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PSEUDO-SHAKSPERE'SCHE D R A M E N.

HERAUSGEGEBEN

VON

DR. NICOLAUS DELIUS.

DRITTES HEFT:

THE BIRTH OF MERLIN.

ELBERFELD, 1856.

VERLAG VON R. L. FRIDERICH'S.

THE BIRTH OF MERLIN.

EIN

SHAKSPERE UND ROWLEY

ZUGESCHRIEBENES

D R A M A.

HERAUSGEGEBEN

VON

DR. NICOLAUS DELIUS.

ooo

ELBERFELD, 1856.

VERLAG VON R. L. FRIDERICHs.

V O R R E D E.

Im Jahre 1662 liess der Londoner Buchhändler Kirkman, ein eifriger Sammler und Herausgeber von handschriftlich aufbewahrten Englischen Schauspielen, ein Drama mit folgendem Titelblatt drucken:

The Birth of Merlin or The Childe hath found his Father. As it hath been several times Acted With great Applause. Written by William Shakespear and William Rowley. Placere cupio.) London: Printed by Tho. Johnson for Francis Kirkman and Henry Marsh, and are to be sold at the Princes Arms in Chancery-Lane. 1662.*

Auf welche Autorität hin dieses Schauspiel, das nach Sprache und Styl unzweifelhaft der Zeit Shakspeare's angehört, diesem selbst und Rowley als eine gemeinschaftliche Arbeit zugeschrieben wird, ist um so weniger zu ermitteln, da eine der Herausgabe durch Kirkman vorhergehende Erwähnung des Dramas sich bisher nirgendwo hat finden lassen. Von William Rowley's Lebensumständen ist wenig überliefert worden, namentlich nach Abzug aller der Notizen, welche die

*) *Placere cupio* ist die Devise, die sich auch auf andern Verlagsartikeln Kirkman's findet.

mit ihm verwechselten gleichnamigen Dichter Samuel Rowley und Ralph Rowley betreffen und irrthümlich auf ihn bezogen sind. Es steht nur fest, dass er gegen das Ende der Regierung der Königin Elisabeth als Schauspieler und zur Zeit ihres Nachfolgers Jacob's I. als dramatischer Dichter sich bekannt gemacht hat. (Vgl. *Malone's Life of Shakspeare* in *Boswell's Ausgabe* Bd. 2. p. 172.) Wenn ein von Rowley und Middleton zuerst entworfenes und von Massinger später umgearbeitetes Drama, *The Old Law*, wie Gifford und Dyce, die Herausgeber der Werke *Massinger's* und *Middleton's*, auf eine begründete Vermuthung von Steevens, annehmen, im Jahre 1599 aufgeführt worden ist, so wäre auch der Anfang von Rowley's schriftstellerischer Thätigkeit sogar noch in das Zeitalter der Elisabeth zu setzen. Von den Dramen, die von ihm erhalten sind, gehören nur vier ihm allein: *A new Wonder*, *a Woman never vex't* (1632 zuerst gedruckt), *All 's Lost by Lust* (1633), *A Match at Midnight* (1633), *A Shoemaker a Gentleman* (1638). Weit productiver erscheint er als Mitarbeiter anderer zum Theil berühmterer Schauspielichter. So schrieb er, abgesehen von dem oben erwähnten Drama: *The Old Law*, das zuerst 1646 unter *Massinger's*, *Middleton's* und *Rowley's* Namen gedruckt wurde, mit *Massinger* gemeinschaftlich *The Parliament of Love* (zuerst gedruckt in *Gifford's Ausgabe* der Werke *Massinger's*); mit *Fletcher* gemeinschaftlich *The Maid in the Mill*, so wie nach *Dyce's* Vermuthung auch *The Queen of Corinth* und *The Bloody Brother*; mit *Middleton* gemeinschaftlich *A Fair Quarrel* (gedr. 1617), *The World tossed at Tennis* (1620), *The Change-*

ling (1653), *The Spanish Gipsy* (1653); gemeinschaftlich mit Heywood, *Fortune by Land and Sea* (1655); gemeinschaftlich mit Dekker und Ford, *The Witch of Edmonton* (1658); gemeinschaftlich mit Webster, *A Cure for a Cuckold* (1661) und *The Thracian Wonder*; mit Day und Wilkins, *The Travailes of three English Brothers*, Sir Thomas, Sir Antony and Mr. Robert Shirley (1607).

Ueber die dichterische Bedeutung Rowley's fallen die Englischen Kritiker verschiedene Urtheile. Während die meisten ihm einen ziemlich untergeordneten Rang in der Reihe der alten Dramatiker anweisen, stellt ihn Charles Lamb, ein Aesthetiker von feinem Geschmack und dabei ein sinniger Kenner des altenglischen Drama's, verhältnissmässig hoch, indem er in seinen *Specimens of English Dramatic Poets* von dem oben erwähnten Schauspiel *The Old Law* sagt: *There is an exquisiteness of moral sensibility — — and a poetical strangeness in all the improbable circumstances of this wild play, which are unlike any thing in the dramas which Massinger wrote alone. The pathos is of a subtler edge. Middleton and Rowley, who assisted in this play, had both of them finer geniuses than their associate.* — Jedenfalls spricht die vielfache Verbindung Rowley's mit andern namhaften Dichtern der Zeit zu gemeinschaftlichen Arbeiten von, theilweise wenigstens, hohem poetischen Werthe für seine nicht geringe Begabung, sowie für die Popularität und das gute Ansehn, dessen er sich als Bühnendichter bei seinen Zeitgenossen erfreute. Eine Vergleichung seiner eigenen Dramen und derjenigen, an denen er unzweifelhaft theilhaftig war, mit dem vorliegenden *Birth of Merlin* bietet

denn auch kein Motiv, die Angabe Kirkman's über die Verfasser, soweit sich dieselbe auf Rowley bezieht, in Zweifel zu ziehen. Wie es sich freilich mit dem andern Theile dieser buchhändlerischen Notiz verhält, welche bei dem Birth of Merlin unsern Shakspeare zu einem Mitarbeiter Rowley's macht — sei es, dass dabei an eine wirkliche Association zu denken wäre, oder dass Rowley etwa eine Shakspeare'sche Skizze ausgeführt und überarbeitet hätte — diese Frage zu bejahen, muss schon eher bedenklich erscheinen.

Während in England jede Betheiligung Shakspeare's an dem Birth of Merlin standhaft geläugnet wird, ist in Deutschland schon vor längerer Zeit ein namhafter Vertheidiger der Kirkman'schen Behauptung in Tieck aufgetreten, der in dem zweiten Bande seiner „Shakspeare's Vorschule“ (Leipzig. 1829) das Schauspiel in deutscher Uebersetzung mitgetheilt und in der Vorrede weitläufig besprochen hat. Er sagt daselbst zunächst:

„Das erste Schauspiel, welches ich im Jahre 1817 in London las und copiren liess, war das dritte dieses Bandes, „die Geburt des Merlin,“ von W. Rowley und Shakspeare. Ist dieses alte Schauspiel auch spät (1662) zuerst gedruckt worden, so war es mir doch wichtig, weil ich schon ausgesprochen habe, dass man diese Traditionen und was spätere Buchhändler, wie Kirkman, unter diesem oder jenem Namen bekannt gemacht haben, nicht unbedingt verwerfen müsse. Ich erstaunte, dass ein so bunt verflechtes, humoristisches und glücklich durchgeführtes Gedicht zu seiner Zeit nicht mehr Aufsehn gemacht hatte, und dass es nicht längst wieder abgedruckt war, da die Engländer doch seitdem manches der Vergessenheit wieder entrissen haben. Dieses Stück ist zugleich ein neuer Beweis von

dem ausserordentlichen Reichthum jener Tage, in welchem eine solche Erscheinung unter der grossen Masse geistreicher und charakteristischer Schauspiele nicht vorzüglich bemerkt ward. Die neuern Engländer, deren schwache Seite die poetische Kritik ist, haben es fast dem Zufall überlassen, welche Erscheinungen wieder hervor zu rufen waren, und man sieht, seit dem älteren Dodsley, der etwas besonnener in seiner Sammlung verfuhr, selten einen Grund, warum dieses oder jenes Stück, und kein anderes, von neuem gedruckt wird. Kirkman, der während und nach der puritanischen Revolution, im Besitz vieler Manuscripte, manches Schauspiel herausgegeben hat, ist, da er jener Zeit der ächten Bühne so nahe lebte, und ein Liebhaber war, gewiss nicht so unkritisch und lügenhaft, als ihn Malone und Steevens in ihren Anmerkungen und Einleitungen machen wollen. Er konnte sich irren, aber, wenn er einmal dem Shakspeare falsche Gedichte vorsätzlich unterschieben wollte: warum hat er nicht mehrere mit diesem Namen in die Welt gesandt, und andern Dichtern ebenfalls, bald diesem, bald jenem, ein Schauspiel zugeschrieben? da obenein, wie schon öfters erwähnt ist, Fletcher damals für den grösseren Dichter gehalten wurde, und man dessen Stücke öfter aufführte und mehr las, als die des Shakspeare?“

Nachdem Tieck darauf über William Rowley und einige seiner Dramen geredet, namentlich von dessen in Gemeinschaft mit Middleton verfassten Schauspiel, *The Changeling*, eine ausführliche Analyse gegeben hat, fährt er fort:

„Aber von keinem seiner Schauspiele kann man so sicher mit dem grössten Lobe sprechen, als von diesem jetzt übersetzten, *Die Geburt des Merlin*. Welchen

Theil hat Shakspeare daran? Hat er Theil genommen? Welche Umstände vermochten ihn dazu? Diese Fragen, die sich jedem Freunde des grossen Dichters sogleich aufdrängen, lassen sich nur ungenügend und nur durch Vermuthungen beantworten. Warum soll Shakspeare nicht einmal für ein anderes Theater als das seinige geschrieben haben? Warum nicht, da die Sitte so allgemein war, einmal mit einem schwächern Poeten in Gesellschaft getreten sein? Die Tradition, die ihn als Mitarbeiter dieses bunten und heitern Schauspiels nennt, wiederholt sich bei Fletcher, an dessen *Two noble Kinsmen* er auch soll Theil genommen haben.“

Unser deutscher Kritiker führt nun seine Gründe an, weshalb er an eine gemeinschaftliche Autorschaft Shakspeare's und Fletcher's in diesem Fall nicht glauben könne, und kommt dann auf Rowley und dessen *Birth of Merlin* zurück in einer ästhetischen Würdigung und Analyse, die hier *in extenso* ihren Platz finden möge, da sie vorzugsweise geeignet scheint, in die Lectüre unseres Pseudo-Shakspeare'schen Schauspiels einzuleiten.

„Rowley,“ sagt Tieck, „hat nicht die Sprache Fletcher's, er steht auf jener populären Stelle, wo Leichtigkeit, Verständlichkeit in jedem Moment den Zuhörern die Sache, die vorgetragen wird, ganz nahe bringen. Er schliesst sich auch in der Erfindung, und die Art und Weise, den Plan durchzuführen, an Dekker, Heywood und ähnliche Dichter jener Zeit, also von selbst an manche leichten Schauspiele Shakspeare's. So sehr man aber Rowley loben mag, sowohl in jenen Stücken, die ganz von ihm herrühren, als auch in denen, die er mit andern arbeitete, so zeigt sich doch nirgend die heitere Ruhe, dieses weise Mass, diese richtige und sichere Fortschreitung, diese Fülle der

Gedanken und der Reichthum des Humors, als in diesem vorliegenden, so lange verkannten Stücke. Mag es eine Jugendarbeit Shakspeare's gewesen sein (wie denn die bunte, vielfach verflochtene Fabel wohl einen dichterischen Jüngling reizen kann), so bin ich doch fast überzeugt, dass er in seinem reifen Alter (denn das Stück muss um 1613 geschrieben sein) einem andern Schauspieler und Dichter mit Liebe half, um diese seltsame und reizende Composition hervorzubringen, die ich neben das Beste stellen muss, was mir in dieser Art nur irgend bekannt geworden ist. Das Schauspiel wird nirgend Tragödie, es erhebt sich selbst nicht zur Leidenschaftlichkeit des Cymbeline, oder Wintermärchen: es hat nicht jenen poetischen Glanz von *As you like it*, oder den hohen poetischen Uebermuth des vierten Heinrich: — sondern es wiegt sich und spielt in einem ganz eigenthümlichen Element, und das Wundersame und Groteske ist mit der Legende so gut in Uebereinstimmung gesetzt, dass man diese leichte, durchsichtige Manier, die ohne Grösse ist, eben nicht anders wünschen kann. Wenn Shakspeare zu dem Gedichte Beiträge geliefert hat, so hat er sie eben in seiner fasslichsten und bequemsten Sprache gegeben, deren er, da ihm alle Töne zu Gebote standen, wohl vollkommen Herr war, weil sie oft genug einzelne Theile seiner Werke belebt. B. Jonson oder Fletcher nachzusprechen wäre ihm schwer, wenn nicht unmöglich gewesen, aber diese leichte Sprache, die in den besseren Stücken Dekker, Heywood, Rowley und schon Greene und vielen Andern gemein ist, die eigentlich die natürlichste Grundlage der Komödie und des Schauspielers war, in dieser konnte er sich eben ohne Anstrengung mit seinem geringern Mitarbeiter vereinigen, denn

er durfte nur jene gesuchteren und tieferen Töne, jene wundersamen Bilder und seltsamen Ausdrücke, die alle seine Werke charakterisiren, mit Vorsatz aufgeben, um in die eine Wageschale kein störendes Uebergewicht zu legen.

Die Einleitung des Stücks ist vortrefflich, Modestia, die geistliche, contrastirt gut mit der Schwester. Die Sachsen sind durch ein Wunder geschlagen, sie bitten um Frieden, und der junge König Aurelius wird sogleich durch die Schönheit der Artesia zur Liebe bewegt. Diese Scene ist meisterhaft. Der fromme Eremit und Modestia, die schon halb bekehrt ist, beschliessen durch diese ruhigen Töne, nach rasch bewegten Scenen, den Akt sehr gut.

Im zweiten Aufzug erscheint plötzlich und unvorbereitet der Humor des Dichters. Diese Scenen, die nach meinem Gefühl von Rowley herrühren, sind mit grosser Geschicklichkeit und feinem Sinn durchgeführt, sie sind ächt komisch, ohne die Grazie zu verletzen. Die Poesie des im Wald irrenden Prinzen Uther contrastirt vortrefflich. Am Hofe ist die Vermählung vollzogen, der Feldherr, Graf Edol, ist am meisten dadurch gekränkt. Es ist verständig, dass dieser, ohne ihn zu weitläufig zu zeichnen, immerdar im Zorn und Wuth ist, die selbst die Gränzen überschreiten, um ihn so von den übrigen vielen Figuren des Gemäldes abzuheben. Fletcher, der oft dergleichen Gestalten aufführt, würde hier im Verachten des Hofes, in Soldatenmoral, Ehrgefühl und dergleichen, unerschöpflich sein. Hier geschieht gerade genug, um die Begebenheit rascher vorzutragen, und der Held selbst wird halb komisch. Der Zug des Hofes und die Vermählten erscheinen wieder. Der junge, verblendete König ist vortrefflich

dargestellt. Der sonderbare Kampf des heidnischen Zauberers mit dem Eremiten erinnert an Roger Baco von Greene, im ersten Bande dieser Vorschule, wo das Wunderliche vielleicht noch anmuthiger hingestellt ist. Offenbar hat sich der Dichter hier jenes früheren Schauspiels erinnert. Prinz Uther, der wiedergefundene, soll den Tag noch fröhlicher machen, er erkennt aber in der Königin jene Gestalt wieder, die er im Walde sah, und um die er seitdem im halben Wahnsinn umhergeschwärmte. Dies ist trefflich angelegt und benutzt, denn sie kömmt ihm buhlerisch sogleich entgegen, um ihn und alle zu verderben.

