waits for thee!

NICHOLAS. Where then hath fled that hump upon her shoulder,
If this be Laine?

PHILIP. Nay, whence have come those tresses that enfold her,
Like golden rain?

NICHOLAS. Her hollow eyes were dim, her wan cheek whiter
Than frozen snow!

PHILIP. Lips like a rose-red flower, those eyes are brighter
Than earth can show.

SAIDA (*to PHILIP*). Ah, let her not lure thee on!
Oh, turn thine eyes away,
Let her not lure thee on;
Though fair she seems to-day,
Bid her begone!
For how can beauty stay
Where all was foul before?
Then turn thine eyes away,
And gaze no more!

ENSEMBLE.

PHILIP.
Was ever sprite or fay
So fair to look upon?
Shall beauty hold its sway
When thou art gone?
Then lift thine eyes and say,
Wooed from what faery shore,
Thy feet have found their way
To earth once more.

SAIDA and CHORUS.
Oh, turn thine eyes away,
Let not her lure thee on;
Though fair she seems to-day,
Bid her begone!
For how can beauty stay
Where all was foul before?
Then turn thine eyes away,
And gaze no more!

SAIDA. In vain ye plead, some magic spell enthralls him!
GUNTRAN. Aye, 'tis in vain! he will not heed your cry!
DEVIL. What if it be the Devil's voice that calls him!
SAIDA. Yea, 'tis a witch he worships! Let her die!

CHORUS. A witch, a witch! Beware, beware!
Round about her draw not nigh!
Bind her! burn her! Have a care,
For see, she hath the evil eye!
A witch, a witch! Beware, beware!
Or on a broomstick she may fly
Up and up and through the air!
A witch, a witch! then let her die!

They circle her, advancing and retreating with alternating rage and fear. In the end they fall upon her and seize her, as JOAN and SIMON force their way through the crowd. LAINE rushes to her mother in terror.

JOAN. What would ye do? Lord Philip, spare, oh, spare her!
SIMON. Wretches! ye knew her well an hour ago!
JOAN. What though her poor, wan cheek be now grown fairer,
'Tis Heaven's sweet miracle hath made her so.
SIMON. Yea, Heaven hath made her fair, then wherefore
fear her?

This is no witch ye look upon to-day.
JOAN. Down on thy knees! Sweet lord, we prithee hear her!
PHILIP. Stand back, ye knaves, and thou,
sweet maid, draw nearer!
Whence came thy wondrous beauty, speak and say!

LAINE. I can but tell I knelt and prayed
To Her who hearkens when we cry,
"Mother, as Thou wert once a maid,
Oh, let me love, or bid me die!"
Still I was crooked, halt, and lame
And knew not then she heard my prayer,
But now I know, for, lo, there came
A holy man who made me fair.

PHILIP. Enough, enough! ye have but to behold her!
Nay, scan her well and tell me, if ye dare,
What devil's art or witch's wile could mould her
There where she stands the fairest of the fair?

When the rose-leaf lies on the dew, do we ask
if it fell from the rose?
If honey be sweet on our lips, know we not
it was stored by the bee?
When the wind blows salt in our teeth, do we
wonder from whither it blows?
Nay, though the shore be afar, yet we know
that it comes from the sea!

CHORUS. When the rose-leaf lies on the dew, etc.

PHILIP. Sweet maid, Heaven too lies afar, yet we know
that from Heaven alone
Come those lips that an angel hath kissed, and
those eyes with the light of a star!

ALL.

Though with roses we crown thee to-day, and
 girdle thee round with a zone,
 Is there aught that shall bind thee to earth whose
 home lies beyond and afar?

PHILIP, *having crowned LAINE with the wreath of rose-buds, clasps the silver girdle about her waist as the curtain falls.*

END OF ACT I.

ACT II.
Scene 1.

A hall in Castle Mirlemont. At the back is a wide doorway. The doors are open, and beyond there is an arcade, and through the arches of the arcade the moonlit sky is seen. On the left of the apartment there is a window; on the right an alcove, in which stands a throne-chair. Upon the wall above the throne-chair a sword and other weapons are hung. Near the throne-chair stands a table, with benches ranged around it. Jugs and goblets are on the table, and dice and playing-cards. There are additional entrances to the apartment on either side. The hall is lighted by quaintly devised lamps.

Seated at the head of the table, PHILIP is playing cards with a party of Knights and Ladies who are gathered around the board. The knights are youthful and dissolute-looking; their dames light and frivolous. The DEVIL stands by PHILIP's side, advising in the conduct of the game. Afar off, by the window, SAIDA sits, watching PHILIP with eyes aflame with hungry jealousy. Other knights and ladies are seen in the arcade, walking in the moonlight.

CHORUS of KNIGHTS and DAMES.

With cards and dance, and with wine and laughter,
And a leaven of love, if love be light,
We care not a jot what may come hereafter
So love and laughter be ours to-night!
Then scatter the cards as we fill the cup;
Though the sun be down, and the moon be up;
Our day doth only begin!
For the coming of night is the dawn of day;
Yet tell us, we pray
What card to play,
And where is the card shall win?

KNIGHTS. Honour and fame, and the lust of battle,
We yield them freely to sturdier lords;

DAMES. Though the coin shall clink and the dice shall rattle
When honour and fame are but empty words.

ALL. Then scatter the cards as we drain the cup;
Though the sun be down, and the moon be up,
Our day doth only begin!
For the coming of night is the dawn of day;
Yet, if as ye say,
'Tis a Heart to play,
Then where is the heart shall win?

SAIDA rises and slowly approaches PHILIP. She is about to lay her hand upon his arm enticingly, when a white-haired SENESCHAL appears, entering from the left.

SENES. My lord –

PHILIP *(rising, eagerly)*. What! is she come?
SENES. The weaver's daughter, my lord?
PHILIP. Aye, and no worse for being daughter to a weaver.
SENES. My lord, the maid entered the castle an hour ago.
PHILIP. By St. Paul! think ye she is commanded hither to be so slighted? Is it not fit that her name should be called aloud by thee?
SENES. Truly, my lord, but thou didst charge the women to apparel this maid becomingly, and fingers are but fingers, ply as busily as they may.
PHILIP *(turning away)*. I had forgot.
SENES *(following him)*. My lord, I broke in upon the game to tell thee the gallant Sir Baldwyn of Ath is arrived.
PHILIP *(impatiently)*. See him rested and refreshed.
SENES. Nay, he rideth in hot haste as herald summoning all valiant men to Maestricht, to the standard of Duke John of Burgundy.
PHILIP. Bid him ride on then. And summon *thou* the weaver's daughter. My patience is out.

He resumes his game at the table as GUNTRAN and BALDWIN – the latter disordered and travel-stained – enter from the left. The SENESCHAL receives BALDWIN, and they talk together.

SAIDA *(aside to GUNTRAN, in bitter mockery)*. Nay, Guntran, if my lord Philip is to set forth to Maestricht, 'tis a stout horse will be needed for the burden methinks.
GUNTRAN. So?
SAIDA. Yea, I promise you he will not budge unless a certain bold wench rides pillion behind him.
GUNTRAN *(in her ear)*. Why, madam, art thou for Maestricht.
SAIDA *(with clenched hands)*. Thou knowest I speak of the weaver's daughter.
GUNTRAN. H'm! she would ride lighter than thou by a dozen years.
SAIDA. Ah! how I hate thee!

She leaves him and returns to her seat by the window.

GUNTRAN *(in a loud voice)*. Sir Baldwyn of Ath.
PHILIP *(rising)*. He is welcome. *(To the card-players.)* Give me leave.

The card-players move away and join the knights and ladies in the arcade. The DEVIL alone remains, perching himself upon the table and laying out the cards in a circle. The SENESCHAL withdraws.

BALDWIN. Philip, lord of Mirlemont, our lord the Duke of Burgundy lies with his host tonight at Flourines. On the morrow he rides straightway to Maestricht, where, as thou know'st, the good Bishop is besieged by the accursed rebel-rout from Liège.
PHILIP. Well, sir?
BALDWIN. Sir, the Duke doth enjoin all those of authority that are not yet under his banner to set out at dawn with

their retinues, and such followers as they can levy, for Maestricht. The lords of Sirault, of Velaines, and St. Sauveur are already hitherward, and I pray that they may lie here tonight within the castle of Mirlemont.

PHILIP. They are not less welcome than thyself.

BALDWIN. Another word. Remembering the gallant days of thy youth, when thou didst face with him the Paynim hordes, the Duke would know thee still for one of spirit and valour. Come, lord, wilt not bear thine own answer to Duke John?

PHILIP. Nay.

GUNTRAN. Say'st thou?

PHILIP. Carry thou my answer, Baldwin of Ath. I am a man of peace in these days, not of war.

GUNTRAN. Now would I were deaf!

PHILIP. I say I would not have our fair land made sore and ugly by the waste of battle. By Heaven and St. Bavon, I cry Peace – peace that shall scatter with untiring hands the seeds of beauty.

GUNTRAN (*an imprecation*). Beauty! beauty!

PHILIP. Aye, Guntran, 'tis my watchword – Peace and Beauty! Look that Sir Baldwin be well tended. (*Turning away.*) The minstrels! Strike the lutes!

He joins his knights and the ladies under the arcade.

BALDWIN. And this was a brave man, that now pillows his head upon rose-leaves! To horse!

He goes out quickly, on the left, followed by GUNTRAN. From the arcade comes the sound of the lutes.

DEVIL (*to himself*). Beauty! beauty, beauty, beauty!

JACQUELINE, gaily and prettily attired as a boy, enters, a little unsteadily, with strut and swagger.

DEVIL (*steading her*). What, my little Jacques! Hast supped, eh?

JACQ. Supped! oh, right well, master!

DEVIL. Are the meats rich?

JACQ. Rich – and plenty.

DEVIL. And the wine?

JACQ. Why, there is a fountain of burgundy that plays in the dining-hall; it sends up jets of rubies. I did dip my cup into its basin and drink my fill. Ha, ha, ha, ha!

DEVIL (*slapping her on the shoulder*). Ha, ha, ha!

SAIDA (*coming to JACQUELINE*). Boy.

JACQ (*bowing low*). My duty, madam.

SAIDA (*stroking JACQUELINE's head*). Pretty boy. (*To the DEVIL*). Have I your leave?

DEVIL (*bowing*). Sweet lady!