Johanna und ihr armer Bruder haben sich dem Hofe genähert. Die sonderbare Untersuchung wird auf seltsame Weise fortgesetzt. — Die fromme Modestia soll überrascht und gedemüthigt werden, und sie ist es, die im Gegentheil zum Erstaunen des Vaters und ihres Verlobten die Schwester von der Welt abwendig macht. Alle diese plötzlichen Umkehrungen im Schauspiel sind von Meisterhand durchgeführt. — Möchte man Shakespeare's Genie erkennen, so wäre es vielleicht am meisten in diesem dritten und dem fünften Akt. Der Teufel, der Vater Merlin's, erscheint mit aller poetischen Würde. Lucina und die drei Parzen machen grosse Wirkung, und ein Meisterwerk ist das Gemälde vom Merlin, der unmittelbar nach der Geburt in einem Buche lesend, mit einem langen Barte geschmückt, auftritt. Ohne viele Anstalten und Zurüstungen ist es dem Dichter gelungen, im Merlin den Zauberer, der halb unterirdisch, halb Mensch, ein mächtiger Geist und doch nur Knabe, der kindisch, neckisch und furchtbar zugleich ist, überzeugend hinzustellen. Ich wüsste nicht, dass sich ein anderer Dichter eine solche Aufgabe schon gesetzt und

mit so weniger Ausmalung so glücklich durchgeführt hätte. Der Narr ihm gegenüber, der den Teufel, den Vater des Zwerges, bald erkennt und das Gesicht mit einer Bratpfanne vergleicht, bald sich mit beiden auf einen guten Fuss setzt, bald stumm gezaubert, oder von Merlin und einem Kobold bestohlen wird, erhält neue Farbe und wird jetzt auf eine andre Weise ergötzlich. — Die Verschwörung gegen den Prinzen und den König setzt den Hof indessen in Bewegung und eine offen erklärte gegenseitige Feindschaft beschliesst diesen Akt, der noch mehr als die vorigen voller Leben und Bewegung ist. Die Geschichte steht niemals still, keine Figur ist müßig, und dennoch findet der Dichter Raum für Scherz und anmuthige Episoden.

Die Bewegung und das Leben des vierten Aktes sind trefflich, dramatisch, alles ist Handlung und Charakter.

Die erste Scene des fünften Aktes ist wohl die schönste des Stückes. Nach den vielfachen Begebenheiten fällt es uns nicht auf, dass Johanna hier edler und poetischer spricht, dass ihre Jugend eine andere gewesen, als wir uns früher vorgestellt haben. Merlin wird seinem Vater gegenüber erhaben, und als dieser vom Sohn Gehorsam fordert, ist dessen Antwort: Gehorsam lernt man nicht in deiner Schule! so treffend und alles erschöpfend, dass dieses Wort allein auf Shakespeare hinweisen möchte. Schön wird nun die alte Sage erfüllt, auf das wunderbare Stonehenge auf Salisburys Ebne, als der Mutter Begräbniss, von Merlin errichtet, hingedeutet: eben so am Schluss auf die Tafelrunde und Arthur's weit verbreiteten Ruhm. Der Schluss könnte vielleicht noch befriedigender sein, aber alle Wunder, Vorzeichen, Kometen, Erscheinungen sind erschöpft und es war schwer etwas Neues aufzufinden.

Ob diese Komödie zu ihrer Zeit grosses Aufsehen gemacht hat, ob sie sehr beliebt gewesen, lässt sich nicht entscheiden, da über alle diese Gegenstände die Zeitgenossen fast immer schweigen, und nur zufällig einmal dieser oder jener Gegenstand erwähnt oder beleuchtet wird. Auch was Malone von alten Theaterschriften gefunden und durch Druck bekannt gemacht hat, ist nur fragmentarisch und erläutert die Jahre nicht im Zusammenhang, eben so wenig die Geschichte aller Theater oder vieler Dichter. Dass aber Rowley mit Recht beliebt war, sehn wir aus diesem Schauspiel, dass sich Shakspeare wohl, ohne sich zu erniedrigen, mit ihm vereinigen konnte, beweiset es ebenfalls. Und dass es, wie kein anderes, das ich von Rowley kenne, so wahrhaft dramatisch bleibt, im Phantastischen, Wunderlichen und Bizarren das rechte Mass hält, nirgend die Gränze überschreitet, in der das Wohlgefällige solcher Aufgaben nur möglich ist, ist wahrscheinlich Wink und Werk des grossen Genius. Hätte dieser allein das Gedicht vollendet, so ist wohl nicht zu bezweifeln, dass wir etwas viel Grösseres erhalten hätten.“

Wie es nun auch um Shakspeare's Betheiligung an dem *Birth of Merlin* stehen und welches Gewicht man dem Zeugnisse Tieck's auch beizulegen oder abzusprechen geneigt sein mag, die Verwunderung und Klage unseres deutschen Kritikers, dass die Engländer ein durch den Stoff wie durch die streitige Autorschaft gleich interessantes Drama so ungebührlich vernachlässigen konnten, ist auch jetzt noch gerechtfertigt: Kirkman's Ausgabe ist noch immer die einzige, die bisher erschien, und dabei so selten, dass schon in England Exemplare davon nur höchst vereinzelt sich finden, in Deutschland aber selbst Bibliotheken, wie die

in Berlin und Göttingen, an Schätzen älterer Englischer Literatur so reich, dieses Buch nicht aufzuweisen haben. Schon deshalb musste ein erneuerter Abdruck einer solchen Rarität wünschenswerth erscheinen.

Wie Tieck seiner Uebersetzung in dem zweiten Bande der „Vorschule Shakspeare's,“ so habe ich meiner Ausgabe eine Copie des im British Museum bewahrten Exemplars zu Grunde gelegt. Ich verdanke diese überaus sorgsame Abschrift einem jungen Freunde und Landsmann, Dr. W. Sattler aus Bremen, dem ich für seine grosse und mühevollen Gefälligkeit hiemit auch öffentlich meinen besten Dank ausspreche. Kirkman's Ausgabe muss nach einem lesbaren und ziemlich guten Manuscripte veranstaltet sein, ohne dass jedoch der Herausgeber dabei sich einer anderen Mühe, als einer, doch nur partiellen, Modernisirung der Orthographie, die nicht mehr die der Shakspeare'schen Zeit ist, unterzogen zu haben scheint. Im Uebrigen sind alle Verse, bis auf die, welche der Reim als solche kenntlich macht, als Prosa gedruckt; eine Eintheilung in Akte, sowie ein Personenverzeichniss findet sich dagegen fehlt die Eintheilung in Scenen; Orthographie und Interpunction lassen viel zu wünschen übrig. Es war also zunächst überall der dramatische Blankvers herzustellen — eine Aufgabe, die sich bei den laxen metrischen Grundsätzen, nach denen das Schauspiel gearbeitet ist, *) nicht überall mit Sicherheit lösen liess. Neben Fehlern der Orthographie und Interpunction, die einer durchgängigen Correctur bedurften, waren auch andere Fehler, die in einer nachlässigen Lesung der Handschrift ihren Ur-

*) Auch die Herausgeber Fletcher's unterscheiden Rowley's Antheil an dessen *Maid in the Mill* an der *rugged versification* und dem *halting metre*, die Rowley eigen sind.

sprung gehabt haben mögen, zum Theil mit Hülfe von Conjecturen, zu verbessern. Solche Emendationen sind die folgenden:*)

S. 7. *That made me thus, may I thence truly know.* — Bei Kirkman steht *whence* für *thence*.

S. 12. *Aur. Shame take thy tongue! being old and weak thyself.* — Bei K. fehlt *Aur.*

S. 13. *Idolatress, get hence! Fond king, let go.* — K. hat *Idolaters*.

S. 15. *That nought be wanting which may make our triumphs.* — K. lässt *may* aus.

Ibid. *To express affection greater than that word.* — Bei K. fehlt *than* und *word*.

S. 19. *On calm affection; one poor sight was all.* — K. hat *Or* für *On*.

S. 20. *Witch, scullion, hag.* — K. hat *stallion* für *scullion*.

*) Ich benutze diese Gelegenheit, um eine irrthümliche Correctur in *Arden of Feversham* (Pseudo-Shakspeare'sche Dramen. Zweites Heft.) zurückzunehmen. Ich hatte daselbst pag. 17. in dem Verse:

This powder was too gross and populous
palpable für *populous* gesetzt; dass aber *populous* die hier passende Bedeutung = allbekannt, verbreitet, auch sonst gehabt hat, zeigt eine Stelle in Webster's *Appius and Virginus* (ed. Dyce Bd. 2. pag. 261.):

he I plead for
Has power to make your beauty populous.

*

S. 24. *All crosses feed but his spleen and his impatience.* — K. hat both für but.

S. 26. *'Gainst whom will you oppose it?* — K. hat expose it.

S. 28. *To that necessity of fight, when the despair.* — K. hat which für when.

S. 32. *'Fore me, 't is he.* — K. hat Force me.

S. 34. *How dar'st thou trust thy traitorous thoughts.* — K. hat traitors thoughts.

S. 37. *the other have but swords and feathers.* — K. hat both für but.

S. 41. *The child find his father, and the law ended.* — Bei K. fehlt find.

S. 43. *and talks to a shadow.* — Bei K. fehlt a.

Ibid. *And for this have I crav'd your company.* — Bei K. fehlt have.

S. 46. *And please those friends whom I have mov'd to grief.* — Bei K. fehlt have.

S. 49. *Learning and wisdom, all the hidden parts.* — Bei K. fehlt and.

S. 50. *And Merlin's name in Britany shall live.* — K. hat Britain für Britany.

S. 56. *How does your instance suit?* — Bei K. *instanced.*

S. 63. *But I am glad to see your cunning.* — Bei K. *you für your.*

Ibid. *I would say she was a witch that begot thee.*
— K. *hat this für thee.*

S. 68. *The fatal cause that keeps your castle down.*
— K. *wiederholt fatal vor castle.*

S. 70. *To their confront, at full march double footing.* — Bei K. *steht as für at.*

S. 72. *I will break thy head and beat thy drumsticks both.* — Bei K. *steht drumsheads.*

S. 77. *Again behold from the igniferous body.* — K. *hat ignifrent.*

S. 78. *Nor shall his conquering foot be forc'd to stand.* — K. *hat conjuring.*

S. 80. *Ages to ages shall, like satellites.* — K. *hat Satalists.*

S. 81. *To quench my lust.* — Bei K. *steht quench to.*

Ibid. *My coadjutors in the spoils of mortals.* — K. *hat morals.*

S. 83. *There Merlin's mother shall be sepulch'red.*
— K. *hat Where für There.*



THE BIRTH OF MERLIN,

OR,

THE CHILD HATH FOUND HIS FATHER.

A COMEDY.

Persons represented.

AURELIUS, King of Britain.

VORTIGER, King of Britain.

UTER PENDRAGON, the Prince, Brother to Aurelius.

DONOBERT, a Nobleman, and Father to Constantia and Modestia.

The Earl of **GLOSTER**, Father to Edwin.

EDOL, Earl of Chester, and General to King Aurelius.

CADOR, Earl of Cornwall, and Suitor to Constantia.

EDWIN, Son to the Earl of Gloster, and Suitor to Modestia.

TOOLIO and **OSWALD**, two Noblemen.

MERLIN, the Prophet.

ANSELME, the Hermit, after Bishop of Winchester.

Clown, Brother to Joan, Mother of Merlin.

SIR NICODEMUS Nothing, a Courtier.

The Devil, Father of Merlin.

OSTORIUS, the Saxon General.

OCTA, a Saxon Nobleman.

PROXIMUS, a Saxon Magician.

Two Bishops. — Two Saxon Lords.

Two of Edol's Captains. — Two Gentlemen.

A little Antick Spirit.

ARTESIA, Sister to Ostorius the Saxon General.

CONSTANTIA,
MODESTIA, } Daughters to Donobert.

JOAN Go-to-'t, Mother of Merlin.

A Waiting-woman to Artesia.

LUCINA, Queen of the Shades.

The SCENE, Britain.

THE BIRTH OF MERLIN.

A C T I.

SCENE I.

Enter DONOBERT, GLOSTER, CADOR, EDWIN, CONSTANTIA
and MODESTIA.

Cador. You teach me language, sir, as one that
knows

The debt of love I owe unto their virtues;
Wherein like a true courtier I have fed
Myself with hope of fair success, and now
Attend your wish'd consent to my long suit.

Dono. Believe me, youthful lord,
Time could not give an opportunity
More fitting your desires; always provided,
My daughter's love be suited with my grant.

Cador. 'T is the condition, sir, her promise seal'd.

Dono. Is 't so, Constantia?

Const. I was content to give him words for oaths,
He swore so oft he lov'd me.

Dono. That thou believest him?

Const. He is a man, I hope.

Dono. That 's in the trial, girl.

Const. However, I am a woman, sir.

Dono. The law 's on thy side then, sha't have a
husband,

Ay, and a worthy one: Take her, brave Cornwall,
And make our happiness great as our wishes.

Cador. Sir, I thank you.

Glost. Double the fortunes of the day, my lord,
And crown my wishes too: I have a son here,
Who in my absence would protest no less
Unto your other daughter.

Dono. Ha, Gloster, is it so? what says Lord Edwin?
Will she protest as much to thee?

Edw. Else must she want some of her sister's faith, sir.

Mod. Of her credulity much rather, sir.

My lord, you are a soldier, and methinks
The height of that profession should diminish
All heat of love's desires,
Being so late employ'd in blood and ruin.

Edw. The more my conscience ties me to repair
The world's losses in a new succession.

Mod. Necessity, it seems, ties your affections then,
And at that rate I would unwillingly
Be thrust upon you; a wife 's a dish soon cloy's, sir.

Edw. Weak and diseased appetites it may.

Mod. Most of your making have dull stomachs, sir.

Dono. If that be all, girl, thou shalt quicken him,
Be kind to him, Modestia: Noble Edwin,
Let it suffice, what 's mine in her, speaks yours;
For her consent, let your fair suit go on,
She is a woman, sir, and will be won.

Enter TOCLIO.

Edw. You give me comfort, sir.

Dono. Now, Toclio?

Toclío. The King, my honor'd lords, requires your
presence,

And calls a council for return of answer
Unto the parling enemy, whose ambassadors
Are on the way to court.

Dono. So suddenly?

Chester, it seems, has ply'd them hard at war,
They sue so fast for peace, which by my advice
They ne'er shall have, unless they leave the realm.
Come, noble Gloster, let 's attend the king,
It lies, sir, in your son to do me pleasure,
And save the charges of a wedding dinner;
If you 'll make haste to end your love affairs,
One cost may give discharge to both my cares.

[*Exit* DONO., GLOST.]

Edw. I 'll do my best.

Cador. Now, *Toclío*, what stirring news at court?

Toclío. Oh, my lord, the court 's all fill'd with rumor,
the city with news, and the country with wonder, and
all the bells i' the kingdom must proclaim it, we have a
new holy-day a coming.

Const. A holy-day! for whom? for thee?

Toclío. Me, Madam! 's foot! I 'd be loath that any
man should make a holy-day for me yet:
In brief, 't is thus: There 's here arriv'd at court,
Sent by the Earl of Chester to the king,
A man of rare esteem for holiness,
A reverend hermit, that by miracle
Not onely sav'd our army,
But without aid of man o'erthrew
The pagan host, and with such wonder, sir,
As might confirm a kingdom to his faith.

Edw. This is strange news, indeed; where is he?

Tockio. In conference with the king, that much respects him.

Mod. Trust me, I long to see him.

Tockio. 'Faith, you will find no great pleasure in him, for aught that I can see, lady; they say, he is half a prophet too. 'Would he could tell me any news of the lost prince, there 's twenty talents offer'd to him that finds him.

Cador. Such news was breeding in the morning.

Tockio. And now it has birth and life, sir: If fortune bless me, I 'll once more search those woods where then we lost him; I know not yet what fate may follow me.

[*Exit.*

Cador. Fortune go with you, sir. Come, fair mistress, Your sister and Lord Edwin are in game, And all their wits at stake to win the set.

Const. My sister has the hand yet, we had best leave them,

She will be out anon, as well as I:

He wants but cunning to put in a die. [*Exit CADOR, CONST.*

Edw. You are a cunning gamester, Madam.

Mod. It is a desperate game, indeed, this marriage, Where there 's no winning without loss to either.

Edw. Why, what but your perfection, noble lady, Can bar the worthiness of this my suit? If so you please; I count my happiness, From difficult obtaining, you shall see My duty and observance.

Mod. There shall be place to neither, noble sir: I do beseech you, let this mild reply Give answer to your suit; for here I vow, If e'er I change my virgin name by you, It gains or loses.

Edw. My wishes have their crown.

Mod. Let them confine you then. —

As to my promise, you give faith and credence?

Edw. In your command, my willing absence speaks it.

[*Exit.*]

Mod. Noble and virtuous: Could I dream of marriage,
I should affect thee, Edwin: Oh, my soul,
Here 's something tells me, that these best of creatures,
These models of the world, weak man and woman,
Should have their souls, their making, life and being,
To some more excellent use: If what the sense
Calls pleasure were our ends, we might justly blame
Great nature's wisdom, who rear'd a building
Of so much art and beauty, to entertain
A guest so far incertain, so imperfect:
If only speech distinguish us from beasts,
Who know no inequality of birth or place,
But still to fly from goodness: Oh, how base
Were life at such a rate! No, no, that power
That gave to man his being, speech, and wisdom,
Gave it for thankfulness: To him alone
That made me thus, may I thence truly know,
I 'll pay to him, not man, the love I owe. [Exit.]

SCENE II.

Flourish Cornets. Enter AURELIUS, DONOBERT, GLOSTER,
CADOR, EDWIN, TOCLIO, OSWALD, *and Attendants.*

Aur. No tidings of our brother yet? 'T is strange,
So near the court, and in our own land too,
And yet no news of him: Oh, this loss
Tempers the sweetness of our happy conquests
With much untimely sorrow.

Dono. Royal sir,
His safety, being unquestion'd, should to time
Leave the redress of sorrow. Were he dead,
Or taken by the foe, our fatal loss
Had wanted no quick herald to disclose it.

Aur. That hope alone sustains me,
Nor will we be so ungrateful unto heaven,
To question what we fear with what we enjoy.
Is answer of our message yet return'd
From that religious man, the holy hermit,
Sent by the Earl of Chester to confirm us
In that miraculous act? For 't was no less,
Our army being in rout, nay, quite o'erthrown,
As Chester writes; even then this holy man
Arm'd with his cross and staff, went smiling on,
And boldly fronts the foe; at sight of whom
The Saxons stood amaz'd; for, to their seeming,
Above the hermit's head appear'd such brightness,
Such clear and glorious beams, as if our men
March'd all in fire, wherewith the pagans fled
And by our troops were all to death pursu'd.

Glost. 'T is full of wonder, sir.

Aur. Oh, Gloster, he 's a jewel worth a kingdom.
Where 's Oswald with his answer?

Osw. 'T is here, my royal lord.

Aur. In writing?
Will he not sit with us?

Osw. His orizons perform'd, he bad me say,
He would attend with all submission.

Aur. Proceed to council then, and let some give order,
The ambassadors being come, to take our answer,
They have admittance. Oswald, Toclio,
Be it your charge: And now, my lords, observe

The holy counsel of this reverend hermit: [*reads*]

„As you respect your safety, limit not
That only power that hath protected you,
Trust not an open enemy too far,
He 's yet a loser, and knows you have won,
Mischiefs not ended, are but then begun.

ANSELME the Hermit.“

Dono. Powerful and pithy, which my advice confirms:
No man leaves physick when his sickness slakes,
But doubles the receipts: The word of peace
Seems fair to blood-shot eyes, but being applied
With such a medicine as blinds all the sight,
Argues desire of cure, but not of art.

Aur. You argue from defects; if both the name
And the condition of the peace be one,
It is to be preferr'd, and in the offer
Made by the Saxon, I see nought repugnant.

Glost. The time of truce requir'd for thirty days,
Carries suspicion in it, since half that space
Will serve to strength their weak'ned regiment.

Cador. Who in less time will undertake to free
Our country from them?

Edw. Leave that unto our fortune.

Dono. Is not our bold and hopeful general
Still master of the field, their legions fall'n,
The rest intrench'd for fear, half starv'd, and wounded,
And shall we now give o'er our fair advantage?
'Fore heaven, my lord, the danger is far more,
In trusting to their words than to their weapons.

Enter OSWALD.

Osw. The ambassadors are come, sir.

Aur. Conduct them in,

We are resolv'd, my lords, since policy fail'd
In the beginning, it shall have no hand
In the conclusion.

That heavenly power that hath so well begun
Their fatal overthrow, I know, can end it:
From which fair hope myself will give them answer.

Flourish Cornets. Enter ARTESIA with the Saxon Lords.

Dono. What 's here, a woman orator?

Aur. Peace, Donobert. — Speak, what are you, lady?

Art. The sister of the Saxon general,
Warlike Ostorius, the East-Angles king.
My name Artesia, who in terms of love
Brings peace and health to great Aurelius,
Wishing she may return as fair a present,
As she makes tender of.

Aur. The fairest present e'er mine eyes were blest with!
Command a chair there for this Saxon beauty: —
Sit, lady, we 'll confer: your warlike brother
Sues for a peace, you say?

Art. With endless love unto your state and person.

Aur. He 's sent a moving orator, believe me. —
What think'st thou, Donobert?

Dono. Believe me, sir, were I but young again,
This gilded pill might take my stomach quickly.

Aur. True, thou art old: How soon we do forget
Our own defects! Fair damsel, — oh, my tongue
Turns traitor, and will betray my heart, — sister to
Our enemy: — 's death! her beauty mazes me,
I cannot speak if I but look on her. —
What 's that we did conclude?

Dono. This, royal lord —

Aur. Pish, thou canst not utter it: —

Fairest of creatures, tell the king, your brother,
That we in love, ha! and honor to our country,
Command his armies to depart our realm.
But if you please, fair soul — Lord Donobert,
Deliver you our pleasure.

Dono. I shall, sir:

Lady, return, and certify your brother —

Aur. Thou art too blunt, and rude: Return so soon?
Fie, let her stay, and send some messenger
To certify our pleasure.

Dono. What means your grace?

Aur. To give her time of rest to her long journey;
We would not willingly be thought uncivil.

Art. Great king of Britain, let it not seem strange,
To embrace the princely offers of a friend,
Whose virtues with thine own, in fairest merit
Both states in peace and love may now inherit.

Aur. She speaks of love again!

Sure, 't is my fear, she knows I do not hate her.

Art. Be then thyself, most great Aurelius,
And let not envy, nor a deeper sin
In these thy counsellors, deprive thy goodness
Of that fair honor. We, in seeking peace,
Give first to thee, who never use to sue,
But force our wishes. Yet, if this seem light,
Oh, let my sex, though worthless your respect,
Take the report of thy humanity.

Whose mild and virtuous life loud fame displays,
As being o'ercome by one so worthy praise.

Aur. She has an angel's tongue. — Speak still.

Dono. This flattery is gross, sir; hear no more on 't. —
Lady, these childish compliments are needless:
You have your answer, and believe it, madam,

His grace, though young, doth wear within his breast
Too grave a counsellor, to be seduc'd
By smoothing flattery, or oily words.

Art. I come not, sir, to woo him.

Dono. 'T were folly if you should; you must not
wed him.

Aur. Shame take thy tongue! being old and weak
thyself,

Thou dot'st, and looking on thine own defects,
Speak'st what thou 'dst wish in me. Do I command
The deeds of others, mine own act not free?
Be pleas'd to smile or frown, we respect neither:
My will and rule shall stand and fall together. —
Most fair Artesia, see, the king descends
To give thee welcome with these warlike Saxons,
And now on equal terms both sues and grants.
Instead of truce, let a perpetual league
Seal our united bloods in holy marriage,
Send the East-Angles king this happy news,
That thou with me hast made a league for ever,
And added to his state a friend and brother:
Speak, dearest love, dare you confirm this title?

Art. I were no woman, to deny a good
So high and noble to my fame and country.

Aur. Live then a queen in Britain.

Glost. He means to marry her?

Dono. Death! he shall marry the devil first!
Marry a pagan, an idolater?

Cador. He has won her quickly.

Edw. She was woo'd afore she came, sure,
Or came of purpose to conclude the match.

Aur. Who dares oppose our will? My Lord of Gloster,
Be you ambassador unto our brother,

The brother of our queen Artesia.
 Tell him for such our entertainment looks him,
 Our marriage adding to the happiness
 Of our intended joys; man's good or ill,
 In this like waves agree, come double still. —

Enter The Hermit.

Who 's this? the Hermit? Welcome, my happiness!
 Our country's hope, most reverend holy man,
 I wanted but thy blessing to make perfect
 The infinite sum of my felicity.

Herm. Alack, sweet prince, that happiness is yonder,
 Felicity and thou art far asunder;
 This world can never give it.

Aur. Thou art deceiv'd, see here, what I have found,
 Beauty, alliance, peace, and strength of friends,
 All in this all-exceeding excellence:
 The league 's confirmed.

Herm. With whom, dear lord?

Aur. With the great brother of this beauteous woman,
 The royal Saxon king.

Herm. Oh! then I see,
 And fear thou art too near thy misery.
 What magick could so link thee to this mischief?
 By all the good that thou hast reapt by me,
 Stand further from destruction.

Aur. Speak as a man, and I shall hope to obey thee.

Herm. Idolatress, get hence! Fond king, let go,
 Thou hugg'st thy ruin, and thy country's woe.

Dono. Well spoke, old father; to him! bait him
 soundly.

Now, by heaven's blest lady, I can scarce keep patience,
 1. *Sax. Lord.* What devil is this?

2. *Sax. Lord.* That cursed christian, by whose hel-
lish charms

Our army was o'erthrown.

Herm. Why do you dally, sir? Oh! tempt not heaven,
Warm not a serpent in your naked bosom:
Discharge them from your court.

Aur. Thou speak'st like madness. —
Command the frozen shepherd to the shade,
When he sits warm i' the sun; the fever-sick,
To add more heat unto his burning pain:
These may obey, 't is less extremity
Than thou enjoin'st to me: Cast but thine eye
Upon this beauty, do it, I 'll forgive thee,
Though jealousy in others finds no pardon.
Then say thou dost not love; I shall then swear
Thou art immortal, and no earthly man.
Oh, blame then my mortality, not me.

Herm. It is thy weakness brings thy misery,
Unhappy prince.

Aur. Be milder in thy doom.

Herm. 'T is you that must indure heaven's doom,
which fallen,
Remember 's just.

Art. Thou shalt not live to see it. — How fares
my lord?

If my poor presence breed dislike, great prince,
I am no such neglected soul, will seek
To tie you to your word.

Aur. My word, dear love! May my religion,
Crown, state, and kingdom fail, when I fail thee! —
Command Earl Chester to break up the camp,
Without disturbance to our Saxon friends;
Send every hour swift posts, to hasten on

The king her brother, to conclude this league,
This endless happy peace of love and marriage;
Till when provide for revels, and give charge
That nought be wanting which may make our triumphs
Sportful and free to all. If such fair blood
Engender ill, man must not look for good.

[*Exeunt all but The Hermit. Flourish.*]

Enter MODESTIA, reading in a book.

Mod. How much the oft report of this blest hermit
Hath won on my desires: I must behold him,
And, sure, this should be he. Oh, the world's folly,
Proud earth and dust, how low a price bears goodness!
All that should make man absolute, shines in him. —
Much reverend Sir, may I without offence
Give interruption to your holy thoughts?

Herm. What would you, lady?

Mod. That which till now ne'er found a language
in me:

I am in love.

Herm. In love, with what?

Mod. With virtue.

Herm. There 's no blame in that.

Mod. Nay, sir, with you, with your religious life,
Your virtue, goodness: If there be a name,
To express affection greater than that word,
That would I learn and utter: Reverend sir,
If there be any thing to bar my suit,
Be charitable and expose it, your prayers
Are the same orizons, which I will number.
Holy Sir,
Keep not instruction back from willingness,
Possess me of that knowledge, leads you on

To this humillty, for well I know,
Were greatness good, you would not live so low.

Herm. Are you a virgin?

Mod. Yes, Sir.

Herm. Your name?

Mod. Modestia.

Herm. Your name and virtues meet, a modest virgin:
Live ever in the sanctimonious way
To heaven and happiness: There 's goodness in you;
I must instruct you further; come, look up,
Behold yon firmament, there sits a power,
Whose footstool is this earth. Oh, learn this lesson,
And practise it: He that will climb so high,
Must leave no joy beneath to move his eye. [*Exit.*

Mod. I apprehend you, sir; on heaven I fix my love,
Earth gives us grief, our joys are all above,
For this was man in innocence naked born,
To show us wealth hinders our sweet return. [*Exit.*

A C T II.

SCENE I.

Enter Clown, and his sister JOAN great with child.

Clown. Away, follow me no further, I am none of thy brother. What, with child? great with child? and knows not who 's the father on 't! I am asham'd to call thee sister.

Joan. Believe me, brother, he was a gentleman.

Clown. Nay, I believe that, he gives arms, and legs too, and has made you the herald to blaze 'em. But, Joan, Joan, sister Joan, can you tell me his name that did it? how shall we name my cousin, your bastard, when we have it?

Joan. Alas, I know not the gentleman's name, brother,
I met him in these woods, the last great hunting;
He was so kind and proffer'd me so much,
As I had not the heart to ask him more.

Clown. Not his name? Why, this shows your country
breeding. Now, had you been brought up i' the city, you'd
have got a father first, and the child afterwards: Hast thou
no marks to know him by?

Joan. He had most rich attire, a fair hat and feather,
a gilt sword, and most excellent hangers.

Clown. Pox on his hangers! 'would he had been gelt
for his labor.

Joan. Had you but heard him swear you would have
thought —

Clown. Ay, as you did: Swearing and lying goes
together still. Did his oaths get you with child, we shall
have a roaring boy then, i' faith. Well, sister, I must
leave you.

Joan. Dear brother, stay, help me to find him out;
I 'll ask no further.

Clown. 'S foot, who should I find? Who should I ask for?

Joan. Alas, I know not; he uses in these woods,
And these are witness of his oaths and promise.

Clown. We are like to have a hot suit on 't, when
our best witness 's but a knight o' the post.

Joan. Do but inquire this forest, I 'll go with you;
Some happy fate may guide us till we meet him.

Clown. Meet him? and what name shall we have
for him, when we meet him? 'S foot! thou neither know'st
him, nor canst tell what to call him. Was ever man tired
with such a business, to have a sister got with child, and
know not who did it? Well, you shall see him, I 'll do
my best for you; I 'll make proclamation; if these woods

and trees, as you say, will bear any witness, let them answer; Oyes! If there be any man that wants a name, will come in for conscience' sake, and acknowledge himself to be a whore-master, he shall have that laid to his charge in an hour, he shall not be rid on in an age; if he have lands, he shall have an heir; if he have patience, he shall have a wife, if he have neither lands nor patience, he shall have a whore. So ho, boy, so ho, so so!

[*Within* Prince UTER.

So ho, boy, so, ho, illo ho, illo ho!

Clown. Hark, hark, sister, there 's one halloes to us. What a wicked world 's this! A man cannot so soon name a whore but a knave comes presently; and see where he is; stand close a while, sister.

Enter Prince UTER.

Prince. How like a voice that echo spake, but oh! My thoughts are lost for ever in amazement. Could I but meet a man to tell her beauties, These trees would bend their tops to kiss the air, That from my lips should give her praises up.

Clown. He talks of a woman, sister.

Joan. This may be he, brother.

Clown. View him well, you see he has a fair sword: but his hangers are fallen.

Prince. Here did I see her first, here view her beauty: Oh, had I known her name, I had been happy.

Clown. Sister, this is he; sure, he knows not thy name either. A couple of wise fools, i' faith, to get children, and know not one another.

Prince. You weeping leaves, upon whose tender cheeks Doth stand a flood of tears at my complaint, You heard my vows and oaths —

Clown. La, la, he has been a great sweater too;
't is he, sister.

Prince. For having overtook her;
As I have seen a forward blood-hound strip
The swifter of the cry, ready to seize
His wished hopes, upon the sudden view,
Struck with astonishment at his arrived prey,
Instead of seizure stands at fearful bay;
Or like to Marius' soldier, whom o'ertook
The eyesight-killing Gorgon, at one look
Made ever-lasting stand: so fear'd, my power,
Whose cloud aspir'd the sun, dissolv'd a shower.
Pygmalion, then I tasted thy sad fate,
Whose ivory picture and my fair were one:
Our dotage past imagination,
I saw and felt desire —

Clown. Pox a' your fingering! Did he feel, sister?

Prince. But enjoy'd not.

Oh fate, thou hadst thy days and nights to feed
On calm affection; one poor sight was all,
Converts my pleasure to perpetual thrall.
Embracing thine, thou lostest breath and desire.
So I relating mine, will here expire;
For here I vow to you, ye mournful plants,
Who were the first made happy by her fame,
Never to part hence, till I know her name.

Clown. Give me thy hand; sister: The child hath
found his father. This is he, sure, as I am a man; had
I been a woman, these kind words would have won me,
I should have had a great belly too, that's certain. Well,
I 'll speak to him. — Most honest and fleshly-minded
gentleman, give me your hand, sir.

Prince. Ha, what art thou, that thus rude and boldly,

Darest take notice of a wretch
So much ally'd to misery as I am?

Clown. Nay, sir, for our alliance, I shall be found to be a poor brother-in-law of your worship's. The gentlewoman you spake on, is my sister: You see what a clew she spreads, her name is Joan Go-to-'t, I am her elder, but she has been at it before me: 't is a woman's fault. — Pox a' this bashfulness! come forward, Jug, pr'ythee, speak to him.

Prince. Have you e'er seen me, lady?

Clown. Seen ye? ha, ha! it seems she has felt you too; here 's a young Go-to-'t a coming, sir; she is my sister, we all love to go to 't, as well as your worship. She 's a maid yet, but you may make her a wife, when you please, sir.

Prince. I am amazed with wonder: Tell me, woman, What sin have you committed worthy this?

Joan. Do you not know me, sir?

Prince. Know thee! as I do thunder, hell and mischief, Witch, scullion, hag!

Clown. I see, he will marry her; he speaks so like
a husband.

Prince. Death, I will cut their tongues
Out for this blasphemy. — Strumpet, villain,
Where have you ever seen me?