SAIDA (*to JACQUELINE*). Boy, go you to my women. Bid them do

on their dancing shoon, and to assemble upon the terrace. For to-night we dance before the lord Philip.
JACQ. Dance! oh, beautiful lady!
SAIDA. Hence!

JACQUELINE *runs out, on the right.*

DEVIL. Dance, madam?
SAIDA. Aye, good friend – for so thou hast professed thyself.
DEVIL. And truly.
SAIDA. Dance! dance! dance! 'twas thus I first gained my lord's favour.
DEVIL. And 'tis thus thou wilt regain him, doubtless. Thy ripe charms against this shoot of maidenhood, hey? To it, madam, to it!
SAIDA (*sinking on to a seat*). Nay, but of late my limbs have lost some of their suppleness, I ween. Oh!
DEVIL (*beside her*). 'Tis hard. Such a common girl!
SAIDA. Who to-day was a cripple, the jeer of the town.
DEVIL. These miracles! they put one out of reckoning.
SAIDA. She shall yet be burnt for a witch. Will show thee that sport in Mirlemont, sir Count. Burnt!
DEVIL (*shaking his head sadly*). Nay, 'twould be no novelty. I've seen so much o' that sort o' thing in my time. Natheless I do marvel, like thyself, whether 'tis holy miracle or naughty charm that hath wrought this strange transformation.
SAIDA. I swear 'tis a devil's charm brewed by the weaver's hag-wife.
DEVIL. Sooth, I fear so.
SAIDA (*rising and pacing the apartment*). Therefore shall they be burnt – the daughter, and all her folk to boot.
DEVIL. What! and their secret with 'em?
SAIDA (*pausing*). Why, 'tis likely.
DEVIL. Tush! thou must play more cunningly. Dear lady, if the Devil be i' the bounteous mood, I counsel thee to put aside thy pious distaste for his doings.
SAIDA. That would I, to be as lovely as this maid; and once again as fresh, to my lord's eye.
DEVIL. Come then! if charm there be in all this, 'tis thou must possess the mystery.
SAIDA. Wilt aid me?
DEVIL. Yea, or any distressful dame.
SAIDA. I thank thee, sir Count. An' if I fail to wrest the secret from the weaver's daughter, I will kill myself ere my lord shall miss the glow of summer from my cheeks.

The tinkling of the lutes ceases.

DEVIL. Nay, be hopeful.
SAIDA. Aye, and light o' foot. To-night will I keep sway without help o' the devil! The dance!

PHILIP returns, and the knights and ladies are seen gathered in the arcade.

PHILIP. Saida, what do thy women here?

SAIDA (caressingly, in his ear). Sweetheart, I have bethought me – while this pretty guest is attiring, I will dance before thee, to stay our impatience.

PHILIP. 'Tis a good thought. (To the knights and dames.) The lady Saida dances, to pleasure us.

He seats himself upon the throne-chair, but with a heavy brow. The knights and ladies dispose themselves about the apartment. SAIDA claps her hands, and her women appear, entering from the arcade. They make her ready for the dance. The minstrels assemble without the doorway. The DEVIL steals away, and presently is seen among the minstrels, a red light from a lamp falling upon his face. He takes a lute from one of the players and thumbs it with the rest. JACQUELINE joins him, standing by his side.

CHORUS of KNIGHTS and DAMES.

sung in a fashion to suggest a series of hushed asides.

Though she should dance
Till dawn of day,
'Twere all for naught;
For if perchance
His eyes should stray
And find her there,
They would but glance
And turn away;
For all his thought
Is elsewhere!
Yea, though her feet
Should prove as fleet
As is the wind,
'Twere all in vain;
They know no art
Whereby to find
To Philip's heart
Their way again!
Then she should dance
Till dawn of day,
He will not care;
He heeds her not,
He needs her not,
He hath forgot
If she be fair!

**SONG. — SAIDA;
CHORUS of KNIGHTS and DAMES
and of EASTERN MAIDENS [8 sopranos];
and DANCE.**

SAIDA.

Safe in her island home, whose sloping glades
Lean sun-ward till they kissed the eastern main,
Happy she dwelt a maid amidst her maids,
Who knowing naught of love knew naught of pain;
Till, westward steering, came those knights unbidden,
Sea-worn, and weary of the clang of war,
And one there was beneath whose helm lay hidden
A face she knew, yet knew not, from afar.
For round about her ere he came —
Aye, ere his feet had pressed the sand —
The woodland blossoms turned to flame,
And Love was lord of all the land
Till dawned that day his sail was set,
And all his thoughts were sea-ward turned,
And one there was remembered yet
What love had taught and love had learned;
One heart that knew not how to stay
If Love were fain to flee away.

KNIGHTS. Why, it is of herself that she sings,
For she followed him so, as we know;

EASTERN MAIDENS.

We are dreaming, we are dreaming of
that little island valley,
Where, beneath the silver olives, at
the ending of the day,

ENSEMBLE.

EASTERN MAIDENS.

Swaying gently to the music, as they thread
each winding alley,
Comes a troop of laughing maidens
dancing downward to the bay!

KNIGHTS and DAMES.

And his was the love that found wings!
Nay, hath it not ever been so?

SAIDA.

South blows the wind as the veil of night is falling,
Warm is the wind that is blowing from the South;
Far in the bay she can hear the sailors calling,
Warm lies the breath of his kisses on her mouth;
South blows the wind, yet northward they are steering,
Love leaps aboard and the North and South are one;
Lo, the stars are darkened, and the bitter gale is veering,
Bleak and cold and drear lies the shore they are nearing;
Woe is the day when he bore her from the sun!

Love lies not here; he hath fled, and we would follow
Where the sapphire sea is breaking in a
ring of silver foam;
Southward speeds his barque, for his pilot is the swallow —
Love! could we but follow, thou
wouldst lead us safely home!
North blows the wind; once again the gale is shifting,
The wrack of heaven stands open, and the
night is past and done;
North blows the wind, yet southward we are drifting;
The rosy day is dawning, and the sullen clouds are lifting;
North blows the wind that shall bear us to the sun!

ENSEMBLE.

EASTERN MAIDENS.

Love lies not here; he hath fled, and we would follow
Where the sapphire sea is breaking in a
ring of silver foam;
Southward speeds his barque, for his pilot is the swallow –
Love! could we but follow, thou
wouldst lead us safely home!

KNIGHTS *and* DAMES.

Why stays she here? Love hath fled, he will not follow,
For his heart hath found a haven and
no longer needs to roam;
Southward she may sail, flying southward with the swallow -
Lord Philip will not follow, for his love
lies nearer home.

Gradually PHILIP is half-recaptured by the allurements of the song and dance. His eyes dwell upon SAIDA tenderly, and at last he rises as if about to embrace her. At that moment the SENESCHAL enters, on the left.

SENES. The demoiselle Laine Limal.

LAINE enters, richly but chastely attired, and stands in the centre of the apartment modestly and wonderingly. PHILIP, entranced, moves towards her; SAIDA falls back in rage and despair.

KNIGHTS. Nay, see ye not this maid is fair?
What wonder then he finds her so!

DAMES. Yet, little maid, beware! beware!
For love will come and love will go!

KNIGHTS. That angel smile, those wondering eyes,
Were never fashioned here below!

DAMES. Yet, little maid, be wise! be wise!
For love will come and love will go!

PHILIP. Sir Knights and Dames, now grant me, by your leave,
That I may speak with this sweet demoiselle.

KNIGHTS *and* DAMES.
 Though Philip's heart she may beguile,

And wear the lady Saida's shoes,
She cannot choose but she must lose
The glory of that angel smile!
Yea, well we know 'twas ever so,
For love will come and love will go!

All withdraw except SAIDA and the DEVIL, and they remain, under the arcade, watching.

PHILIP *(never removing his eyes from LAINE's face)*. Thou hast tarried long.
LAINE. They did delay me, to make me fit to appear before thee. My lord –
PHILIP. Sayest thou?
LAINE. I do thank thee for thy goodness to a poor maid.
PHILIP. Poor! nay, thy perfect loveliness maketh thee vastly rich.
LAINE *(passing her hand over her face)*. Ah! and yet this morning I was ugly and most despised.
PHILIP *(incredulously)*. 'Tis so reported.
LAINE. 'Tis very sooth, my lord – until the holy man wrought this miracle.
PHILIP. How wrought he the miracle?
LAINE. My lord, I may not tell. My mother and father have forbade me strictly to say aught save that 'twas in answer to a prayer to Our Lady.
DEVIL *(to SAIDA)*. Heard you that?
SAIDA *(to him)*. Aye.

They move away.

PHILIP *(to LAINE)*. No matter – sith thou art as thou art. *(Pointing to a seat.)* Sit ye down.
LAINE. Not whiles you stand, my lord.
PHILIP. Nay, then.

They sit.

PHILIP. Demoiselle, know you that the lady Catherine of Ninove, who dwells within this castle, will take you as a playfellow for her daughter Blanche, an' thou'rt willing.
LAINE. Oh, I am not suitable.
PHILIP *(sternly)*. I do bid thee to do this.
LAINE *(her eyes drooping before his)*. My lord – !
PHILIP. For, in very deed, I desire to gaze at thee with but little intermission day by day.
LAINE *(wonderingly)*. Why, my lord?
PHILIP. Because thou art the ripe fulfilment of all my dreams of beauty.
LAINE *(clasping her hands)*. Holy Mother, what if Thou hast made me over-beautiful! *(To him.)* My lord, such comeliness as I possess thou hast now seen and noted.
PHILIP. Truly, I see thee; yet I cannot see thee. Thy splendour

turneth the air about thee into a mist. Therefore it behoves me to look on thee constantly, that custom may grave thy features upon my memory.

LAINÉ (*in a low voice*). That is strange. Why, my lord, when I had glimpse of *thy* face but once – it seemeth years ago – and thou wert riding right swiftly through the streets –

PHILIP (*eagerly*). Aye? then – then – ?

LAINÉ (*abashed*). Oh, pardon me.

PHILIP (*drawing nearer to her*). What, have radiant dreams sought thee out also?

LAINÉ (*faintly*). Our alley is too narrow, my lord.

PHILIP. A good answer, little heart! Yet not so narrow but Philip of Mirlemont hath strayed thither, in thy sleep?

LAINÉ (*attempting to rise*). Oh, my lord!

PHILIP (*detaining her*). Speak!

LAINÉ (*helplessly*). My lord, I am still but a weaver's daughter!

DUET. – LAINÉ and PHILIP.

PHILIP. I love thee! I love thee!

LAINÉ. Nay, nay, thou lov'st me not!

PHILIP. Dost thou not hear? I love thee!

LAINÉ. My lord, thou hast forgot
Thou couldst not give me all,
For, ah! full well I know
That thy fond glance doth fall
On one set high above me;
Then prithee let me go!

PHILIP. 'Tis false! my heart is free!
Yon Heav'n may hear my vow –
I ne'er have loved but thee,
I knew not love till now!

LAINÉ. Ah, no, it may not be!
Thou art too high, too great;
I am not fit to mate
With one like thee!

PHILIP. Yet Beauty's star doth shine
Above all earthly state;
It makes the lowliest great –
Aye, and it makes thee mine!

LAINÉ. I too had seen a star;
And now, ah, now I know
That shining star was Love!

PHILIP. For here my life's long quest
To find the loveliest
Doth end, sweet love, in thee –
Ever in love for thee!

ENSEMBLE.

LAINÉ.
For here, upon my breast,

PHILIP.
For here my life's long quest

My heart hath found its rest,	To find the loveliest
Dear lord, in love for thee –	Doth end, sweet love, in thee–
In thee,	In thee,
For ever!	For ever!

From the arcade comes the sound of boisterous, mocking laughter. The DEVIL appears in the arcade with SAIDA.

DEVIL *(as he enters, to those who are out of sight).* Nay, nay, sirs! prithee spare them.
PHILIP *(to the DEVIL).* What's toward?
DEVIL *(coming into the apartment).* Sir, thy good gentlemen, in carelessness of spirit, do make jest of an aged couple here.
SAIDA *(entering the apartment).* Why, 'tis the weaver and his dame.

JOAN and SIMON enter from the arcade, resisting two attendant who attempt to put them back.

LAINÉ *(running to meet them).* Ah!
SIMON *(to PHILIP).* Lord, we do entreat thee –
JOAN. We came hither with our daughter, and are mocked at by gentlemen, and served like thieves by these varlets.
PHILIP *(to the attendants).* Begone!

The attendants withdraw.

PHILIP *(to JOAN and SIMON).* What would you?
SIMON. Naught but wait upon our child wherewith she goes.
LAINÉ *(to PHILIP).* My lord, thou seest how 'tis. My father and mother are but poorly clad, which seemeth to render them food for laughter. I do pray that they too may be given fitting raiment, even as I, so that we may all dwell in the castle without being shamed.
JOAN and SIMON. Dwell i' the castle!
LAINÉ *(embracing them joyfully).* Yea, mother; yea, father; you and I!

LAINÉ talks to JOAN and SIMON apart. The DEVIL suddenly appears at PHILIP's elbow.

DEVIL. Ha, ha, ha!
PHILIP *(to the DEVIL).* Sir, thy mirth is unwelcome.
DEVIL. Nay, sir, I am most sympathetic. For truly I perceive what vexation is here.
PHILIP *(heavily).* I am not vexed.
DEVIL. Not now, sir – when thou art merry. Yet I vow 'twould anger me to see my kitten mewling after such a tom and tabby.
PHILIP *(eyeing LAINÉ askance).* Sooth, 'tis a fair flower to twine about so rank and common a bush.
DEVIL. Let not thine eyes be reminded of it. Come, sir, shall I aid thee in this business?

PHILIP. Thou?
DEVIL. Wilt give me leave to dispose of these unsightly folk,
to their comfort and thine own?
PHILIP. What, with thy purse?
DEVIL. I know not the plan, till I have argument with them.
But wilt give me leave?
PHILIP. Nay – nay –
DEVIL (*persuasively*). Be counselled. Ugh, how they tumble
her!
PHILIP (*guiltily*). Yea, then; as you list.

He turns away, and sits upon the throne-chair with his head bowed.

DEVIL (*to SIMON and JOAN*). Come, weaver; hither, good dame.
The lord Philip doth graciously charge me with the care
of you. Follow me, most worthy people.
JOAN and SIMON (*bowing low to PHILIP*). We thank you.
LAINÉ (*embracing them again*). Oh, mother! father! (*In their ears.*) Sweethearts, will steal back with you to the
alley to-morrow and help break the loom into a thousand
pieces.
DEVIL (*impatiently*). Come, come, come!

The DEVIL takes SIMON and JOAN away, on the left.

LAINÉ (*kneeling before PHILIP*). My lord –
PHILIP (*harshly*). Sayest thou?
LAINÉ. My heart doth ache with very joy. (*Bending over his feet.*) Oh, my lord, my lord, my lord!

There is a distant sound of a blast of trumpets.

PHILIP (*starting to his feet remorsefully*). Ha!

GUNTRAN enters quickly from the arcade. He and PHILIP talk together in low voices.

GUNTRAN (*to PHILIP*). Hearest thou that?
PHILIP. Guntran – ?
GUNTRAN. Thy guests approach.
PHILIP. Guests?
GUNTRAN. Those that have leave to lie here to-night, that set
out at dawn to join with Duke John and William of
Hainault at Flourines.
PHILIP. Aye?
GUNTRAN. Aye! Wilt not go forth but a few steps to cry a welcome
to these brave and true lords?
PHILIP (*his head averted*). See them and their following fitly
honoured. (*Sitting at the table.*) I have no words for
them.

There is another, but less distant, blast of trumpets. The DEVIL re-enters lightly, and whispers to SAIDA, who is by the window.

Whereupon she throws open one of the casements and looks out eagerly. Then the DEVIL beckons to LAINE, who has been standing by the throne-chair, and presents her to SAIDA.

GUNTRAN (to PHILIP). Thou hast no words for them! yet are they to be fitly honoured! Ugh, but thou'rt in the right, for these comers should be welcomed by one as gallant as they.

PHILIP. Peace, Guntran, lest I forget thy hold upon my heart.

GUNTRAN. Nay, prithee forget that too, that I may forget the love I once had for thee.

PHILIP (*seeing the DEVIL and calling to him loudly*). Count of Foscano! the game again! come, sir!

The DEVIL joins PHILIP at the table as the trumpets sound once more.

GUNTRAN (to PHILIP). Hark! they are nearer.

PHILIP. Peace, I say. (*To the DEVIL – playing cards.*) Sir Count –

GUNTRAN paces the apartment in rage and despair.

DEVIL (to PHILIP, *in a whisper*). Sir, a word. Be at thine ease; thou art rid of them.

PHILIP. What mean you?

DEVIL. The weaver and his wife.

PHILIP. Ah? the manner of their going?

DEVIL. E'en now they are being driven out by your varlets.

PHILIP. Why, sir, I did not charge thee so far.

DEVIL. Nay, sir, not you – (*close to PHILIP*) but I am apt at the reading of men's thoughts.

SAIDA (*suddenly, to LAINE, drawing her to the window*). Look! look!

LAINE (*looking out*). My mother and father!

SAIDA. Look still!

LAINE. Oh – ! there is one that strikes at them with a cudgel! Ah – !

SAIDA (*gripping her arm tightly, and hissing into her ear*). Yea, they are sent forth with blows. Now thou know'st thyself, know'st what thou hast become! Fool, to expect aught else from thy lord! thy lord, forsooth! thy lord!

The trumpet sounds finally, near at hand.

GUNTRAN (*approaching PHILIP*). They are without. Wilt not greet them?

PHILIP (to GUNTRAN). I am busily employed. (*To the DEVIL.*) Deuce-ace!

GUNTRAN (*vehemently*). Nay then, play out the night till bedtime with thy new-fangled, painted pictures – devil's playthings – !

DEVIL. Ha, ha, ha!

GUNTRAN. I'll to these lords and tell them how 'tis with thee!

SCENE.

SONG. — GUNTRAN.

I'll tell them what thou wast when first I knew thee;
A stripling boy in deeds of valour nursed,
Ere yet this plague of beauty came and slew thee
And left the thing thou art — accurst! accurst!
Aye, slew thee! for 'tis beauty hath bereft us
Of all we loved, and he that fills thy place —
This craven knight the ruined years have left us —
Bears but the waxen image of thy face!
Yea, Philip, for thy soul is dead
That made thee once fit mate for men,
As steadfast midst the rout that fled
Thy sword withstood the Saracen!
'Twas there I knew thee, loved thee, first!
Behold thee now — accurst! accurst!

'Twas not enough thy youth should waste and wither
Beneath yon Eastern wanton's blighting spell;
Nay, though her charm be spent, yet now comes hither
This flaxen toy to lure thy soul to hell!
Whate'er was left of manhood when she found thee —
Ah, none can say from whence her beauty came! —
Is hers to win; her arms shall wind around thee,
And hers the honeyed kiss shall end thy shame!
Then take the poison from her lips,
But few short hours are left to thee;
Yea, for thy heart's blood drains and drips,
And Time draws near to claim his fee.
Go fan ye passion's lingering flame,
Or love himself shall cry thee shame!

GUNTRAN *goes out, on the left.*

PHILIP (*to the DEVIL, who has been holding him back*).

Release me! Shame! My sword! my sword!
He may not love that spake that word!

LAINE. Ah! let me hence!

DEVIL (*releasing PHILIP*).

Heed not what this poor dotard cries;
'Tis naught to thee — thou hast Love's prize!

LAINE. Let me go hence!

SAIDA (*in scorn*). Yet see those angel eyes are wet
With scalding tears!

PHILIP (*to LAINE*). Weep not, thy heart shalt soon forget
These passing fears!

LAINE. Nay, let me go! I must! I must!
My heart is stricken to the dust,
Each word as with a javelin thrust
Did pierce it through!

PHILIP. Thou shalt not go. I'll hear no more;
I hold thee close! Shut fast the door!

LAINE. What wouldst thou do?

The DEVIL goes into the arcade and gives orders. The doors admitting to the arcade are shut by attendants; and, one by one, other doors re heard to close with a clang and rattle.

LAINE. Nay, wert thou more than all he said thou art,
Yet even so,
Some pity lingering in thy fallen heart
Would bid me go!
What have I done? If love were my offence,
That love is slain;
It cannot hurt thee more, then let me hence
Or end my pain!
Aye, kill me! or should beauty prove my fault,
I'll pray to Heaven to make this body halt
And lame again,
So thou wilt let me go from whence I came,
And hide my head!
Thou wilt not? Then I too do cry thee shame!
'Twas sooth he said –
This is some other lord that bears thy name;
And thou art dead!