Clown. Speak for yourself with a pox to ye.

Prince. Slaves,
I 'll make you curse yourselves for this temptation.

Joan. Oh, sir, if ever you did speak to me,
It was in smother phrase, in fairer language.

Prince. Lightning consume me, if I ever saw thee:
My rage o'erflows my blood, all patience flies me.

, [Beats her.

Clown. Hold! I beseech you, sir, I have nothing to
say to you.

Joan. Help, help, murder, murder!

Enter TOCLIO and OSWALD.

Toclio. Make haste, sir, this way the sound came, it
was i' the wood.

Osw. See where she is, and the prince, the price
of all our wishes.

Clown. The prince, say ye? he 's made a poor subject
of me, I am sure.

Toclio. Sweet prince, noble Uter, speak, how fare
you, sir?

Osw. Dear sir, recall yourself, your fearful absence
Hath won too much already on the grief
Of our sad king, from whom our laboring search
Hath had this fair success in meeting you.

Toclio. His silence and his looks argue distraction.

Clown. Nay, he 's mad, sure, he will not acknow-
ledge my sister, nor the child neither.

Osw. Let us entreat your grace along with us,
Your sight will bring new life to the king your brother.

Toclio. Will you go, sir?

Prince. Yes, any whither; guide me, all 's hell; I see,
Man may change air, but not his misery.

[*Exit PRINCE, TOCLIO.*

Joan. Lend me one word with you, sir.

Clown. Well said, sister, he has a feather, and fair
hangers too, this may be he.

Osw. What would you, fair one?

Clown. Sure, I have seen you in these woods ere this.

Osw. Trust me, never; I never saw this place,
Till at this time my friend conducted me.

Joan. The more 's my sorrow then.

Osw. 'Would I could comfort you:

I am a bachelor, but it seems you have
A husband, you have been foully o'ershot else.

Clown. A woman's fault, we are all subject to go
to 't, sir.

Enter TOCLIO.

Toclio. Oswald, away, the prince will not stir a foot
without you.

Osw. I am coming. Farewell, woman.

Toclio. Pr'ythee, make haste.

Joan. Good sir, but one word with you ere you
leave us.

Toclio. With me, fair soul?

Clown. She 'll have a fling at him too, the child
must have a father.

Joan. Have you ne'er seen me, sir?

Toclio. Seen thee?

'S foot, I have seen many fair faces in my time,
Pr'ythee, look up; and do not weep so;
Sure, pretty wanton, I have seen this face before.

Joan. It is enough, though you ne'er see me more.
(*Sinks down.*)

Toclio. 'S foot, she 's fallen.

This place is enchanted, sure, look to the woman, fellow.
[*Exit.*]

Clown. Oh, she 's dead! she 's dead! As you are
a man, stay and help, sir. — Joan, Joan, sister Joan,
why, Joan Go-to 't, I say; will you cast away yourself,
and your child, and me too? what do you mean, sister?

Joan. Oh, give me pardon, sir, 't was too much
joy,

Oppress'd my loving thought. I know you were
Too noble to deny me, — Ha! where is he?

Clown. Who, the gentleman? he 's gone, sister.

Joan. Oh! I 'm undone then: run, tell him I did
But faint for joy, dear brother, haste: Why dost thou stay?
Oh, never cease, till he give answer to thee.

Clown. He: which he? what do you call him, trow?

Joan. Unnatural brother, shew me the path he took.
Why dost thou dally? speak, oh, which way went he?

Clown. This way, that way, through the bushes there.

Joan. Were it through fire,

The journey 's easy, wing'd with sweet desire. *[Exit.*

Clown. Heyday, there 's some hope of this yet.
I 'll follow her for kindred's sake, if she miss of her purpose now, she 'd challenge all she finds, I see; for if ever we meet with a two-legg'd creature in the whole kingdom, the child shall have a father, that 's certain. *[Exit.*

SCENE II.

Loud musick. Enter two with the sword and mace, CADOR, EDWIN, two Bishops, AURELIUS, OSTORIUS leading ARTESIA crown'd, CONSTANTIA, MODESTIA, OCTA, PROXIMUS a Magician, DONOBERT, GLOSTER, OSWALD, TOCLIO, all pass over the stage. Manent DONOBERT, GLOSTER, EDWIN, CADOR.

Dono. Come, Gloster,
I do not like this hasty marriage.

Glost. She was quickly woo'd and won, not six days
since

Arriv'd an enemy to sue for peace,
And now crown'd Queen of Britain; this is strange.

Dono. Her brother too made as quick speed in coming,
Leaving his Saxons, and his starved troops,
To take the advantage, whilst 't was offered.
'Fore heaven, I fear the king's too crédulous,
Our army is discharg'd too.

Glost. Yes, and our general commanded home. —
Son Edwin, have you seen him since?

Edw. He's come to court, but will not view the
presence,

Nor speak unto the king, he is so discontent
At this so strange alliance with the Saxon,
As nothing can persuade his patience.

Cador. You know, his humor will endure no check,
No if the king oppose it;
All crosses feed but his spleen and his impatience,
Those affections are in him like powder,
Apt to inflame with every little spark,
And blow up all his reason.

Glost. Edol of Chester is a noble soldier.

Dono. So is he, by the rood, ever most faithful
To the king and kingdom, howe'er his passions guide him.

Enter EDOL with Captains.

Cador. See where he comes, my lord.

Omnes. Welcome to court, brave Earl.

Edol. Do not deceive me by your flatteries:
Is not the Saxon here? the league confirm'd?
The marriage ratified? the court divided
With pagan infidels? the least part christians,
At least in their commands? Oh, the gods!
It is a thought that takes away my sleep,
And dulls my senses so, I scarcely know you:
Prepare my horses, I'll away to Chester.

Capt. What shall we do with our companies, my lord?

Edol. Keep them at home to increase cuckolds,
And get some cases for your captainships;
Smooth up your brows, the wars has spoil'd your faces,
And few will now regard you.

Dono. Preserve your patience, sir.

Edol. Preserve your honors, lords, your country's
safety,

Your lives, and lands, from strangers: What black devil
Could so bewitch the king, so to discharge
A royal army in the height of conquest,
Nay, even already made victorious,
To give such credit to an enemy,
A starved foe, a straggling fugitive,
Beaten beneath our feet, so low dejected,
So servile and so base, as hope of life
Had won them all, to leave the land for ever?

Dono. It was the king's will.

Edol. It was your want of wisdom,
That should have laid before his tender youth
The dangers of a state, where foreign powers
Bandy for sovereignty with lawful kings,
Who being settled once, to assure themselves,
Will never fail to seek the blood and life
Of all competitors.

Dono. Your words sound well, my lord, and point
at safety,

Both for the realm and us; but why did you,
Within whose power it lay, as general,
With full commission to dispose the war,
Lend ear to parly with the weak'ned foe?

Edol. Oh, the good Gods!

Cador. And on that parly came this embassy.

Edol. You will hear me?

Edw. Your letters did declare it to the king,
Both of the peace, and all conditions,
Brought by this Saxon lady, whose fond love
Has thus bewitched him.

Edol. I will curse you all as black as hell,
Unless you hear me; your gross mistake would make
Wisdom herself run madding through the streets,
And quarrel with her shadow. Death!
Why kill'd you not that woman?

Dono., Glost. Oh, my lord!

Edol. The great devil take me quick, had I been by,
And all the women of the world were barren,
She should have died ere he had married her
On these conditions.

Cador. It is not reason that directs you thus.

Edol. Then have I none, for all I have directs me.
Never was man so palpably abus'd,
So basely marted, bought and sold to scorn.
My honor, fame, and hopeful victories,
The loss of time, expenses, blood and fortunes,
All vanish'd into nothing.

Edw. This rage is vain, my lord:
What the king does, nor they, nor you can help.

Edol. My sword must fail me then.

Cador. 'Gainst whom will you oppose it?

Edol. What's that to you? 'Gainst all the devils in hell,
To guard my country.

Edw. These are airy words.

Edol. Sir, you tread too hard upon my patience.

Edw. I speak the duty of a subject's faith,
And say again, had you been here in presence,
What the king did, you had not dar'd to cross it.

Edol. I 'll trample on his life and soul that says it.

Cador. My lord —

Edw. Come, come.

Edol. Now before heaven!

Cador. Dear sir.

Edol. Not dare? Thou liest beneath thy lungs.

Gloster. No more, son Edwin.

Edw. I have done, sir; I take my leave.

Edol. But thou shalt not; you shall take no leave
of me, sir.

Dono. For wisdom's sake, my lord —

Edol. Sir, I 'll leave him, and you, and all of you,
The court and king, and let my sword, and friends,
Shuffle for Edol's safety: Stay you here,
And hug the Saxons, till they cut your throats,
Or bring the land to servile slavery.
Such yokes of baseness Chester must not suffer!
Go, and repent betimes these foul misdeeds,
For in this league all our whole kingdom bleeds,
Which I 'll prevent, or perish. [*Exeunt EDOL, and Captains.*]

Glost. See, how his rage transports him!

Cador. These passions set apart, a braver soldier
Breathes not i' the world this day.

Dono. I wish his own worth do not court his ruin.
The king must rule, and we must learn to obey,
True virtue still directs the noble way.

Loud musick. Enter AURELIUS, ARTESIA, OSTORIUS,
OCTA, PROXIMUS, TOCLIO, OSWALD, The Hermit.

Aur. Why is the court so dull? methinks, each room
And angle of our palace should appear
Stock full of objects fit for mirth and triumphs,
To show our high content. Oswald, fill wine.

Must we begin the revels? be it so then!
Reach me the cup: I 'll now begin a health
To our lov'd queen, the bright Artesia,
The royal Saxon king, our warlike brother.
Go and command all the whole court to pledge it;
Fill to the Hermit there. Most reverend Anselme,
We 'll do thee honor first, to pledge my queen.

Herm. I drink no healths, great king, and if I did,
I would be loath to part with health to those
That have no power to give it back again.

Aur. Mistake not, it is the argument of love
And duty to our queen and us.

Art. But he owes none, it seems.

Herm. I do to virtue, madam; temperate minds
Covet that health to drink, which nature gives
In every spring to man. He that doth hold
His body but a tenement at will,
Bestows no cost but to repair what 's ill.
Yet if your healths or heat of wine, fair princess,
Could this old frame, or these craz'd limbs restore,
Or keep out death, or sickness, then fill more;
I 'll make fresh way for appetite; if no,
On such a prodigal who would wealth bestow?

Ostor. He speaks not like a guest to grace a wedding.

Enter TOCLIO.

Art. No, sir, but like an envious impostor.

Octa. A Christian slave, a cynick.

Ostor. What virtue could decline your kingly spirit,
To such respect of him whose magick spells
Met with your vanquish'd troops, and turn'd your arms
To that necessity of fight, when the despair

Of any hope to stand but by his charms,
Had been defeated in a bloody conquest?

Octa. 'T was magick, hellbred magick did it, sir,
And that 's a course, my lord, which we esteem,
In all our Saxon wars, unto the last
And lowest ebb of servile treachery.

Aur. Sure, you are deceiv'd, it was the hand of
heaven,

That in his virtue gave us victory.
Is there a power in man that can strike fear
Thorough a general camp, or create spirits,
In recreant bosoms above present sense?

Ostor. To blind the sense there may, with apparition
Of well-arm'd troops, within themselves are air,
Form'd into human shapes; and such that day
Were by that sorcerer rais'd to cross our fortunes.

Aur. There is a law tells us, that words want force
To make deeds void; examples must be shown
By instances alike, ere I believe it.

Ostor. 'T is easily perform'd, believe me, sir:
Propose your own desires, and give but way
To what our magick here shall straight perform,
And then let his or our deserts be censur'd.

Aur. We could not wish a greater happiness,
Than what this satisfaction brings with it.
Let him proceed, fair brother.

Ostor. He shall, sir.
Come, learned Proximus, this task be thine;
Let thy great charms confound the opinion,
This christian by his spells has falsely won.

Prox. Great king, propound your wishes then,
What persons, of what state, what numbers, or how arm'd —
Please your own thoughts, they shall appear before you.

Aur. Strange art! What think'st thou, reverend Hermit?

Herm. Let him go on, sir.

Aur. Wilt thou behold his cunning?

Herm. Right gladly, sir, it will be my joy to tell,
That I was here to laugh at him and hell.

Aur. I like thy confidence.

Art. His saucy impudence! — Proceed to the trial.

Prox. Speak your desires, my lord, and be it placed
In any angle underneath the moon,
The center of the earth, the sea, the air,
The region of the fire, nay, hell itself,
And I 'll present it.

Aur. We 'll have no sight so fearful, only this:
If all thy art can reach it, show me here
The two great champions of the Trojan war,
Achilles and brave Hector, our great ancestor,
Both in their warlike habits, armor, shields
And weapons then in use for fight.

Prox. 'T is done, my lord, command a halt and
silence,
As each man will respect his life or danger! —
Armell! Plesgeth!

Enter Spirits.

Quid vis?

Prox. Attend me.

Aur. The Apparition comes; on our displeasure;
Let all keep place and silence.

[*Within drums beat marches.*

Enter PROXIMUS bringing in Hector attired and armed after the Trojan manner, with target, sword, and battle-ax, a trumpet before him, and a spirit in flame colours

with a torch; at the other door Achilles with his spear and falchion, a trumpet and a spirit in black before him; trumpets sound alarm, and they manage their weapons to begin the fight: and after some charges, the Hermit steps between them, at which seeming amazed the spirits tremble.

[Thunder within.

Prox. What means this stay, bright Armel, Plesgeth? Why fear you and fall back?

Renew the alarums, and enforce the combat,
Or hell or darkness circles you for ever.

Armel. We dare not.

Prox. Ha!

Plesgeth. Our charms are all dissolv'd; Armel, away!
'T is worse than hell to us, whilst here we stay.

[Exeunt Spirits.

Herm. What! at a non-plus, sir? Command them back,
for shame!

Prox. What power o'er-awes my spells? return, you
hell-hounds:

Armel, Plesgeth, double damnation seize you!
By all the infernal powers, the prince of devils
Is in this Hermit's habit: What else could force
My spirits quake or tremble thus?

Herm. Weak argument to hide your want of skill:
Does the devil fear the devil, or war with hell?
They have not been acquainted long, it seems.
Know, misbelieving pagan, even that power,
That overthrew your forces, still lets you see,
He only can controul both hell and thee.

Prox. Disgrace and mischief! I 'll enforce new
charms,

New spells, and spirits rais'd from the low abyss
Of hell's unbottom'd depths.

Aur. We have enough, sir;
Give o'er your charms, we 'll find some other time
To praise your art. I dare not but acknowledge
That heavenly power my heart stands witness to —
Be not dismay'd, my lords, at this disaster,
Nor thou, my fairest queen: we 'll change the scene
To some more pleasing sports. Lead to your chamber. —
Howe'er in this thy pleasures find a cross,
Our joy 's too fixed here to suffer loss.

Tockio. Which I shall add to, sir, with news I
bring:

The prince your brother lives. —

Aur. Ha!

Tockio. And comes to grace this high and heaven-
knit marriage.

Aur. Why dost thou flatter me, to make me think,
Such happiness attends me?

Enter Prince UTER and OSWALD.

Tockio. His presence speaks my truth, sir.

Dono. 'Fore me, 't is he: Look, Gloster.

Glost. A blessing beyond hope, sir.

Aur. Ha! it is he: welcome, my second comfort.

Artesia, dearest love, it is my brother,

My princely brother, all my kingdom's hope:

Oh, give him welcome, as thou lov'st my health.

Art. You have so free a welcome, sir, from me,
As this your presence has such power, I swear,
O'er me, a stranger, that I must forget
My country, name, and friends, and count this place
My joy and birth-right.

Prince. 'T is she!

'T is she, I swear! oh, ye good gods, 't is she!
That face within those woods, where first I saw her,
Captiv'd my senses, and thus many months
Barr'd me from all society of men.

How came she to this place?

Brother Aurelius, speak that angel's name,
Her heaven-blest name, oh, speak it quickly, sir.

Aur. It is Artesia, the royal Saxon princess.

Prince. A woman, and no deity? no feign'd shape,
To mock the reason of admiring sense,
On whom a hope as low as mine may live,
Love, and enjoy, dear brother, may it not?

Aur. She is all the good, or virtue, thou canst name,
My wife, my queen.

Prince. Ha! your wife!

Art. Which you shall find, sir, if that time and fortune
May make my love but worthy of your trial.

Prince. Oh!

Aur. What troubles you, dear brother?
Why with so strange and fix'd an eye dost thou
Behold my joys?

Art. You are not well, sir?

Prince. Yes, yes. Oh, you immortal powers,
Why has poor man so many entrances
For sorrow to creep in at, when our sense
Is much too weak to hold his happiness?
Oh, say I was born deaf: and let your silence
Confirm in me the knowing my defect.
At least be charitable to conceal my sin,
For hearing is no less in me, dear brother.