PHILIP. I prithee peace! Let be! Let be!
Go, take thy way! For thou art free!

The doors are opened at his command and LAINE runs out, leaving PHILIP overcome with remorse. When she has gone he sinks upon a seat and bows his head upon the table despairingly.

SAIDA (to the DEVIL). She's gone! my power returns at last!
DEVIL (restraining her). Not yet! not yet!

The memory of her holds him fast
SAIDA. He shall forget.
(to PHILIP). Nay, grieve not; in a little while
Thine eyes shall gaze on that sweet isle
Where first we met!
'Tis there, where flowering valleys smile,
Love's bower is set!

PHILIP. I see her tears: I hear her cry,
" 'Twas sooth he said!"
Away! away! The end draws nigh,
The broken cup of life runs dry;
My heart is dead!

SAIDA (to the DEVIL).
He will not heed! What need to stay?
All, all is gone!

DEVIL. Nay, didst hear that maiden say
That now she fain would fling away
What scarce was won?

SAIDA. Think you that beauty may be mine?
DEVIL. Yea, thou shalt taste of life's new wine!
Or magic spell, or gift divine,
This maiden's beauty must be thine

Ere night be done!

SAIDA and DEVIL. Or magic spell, or gift divine, etc.

SAIDA and the DEVIL creep away after LAINE. As they go, GUNTRAN enters from the left, followed by the Lords of Sirault, Velaines, and St. Sauveur – three grim-looking warriors – and the knights of their retinue.

GUNTRAN. Lords of Sirault, Velaines, and St. Sauveur,
Would seek lord Philip? Then behold him now!
Ye that have known him in the days that were,
Say whence hath come that brand upon his brow?

THREE LORDS. Philip, at the dawn of day
Forth we ride upon our way;
Beware! the dawn is near!
Night is spent! awake! awake!
Lift those leaden eyes and say
What answer dost thou bid us make
To him that sent us here!

PHILIP. Go hence and say my race is well-nigh run,
From out this breast all lust of war hath fled;
Yea, shame and fame and glory all are one;
Go tell him this – that lord ye sought is dead.

GUNTRAN. Enough, enough! from this day forth,
Whate'er my chance, I know thee not!
These withered limbs be little worth,
Yet this right arm hath not forgot
Its ancient use. On, on, my lords!
Yea, though the end of all be nigh,
I'd liefer meet those rebel swords
Than serve with one who dares not die!

PHILIP (*taking down the sword which hangs above the throne-chair*).

A lie! my lords, a lie! Whate'er he saith,
There lives no man can boast that he hath seen
These eyes affrighted at the eyes of death!
Go, tell your liege I'll greet him at Flourines!

Gradually the knights of PHILIP's retinue have assembled in the arcade with their dames; the knights now enter the apartment, while their ladies gather in the distance full of bustling curiosity.

PHILIP (*turning to his knights*).

And ye who serve me, see, this sword is drawn
That all too long within its sheath hath lain!
If so ye love me, ride with me at dawn
Or meet me not in fellowship again!
Who called me coward? Guntran, it was thou!

GUNTRAN. Philip of Mirlemont, I know thee now!

ALL. All hail to Philip, Lord of Mirlemont!

End of Scene 1.

Scene 2.

The Weaver's home again, at night-time. The table, upon which a lamp burns feebly, now stands by the window. The shutters are closed and barred.

Lightning is seen through the window in the loft, and distant thunder is heard. The door leading to the alley is undone from without, and JOAN and SIMON enter.

JOAN. Do they still follow?
SIMON. Nay, they pursued us no further than the mouth of the alley.
JOAN. Then 'twas the echo of our own footsteps that frightened me.
SIMON. (*fastening the door*). Malison on the knaves, and upon the base lord they serve!
JOAN. Why do you do up the door, good man? Shall we rest in peace while our child remaineth in the castle?
SIMON. (*coming to her*). Nay, but 'tis no work for thee. Keep thou within, and when I have regained my breath I will creep back to the castle through the shadows.
JOAN. (*clinging to him*). They will surely beat thee again.
SIMON. I feel naught, save that our little maid is stolen.
JOAN. Saints forgive me! thou dost not believe she hath been party to this cruelty?
SIMON. Wife!
JOAN. (*weeping*). I know not what I say.
SIMON. Did ye not hear her entreat that we might be well cared for?
JOAN. Sooth, did I; and prettily 'twas spoke.
SIMON. This is but a scurvy trick of this lord's to be rid of us. But bolts and chains will not hold her, once she learns how we have been misused. Buss me, wife, and let me go forth.
JOAN. (*listening*). Hist!
SIMON. The alley is quiet.
JOAN. 'Tis neighbour Grimoald's magpie hath broken its cage once more and is beating its wings against our shutters.

Lightning again, and a sharper peal of thunder. SIMON opens the door and LAINE enters swiftly. She is still in her rich clothes, but is carrying a poor-looking bundle.

TRIO. — LAINE, JOAN, and SIMON.

JOAN. 'Tis she! 'tis she! our little Laine!
LAINE. Mother! Mother!
SIMON. The flood is out, the night is wild!
How came you through the blinding rain?

JOAN. 'Tis Heaven hath sent us back our child!
Then weep not; thou art home again!

LAINE. Mother! Mother!

JOAN. Hush! think no more of what is past
Enough that thou art safe at last!

LAINE. Not safe, not safe!
I may not rest
The while this stone
Doth tear and chafe
My wounded breast!
O! would 'twere gone!
Yea that were best!
Mother! Mother!

ENSEMBLE.

LAINE.	JOAN and SIMON.
Then let me cast	Stay, stay! hold fast
Away this snare	To what is there!
That made my lord	Though this false lord
To use me ill,	Hath used thee ill,
For all the past	That now is past
Still lingers there;	Still thou art fair;
My heart is scored	And life's reward
And aching still!	Awaits thee still!

JOAN. Aye, truly all are not as he;
Thy beauty yet remains to thee!

LAINE. Beauty! ah, let that beauty go!
'Twas Beauty brought lord Philip low,
Whose spirit once had soared so high;
'Tis Beauty that hath wrought my woe!
Dear Mother Mary, hear my cry! —
Take it away, away!
It breeds not joy, but sorrow,
Though seeming fair to-day,
'Tis false to-morrow.
'Twas Death, not Life, that came
When Beauty first was born!
It brings not love, but shame,
And hate, and scorn!
Once more I fain would be
Crooked, as when to-day
I knelt and prayed to thee!
Ah! take this thing away!
Away! away!

She tears open her dress, removes the stone from about her neck, and casts it upon the ground at their feet; then, covering her face with her hands, she rushes away into her bed-chamber.

JOAN and SIMON (at the door of LAINE's room). Laine! wench!

JOAN. Hath fastened up her door against us.

SIMON (leaving the door). Nay then, let her bide. The heart
lightens when the tears flow.

JOAN (joining him). Gramercy, our child will be ugly again.

SIMON. True. Yet what matters that? She was happier as she was, it would seem.
JOAN. Aye, and more secure, as she saith.
SIMON. And when you think on't, she was ne'er ugly to us.
JOAN. She! ugly!
SIMON. The word was thine.
JOAN. Peace! your mind wanders, my man. (*Looking down at the stone.*) How shall we deal with the stone? The Friar may be miles away ere now.
SIMON (*stooping to pick it up*). Let us hide it.
JOAN (*arresting his arm*). Nay, touch it not.
SIMON. Why?
JOAN. She called it accursed.
SIMON. Accursed it cannot be, when it is the holiest of relics.

After some hesitation he picks it up.

JOAN (*in fear*). Hold it further from thee.
SIMON (*gazing at the stone*). Blessed St. Luke! 'tis of a ruddy, generous colour!
JOAN (*regaining courage*). Yea, so 'tis.
SIMON (*glancing at LAINE'S door*). The foolish wench! (*To JOAN.*) Beshrew me! is't not a pity to waste it?
JOAN. What mean you?
SIMON. Though it hath wrought ill to one, doth it follow 'twould so harm another?
JOAN. Beauty bringeth shame, quo' she.
SIMON. Aye, upon a maid, because 'twill encourage unrighteous love. Yet it could bring no shame to thee.
JOAN. To me!
SIMON. To thee; for thou'rt a wife, and the love I still bear thee is righteous enough, heaven knows.
JOAN. Simon! Why, thy heart is not warm for me, after these years?
SIMON. Sooth, I am but ill-humoured with thee from sheer weariness of body.
JOAN (*embracing him*). Oh, my man, my man!
SIMON. Aye, in all my troubles I have ne'er lacked friend, with thee by my side.
JOAN. Heaven bless thee! Oft have we come near to starving together, yet to-day am I glad I wed thee.
SIMON. Joan, take thou the stone and let me see again the buxom lass I courted years ago at Zolden.
JOAN. Nay, rather let me see the comely lad who would walk out from Freyden o' Sundays with a bunch o' flowers in's hand. Dost remember?
SIMON. Ha!
JOAN. We were four — I and my girl mates; and thou didst choose me!
SIMON. So did I!
JOAN. Ha, ha, ha! me! Quick! hang thou the stone about thy neck.
SIMON. Not I. To see thee as thou wert would straighten me and

ease my creaking bones. Take it, old love, 'tis for thee.

JOAN. Nay, sweetheart – for thee, for thee!

DUET. – JOAN and SIMON.

SIMON. I would see a maid who dwells in Zolden –
Her eyes are soft as moonlight on the mere;
The spring hath fled, the ripened year turns golden –
Shall I win her ere the waning of the year?
The reaping-folk pass homeward by the fountain;
What is it then that calls me from the dell,
What bids me climb the path beside the mountain
To the down beyond the sheepfold? Who can tell?
Then take it, for this magic stone hath power
To change thee to the fairest; yet to me
Thou wert fairest as I knew thee in that hour
When a maiden dwelt in Zolden!
Ah, take it, 'tis for thee!

JOAN. I would see a youth whom comes from Freyden –
He is straighter than the pine trees grow;
Gossips say he comes to woo a maiden,
So the gossips say – but can they know?
Three laughing maids are in the hollow
Yet none will set him straight upon his way;
Nay! soft! for he hath found the path to follow
He is coming! little heart, what will he say?
Then take it, for this magic stone hath power
To change thee to the fairest, yet to me
Thou wert fairest as I knew thee in that hour
When a youth came up from Freyden!
Ah, take it, 'tis for thee!

BOTH. Then take it, for this magic stone hath power, etc.

Tenderly JOAN adjusts the cord about SIMON's neck so that the stone falls upon his bare breast. Then there is another flash of lightning, followed by a loud roll of thunder.

JOAN *(clinging to SIMON)*. Saints!

SIMON. Fear not.

JOAN *(glancing up at the loft)*. The lightning! 'twill strike us where we stand.

SIMON. Why should it seek us out, that are as the rats of the town?

Lightning again.

JOAN. Ah!

SIMON. Will close the door of the loft.

He goes up the steps laboriously, and enters the loft.

JOAN *(at the foot of the steps)*. Prithee have a care for

thyself. 'Twould break my heart in twain, did aught befall thee.

There is a still brighter flash of lightning, and the crash of some heavy object falling in the alley.

JOAN *(running to the door and opening it)*. Blessed Virgin!

SIMON re-appears, dragging the door of the loft after him. He makes the door fast and descends the steps slowly and painfully. There is another peal of thunder.

JOAN *(at the door, peering out)*. The lightning hath struck the sign and brought it to the ground. Holy Mother, protect us! it hath hung there for full eighteen years, since the day our Laine was born.

LAINE returns. She has resumed her old apparel; her face, which is once more enclosed in her little cap, is pinched and sickly; her shoulder is humped; and, as before, she hobbles with the aid of her crutch.

LAINE. Mother! the storm! it frightens me!

JOAN *(coming to her)*. Oh, to see thee bowed and twisted again when to-day thou wert as straight as a poplar! Simon, our child!

JOAN and SIMON embrace her.

LAINE. Nay, dears, heed me not. What horrid noise was that?

JOAN. The sign has been struck by lightning and has fallen. Husband, go drag it in, lest our neighbours break their shins upon it.

SIMON goes out.

LAINE. Mother, the sign is heavy, and father is old and weak. Let us go help him.

JOAN. Stay you there. *(Calling to SIMON.)* Simon, my man, let me aid thee – *(at the door, starting back)* Ah!

SIMON *(without – in the ringing voice of youth)*. Nay, I need no aid. Lo!

He re-enters, carrying lightly the fallen sign – a weighty piece of twisted metal-work. He is handsome, fresh-coloured, and beardless, his hair is dark and thick, his body erect and lissom.

LAINE. Oh!

JOAN. Holy St. Jude! Simon!

SIMON *(throwing the sign down)*. Wife! daughter!

LAINE. Father!

JOAN. Blessed be the Saints! *(To LAINE.)* Guess ye not he wears the sacred stone upon his breast? *(Embracing SIMON.)* My lad! my lad!

The DEVIL appears at the open door.

DEVIL. H'm, how fortunate! the family is still up and about.
(*Beckoning to SAIDA.*) Hist!

SAIDA appears and enters the room.

SAIDA. Where is the maid upon whom beauty has fallen so wondrously?

LAINE (*presenting herself*). Madam?

SAIDA. Thou! why, thou crooked thing, thou art not the weaver's daughter – she I saw an hour ago!

LAINE. Even I.

DEVIL (*at SAIDA's elbow – in her ear*). She hath lost her beauty as she found it – in a hurry. Truly this is but unholy magic.

SAIDA (*turning from LAINE*). What unnatural jugglery is here?

She comes face to face with SIMON, who is gazing at her with rapture.

SIMON (*in a low voice*). Lady –

SAIDA. Who art thou?

SIMON. Simon Limal, the weaver.

SAIDA. The old man that was lately driven from the castle!

SIMON. Old I was, but – (*looking into her face, entranced*) lady, I am young.

DEVIL (*to SAIDA, as before*). Mischief take him! Why he hath gained possession of the charm!

SAIDA (*to the DEVIL, in a whisper*). Then 'tis mine indeed. My fading beauty hath still enough of power to coax the mystery out of this common fellow, I promise thee.

JOAN (*to SIMON, aloud – clutching his arm*). Simon! why do you fix your eyes thus upon the lady Saida?

SIMON (*shaking JOAN off*). Hence! begone! (*To SAIDA.*) Saints! how fair thou art!

QUINTET. – LAINE, SAIDA, JOAN, SIMON, and DEVIL.

DEVIL (*to SAIDA*). Haste thee! Haste thee!
Use thy cunning!
Do not waste the
Hours that fly!
Time is running,
Night is waning;
Use thy feigning,
Dawn is nigh!

LAINE and JOAN. 'Tis her beauty doth ensnare him;
Naught he hears of all we say!
Lady, then in pity spare him,
Speak, oh, speak, and bid him stay!

SAIDA (*to SIMON*). Weaver, hear me –
Wouldst thou wander

Ever near me
Till the day,
Rising yonder,
Through the gloaming,
Finds thee roaming
Far away?

LAINÉ and JOAN. See those eyes his eyes enchaining
Nothing now his heart can stir;
Naught he recks of our complaining,
All his thought is bent on her!

SIMON (to SAIDA). Onward! Onward!
I will follow,
Sea-ward, sun-ward,
Still thy slave;
Though the hollow
Earth should sunder,
Though the thunder
Roar and rave!

ENSEMBLE.

{ **LAINÉ and JOAN.**
All in vain! He will not hearken;
Sea-ward, sun-ward he will roam!
Day shall dawn and night shall darken
Ere his heart shall lead him home.

{ **SAIDA.** **DEVIL.** **SIMON.**
Wouldst thou Haste thee! Onward!
wander, etc. Haste thee! etc. Onward! etc.

DEVIL. Haste thee! Haste thee!

SAIDA goes out the door, drawing SIMON after her with an enticing look. JOAN and LAINÉ would follow, but the DEVIL, laughingly, wards them back and closes the door in their faces. There is a final peal of thunder.

End of Scene 2.

Scene 3.

A space of uneven ground lying between the Castle and the North Gate of Mirlemont. On the right a road runs up to the castle, which is seen perched upon an eminence, and on the left stand the gate and a portion of the town-wall. Across the scene, in the middle distance, runs a ridge of rocky earth broken, on the left by the opening to a pathway; and beyond the ridge is shewn a wide expanse of country.

It is dawn.

The DEVIL, squatting upon the ridge, is looking out into the open country. JACQUELINE, with weary steps, comes along the pathway.

DEVIL. Ha! welcome, little Jacques! Hast kept thy watch?
JACQ. Oh, yes, master; (faintly) all the night through.

DEVIL. Come! account!
JACQ. Well, as thou didst bid me, I did go after the lady
Saida, and the poor youth –
DEVIL. Youth! ho, ho, ho! They did not perceive thee?
JACQ. Not they; I cared for that.
DEVIL. Whither went they?
JACQ. Through the town, she enforcing him by a crook o' the
finger, he following with fixed eyne and open mouth
like one planet-struck. And at last came they to the
south gate; and there she did link her arm with his,
and did lead him forth into the meadows, until she
espied a pent-house under the east wall, warm and dry
and overborne with climbing flowers. And when she had
made him sit therein she did creep close to him, first
bidding him, then entreating him, to yield his secret.
DEVIL. His secret?
JACQ. "Render me thy secret," cried she, "oh, render me thy
secret" And again, when he refused her with tears,
still she cried, "Give me up thy secret!" and so the
black hours grew grey, and the dawn showed rose-yellow;
whereupon, unsatisfied, she left him, and I ran hither
to thee. Prithee let me to bed, dear master.
DEVIL. Bed!
JACQ. Why, thou didst promise me an easy life.
DEVIL. Shalt sleep anon, lazy-bones, when this merry coil is
ended. (*Catching her as she staggers from fatigue.*)
What! nay, sing, dance, drink, guzzle, (*pinching her
arm*) but keep thine eyes open at need an' ye would
please me.
JACQ. Oh, thy nails! I – I will please thee, dear master.

DUET (with Dance). – JACQUELINE and the DEVIL.

JACQUELINE (*struggling against her drowsiness*).
Up and down,
And through the town,
Out of the gate and across the meads,
Hither and thither
He recks not whither;
He needs must follow where'er she leads.
Yet, O, he sighed,
As ever she cried, –
"Now say what magic hath made thee fair?"
"In sooth, sweet dame,
How this beauty came,
Though I fain would tell thee I may not dare."

JACQUELINE and DEVIL (*aping SAIDA and SIMON*).
Thou art he!
And I am she!
For so she beckoned, and so he came;
Through fire and water
He would have sought her,
With jaws agape and with eyes aflame.

JACQUELINE. On and on,
 Till, one by one,
The pale stars flickered and fled away;
 With eyes entrancing,
 She led him dancing
Beyond the river and through the hay!
 Yet still he sighed
 As ever she cried, –
"Whence came thy beauty, oh, tell me true?"
 "Nay, how it befell
 I am loth to tell,
For none may know how this wonder grew!"

JACQUELINE and DEVIL.
 I am he!
 And thou art she!
For so he followed where'er she led;
 She crooked her finger,
 He dared not linger
Though day was dawning and night had fled.

JACQUELINE. In and out,
 And round about,
She led him at last to that hidden bower;
 And there with pressing,
 And soft caressing,
She wooed him fondly for all an hour!
 But though she sighed,
 Yet ever he cried, –
"How came this beauty I may not say!"
 Then up she leapt,
 And away she stept,
"Enough, false lover! then go thy way!"

JACQUELINE and DEVIL.
 Thou art she!
 Oh, let me be;
The way from the valley is long and steep!
 Nay, faster! faster!
 Good my master,
My feet are weary – I needs must sleep!

*JACQUELINE sinks to the ground, overcome by slumber, while the
DEVIL continues the dance.*

DEVIL (*aside*). Artful weaver,
 Wouldst deceive her?
Nay, but her beauty shall make thee moan,
 Till all forsaken,
 Thy heart shall waken –
And then the Devil shall claim his own.

*SAIDA appears, entering by the pathway. The sun has now got up,
brightening the landscape.*

DEVIL. Sweet lady?
SAIDA. The fool is obstinate.
DEVIL. Alack!
SAIDA. He doth whine and moan, and declare that to confess his secret would put him into danger of losing the very gift that procured him my favour. My favour! my hate!
DEVIL. Nay, hide you that. Take him to the castle, give him further appetite for your kisses, yet starve him by persistent denial. And ere a week has sped – well, I have oft heard what women can do in my country.
SAIDA. To the castle?
DEVIL. Aye.
SAIDA. Sir Count, forget ye the lord Philip?
DEVIL. Ah, you know not –

From the castle comes the sound of a prolonged blast of trumpets.