Aur. No more!

I see thou art a rival in the joys

Of my high bliss. Come, my Artesia;
The day 's most prais'd, when 't is eclips'd by night:
Great good must have as great ill opposite.

Prince. Stay, hear but a word; yet now I think on 't,
This is your wedding-night, and were it mine,
I should be angry with least loss of time.

Art. Envy speaks no such words, has no such looks.

Prince. Sweet rest unto you both.

Aur. Lights to our nuptial chamber!

Art. Could you speak so,
I would not fear how much my grief did grow.

Aur. Lights to our chamber; on, on, set on.

[*Exeunt. Manet Prince.*]

Prince. „Could you speak so,
I would not fear how much my grief did grow.“
Those were her very words, sure! I am waking,
She wrung me by the hand, and spoke them to me
With a most passionate affection.
Perhaps she loves, and now repents her choice
In marriage with my brother. Oh, fond man,
How dar'st thou trust thy traitorous thoughts, thus to
Betray thyself? 'T was but a waking dream
Wherein thou mad'st thy wishes speak, not her,
In which thy foolish hopes strive to prolong
A wretched being. So sickly children play
With health-lov'd toys, which for a time delay,
But do not cure the fit. Be then a man,
Meet that destruction which thou canst not fly
From, not to live, make it thy hest to die;
And call her now, whom thou didst hope to wed,
Thy brother's wife: thou art too near a kin,
And such an act above all name 's a sin
Not to be blotted out, heaven pardon me!

She 's banish'd from my bosom now for ever;
To lowest ebbs men justly hope a flood;
When vice grows barren, all desires are good.

Enter Waiting Gentlewoman with a jewel.

Gent. The noble prince, I take it, sir?

Prince. You speak me, what I should be, lady.

Gent. Know, by that name, sir, queen Artesia greets
you —

Prince. Alas, good virtue, how is she mistaken!

Gent. Commending her affection in this jewel, sir.

Prince. She binds my service to her: Ha! a jewel, 't is
A fair one, trust me, and methinks, it much
Resembles something I have seen with her.

Gent. It is an artificial crab, sir.

Prince. A creature that goes backward.

Gent. True, from the way it looks.

Prince. There is no moral in it alludes to herself?

Gent. 'T is your construction gives you that, sir, she
's a woman.

Prince. And, like this, may use her legs, and eyes
two several ways.

Gent. Just like the sea-crab, which on the mistle
preys, whilst he bills at a stone.

Prince. Pretty in truth; pr'ythee, tell me, art thou
honest?

Gent. I hope I seem no other, sir.

Prince. And those that seem so,
Are sometimes bad enough.

Gent. If they will accuse themselves for want of
witness, let them; I am not so foolish.

Prince. I see th' art wise; come, speak me truly:
What is the greatest sin?

Gent. That which man never acted; what has been done
Is, at the least, common to all as one.

Prince. Dost think thy lady is of thy opinion?

Gent. She 's a bad scholar else, I have brought her up,
And she dares owe me still.

Prince. Ay, 't is a fault in greatness, they dare owe
Many, ere they pay one. But dar'st thou expose
Thy scholar to my examining?

Gent. Yes, in good troth, sir, and pray, put her to 't
too; 't is a hard lesson, if she answer it not.

Prince. Thou know'st the hardest.

Gent. As far as a woman may, sir.

Prince. I commend thy plainness.

When wilt thou bring me to thy lady?

Gent. Next opportunity I attend you, sir.

Prince. Thanks, take this and commend me to her.

Gent. Think of your sea-crab, sir, I pray. [*Exit.*

Prince. Oh, by any means, lady —

What should all this tend to?

If it be love or lust that thus incites her,

The sin is horrid and incestuous;

If to betray my life, what hopes she by it?

Yes, it may be a practice 'twixt themselves,

To expel the Britons and ensure the state

Through our destructions, all this may be

Veil'd with a deeper reach in villany,

Than all my thoughts can guess at. However,

I will confer with her, and if I find

Lust hath given life to envy in her mind,

I may prevent the danger; so men wise

By the same step by which they fell, may rise.

Vices are virtues, if so thought and seen,

And trees, with foulest roots, branch soonest green. [*Exit.*

A C T III.

SCENE I.

Enter Clown and his sister JOAN.

Clown. Come, sister, thou art all fool, all madwoman.

Joan. Pr'ythee, have patience, we are now at court.

Clown. At court! ha, ha, that proves thy madness; was there ever any woman in thy taking travell'd to court for a husband? 'Slid, 't is enough for them to get children, and the city to keep 'em, and the country to find nurses: every thing must be done in his due place, sister.

Joan. Be but content a while; for, sure, I know This journey will be happy. Oh, dear brother, This night my sweet friend came to comfort me; I saw him, and embrac'd him in mine arms.

Clown. Why did you not hold him, and call me to help you?

Joan. Alas, I thought I had been with him still, But when I wak'd —

Clown. A pox of all logger-heads! Then you were but in a dream all this while, and we may still go look him. Well, since we are come to court, cast your cat's eyes about you, and either find him out you dreamt on, or some other, for I 'll trouble myself no further.

Enter DONOBERT, CADOR, EDWIN and TOCLIO.

See, see, here comes more courtiers, look about you, come, pray, view 'em all well; the old man has none of the marks about him, the other have but swords and feathers: What thinkest thou of that tall young gentleman?

Joan. He much resembles him; but, sure, my friend, Brother, was not so high of stature.

Clown. Oh beast, wast thou got a child with a short thing too?

Dono. Come, come, I 'll hear no more on 't: Go,
lord Edwin,

Tell her, this day her sister shall be married
To Cadour, Earl of Cornwall; so shall she
To thee, brave Edwin, if she 'll have my blessing.

Edw. She is addicted to a single life,
She will not hear of marriage.

Dono. Tush, fear it not: Go you from me to her,
Use your best skill, my lord, and if you fail,
I have a trick shall do it: Haste, haste about it.

Edw. Sir, I am gone;
My hope is in your help more than my own.

Dono. And worthy Toelio, to your care I must
Commend this business,
For lights and musick, and what else is needful.

Toelio. I shall, my lord.

Clown. We would entreat a word, sir; come forward, sister.

[*Exeunt* DONOBERT, TOELIO, CADOR.]

Edw. What lack'st thou, fellow?

Clown. I lack a father for a child, sir.

Edw. How! a god-father?

Clown. No, sir, we mean the own father: It may be you, sir, for any thing we know: I think the child is like you.

Edw. Like me! pr'ythee, where is it?

Clown. Nay, 't is not born yet sir, 't is forth-coming; you see, the child must have a father: What do you think of my sister?

Edw. Why, I think, if she ne'er had husband, she 's a whore, and thou a fool; farewell. [*Exit.*]

Clown. I thank you, sir. Well, pull up thy heart, sister; if there be any law i' the court, this fellow shall father it, 'cause he uses me so scurvily. There 's a great wedding towards, they say. We 'll amongst them for a husband for thee.

Enter Sir NICODEMUS with a letter.

If we miss there, I 'll have another bout with him that abus'd me. See, look, there comes another hat and feather, this should be a close latcher, he 's reading of a love-letter.

Sir Nic. Earl Cador's marriage, and a masque to
grace it,

So, so.

This night shall make me famous for presentments. —
How now, what are you?

Clown. A couple of Great Britons, you may see by
our bellies, sir.

Sir Nic. And what of this, sir?

Clown. Why, thus the matter stands, sir: There 's one of your courtiers' hunting nags, has made a gap through another man's inclosure. Now, sir, here 's the question, who should be at charge of a fur-bush to stop it?

Sir Nic. Ha, ha, this is out of my element: The law must end it.

Clown. Your worship says well; for, surely, I think some lawyer had a hand in the business, we have such a troublesome issue.

Sir Nic. But what 's thy business with me now?

Clown. Nay, sir, the business is done already, you may see by my sister's belly.

Sir Nic. Oh, now I find thee. This gentlewoman, it seems, has been humbled.

Clown. As low as the ground would give her leave, sir, and your worship knows this: Though there be many fathers without children, yet to have a child without a father, were most unnatural.

Sir Nic. That 's true, i' faith, I never heard of a child yet that e'er begot his father.

Clown. Why, true, you say wisely, sir.

Sir Nic. And therefore I conclude, that he that got the child, is without all question the father of it.

Clown. Ay, now you come to the matter, sir; and our suit is to your worship for the discovery of this father.

Sir Nic. Why, lives he in the court here?

Joan. Yes, sir, and I desire but marriage.

Sir Nic. And does the knave refuse it? Come, come, be merry, wench, he shall marry thee, and keep the child too, if my knighthood can do any thing; I am bound by mine orders to help distressed ladies, and can there be a greater injury to a woman with child, than to lack a father for 't? I am asham'd of simpleness: Come, come, give me a courtier's fee for my pains, and I 'll be thy advocate myself, and justice shall be found; nay, I 'll sue the law for it; but give me my fee first.

Clown. If all the money I have i' the world will do it, you shall have it, sir.

Sir Nic. An angel does it.

Clown. Nay, there 's two, for your better eyesight, sir.

Sir Nic. Why, well said! give me thy hand, wench, I 'll teach thee a trick for all this, shall get a father for thy child presently, and this it is, mark now: You meet a man, as you meet me now, thou claimest marriage of me, and layest the child to my charge; I deny it: Pish, that 's nothing, hold thy claim fast, thy word carries it, and no law can withstand it.

Clown. Is 't possible?

Sir Nic. Past all opposition; her own word carries it. Let her challenge any man, the child shall call him father; there 's a trick for your money, now.

Clown. Troth, sir, we thank you, we 'll make use of your trick, and go no further to seek the child a father, for we challenge you, sir. Sister, lay it to him, he shall marry thee, I shall have a worshipful old man to my brother.

Sir Nic. Ha, ha, I like thy pleasantness.

Joan. Nay, indeed, sir, I do challenge you.

Clown. You think we jest, sir?

Sir Nic. Ay, by my troth do I, I like thy wit i' faith, thou shalt live at court with me; didst never hear of Nicodemus Nothing? I am the man.

Clown. Nothing? 'slid, we are out again. Thou wast never got with child with nothing, sure?

Joan. I know not what to say.

Sir Nic. Never grieve, wench, show me the man, and process shall fly out.

Clown. 'T is enough for us to find the children, we look that you should find the father, and therefore either do us justice, or we 'll stand to our first challenge.

Sir Nic. Would you have justice without an adversary? Unless you can show me the man, I can do you no good in it.

Clown. Why, then I hope you 'll do us no harm, sir, you 'll restore my money.

Sir Nic. What, my fee?

Marry, law forbid it, and all shall be amended,
The child find his father, and the law ended. [*Exit.*]

Clown. Well, he has deserv'd his fee, indeed, for he has brought our suit to a quick end, I promise you, and yet the child has never a father; nor we have on

more money to seek after him, a shame of all lecherous plackets! Now you look like a cat had newly kitten'd; what will you do now, trow? Follow me no further, lest I beat your brains out.

Joan. Impose upon me any punishment,
Rather than leave me now.

Clown. Well, I think I am bewitch'd with thee; I cannot find in my heart to forsake her, there was never sister would have abus'd a poor brother as thou hast done. I am even pin'd away with fretting, there 's nothing but flesh and bones about me. Well, an I had my money again, it were some comfort; hark, sister, does it not thunder? *(Thunder.)*

Joan. Oh yes, most fearfully: What shall we do,
brother?

Clown. Marry, e'en get some shelter ere the storm catch us: Away, let 's away, I pr'ythee.

Enter The Devil in man's habit, richly attired, his feet and his head horrid.

Joan. Ha, 't is he: stay, brother, dear brother, stay.

Clown. What 's the matter now?

Joan. My love, my friend is come, yonder he goes.

Clown. Where, where? Show me, where, I 'll stop him, if the devil be not in him.

Joan. Look there, look yonder. — Oh, dear friend, pity
my distress,
For heaven and goodness, do but speak to me.

Devil. She calls me, and yet drives me headlong
from her, —

Poor mortal, thou and I are much uneven,
Thou must not speak of goodness, nor of heaven,
If I confer with thee: But be of comfort,

Whilst men do breathe and Britain's name be known,
The fatal print thou bear'st within thy womb,
Shall here be famous till the day of doom.

Clown. 'Slid, who 's that talks so? I can see no-
body.

Joan. Then art thou blind, or mad, see where he
goes,

And beckons me to come; oh, lead me forth,
I 'll follow thee in spite of fear or death. [*Exit.*

Clown. Oh brave! she 'll run to the devil for a
husband, she 's stark mad, sure, and talks to a shadow,
for I could see no substance: Well, I 'll after her, the
child was got by chance, and the father must be found
at all adventure. [*Exit.*

SCENE II.

Enter The Hermit, MODESTIA and EDWIN.

Mod. Oh, reverend sir, by you my heart hath reach'd
At the large hopes of holy piety,
And for this have I crav'd your company,
Here in your sight religiously to vow,
My chaste thoughts up to heaven, and make you now
The witness of my faith.

Herm. Angels assist thy hopes.

Edw. What means my love? thou art my promis'd
wife.

Mod. To part with willingly what friends and life
Can make no good assurance of.

Edw. Oh, find remorse, fair soul, to love and
merit,

And yet recant thy vow.

Mod. Never:

This world and I are parted now for ever.

Herm. To find the way to bliss, oh, happy woman,
Thou 'st learn'd the hardest lesson well, I see,
Now show thy fortitude and constancy,
Let these thy friends thy sad daparture weep,
Thou shalt but lose the wealth thou could'st not keep —
My contemplation calls me, I must leave ye.

Edw. Oh, reverend sir, persuade not her to leave me.

Herm. My lord, I do not, nor to cease to love ye;
I only pray, her faith may fixed stand,
Marriage was blest, I know, with heaven's own hand.

[*Exit.*]

Edw. You hear him, lady, 't is not a virgin's state,
But sanctity of life, must make you happy.

Mod. Good sir, you say you love me, gentle Edwin,
Even by that love I do beseech you leave me.

Edw. Think of your father's tears, your weeping friends,
Whom cruel grief makes pale and bloodless for you.

Mod. 'Would I were dead to all.

Edw. Why do you weep?

Mod. Oh, who would live to see
How men with care and cost seek misery.

Edw. Why do you seek it then? What joy, what pleasure,
Can give you comfort in a single life?

Mod. The contemplation of a happy death,
Which is to me so pleasing that I think
No torture could divert me: What's this world,
Wherein you'd have me walk, but a sad passage
To a dread judgment-seat, from whence even now
We are but bail'd, upon our good abearing,

Till that great sessions come, when death, the crier,
Will surely summon us, and all to appear,
To plead us guilty or our bail to clear:

What musick 's this?

[*Soft musick.*]

Enter Two Bishops, EDWIN, DONOBERT, GLOSTER, CADOR,
CONSTANTIA, OSWALD, TOCLIO.

Edw. Oh, now resolve and think upon my love.
This sounds the marriage of your beauteous sister,
Virtuous Constantia, with the noble Cador,
Look, and behold this pleasure.

Mod. Cover me with night;
It is a vanity not worth the sight.

Dono. See, see, she 's yonder,
Pass on, son Cador, daughter Constantia,
I beseech you all, unless the first move speech,
Salute her not. — Edwin, what good success?

Edw. Nothing as yet, unless this object take her.

Dono. See, see, her eye is fix'd upon her sister —
Seem careless all, and take no notice of her —
On, afore there, come, my Constantia.

Mod. Not speak to me, nor deign to cast an eye,
To look on my despised poverty?
I must be more charitable, — pray, stay, lady,
Are not you she whom I did once call sister?

Const. I did acknowledge such a name to one
Whilst she was worthy of it, in whose folly,
Since you neglect your fame and friends together,
In you I drown'd a sister's name for ever.

Mod. Your looks did speak no less.

Glost. It now begins to work, this sight has mov'd
her.

Dono. I know this trick would take, or nothing.

Mod. Though you disdain in me a sister's name,
Yet charity, methinks, should be so strong
To instruct ere you reject. I am a wretch,
Even folly's instance, who perhaps have err'd,
Not having known the goodness bears so high
And fair a show in you; which being express'd,
I may recant this low despised life
And please those friends whom I have mov'd to grief.

Cador. She is coming, i' faith; be merry, Edwin.

Const. Since you desire instruction, you shall have it.
What is 't should make you thus desire to live,
Vow'd to a single life?

Mod. Because I know I cannot fly from death.
Oh, my good sister, I beseech you, hear me:
This world is but a masque, catching weak eyes,
With what is not ourselves, but our disguise,
A vizard that falls off, the dance being done,
And leaves death's glass for all to look upon.
Our best happiness here lasts but a night,
Whose burning tapers make false ware seem right;
Who knows not this, and will not now provide,
Some better shift before his shame be spied,
And knowing this vain world at last will leave him,
Shake off these robes that help but to deceive him!