SAIDA. Why do the trumpets sound?

GUNTRAN, decked for war, some Knights who are also in armour, and a Standard-bearer with a standard, enter from the road leading to the castle and cross to the town-gate, where they knock violently. JACQUELINE wakes, rises, and creeps away up to the castle.

SAIDA. Guntran! what is't?
GUNTRAN. What is't, madam! why, naught but that Philip of Mirlemont hath of a sudden lost his taste for lollipops and is a man once more.
SAIDA. Sir – !
GUNTRAN. (*knocking*). Ho, gate-keeper! rub the sleep from thine eyes! (*To the Standard-bearer.*) Unfurl thy standard, knave! (*To SAIDA.*) Yea, by St. Luke, we are for charging all true citizens to throw down their tools of trade and follow their new-wakened lord. What, keeper!

The clank of chains is heard, and the sound of the lifting of the portcullis.

SAIDA. Follow! whither?
GUNTRAN. To Maestricht, to do battle for the Prince Bishop. (*To the Knights.*) Cry Philip! Philip of Mirlemont! (*seizing the standard*) the Lion of Flanders!
KNIGHTS. Philip of Mirlemont! the Lion of Flanders! Philip of Mirlemont!
DEVIL. (*to SAIDA*). See ye now? what is to hinder thee from holding a new lover snug to thy side?
SAIDA. To Maestricht! Philip!
DEVIL. Aye, and when he returns, warm with victory, 'tis thy beauty, freshened by the magic charm the weaver shall yield ye, will draw him to thee again.

The town-bells ring out. SIMON enters from the path-way, and

stands gazing at SAIDA.

SAIDA *(lightly)*. Ah! *(Plucking a flower and giving it to him.)* For thee, Simon. The morning dew lies upon it, and upon me.

SIMON. Lady, you pardon me?

SAIDA. That do I.

SIMON. And will count me thy slave and leman?

SAIDA. Nay, that cannot be, for I have perceived thou lovest me not.

SIMON. Dearer that I do love this earth that springs anew beneath my feet.

SAIDA. Why then, to love is to yield; therefore give me up thy secret.

SIMON. I cannot – I cannot.

SAIDA. Quit my side then, and knock no more at my heart. I knew not man could be so cruel.

JOAN and LAINE enter, through the gate, searching for SIMON.

JOAN *(to LAINE)*. He is here. *(Approaching SIMON.)* Husband!

LAINE *(going to SIMON)*. Father!

SIMON *(waving them from him)*. Away!

JOAN. I am thy wife.

LAINE. I thy daughter.

SIMON. Get ye gone, I say!

The trumpets sound near at hand, and PHILIP enters, from the castle, accompanied by the rest of his Knights and the Lords of Sirault, Velaines, and St. Sauveur and their Knights. All are in war array.

SAIDA *(intercepting PHILIP – speaking into his ear)*. Philip!

PHILIP. Farewell.

SAIDA. Nay, not farewell.

PHILIP. I have said it, Saida. Beauty and Love have held me in soft embrace overlong. No more! Farewell!

SAIDA. But a little while and thou shalt kiss that word from my memory. Philip, thou dost deceive thyself.

PHILIP. I!

SAIDA. I tell thee thou hast not wearied of beauty, wilt never weary of it; for the nonce, 'tis beauty that hath fled from my side. *(Clutching his arm.)* List! when thou return'st I will show thee such beauty in myself as will make thy innermost soul drunk with love again.

PHILIP. Saida!

SAIDA. By all thy Saints, I swear it!

There are cried of "Philip of Mirlemont!" and GUNTRAN and his companions return. A crowd of townspeople follow, headed by NICHOLAS and the Aldermen.

FINALE OF ACT II.

GUNTRAN. There he stands, that lord ye knew
 In the days of yore;
 Stout of heart, and brave and true –
 See, he dreams no more!
 Vainly now shall Beauty sue,
 All her reign is o'er!
 Say ye then doth Flanders need us?
 'Tis Lord Philip that shall lead us,
 Here as heretofore!

CHORUS. Hail to the lord of our land!
 Philip of Mirlemont, hail!

PHILIP. Men of Mirlemont, no longer
 Wrapt in heedless dreams of sense
 Sleeps this heart; for clearer, stronger,
 Sounds the cry that calls me hence!
 Ah! Gone are Beauty's fond caresses,
 Broken lies Love's silken chain;
 Where the shock of battle presses,
 I would lead ye forth again!

 Let us on, where, loud out-ringing,
 War's acclaim doth rend the air!
 Let us hence, though Death be winging
 Every blow that waits me there!
 Say ye then that I am dreaming?
 Nay, Lord Philip wakes at last!
 Look where yonder sun is gleaming –
 Day is dawning night is past!

CHORUS. Day is dawning night is past!
 Hail to the lord of our land!
 Philip of Mirlemont, hail!

JOAN and LAINE approach PHILIP timidly.

LAINÉ. My lord!

PHILIP. What would you?

LAINÉ. Good my lord, my father!

PHILIP. I am not he! Poor cripple, stand apart!

Some who are about PHILIP lay hands upon LAINE and JOAN.

LAINÉ. Nay, nay, in pity hear me! There is one
 Who by the enchantment of her beauty holds
 My father as her slave. Ah, go not forth
 Till thou hast set him free!

JOAN. Yea, give him back
 To them that love him!

LAINÉ. Look on me, my lord.
 Dost thou not know me?

PHILIP. Nay, not I, in faith!

What gossip's tale is this?
(Taking a purse from his pouch.) Go, get thee hence
(Throwing her the purse.) And buy thee a new crutch!

LAINE (with a prolonged cry). Oh!

PHILIP (to the townspeople). On to the market-place!

The citizens surround PHILIP and LAINE, while JOAN is swept aside in the tumult. PHILIP is mounted upon the shoulders of two of the townsmen.

CHORUS. Hail! Hail!
Day is dawning, night is past!
Hail to the lord of our land!
Philip of Mirlemont, hail!

[the following chorus appears in the libretto, but not in the vocal score.]

CHORUS. Hail to the lord of our land!
Philip of Mirlemont, hail!
Forth from the anvil and loom,
Up from the depths of the vale,
Hither, thy liegemen, we come
Ready to answer thy call,
Heedless of what may befall,
Fearless of heart – for we know,
Even though Death be the foe,
Thou shalt not falter nor fail!
Hail to the lord of our land!
Philip of Mirlemont, hail!

The citizens, bearing PHILIP, and singing as they go, pass through the town-gate, headed by GUNTRAN and NICHOLAS and followed by the Lords of Sirault, Velaines, and St. Sauveur, and the Knights and pages. As the crowd disperses, LAINE is discovered lying upon the ground, trampled on and senseless. With a cry, JOAN, rushes to her and kneels by her side. At the same moment SAIDA is seen going towards the castle beckoning SIMON, who follows her with outstretched arms. JOAN turns to them and raises her hand to heaven in malediction. The DEVIL looks on approvingly. The voices of the citizens are heard in the distance, growing fainter and fainter as the curtain falls.

END OF ACT II.

ACT III.

Scene 1.

The Terrace of the Castle. In the centre stands an ample, cushioned seat. On the right and left is an archway; and, at the back, from one archway to the other, runs a balustrade from which spring pillars supporting the roof. Beyond is a view of the Wall and Town of Mirlemont, as seen from a height. The sun shines hotly.

From without, as if from some distance below the castle, comes the sound of LAINE's voice.

SONG. — LAINE.

An hour ago 'twas the moon that shone —
 Oh, for the moon on the city wall! —
But the night is done, and now one by one
The banners are set afloat in the sun —
 Oh, for the sun on the city wall! —
Yet night and day I kneel and pray
 At the foot of the castle stair;
Then tell me, I pray, ye gallants gay —
 Ah, tell me, ye ladies fair! —
If your lord should chance to ride this way,
 Would he list to a poor maid's prayer?

During the song, the SENESCHAL enters, from the right. Attracted by the voice, he goes to the balustrade and looks down at the singer.

SENESCHAL *(as the song ceases)*. 'Tis the crippled beggar-maid.
Why comes she hither to sing her song morn after morn?
Get ye within the town, foolish wench, where thy piping
will not be lost in air.

From the left, SAIDA and SIMON enter. An angry frown is upon her face, but, lover-like, he follows her patiently and wistfully. SIMON is now apparelled richly, in a habit becoming a young man. The SENESCHAL, eyeing them under his brows, bows and prepares to depart.

SAIDA *(to the SENESCHAL)*. Stay. Some bustle is toward in the town. Seek ye the cause.

SENES. I will, madam.

He goes out, on the left.

SAIDA *(sitting wearily)*. The air is heavy, is it not?

SIMON. To me 'tis pleasing, save when you look harshly upon me.

SAIDA *(impatiently)*. Tsch! thou know'st I regard thee with some liking.

SIMON. With some liking! Yesterday 'twas with some love; this morn 'tis with some liking; to-morrow, perchance,

'twill be with a little loathing. (*Sitting beside her.*)
Alack, you alter with each hour!

SAIDA (*softly*). Tell me thy secret, Simon, and I will be
steadfast evermore.

SIMON. I cannot!

SAIDA. Pah! how oft have I besought thee to trust me, and how
oft hast thou replied, "I cannot, I cannot"!

SIMON. You would I trust, dared I trust mortal. (*Rising
apprehensively.*) But there is the holy friar's warning
against it.

SAIDA. He recked not of one loving thee as I do. For, indeed,
I find I do love thee, Simon.

SIMON (*throwing himself upon his knees before her*). Oh, lady,
lady!

SAIDA (*bending over him*). Therefore give me, for trust, the
lightest inkling of thy secret. Trust me, or go.

SIMON. Pity me!

SAIDA (*thrusting him from her*). Nay then, go!

SIMON (*clinging to her*). Sweet madam, this much will I tell –

SAIDA. Ah!

SIMON. The miracle is wrought by the possession of a sacred
relic that will advantage only its owner.

SAIDA (*her arms about him*). Yea! Say on, dear love.

SIMON. No more.

SAIDA. Lo, I stoop to kiss thine hands! Where lieth this
relic?

SIMON. That will I ne'er reveal.

SAIDA. Takest thou me for a thief!

SIMON. I do fear even the rush of the wind, lest it strip me
of my holy treasure.

SAIDA. What! dost thou bear it upon thee?

SIMON. Nay!

SAIDA. Thou dost!

LAINE's voice is again heard.

LAINE.

The white moon lay on the ruined hay,
 White as a shroud on the city wall!
Though they cried him nay, yet he went his way;
For all their sighing he would not stay –
 Oh, for the moon on the city wall! –
Then tell him, pray, ye gallants gay –
 Ah, tell him, ye ladies fair! –
There is one doth wait by the castle gate,
 At the foot of the castle stair;
And she cries Alack! come back, come back!
 Ah, why doth he linger there?

SIMON. List!

SAIDA. 'Tis but a beggar-maid that sings daily under the
castle wall.

SIMON (*rising and looking down at SAIDA guiltily*). Lady – !

SAIDA *(avoiding his gaze)*. Aye?
SIMON *(his head bowed)*. This beggar-maid is the daughter of old Simon Limal, the weaver; the daughter of the man I was ere I became – *(conscience-stricken)*. Saints, what am I!
SAIDA *(rising and embracing him)*. My lover – my lover.
SIMON *(repelling her gently)*. The song of the beggar-maid oppresses me.
SAIDA. Think not of her now, in the hour of our love. Fling her gold.
SIMON. That have I done, and she renders it back to the warder at the castle gate. 'Tis not gold she begs. Poor wench! poor wench!

He looks over the balustrade, while SAIDA taps her foot upon the ground impatiently. The song ceases.

SIMON *(turning to her)*. Lady, you speak sooth – the air is heavy.

The SENESCHAL returns.

SENES. Madam –
SAIDA. Say you?
SENES. There has ridden one into the town telling how that, upon coming of the Duke of Burgundy and the Count of Hainault, the rebel lord of Pieruels did raise the siege of Maestricht and fall upon Liége.
SAIDA. Ha!
SENES. And that there a great and victorious battle has been fought.
SAIDA. Victorious! *(Advancing to him.)* My lord of Mirlemont – ?
SENES. Returns triumphant. The town buzzes with talk of his gallantry, and even now gathers an assemblage in the market-place to greet him honourably.
SAIDA. Triumphant! At what hour is he looked for?
SENES. Madam, at noon.

The SENESCHAL goes out, on the left.

SAIDA *(to herself)*. Triumphant! and returned! already!
SIMON *(approaching her, gloomily)*. The lord of Mirlemont is for home. Then am I banished from thy side.
SAIDA. Sweet, I will plot to keep thee near me. Come, 'tis still a little time from noon, and the sun is hot. Let us, while we may, go within, and 'twixt sleeping and waking, whisper promises of love.
SIMON *(passionately)*. Saida!
SAIDA *(drawing back)*. Stay! but first show me this holy relic that thou hast upon thee.
SIMON *(disclosing the stone)*. 'Tis here.
SAIDA *(in a whisper)*. Come!

They go off together, on the right, her fingers toying with the cord from which hangs the beauty stone. As they go, the DEVIL, watching them, steals on, from the left, followed by JACQUELINE, who is carrying a lute. JACQUELINE is now very gentle and maidenly.

DEVIL *(to himself)*. At last! I thought my jest had run its course, the booby was so prudent. *(To JACQUELINE.)* Little Jacques.

JACQ *(approaching him, with downcast eyes)*. Call you me, sir?

DEVIL. See you yon couple?

JACQ. Aye.

DEVIL. What make they?

JACQ *(with a sigh)*. Love, I ween – true love.

DEVIL. Ha, ha, ha! ho, ho, ho!

JACQ. Why, 'tis my lady Saida and the pretty youth! and while the lord Philip is away at the wars! Oh, shame! *(Walking away.)* I will look no more.

DEVIL. H'm, I had forgot you are a girl, little Jacques. 'Tis surprising, too, how modest ye are, remembering ye as I found ye. Lo, they have shut themselves within; you may turn your blushing face hitherward.

JACQ *(returning to him)*. Oh, do not scoff at me, dear master!

DEVIL *(with a grimace)*. Dear master! *(Venomously)*. Dear puling, sighing, bleating sheep – for so you are become!

JACQ. Oh, prithee!

DEVIL *(sitting, gazing in the direction in which SAIDA and SIMON have departed.)* Bah! strike me thy lute and sing. Sing me a strain with mischief in it.

JACQ. Nay, I know no such strain. *(Woefully.)* I fear me I have lost appetite for mischief, master.

DEVIL. Sing, vixen! sing!

SONG. – JACQUELINE.

Why dost thou sigh and moan?
Ah, why? ah, why?
Mad, merry Jacqueline,
That danced from morn till e'en –
Good-bye! good-bye!
Yea, for all mirth hath flown;
The strings have all one tone –
Ah, why? ah, why?

DEVIL *(not heeding JACQUELINE – to himself)*. Haste, Saida! haste! thy lord's home-coming will thwart thee an' thou dost not use despatch!

JACQUELINE *seats herself upon the ground near the DEVIL.*

JACQUELINE. It is the lute that sings,

Not I! not I!
Haply some prisoned heart
That once had felt love's smart
Doth wake and cry!
Nay, it is love's own wings
That beat the trembling strings –
Not I! not I!

DEVIL (*turning to JACQUELINE, looking down upon her with distaste*). Why, what is't ye sing of?
JACQ. Love, master.
DEVIL. Love!
JACQ. Yea, master.
DEVIL. Of what degree?
JACQ. Pure love, sir, faithful love.
DEVIL. Who has learned ye the song?
JACQ. None.
DEVIL. Whence comes it?
JACQ. Methinks, from my heart.
DEVIL. Your heart! your – ! (*Suddenly.*) Baggage! with whom are you smitten?

She averts her face.

DEVIL (*harshly*). With whom? with whom? (*Jumping up.*) Why, you misbegotten little trull, ere I made you my page you had hated men, as such!
JACQ (*rising*). So did I.
DEVIL. And now – ! the name of the knave? his title?
JACQ. Oh, sir!
DEVIL. Ah! (*Grasping her wrist.*) 'Tis I!
JACQ. Mercy! thy nails!
DEVIL. 'Tis I! speak!
JACQ. Pardon!
DEVIL. Speak!
JACQ. Master, when I promised thee I could ne'er love man, then – then –
DEVIL. Then – ?
JACQ. Then a man had ne'er become poor Jacqueline's master.
DEVIL (*flinging her aside, and pacing to and fro, enraged*). Faugh! faugh! ugh! ugh! puh!
JACQ. Pardon me! oh, pardon me! I do desire naught but to serve thee humbly and faithfully till death.
DEVIL. Get thee gone! I am weary of thee! I took ye, fed ye, clothed ye, that thou shouldst be merry, mischievous, and spiteful; and now thou art sick with pure, honest, maidenly devotion. Puh! (*flinging her lute over the balustrade*). Go! back to thy foul stable!
JACQ. Nay, let me stay, sir.
DEVIL. Rummage beneath the straw; there lie thy rags, where thou didst stow them.
JACQ. Master, I will not leave thee.
DEVIL (*formidably*). Wilt not! (*Pointing to the left.*) To thy rags! to thy stable!

She departs unsteadily. From the right comes the sound of SIMON's voice calling piteously to SAIDA.

DEVIL *(listening)*. Ha!

SAIDA enters and stands facing the DEVIL triumphantly. She has cast away her outer robe and is clad wholly in white. Her hair streams luxuriantly to her waist, and upon her face is the look of fresh, virginal beauty.

RECITATIVE. – SAIDA.

Mine, mine at last! Poor vanquished slave, begone!
Say you my lord hath conquered? look on me!
That fading wreath of laurel he hath won
Vies not with beauty's crown of victory!

SONG. – SAIDA.

What laggard steed doth carry
Lord Philip home to-day?
Ah! wherefore doth he tarry
So long upon the way?
Knew he that beauty's flower
Refashioned waits him here,
Methinks each fleeting hour
Would seem a lingering year!

Ride on, my lord, ride on!
Ride on, and thou shalt find
Cheeks of whitest snow
Where reddest roses grow
O'er mounds of moulded pearl;
Eyes of darkest jet
Rimmed round with violet,
Tresses that unfurl
Like banners in the wind
Whereon the sun hath shone!
Ride on, my lord, ride on!

Nay, though the crowd be thronging
To kiss thy finger-tips,
Ride on! these lips are longing,
Sweet love, to greet thy lips.
Then sheathe that sword thou bearest,
Cast the laurel from thy brow;
Those eyes that sought the fairest
Shall behold the fairest now.
Ride on, my lord, ride on!

SIMON enters – again a feeble, broken, old man.

SIMON *(appealingly)*. Saida!

SAIDA. Presume no more, thou vile old man!

DEVIL (*leading him across to the left*). Old gentleman, take a friend's counsel – change thy garb and get thee to thy loom again without more ado.

SIMON. Lady!

DEVIL. Hence, or the cry of witchcraft shall be raised against thee! Hence, vagabond! hence, imposter! Ha, ha, ha, ha!

SIMON staggers away, on the left. Trumpets sound without, and there is the noise of tramping feet and of the clatter of armour.

SAIDA. He comes! my lord comes!

DEVIL (*glancing over the balustrade*). Aye, truly.

SAIDA. So do I reap my triumph in the hour of his triumph! so does my victory crown his victory! so shall my new-found beauty be as the gay flower that the war-weary soldier plucks and wears in his helm!

DEVIL. Aye, and this fellow shall stoop to pluck it too! Stoop! cringe! crawl!

SAIDA. Sir Count, I do thank thee for thy service – ah, prithee, stand aside!

PHILIP and GUNTRAN enter, from the left – PHILIP leaning upon GUNTRAN and, with his disengaged hand, feeling his way helplessly. His casque is off and a bandage is over his eyes. His Knights, and the Standard-bearer carrying a torn standard, follow slowly. All are still in armour, which is now dented and rusty.

SAIDA. Philip!

PHILIP. Who speaks?

SAIDA. 'Tis I! Saída!

PHILIP. Saída?

SAIDA. Strip the cloth from thine eyes! look at me!

PHILIP. I cannot. I am blind.

SAIDA (*with a cry of horror*). Oh – !

GUNTRAN. Nay, madam, 'tis time for rejoicing. By St. Bavon, but my lord Philip was the first to break the rebel ranks at Liége! As for his eyes, *that* for the accursed sulphur and pitch that hath seared them! Why, as thou knowest, a man's eyes are oft his worst enemy. Therefore we cry naught but Victory – Philip of Mirlemont and Victory!