Const. Her words are powerful, I am amaz'd to
hear her!

Dono. Her soul 's enchanted with infected spells.
Leave her, best girl, for now in thee
I 'll seek the fruits of age, posterity. —
Out o' my sight! sure; I was half asleep,
Or drunk, when I begot thee.

Const. Good sir, forbear. What say you to that,
sister?

The joy of children, a blest mother's name?
Oh, who without much grief can lose such fame!

Mod. Who can enjoy it without sorrow rather?
And that most certain where the joy 's unsure,
Seeing the fruit that we beget, endure
So many miseries, that oft we pray
The heavens to shut up their afflicted day:
At best we do but bring forth heirs to die,
And fill the coffins of our enemy.

Const. Oh, my soul!

Dono. Hear her no more, Constantia,
She 's sure bewitch'd with error; leave her, girl.

Const. Then must I leave all goodness, sir: away,
Stand off, I say.

Dono. How 's this?

Const. I have no father, friend, no husband now,
All are but borrow'd robes, in which we mask
To waste and spend the time, when all our life
Is but one good betwixt two ague-days,
Which from the first, ere we have time to praise,
A second fever takes us: Oh, my best sister,
My soul's eternal friend, forgive the rashness
Of my distemper'd tongue; for how could she,
Knew not herself, know thy felicity?
From which worlds cannot now remove me.

Dono. Art thou mad too, fond woman? what 's thy
meaning?

Const. To seek eternal happiness in heaven,
Which all this world affords not.

Cador. Think of thy vow, thou art my promis'd
wife.

Const. Pray, trouble me no further.

Omnes. Strange alteration!

Cador. Why do you stand at gaze, you sacred priests?
You holy men, be equal to the gods,
And consummate my marriage with this woman.

Bishop. Herself gives bar, my lord, to your desires,
And our performance; 't is against the law
And orders of the church, to force a marriage.

Cador. How am I wrong'd! Was this your trick, my lord?

Dono. I am abus'd past sufferance;
Grief and amazement strive which sense of mine
Shall lose her being first; yet let me call thee daughter.

Cador. Me, wife.

Const. Your words are air, you speak of want to wealth,
And wish her sickness, newly rais'd to health.

Dono. Bewitched girls, tempt not an old man's fury,
That hath no strength to uphold his feeble age,
But what your sights give life to; oh, beware,
And do not make me curse you.

Mod. (*Kneeling.*) Dear father,
Here at your feet we kneel, grant us but this,
That in your sight and hearing the good Hermit
May plead our cause; which if it shall not give
Such satisfaction as your age desires,
We will submit to you.

Const. You gave us life:
Save not our bodies, but our souls, from death.

Dono. This gives some comfort yet: Rise with my
blessings. —

Have patience, noble Cador, worthy Edwin,
Send for the Hermit that we may confer.
For, sure, religion ties you not to leave
Your careful father thus. If so it be,
Take you content, and give all grief to me. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE III.

Thunder and lightning. Enter Devil.

Devil. Mix light and darkness, earth and heaven
dissolve,

Be of one piece again, and turn to chaos;
Break all your works, you powers, and spoil the world,
Or, if you will maintain earth still, give way
And life to this abortive birth now coming,
Whose fame shall add unto your oracles.
Lucina, Hecate, dreadful queen of night,
Bright Proserpine, be pleas'd for Ceres' love,
From Stygian darkness summon up the Fates,
And in a moment bring them quickly hither,
Lest death do vent her birth and her together. [*Thunder.*
Assist, you spirits of infernal deeps,
Squint-ey'd Erictho, midnight Incubus,
Rise, rise to aid this birth prodigious.

Enter LUCINA, and The three Fates.

Thanks, Hecate, hail, sister to the gods!
There lies your way, haste with the Fates, and help,
Give quick dispatch unto her laboring throes,
To bring this mixture of infernal seed
To human being; [*Exeunt Fates.*
And to beguile her pains, till back you come,
Anticks shall dance, and musick fill the room. — [*Dance.*
Thanks, queen of shades.

Lucina. Farewell, great servant to th' infernal king.
In honor of this child, the Fates shall bring
All their assisting powers of knowledge, arts,
Learning, and wisdom, all the hidden parts
Of all-admiring prophecy, to fore-see

The event of times to come. His art shall stand
A wall of brass to guard the Britain land.
Even from this minute, all his art appears
Manlike in judgment, person, state, and years.
Upon his breast the Fates have fix'd his name,
And since his birthplace was this forest here,
They now have nam'd him Merlin Silvester.

Devil. And Merlin's name in Britany shall live,
Whilst men inhabit here, or Fates can give
Power to amazing wonder; envy shall weep,
And mischief sit and shake her ebon wings,
Whilst all the world of Merlin's magick sings. [*Exeunt.*]

SCENE IV.

Enter Clown.

Clown. Well, I wonder how my poor sister does, after all this thundering. I think she 's dead, for I can hear no tidings of her. Those woods yield small comfort for her; I could meet nothing but a swineherd's wife keeping hogs by the forestside, but neither she nor none of her sows would stir a foot to help us. Indeed, I think she durst not trust herself amongst the trees with me, for I must needs confess I offer'd some kindness to her. Well, I would fain know what 's become of my sister. If she have brought me a young cousin, his face may be a picture to find his father by. So ho! sister Joan, Joan Go-to-'t, where art thou?

Joan. (Within.) Here, here, brother, stay but a while,
I come to thee.

Clown. O brave! she 's alive still, I know her voice, she speaks, and speaks cheerfully, methinks. How now, what moon-calf has she got with her?

Enter JOAN and MERLIN with a book.

Joan. Come, my dear Merlin, why dost thou fix
thine eye

So deeply on that book?

Merl. To sound the depth
Of arts, of learning, wisdom, knowledge.

Joan. Oh, my dear, dear son,
Those studies fit thee when thou art a man.

Merl. Why, mother, I can be but half a man at best,
And that is your mortality; the rest
In me is spirit; 't is not meat, nor time,
That gives this growth and bigness; no, my years
Shall be more strange than yet my birth appears.
Look, mother, there 's my uncle.

Joan. How dost thou know him, son? thou never
saw'st him.

Merl. Yes, I know him, and know the pains he has
taken for ye, to find out my father — Give me your hand,
good uncle.

Clown. Ha, ha, I 'd laugh at that, i' faith. Do you
know me, sir?

Merl. Yes, by the same token that even now you
kiss'd the swineherd's wife i' the woods, and would have
done more, if she would have let you, uncle.

Clown. A witch, a witch, a witch, sister! Rid him
out of your company, he is either a witch or a conjurer;
he could never have known this else.

Joan. Pray, love him, brother, he is my son.

Clown. Ha, ha, this is worse than all the rest, i'
faith; by his beard he is more like your husband. Let me
see, is your great belly gone?

Joan. Yes, and this the happy fruit.

Clown. What, this artichoke? A child born with a beard on his face?

Merl. Yes, and strong legs to go, and teeth to eat.

Clown. You can nurse up yourself then? There 's some charges sav'd for soap and caudle; 'slid, I have heard of some that has been born with teeth, but never none with such a talking tongue before.

Joan. Come, come, you must use him kindly, brother; did you but know his worth, you would make much of him.

Clown. Make much of a monkey? This is worse than Tom Thumb, that let a fart in his mother's belly; a child to speak, eat, and go the first hour of his birth, nay, such a baby as had need of a barber before he was born too! Why, sister, this is monstrous, and shames all our kindred.

Joan. That thus 'gainst nature and our common births
He comes thus furnish'd, to salute the world,
Is power of Fates, and gift of his great father.

Clown. Why, of what profession is your father, sir?

Merl. He keeps a hot-house i' the Low Countries; will you see him, sir?

Clown. See him? why, sister, has the child found his father?

Merl. Yes, and I 'll fetch him, uncle. *[Exit.]*

Clown. Do not uncle me, till I know your kindred. For my conscience, some baboon begot thee. — Surely thou art horribly deceived, sister, this urchin cannot be of thy breeding; I shall be asham'd to call him cousin, though his father be a gentleman.

Enter MERLIN and Devil.

Merl. Now, my kind uncle, see,
The child has found his father, this is he.

Clown. The devil it is; ha, ha, is this your sweet-heart, sister? have we run through the country, haunted the city, and examin'd the court to find out a gallant with a hat and feather, and a silken sword, and golden hangers, and do you now bring me to a ragamuffin with a face like a frying-pan?

Joan. Fie, brother, you mistake; behold him better.

Clown. How 's this? do you juggle with me, or are mine eyes matches? Hat and feather, sword, and hangers, and all! This is a gallant, indeed, sister; this has all the marks of him we look for.

Devil. And you have found him now, sir:
Give me your hand, I now must call you brother.

Clown. Not till you have married my sister, for all this while she 's but your whore, sir.

Devil. Thou art too plain, I 'll satisfy that wrong
To her, and thee, and all, with liberal hand:
Come, why art thou fearful?

Clown. Nay, I am not afraid, an you were the devil, sir.

Devil. Thou needest not; keep with thy sister still,
And I 'll supply your wants, you shall lack nothing
That gold and wealth can purchase.

Clown. Thank you, brother. We have gone many a weary step to find you; you may be a husband for a lady, for you are far-fetch'd and dear-bought, I assure you. Pray, how should I call your son, my cousin here?

Devil. His name is Merlin.

Clown. Merlin? Your hand, cousin Merlin; for your father's sake I accept you unto my kindred; if you grow in all things as your beard does, you will be talk'd on. By your mother's side, cousin, you come of the Go-to-'ts, Suffolk-bred, but our standing house is at Hocklye

i' th' Hole, and Layton-Buzzard. For your father, no doubt you may from him claim titles of worship, but I cannot describe it; I think his ancestors came first from Hell-bree in Wales, cousin.

Devil. No matter whence we do derive our name:
All Britany shall ring of Merlin's fame,
And wonder at his acts. Go hence to Wales,
There live a while, there Vortiger the king
Builds castles and strong holds, which cannot stand,
Unless supported by young Merlin's hand.
There shall thy fame begin, wars are a breeding.
The Saxons practise treason, yet unseen,
Which shortly shall break out. — Fair love, farewell;
Dear son and brother, here I must leave you all,
Yet still I will be near at Merlin's call. [*Exit.*

Merl. Will you go, uncle?

Clown. Yes, I 'll follow you, cousin. — Well, I do most horribly begin to suspect my kindred; this brother-in-law of mine is the devil, sure, and though he hide his horns with his hat and feather, I spied his cloven foot for all his cunning. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE V.

Enter OSTORIUS, OCTA, and PROXIMUS.

Ostor. Come, come, time calls our close complots
to action:

Go, Proximus, with winged speed fly hence,
Hie thee to Wales, salute great Vortiger
With these our letters; bid the king to arms,
Tell him we have new friends, more forces landed
In Norfolk and Northumberland; bid him

Make haste to meet us; if he keep his word,
We 'll part the realm between us.

Octa. Bend all thine art to quit that late disgrace
The christian Hermit gave thee; make thy revenge
Both sure and home.

Prox. That thought, sir, spurs me on,
Till I have wrought their swift destruction. [*Exit.*

Ostor. Go then and prosper. *Octa*, be vigilant:
Speak, are the forts possess'd? the guards made sure?
Revolve, I pray, on how large consequence
The bare event and sequel of our hopes
Jointly consists, that have embark'd our lives
Upon the hazard of the least miscarriage.

Octa. All 's sure, the queen your sister hath contrived

The cunning plot so sure, as at an instant
The brothers shall be both surpriz'd and taken.

Ostor. And both shall die, yet one a while must live,

Till we by him have gather'd strength and power

To meet bold Edol, their stern general,
That now, contrary to the king's command,
Hath re-united all his cashier'd troops,
And this way beats his drums to threaten us.

Octa. Then our plot is discover'd.

Ostor. Come, th' art a fool, his army and his life
Is given unto us: Where is the queen my sister?

Octa. In conference with the prince.

Ostor. Bring the guards nearer, all is fair and good;

This conference, I hope, shall end in blood. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE VI.

Enter Prince and ARTESIA.

Art. Come, come, you do but flatter;
What you term love, is but a dream of blood,
Wakes with enjoying, and with open eyes,
Forgot, contemn'd, and lost.

Prince. [*Aside.*] I must be wary, her words are
dangerous. —

True, we 'll speak of love no more then.

Art. Nay, if you will, you may;
'T is but in jest, and yet so children play
With fiery flames, and covet what is bright,
But, feeling his effects, abhor the light.
Pleasure is like a building, the more high,
The narrower still it grows; cedars do die
Soonest at top.

Prince. How does your instance suit?

Art. From art and nature to make sure the root,
And lay a fast foundation, ere I try
The incertain changes of a wavering sky. —
Make your example thus. — You have a kiss. [*Kisses him.*
Was is not pleasing?

Prince. Above all name to express it.

Art. Yet now the pleasure 's gone,
And you have lost your joy's possession.

Prince. Yet when you please, this flood may ebb
again.

Art. But where it never ebbs, there runs the main.

Prince. Who can attain such hopes?

Art. I 'll show the way to 't. Give me
A taste once more of what you may enjoy.

[*Kisses him.*

Prince. [*Aside.*] Impudent whore! —
I were more false than atheism can be,
Should I not call this high felicity.

Art. If I should trust your faith, alas, I fear,
You soon would change belief.

Prince. I 'd covet martyrdom to make 't confirm'd.

Art. Give me your hand on that you 'll keep your
word.

Prince. I will.

Art. Enough: Help, husband, king Aurelius, help! —
Rescue betray'd Artesia.

Prince. Nay then 't is I that am betray'd, I see;
Yet with thy blood I 'll end thy treachery.

Art. How now? what troubles you? Is this you, sir,
That but even now would suffer martyrdom
To win your hopes, and is there now such terror
In names of men to fright you? Nay, then I see
What mettle you are made of.

Prince. Ha! was 't but trial? then I ask your pardon:
What a dull slave was I to be so fearful!

[*Aside.*] I 'll trust her now no more, yet try the utmost. —
I am resolv'd, no brother, no man breathing,
Were he my blood's begetter, should withhold.
Me from your love; I 'd leap into his bosom,
And from his breast pull forth that happiness
Heaven had reserv'd in you for my enjoying.

Art. Ay, now you speak a lover like a prince! —
Treason, treason!

Prince. Again?

Art. Help, Saxon princes, treason!

Enter OSTORIUS, OCTA etc.

Ostor. Rescue the queen; strike down the villain.

Enter EDOL, AURELIUS, DONOBERT, CADOR, EDWIN,
TOCLIO, OSWALD, *at the other door.*

Edol. Call in the guards; the prince in danger! —
Fall back, dear sir, my breast shall buckler you.

Aur. Beat down their weapons!

Edol. Slave, wert thou made of brass, my sword
shall bite thee.

Aur. Withdraw on pain of death! Where is the
traitor?

Art. Oh, save your life; my lord, let it suffice
My beauty forc'd mine own captivity.

Aur. Who did attempt to wrong thee?

Prince. Hear me, sir.

Aur. Oh my sad soul! was 't thou?

Art. Oh, do not stand to speak; one minute's stay
Prevents a second speech for ever.

Aur. Make our guards strong:
My dear Artesia, let us know thy wrongs,
And our own dangers.

Art. The prince your brother, with these Briton
lords,
Have all agreed to take me hence by force,
And marry me to him.

Prince. The devil shall wed thee first;
Thy baseness and thy lust confound and rot thee!

Art. He courted me even now, and in mine ear
Sham'd not to plead his most dishonest love,
And their attempts to seize your sacred person,
Either to shut you up within some prison,
Or, which is worse, I fear, to murder you.

Omnes Britons. 'T is all as false as hell.

Edol. And as foul as she is.

Art. You know me, sir?

Edol. Yes, deadly sin, we know you,
And shall discover all your villany.

Aur. Chester, forbear.

Ostor. Their treasons, sir, are plain:
Why are their soldiers lodg'd so near the court?

Octa. Nay, why came he in arms so suddenly?

Edol. You fleering anticks, do not wake my fury.

Octa. Fury?

Edol. Ratsbane, do not urge me.

Art. Good sir, keep farther from them.

Prince. Oh, my sick heart!

She is a witch by nature, devil by art.

Aur. Bite thine own slanderous tongue, 't is thou
art false,

I have observ'd your passions long ere this.

Ostor. Stand on your guard, my lord, we are your
friends,

And all our force is yours.

Edol. To spoil and rob the kingdom.

Aur. Sir, be silent.

Edol. Silent! how long? till doomsday? shall I
stand by,

And hear mine honor blasted with foul treason,

The state half lost, and your life endanger'd, yet be silent?

Art. Yes, my blunt lord, unless you speak your
treasons —

Sir, let your guards, as traitors, seize them all,

And then let tortures and divulsive racks

Force a confession from them.

Edol. Wildfire and brimstone eat thee! Hear me,
sir.

Aur. Sir, I 'll not hear you.

Edol. But you shall! Not hear me?

Were the world's monarch, Cæsar, living, he
Should hear me.

I tell you, sir, these serpents have betray'd
Your life and kingdom. Does not every day
Bring tidings of more swarms of lousy slaves,
The offal fugitives of barren Germany,
That land upon our coasts, and by our neglect
Settled in Norfolk and Northumberland?

Ostor. They come as aids and safeguards to the
king.

Octa. Has he not need, when Vortiger's in arms,
And you raise powers, 't is thought, to join with him?

Edol. Peace, you pernicious rat.

Dono. Pr'ythee, forbear.

Edol. Away, suffer a gilded rascal,
A low-bred despicable creeper, an insulting toad,
To spit his poison'd venom in my face!

Octa. Sir, sir.

Edol. Do not reply, you cur; for, by the gods,
Though the king's presence guard thee, I shall break all
patience,

And, like a lion rous'd to spoil, shall run
Foul-mouth'd upon thee, and devour thee quick. —
Speak, sir, will you forsake these scorpions,
Or stay, till they have stung you to the heart?

Aur. You are traitors all, this is our wife, our
queen.

Brother Ostorius, troop your Saxons up,
We'll hence to Winchester, raise more powers,
To man with strength the castle Camilot. —
Go hence, false men, join you with Vortiger,
The murderer of our brother Constantine:
We'll hunt both him and you with dreadful vengeance.

Since Britain fails, we 'll trust to foreign friends,
And guard our person from your traitorous ends.

[*Exeunt* AUR., OSTOR., OCTA, ART., TOCL., OSW.]

Edw. He 's sure bewitch'd.

Glost. What counsel now for safety?

Dono. Only this, sir: with all the speed we can,
Preserve the person of the king and kingdom.

Cador. Which to effect, 't is best march hence to
Wales,

And set on Vortiger before he join
His forces with the Saxons.

Edw. On then with speed for Wales and Vortiger!
That tempest once o'erblown, we come, Ostorius,
To meet thy traitorous Saxons, thee and them,
That with advantage thus have won the king,
To back your factions, and to work our ruins.
This, by the gods and my good sword, I 'll set
In bloody lines upon thy burgonet. [*Exeunt.*]

A C T I V.

SCENE I.

Enter Clown, MERLIN, and a little Antick Spirit.

Merl. How now, uncle? Why do you search your
pockets so? do you miss any thing?

Clown. Ha! cousin Merlin, I hope your beard does
not overgrow your honesty; I pray, remember, you are
made up of my sister's thread, I am your mother's brother,
whosoever was your father.

Merl. Why, wherein can you task my duty, uncle?

Clown. Yourself, or your page it must be; I have
kept no other company, since your mother bound you

head to my protectorship; I do feel a fault of one side; either it was that sparrowhawk, or a cast of Merlin's, for I find a covey of cardecu's sprung out of my pocket.

Merl. Why, do you want any money, uncle? — Sirrah, had you any from him?

Clown. Deny it not, for my pockets are witness against you.

Spirit. Yes, I had, to teach you better wit to look to it.

Clown. Pray, use your fingers better, and my wit may serve as it is, sir.

Merl. Well, restore it.

Spirit. There it is.

Clown. Ay, there 's some honesty in this; 't was a token from your invisible father, cousin, which I would not have to go invisibly from me again.

Merl. Well, you are sure you have it now, uncle?

Clown. Yes, and mean to keep it now from your page's filching fingers too.

Spirit. If you have it so sure, pray, show it me again.

Clown. Yes, my little juggler, I dare show it. — Ha cleanly conveyance again! ye have no invisible fingers, have ye? 'T is gone, certainly.

Spirit. Why, sir, I touch'd you not.

Merl. Why, look you, uncle, I have it now. How ill do you look to it. Here, keep it safer.

Clown. Ha, ha, this is fine, i' faith. I must keep some other company, if you have these sleights of hand.

Merl. Come, come, uncle, 't is all my art which shall not offend you, sir, only I give you a taste of it, to show you sport.

Clown. Oh, but 't is all jesting with a man's pocket,

though. — But I am glad to see your cunning, cousin, for now will I warrant thee a living till thou diest. You have heard the news in Wales here?

Merl. Uncle, let me prevent your care and counsel, 'T will give you better knowledge of my cunning; You would prefer me now, in hope of gain, To Vortiger, king of the Welsh Britons, To whom are all the artists summon'd now, That seek the secrets of futurity, The bards, the druids, wizards, conjurers, Not an Aruspex with his whistling spells, No Capnomancer with his musty fumes, No witch or juggler, but is thither sent, To calculate the strange and fear'd event Of his prodigious castle, now in building, Where all the labors of the painful day, Are ruin'd still i' the night, and to this place You would have me go.

Clown. Well, if thy mother were not my sister, I would say she was a witch that begot thee; but this is thy father, not thy mother wit. Thou hast taken my tale into thy mouth, and spoke my words before me; therefore away, shuffle thyself amongst the conjurers, and be a made man before thou comest to age.

Merl. Nay, but stay, uncle, you overslip my dangers: The prophecies and all the cunning wizards, Have certified the king, that this his castle Can never stand, till the foundation 's laid With mortar temper'd with the fatal blood Of such a child, whose father was no mortal.

Clown. What 's this to thee? If the devil were thy father, was not thy mother born at Carmarthen? Diggon for that then; and then it must be a child's blood, and

who will take thee for a child with such a beard of thy face? Is there not diggon for that too, cousin?

Merl. I must not go: Lend me your ear a while, I 'll give you reasons to the contrary.

Enter Two Gentlemen.

1 Gent. Sure, this is an endless piece of work, the king has sent us about!

2 Gent. Kings may do it, man; the like has been done to find out the unicorn.

1 Gent. Which will be sooner found, I think, than this fiend-begotten child we seek for.

2 Gent. Pox of those conjurers that would speak of such a one, and yet all their cunning could not tell us where to find him.

1 Gent. In Wales they say assuredly he lives; come, let 's enquire further.

Merl. Uncle, your persuasions must not prevail with me: I know mine enemies better than you do.

Clown. I say th' art a bastard then, if thou disobey thine uncle. Was not Joan Go-to-'t, thy mother, my sister? If the devil were thy father, what kin art thou to any man alive, but baileys and brokers? and they are but brothers-in-law to thee neither.

1 Gent. How 's this? I think we shall speed here.

2 Gent. Ay, and unlook'd for to. Go near and listen to them.

Clown. Hast thou a beard to hide it? Wilt then show thyself a child? Wilt thou have more hair than wit? Wilt thou deny thy mother, because nobody knows thy father? Or shall thine uncle be an ass?

1 Gent. Bless ye, friend: Pray, what call you this small gentleman's name?

Clown. Small, sir? A small man may be a great gentleman; his father may be of an ancient house, for aught we know, sir.

2 Gent. Why, do you not know his father?

Clown. No, nor you neither, I think, unless the devil be in ye.

1 Gent. What is his name, sir?

Clown. His name is my cousin, sir; his education is my sister's son, but his manners are his own.

Merl. Why ask ye, gentlemen? My name is Merlin.

Clown. Yes, and a goshawk was his father, for aught we know; for I am sure his mother was a wind-sucker.

2 Gent. He has a mother then?

Clown. As sure as I have a sister, sir.

1 Gent. But his father you leave doubtful.

Clown. Well, sir, as wise men as you doubt, whether he had a father or no.

1 Gent. Sure, this is he we seek for.

2 Gent. I think no less: And, sir, we let you know the king hath sent for you.

Clown. The more child he; an he had been rul'd by me, he should have gone before he was sent for.

1 Gent. May we not see his mother?

Clown. Yes, and feel her too, if you anger her. A devilish thing, I can tell ye, she has been. I'll go fetch her to ye. [Exit.]

2 Gent. Sir, it were fit you did resolve for speed, You must unto the king.

Merl. My service, sir,
Shall need no strict command, it shall obey
Most peaceably; but needless 't is to fetch
What is brought home. My journey may be staid,

The king is coming hither
With the same quest you bore before him. — Hark,
This drum will tell ye. [*Within drums beat a low march.*
1 *Gent.* This is some cunning, indeed, sir.

Flourish. Enter VORTIGER reading a letter, PROXIMUS,
with drum and soldiers, etc.

Vort. Still in our eye your message, Proximus,
We keep to spur our speed:
Ostorius and Octa we shall salute
With succour 'gainst prince Uter and Aurelius,
Whom now we hear encamp'd at Winchester.
There 's nothing interrupts our way so much,
As doth the erection of this fatal castle,
That spite of all our art and daily labor,
The night still ruins.

Prox. As erst I did affirm, still I maintain,
The fiend-begotten child must be found out,
Whose blood gives strength to the foundation,
It cannot stand else.

Enter Clown, MERLIN, and JOAN.

Vort. Ha! is 't so?
Then, Proximus, by this intelligence
He should be found: Speak, is this he you tell of?

Clown. Yes, sir, and I his uncle, and she his mother.

Vort. And who is his father?

Clown. Why, she his mother can best tell you that,
and yet I think the child be wise enough, for he has
found his father.

Vort. Woman, is this thy son?

Joan. It is, my lord.

Vort. What was his father? Or where lives he?

Merl. Mother, speak freely and unastonished;
That which you dar'd to act, dread not to name.

Joan. In which I shall betray my sin and shame,
But since it must be so, then know, great king,
All that myself yet knows of him, is this:
In pride of blood and beauty I did live,
My glass the altar was, my face the idol;
Such was my peevish love unto myself,
That I did hate all other; such disdain
Was in my scornful eye, that I suppos'd
No mortal creature worthy to enjoy me.
Thus with the peacock I beheld my train,
But never saw the blackness of my feet,
Oft have I chid the winds for breathing on me,
And curs'd the sun, fearing to blast my beauty.
In midst of this most leperous disease,
A seeming fair young man appear'd unto me,
In all things suiting my aspiring pride,
And with him brought along a conquering power,
To which my frailty yielded; from whose embraces
This issue came. What more he is, I know not.

Vort. Some Incubus, or spirit of the night
Begot him then; for, sure, no mortal did it.

Merl. No matter who, my lord; leave further quest,
Since 't is as hurtful as unnecessary
More to enquire: Go to the cause, my lord,
Why you have sought me thus?

Vort. I have no doubt but thou know'st; yet, to be
plain,

I sought thee for thy blood.

Merl. By whose direction?

Prox. By mine.

My art infallible instructed me,

Upon thy blood must the foundation rise
Of the king's building, it cannot stand else.

Merl. Hast thou such leisure to enquire my fate,
And let thine own hang careless over thee?
Know'st thou what pendulous mischief roofs thy head,
How fatal, and how sudden?

Prox. Pish!
Bearded abortive, thou foretell my danger? —
My lord, he trifles to delay his own.

Merl. No,
I yield myself; and here before the king,
Make good thine augury, as I shall mine.
If thy fate fall not, thou hast spoke all truth,
And let my blood satisfy the king's desires:
If thou thyself wilt write thine epitaph,
Dispatch it quickly, there 's not a minute's time
'Twixt thee and thy death.

Prox. Ha, ha, ha!

[*A stone falls and kills Proximus.*]

Merl. Ay, so thou may'st die laughing.

Vort. Ha! This is above admiration. Look, is he dead?

Clown. Yes, sir, here 's brains to make mortar of,
if you 'll use them. — Cousin Merlin, there 's no more of
this stone fruit ready to fall, is there? I pray, give your
uncle a little fair warning.

Merl. Remove that shape of death; and now, my lord,
For clear satisfaction of your doubts, Merlin will show
The fatal cause that keeps your castle down,
And hinders your proceedings.
Stand there, and by an apparition see
The labor and end of all your destiny. —
Mother and uncle, you must be absent.

Clown. Is your father coming, cousin?

Merl. Nay, you must be gone.

Joan. Come, you 'll offend him, brother.

Clown. I would fain see my brother-in-law; if you were married, I might lawfully call him so.

[*Exeunt* JOAN and Clown.

MERLIN strikes his wand. Thunder and lightning. Two dragons appear, a white and a red; they fight a while and pause.

Vort. What means this stay?

Merl. Be not amaz'd, my lord, for on the victory
Of loss or gain, as these two champions' ends,
Your fate, your life, and kingdom all depends;
Therefore observe it well. 4

Vort. I shall; heaven be auspicious to us.

Thunder. *The two dragons fight again, and the white dragon drives off the red.*

Vort. The conquest is on the white dragon's part.
Now, Merlin, faithfully expound the meaning.

Merl. Your grace must then not be offended with me.

Vort. Is it the weakest part I found in thee,
To doubt of me so slightly? Shall I blame
My prophet that foretells me of my dangers?
Thy cunning I approve most excellent.

Merl. Then know, my lord, there is a dampish cave,
The nightly habitation of these dragons,
Vaulted beneath where you would build your castle,
Whose enmity and nightly combats there
Maintain a constant ruin of your labors.
To make it more plain, the dragons then
Yourself betoken, and the Saxon king;
The vanquish'd red is, sir, your dreadful emblem.

Vort. Oh my fate!

Merl. Nay, you must hear with patience, royal sir:
You slew the lawful king Constantius:
'T was a red deed, your crown his blood did cement.
The English Saxon, first brought in by you,
For aid against Constantius' brethren,
Is the white horror; who now, knit together,
Have driven and shut you up in these wild mountains.
And though they now seek to unite with friendship,
It is to wound your bosom, not embrace it,
And with an utter extirpation
To rout the Britons out, and plant the English.
Seek for your safety, sir, and spend no time
To build the airy castles; for prince Uter
Armed with vengeance for his brother's blood
Is hard upon you. If you mistrust me,
And to my words crave witness, sir, then know,
Here comes a messenger to tell you so. [*Exit MERLIN.*]

Enter Messenger.

Mess. My lord! prince Uter!

Vort. And who else, sir?

Mess. Edol, the great general.

Vort. The great devil!

They are coming to meet us.

Mess. With a full power, my lord.

Vort. With a full vengeance

They mean to meet us; so we are ready
To their confront, at full march double footing.
We 'll lose no ground, nor shall their numbers fright us:
If it be fate, it cannot be withstood;
We got our crown so, be it lost in blood. [*Exeunt.*]

SCENE II.

*Enter Prince UTER, EDOL, CADOR, EDWIN, TOCLIO,
with drum and soldiers.*

Prince. Stay, and advice; hold, drum.

Edol. Beat, slave, why do you pause?
Why make a stand? where are our enemies?
Or do you mean we fight amongst ourselves?

Prince. Nay, noble Edol, let us here take counsel,
It cannot hurt,
It is the surest garrison to safety.

Edol. Fie on such slow delays! so fearful men,
That are to pass over a flowing river,
Stand on the bank to parly of the danger,
Till the tide rise, and then be swallowed.
Is not the king in field?

Cador. Proud Vortiger, the traitor, is in field.

Edw. The murderer, and usurper.

Edol. Let him be the devil,
So I may fight with him. For heaven's love, sir, march on.
Oh my patience! will you delay
Until the Saxons come to aid his party? [*A tucket.*]

Prince. There 's no such fear: Pr'ythee, be calm
a while.

Hark!

It seems by this, he comes or sends to us.

Edol. If it be for parly, I will drown the summons,
If all our drums and hoarseness choke me not.

Enter Captain.

Prince. Nay, pr'ythee, hear. — From whence art thou?

Capt. From the king Vortiger.

Edol. Traitor, there 's none such:

Alarum drum, strike, slave, or by mine honor
I will break thy head, and beat thy drumsticks both
About thine ears.

Prince. Hold, noble Edol,
Let 's hear what articles he can enforce.

Edol. What articles, or what conditions
Can you expect to value half your wrong,
Unless he kill himself by thousand tortures,
And send his carcass to appease your vengeance,
For the foul murder of Constantius,
And that 's not a tenth part neither.

Prince. 'T is true,
My brother's blood is crying to me now;
I do applaud thy counsels. Hence, be gone! —

[*Exit* Captain.

We 'll hear no parly now but by our swords.

Edol. And those shall speak home in death-killing
words. —

Alarum to the fight, sound, sound the alarum. [*Exeunt.*

Alarum. *Enter* EDOL *driving all* VORTIGER'S *force*
before him; then exit.

SCENE III.

Enter Prince UTER *pursuing* VORTIGER.

Vort. Dost follow me?

Prince. Yes, to thy death I will.

Vort. Stay, be advis'd,
It would not be the only fall of princes,
I slew thy brother.

Prince. Thou didst, black traitor,
And in that vengeance I pursue thee.

Vort. Take mercy for thyself, and fly my sword,
Save thine own life as satisfaction,
Which here I give thee for thy brother's death.