KNIGHTS. Philip of Mirlemont! Victory! Victory!

DEVIL (*behind SAIDA, in her ear*). Alack, madam! we reckoned not for this.

SAIDA (*to PHILIP, beseechingly*). Philip – my love! I tell thee my skin is soft and fair.

PHILIP. I cannot see thee.

SAIDA. My eyes sparkle, my lips are red, my hair drops round me like a cloak.

PHILIP. I cannot see thee.

SAIDA. Then am I no more beautiful to thee than the withered crones that whine for alms beside the fountain?

PHILIP. No more – for I cannot see thee.

LAINE's voice is heard again.

LAINE.

With roses red they crowned her head –
 Bright was the sun on the city wall! –
But the light hath fled, and the day is dead,
And the rose-leaves all are witherèd –
 Oh, for the sun on the city wall! –
Then tell me, I pray, ye gallants gay,
 As ye climb the castle stair,
If your lord should chance to ride this way –
 Ah, tell me, ye ladies fair! –
If your lord should chance to ride this way,
 Would he list to a poor maid's prayer?
Alack, alack! could he give her back
 A heart that is prisoned there?

PHILIP. Whose voice is that?

SAIDA. 'Tis a ragged wench that sings daily under the castle wall.

PHILIP. 'Tis the voice of the weaver's daughter.

SAIDA (to the DEVIL, in a whisper). Turn her away! whip her an' she will not cease her song!

DEVIL (to himself, with a scowl). Aye, for this smacks too much of true love.

He goes out, on the right.

PHILIP (to GUNTRAN). Guntran, I would speak with the weaver's daughter. Lead me to her.

SAIDA. Nay, she hath returned to her crippledom. Once more is her shoulder humped, her body lean, her skin yellow!

PHILIP (pointing into vacancy). See! she is beautiful!

SAIDA. See! thou canst not see!

PHILIP. Yea – into her soul.

As LAINE's song ceases, the DEVIL returns.

SAIDA. Philip!

PHILIP (to GUNTRAN). Lead me forth, to the weaver's daughter.

PHILIP goes out, on the left, led by GUNTRAN. The Knights and the Standard-bearer follow.

SCENE.

SAIDA (coming face to face with the DEVIL).

So all is lost for ever! And 'twas thou
Didst lure me on to steal this treacherous stone!

DEVIL. Nay, Beauty's crown still rests upon thy brow;
Though love be blind, that beauty is thine own!

SAIDA. Mine own! mine own! What devil lurks in thee
To mock my shame? And this accursed spell,

That leaves yon crippled maid her victory -
In hell 'twas born, I yield it back to hell!

She plucks the stone from her bosom and flings it on the ground, and rushes away, on the right. The distant town-bells ring out, as the DEVIL picks up the stone.

DEVIL. And so it befell,
At the sound of the bell,
This stone had come back to me.

Slipping the stone into his pocket.

And anon it sped over sea and land,
It journeyed o'er land and sea,
It hath lodged in many a jealous hand –
Yet it always comes back to me!

He mounts the balustrade and leaps into space.

End of Scene 1.

Scene 2.

The Market-place again, now gay with flowers and banners and bright sunshine.

The townsfolk are assembled as in the first act. Those from the war are narrating their exploits to eager listeners, and once more the aldermen are waiting expectantly in the doorway of the town-hall, and the pikemen are gathered about the steps. NICHOLAS DIRCKS is directing the serving-men in the arrangement of the throne-chair and some less important seats in front of the steps, while a score of lads and girls are dancing gaily before the inn, with PEPPIN, the dwarf, in their midst.

CHORUS.

O'er Mirlemont city the banners are flying -
Sing Heigh for the garlands that swing in the sun!-
And hearts that but yesterday sadly were sighing
Are crying Sing Ho! for the war that is won.
Sing Ho for the war that is done!
The battle is only begun,
For winning a lover,
As ye shall discover
Is harder than storming a town!

DANCE.

JOAN makes her way through the crowd and humbly plucks NICHOLAS by the sleeve.

NICHOLAS. Tut, tut, tut! what is this?

JOAN. Good burgomaster, hast seen aught of Laine, my child?

NICHOLAS. I, woman!

JOAN. Every morn she will stray from my side, and to-day she is long past her hour for home-coming.

NICHOLAS. Tsch! here is the lord Philip that hath lost both his eyes, and he bids us rejoice; yet thou must needs whimper because perchance thy weakling hath fallen into the dyke. Stand aloof, dame.

NICHOLAS enters the town-hall as SIMON, who has returned to his rags, comes through the crows and approaches JOAN.

SIMON (*who is concealed from the rest by his hood, in a low voice*). Joan!

JOAN. Blessed St. Luke! Simon!

SIMON. Wife, I am old again; yea, but vastly older than I was, for I have broken faith with thee, my true friend, which knowledge is heavier upon me than double all my years of want and labour.

JOAN. Where is the stone that gave thee youth?

SIMON. The woman took it from my breast.

JOAN. I thank the Saints.

SIMON. Truly thou art avenged. Whither wouldst have me go?

JOAN. Back to thy loom.

SIMON. And thou?

JOAN. I'll come with thee, and patch and mend for thee whiles thou art spinning.

SIMON. Wife!

JOAN (*weeping*). Oh, Simon!

Some of the townsfolk gather about them.

THE MATRONLY WOMAN. Why, weaver, where have you been this past week?

JOAN (*stoutly*). Nay, may not a toiler take holiday once in a score of years? The good man hath been to Zolden, where he courted me ere ever we saw Mirlemont. I did send him with a message to my cousin.

THE SHREWISH GIRL (*to SIMON*). You know your wench has lost her beauty as quickly as she found it?

JOAN (*facing her*). Aye, what the Saints bestow, that can they take away. They are not like to give thee aught, sour face, e'en for an hour, save it be a fit o' the spleen.

SIMON and JOAN go up the alley. The Shrewish Girl and a few others follow them, jeering at them. The DEVIL, again disguised as a friar, comes through the crowd and stands pulling his beard and looking about him. The town-bells ring out, as JACQUELINE – dressed as she was in the first act, as a poor girl – enters, with tottering steps, and knocks against the DEVIL.

JACQ (*dazed*). Oh! Pardon, holy father; I can scarce see thee before me.

DEVIL. What ails thee, daughter? Thou art trembling.
JACQ. Aye, all of a shake. Oh, I have had an ill dream, or some evil fellow has put magic upon me.
DEVIL (*shocked*). Magic!
JACQ. Father, say, is it possible for one to dream a whole week through?
DEVIL. Verily, if thou sleepest for a week unbrokenly.
JACQ. Alack, and I have been wide-awake! (*Clutching at his gown in terror.*) Father!
DEVIL. Hey?
JACQ. Grant me your blessing! Holy Saints, but I do believe I have been in service, since a week yesterday, to the Devil himself!
DEVIL (*pulling his gown away*). Daughter!
JACQ. Nay, nay, your blessing! I will be a good girl for evermore! Your blessing!
DEVIL (*in horror*). A TANTO SCELERE LIBERA NOS DOMINE!

He waves her from him, and she staggers away towards the alley. The two trumpeters come from the town-hall and, standing upon the steps, blow blasts on their trumpets. The pikemen force the crowd back, as NICHOLAS returns bowing before PHILIP, who descends the steps with GUNTRAN's aid. The Knights and the Standard-bearer follow. There is a general movement of sympathy among the crowd.

PHILIP. People of Mirlemont, you are assembled to do me honour, yet are you silent. You will not raise your voices in joyful greeting because, you think, I am blind. Friends, I do declare to you I am blind only with my eyes, and that with my understanding I do see at last all men and women, and the world we dwell in, right clearly. Therefore, for the tardy love I bring you, I do beseech you deny me not your voices.

THE TOWNSFOLK. Philip of Mirlemont! Philip of Mirlemont!

PHILIP. And as earnest of my good resolves toward you that live within my township, have I determined to mate with one that is humblest among you. Yet I take small credit for this act, the maid I worship being the fairest of all I have e'er known – so pure is she in heart and disposition, wherein I now perceive lieth true beauty. Set me a seat here beside my own.

The serving-men place a seat by the throne-chair, and GUNTRAN goes into the town-hall. SIMON, JOAN, and JACQUELINE return and mix with the crowd. The DEVIL stands near the inn, watching the proceedings with a scowl.

FINALE OF ACT III.

CHORUS.

Hail to the lord of our land!
Philip of Mirlemont, hail!
Yea, whosoever it be

Love shall ere call to thy side.

GUNTRAN *reappears, and following him come some of the ladies of PHILIP's household escorting LAINE.*

GUNTRAN. Behold the maid whose simple faith hath proved
Both shield and spur to that true lord she loved!

CHORUS. What is this? Nay, look again!

It is! and yet it cannot be!

JOAN. And I who sought her all in vain –

My little Laine comes back to me!

CHORUS. Lord Philip weds the cripple Laine?

Yes, look again; in sooth 'tis she!

LAINE *advances and embraces her mother and father and JACQUELINE.*

LAINE. Oh, father! mother! Father hath come home!

SIMON. Yea, this truant heart never more shall roam.

LAINE. I dreamt not this! And thou, dear Jacqueline!

JACQUELINE. Dost know me still! the rabble's tattered queen?

PHILIP *(to LAINE).*

Where hast thou fled? Come hither! take thy place,
That all may see the glory of thy face.

DEVIL *(aside).*

I'll get me hence. 'Tis but a sorry jest

When love, though blind, hath wit to choose the best.

PHILIP.

In truth I am not blind. At last, at last,

I see thee truly, know thee as thou art.

Though heaven hath set a veil upon these eyes,

It doth but blacken out the ruined past;

And love's one star that lights my sunless skies

Shows clear the way that leads me to thy heart.

If the cloak of winter be naught but

the glittering garment of spring;

If the whispering silence of night but

tells of the dawn that is there;

Then the veil on these eyes is no more than

a shadow that falls from Love's wing,

'Tis love that proclaims thee to-day the

fairest of all that are fair.

ALL. If the cloak of winter be naught, etc.

PHILIP and LAINE *sit side by side; SIMON and JOAN kneel before them, stretching out their hands in thanksgiving. The DEVIL, hiding his face in his cowl, steals away as the curtain falls finally.*

THE END.