Prince. Give what 's thine own: a traitor's heart
and head,
That 's all thou art right lord of; the kingdom
Which thou usurp'st, thou most unhappy tyrant,
Is leaving thee; the Saxons which thou brought'st
To back thy usurpations, are grown great,
And where they seat themselves, do hourly seek
To blot the records of old Brute and Britons
From memory of men, calling themselves
Hingest-men, and Hingest-land, that no more
The Briton name be known; all this by thee,
Thou base destroyer of thy native country.

Enter EDOL.

Edol. What, stand you talking? Fight!

Prince. Hold, Edol.

Edol. Hold out, my sword,
And listen not to king or prince's word,
There 's work enough abroad, this task is mine. [*Alarum.*

Prince. Prosper thy valour, as thy virtues shine.
[*Exeunt.*

SCENE IV.

Enter CADOR, and EDWIN.

Cador. Bright victory herself fights on our part,
And, buckled in a golden beaver, rides
Triumphantly before us.

Edw. Justice is with her,
Who ever takes the true and rightful cause;
Let us not lag behind them.

Enter Prince.

Cador. Here comes the prince; how go our fortunes, sir?

Prince. Hopeful, and fair, brave Cador;
Proud Vortiger, beat down by Edol's sword,
Was rescu'd by the following multitudes,
And now for safety 's fled unto a castle
Here standing on the hill; but I have sent
A cry of hounds as violent as hunger,
To break his stony walls; or if they fail,
We 'll send in wildfire to dislodge him thence,
Or burn them all with flaming violence. [*Exeunt.*]

SCENE V.

Blazing star appears. Flourish. Enter Prince UTER, EDOL, CADOR, EDWIN, TOCLIO, with drum and soldiers.

Prince. Look, Edol: Still this fiery exhalation shoots
His frightful horrors on th' amazed world;
See, in the beam that 'bout his flaming ring,
A dragon's head appears, from out whose mouth
Two flaming flakes of fire stretch east and west.

Edol. And see, from forth the body of the star
Seven smaller blazing streams directly point
On this affrighted kingdom.

Cador. 'T is a dreadful meteor.

Edw. And doth portend strange fears.

Prince. This is no crown of peace; this angry fire
Hath something more to burn than Vortiger;
If it alone were pointed at his fall,
It would pull in his blazing pyramids,
And be appeas'd, for Vortiger is dead.

Edol. These never come without their large effects.

Prince. The will of heaven be done! Our sorrow's this,
We want a mystic Python to expound
This fiery oracle.

Cador. Oh no, my lord,
You have the best that ever Britain bred;
And durst I prophecy of your prophet, sir,
None like him shall succeed him.

Prince. You mean Merlin?

Cador. True, sir, wonderous Merlin,
He met us in the way, and did foretell
The fortunes of this day successful to us.

Edw. He's sure about the camp; send for him, sir.

Cador. He told the bloody Vortiger his fate,
And truly too, and if I could give faith
To any wizard's skill, it should be Merlin.

Enter MERLIN and Clown.

Cador. And see, my lord,
As if to satisfy your highness' pleasure,
Merlin is come.

Prince. See,
The comet's in his eye, disturb him not.

Edol. With what a piercing judgment he beholds it!

Merl. Whither will heaven and fate translate this
kingdom?

What revolutions, rise and fall of nations
Is figur'd yonder in that star, that sings

The change of Britain's state, and death of kings?
Ha! He 's dead already, how swiftly mischief creeps!
Thy fatal end, sweet prince, even Merlin weeps.

Prince. He does foresee some evil, his action shows it,
For, ere he does expound, he weeps the story.

Edol. There is another weeps too. —
Sirrah, doth thou understand what thou lament'st for?

Clown. No, sir, I am his uncle, and weep because
my cousin weeps; flesh and blood cannot forbear.

Prince. Gentle Merlin, speak thy prophetick knowledge,
In explanation of this fiery horror,
From which we gather from thy mournful tears,
Much sorrow and disaster in it.

Merl. 'T is true,
Fair prince, but you must hear the rest with patience.

Prince. I vow I will, tho' it portend my ruin.

Merl. There 's no such fear,
This brought the fiery fall of Vortiger,
And yet not him alone: This day is fall'n
A king more good, the glory of our land,
The mild, and gentle, sweet Aurelius.

Prince. Our brother?

Edw. Forefend it, heaven!

Merl. He at his palace royal, sir,
At Winchester, this day is dead and poison'd.

Cador. By whom? or what means, Merlin?

Merl. By the traitorous Saxons.

Edol. I ever fear'd as much: That devil Ostorius,
And the damn'd witch Artesia, sure, have done it.

Prince. Poisoned! oh, look further, gentle Merlin,
Behold the star again, and do but find
Revenge for me, though it cost thousand lives,
And mine the foremost.

Merl. Comfort yourself, the heavens have given it fully,
All the portentious ills to you are told.
Now hear a happy story, sir, from me,
To you and to your fair posterity.

Clown. Methinks, I see something like a peel'd onion,
it makes me weep again.

Merl. Be silent, uncle, you 'll be forc'd else.

Clown. Can you not find in the star, cousin, whether
I can hold my tongue or no?

Edol. Yes, I must cut it out.

Clown. O, ha, you speak without book, sir, my
cousin Merlin knows.

Merl. True, I must tie it up. Now speak your pleasure,
uncle.

Clown. Hum, hum, hum, hum.

Merl. So, so. — Now observe, my lord, and there
behold

Above yon flame-hair'd beam that upwards shoots,
Appears a dragon's head, out of whose mouth
Two streaming lights point their flame-feather'd darts
Contrary ways, yet both shall have their aims.
Again behold from the igniferous body,
Seven splendent and illustrious rays are spread,
All speaking heralds to this Briton isle,
And thus they are expounded: The dragon's head
Is the hieroglyphick that figures out
Your princely self that here must reign a king;
Those by-form'd fires that from the dragon's mouth
Shoot east and west, emblem two royal babes,
Which shall proceed from you, a son and daughter:
Her pointed constellation northwest tending,
Crowns her a queen in Ireland, of whom first springs
That kingdom's title to the Briton kings.

Clown. Hum, hum, hum.

Merl. But of your son, thus fate and Merlin tells:
All aftertimes shall fill their chronicles
With fame of his renown, whose warlike sword
Shall pass through fertile France and Germany,
Nor shall his conquering foot be forc'd to stand,
Till Rome's imperial wreath hath crown'd his fame
With monarch of the west, from whose seven hills
With conquest, and contributory kings,
He back returns to enlarge the Briton bounds,
His heraldry adorn'd with thirteen crowns.

Clown. Hum, hum, hum.

Merl. He to the world shall add another worthy,
And, as a loadstone for his prowess, draw
A train of martial lovers to his court.
It shall be then the best of knighthood's honor,
At Winchester to fill his castle hall,
And at his royal table sit and feast
In warlike orders, all their arms round hurl'd,
As if they meant to circumscribe the world.

[*He touches the Clown's mouth with his wand.*]

Clown. Hum, hum, hum. Oh, that I could speak a little!

Merl. I know your mind, uncle; again be silent.

[*Strikes him again.*]

Prince. Thou speak'st of wonders, Merlin, pr'ythee,
go on,

Declare at full this constellation.

Merl. Those seven beams pointing downward, sir,
betoken

The troubles of this land, which then shall meet
With other fate; war and dissension strives
To make division, till seven kings agree
To draw this kingdom to a heptarchy.

Prince. Thine art hath made such proof, that we
believe

Thy words authentical; be ever near us,
My prophet, and the guide of all my actions.

Merl. My service shall be faithful to your person,
And all my studies for my country's safety.

Clown. Hum, hum, hum.

Merl. Come, you are releas'd, sir.

Clown. Cousin, pray, help me to my tongue again;
you do not mean I shall be dumb still, I hope?

Merl. Why, hast thou not thy tongue?

Clown. Ha! yes, I feel it now, I was so long dumb,
I could not well tell whether I spake or no.

Prince. Is 't thy advice, we presently pursue
The bloody Saxons that have slain my brother?

Merl. With your best speed, my lord;
Prosperity will keep you company.

Cador. Take then your title with you, royal prince,
'T will add unto our strength: Long live king Uter!

Edol. Put the addition to 't that heaven hath given
you:

The dragon is your emblem, bear it bravely,
And so long live and ever happy, styl'd
Uter Pendragon, lawful king of Britain.

Prince. Thanks, Edol, we embrace the name and title,
And in our shield and standard shall the figure
Of a red dragon still be born before us,
To fright the bloody Saxons. — Oh, my Aurelius,
Sweet rest thy soul; let thy disturbed spirit
Expect revenge, think what it would, it hath,
The dragon 's coming in his fiery wrath. [Exeunt.

A C T V.

SCENE I.

Thunder, then musick.

Enter JOAN *fearfully*, the Devil *following* her.

Joan. Hence, thou black horror! Is thy lustful fire
Kindled again? Not thy loud-throated thunder,
Nor thy adulterate infernal musick,
Shall e'er bewitch me more, oh, too, too much
Is past already!

Devil. Why dost thou fly me?
I come a lover to thee, to embrace,
And gently twine thy body in mine arms.

Joan. Out, thou hell-hound!

Devil. What hound so e'er I be,
Fawning and sporting as I would with thee,
Why should I not be strok'd and play'd withal?
Wilt thou not thank the lion, might devour thee,
If he shall let thee pass?

Joan. Yes, thou art he;
Free me, and I 'll thank thee.

Devil. Why, whither wouldst?
I am at home with thee, thou art mine own,
Have we not charge of family together?
Where is your son?

Joan. Oh, darkness cover me!

Devil. There is a pride which thou hast won by me,
The mother of a fame, shall never die:
Kings shall have need of written chronicles,
To keep their names alive, but Merlin none,
Ages to ages shall, like satellites,
Report the wonders of his name and glory,
While there are tongues and times to tell his story.

Joan. Oh, rot my memory before my flesh,
Let him be call'd some hell or earth-bred monster,
That ne'er had hapless woman for a mother!
Sweet death, deliver me! — Hence from my sight!
Why shouldst thou now appear? I had no pride
Nor lustful thought about me, to conjure
And call thee to my ruin, whenas at first
Thy cursed person became visible.

Devil. I am the same I was.

Joan. But I am chang'd.

Devil. Again I 'll change thee to the same thou
wert,

To quench my lust. — Come forth, by thunder led,
My coadjutors in the spoils of mortals. [*Thunder.*

Enter Spirits.

Clasp in your ebon arms that prize of mine,
Mount her as high as pallid Hecate,
And on this rock I 'll stand to cast up fumes
And darkness o'er the blue-fac'd firmament:
From Britain and from Merlin, I 'll remove her,
They ne'er shall meet again.

Joan. Help me some saving hand,
If not too late, I cry: Let mercy come!

Enter MERLIN.

Merl. Stay, you black slaves of night, let loose
your hold,
Set her down safe, or by th' infernal Styx,
I 'll bind you up with exorcisms so strong,
That all the black Pentagoron of hell,
Shall ne'er release you; save yourselves and vanish!

[*Exeunt Spirits.*

4 **

Devil. Ha, what is he?

Merl. The child hath found his father.

Do you not know me?

Devil. Merlin!

Jaan. Oh, help me, gentle son!

Merl. Fear not, they shall not hurt you.

Devil. Reliev'st thou her, to disobey thy father?

Merl. Obedience is no lesson in your school,

Nature and kind to her commands my duty;

The part that you begot was against kind.

So all I owe to you is to be unkind.

Devil. I 'll blast thee, slave, to death, and on this
rock

Stick thee as an eternal monument.

Merl. Ha, ha, thy power 's too weak; what art thou,
devil,

But an Inferior lustful Incubus,

Taking advantage of the wanton flesh,

Wherewith thou dost beguile the ignorant?

Put off the form of thy humanity,

And crawl upon thy speckled belly, serpent,

Or I 'll unclasp the jaws of Acheron,

And fix thee ever in the local fire.

Devil. Traitor to hell! Curse that e'er begot thee!

Merl. Thou didst beget thy scourge; storm not,
nor stir;

The power of Merlin's art is all confirm'd

In the fates' decretals: — I will ransack hell,

And make thy masters bow unto my spell.

Thou first shalt taste it.

[*Thunder and lightning in the rock.*]

Tenebrarum precis, divitiarum et inferorum deus, hunc.

Incubum in ignis eterni abyssum accipite, aut in hoc carcere tenebroso in sempiternum astringere mando.

[The rock incloses the Devil.]

So! there beget earthquakes or noisome damp,
For never shalt thou touch a woman more. —
How cheer you, mother?

Joan. Oh, now my son is my deliverer,
Yet I must name him with my deepest sorrow.

[Alarum afar off.]

Merl. Take comfort now, past times are ne'er recall'd,
I did foresee your mischief and prevent it.
Hark, how the sounds of war now call me hence
To aid Pendragon, that in battle stands
Against the Saxons, from whose aid
Merlin must not be absent. Leave this soil,
And I 'll conduct you to a place retir'd,
Which I by art have rais'd, call'd Merlin's bower.
There shall you dwell with solitary sighs,
With groans and passions, your companions,
To weep away this flesh you have offended with,
And leave all bare unto your aerial soul.
And when you die, I will erect a monument
Upon the verdant plains of Salisbury,
No king shall have so high a sepulcher,
With pendulous stones that I will hang by art,
Where neither lime nor mortar shall be us'd,
A dark enigma to the memory,
For none shall have the power to number them,
A place that I will hallow for your rest;
Where no night-hag shall walk, no ware-wolf tread,
There Merlin's mother shall be sepulch'red. *[Exeunt.]*

SCENE II.

Enter DONOBERT, GLOSTER, *and* Hermit.

Dono. Sincerely, Gloster, I have told you all:
My daughters are both vow'd to single life,
And this day gone unto the nunnery,
Though I begot them to another end,
And fairly promis'd them in marriage,
One to earl Cador, th' other to your son,
My worthy friend, the earl of Gloster.
Those lost, I am lost: They are lost, all 's lost.
Answer me this then: Is 't a sin to marry?

Herm. Oh no, my lord.

Dono. Go to then, I will go no further with you,
I persuade you to no ill, persuade you then
That I persuade you well.

Glost. 'T will be a good office in you, sir.

Enter CADOR *and* EDWIN.

Dono. Which since they thus neglect,
My memory shall lose them now for ever. —
See, see the noble lords, their promis'd husbands!
Had fate so pleas'd, you might have call'd me father.

Edw. Those hopes are past, my lord, for even this
minute

We saw them both enter the monastery,
Secluded from the world and men for ever.

Cador. 'T is both our griefs we cannot, sir:
But from the king take you the time's joy from us;
The Saxon king Ostorius slain and Octa fled,
That woman-fury, queen Artesia,
Is fast in hold, and forc'd to re-deliver
London and Winchester (which she had fortified)
To princely Uter, lately styl'd Pendragon,

Who now triumphantly is marching hither
To be invested with the Briton crown.

Dono. The joy of this shall banish from my breast
All thought that I was father to two children,
Two stubborn daughters, that have left me thus.
Let my old arms embrace, and call you sons;
For, by the honor of my father's house,
I 'll part my estate most equally betwixt you.

Edw., Cador. Sir, you are most noble.

Flourish. Enter EDOL with drum and colours, OSWALD bearing the standard, TOCLIO the shield, with the red dragon pictur'd in them, Two Bishops with the crown, Prince UTER, MERLIN, ARTESIA bound, Guard and Clown.

Prince. Set up our shield and standard, noble soldiers.
We have firm hope that, tho' our dragon sleep,
Merlin will us and our fair kingdom keep.

Clown. As his uncle lives, I warrant you.

Glost. Happy restorer of the Britons' fame,
Uprising sun, let us salute thy glory:
Ride in a day perpetual about us,
And no night be in thy throne's zodiack. —
Why do we stay to bind those princely brows
With this imperial honor?

Prince. Stay, noble Gloster!
That monster first must be expell'd our eye,
Or we shall take no joy in it.

Dono. If that be hinderance, give her quick judgment;
And send her hence to death; she has long deserv'd it.

Edol. Let my sentence stand for all. Take her hence,
And stake her carcass in the burning sun,
Till it be parch'd and dry, and then flay off
Her wicked skin, and stuff the pelt with straw

To be shown up and down at fairs and markets,
Two pence a piece. To see so foul a monster,
Will be a fair monopoly and worth the begging.

Art. Ha, ha, ha.

Edol. Dost laugh, Erietho?

Art. Yes, at thy poor invention,
Is there no better torture-monger?

Dono. Burn her to dust.

Art. That is a phoenix' death, and glorious.

Edol. Ay, that 's too good for her.

Prince. Alive

She shall be buried, circled in a wall. —

Thou muddress of a king, there starve to death.

Art. Then I 'll starve death when he comes for his prey,
And i' the mean time I 'll live upon your curses.

Edol. Ay, it is good enough, away with her!

Art. With joy, my best of wishes is before;
Thy brother 's poison'd, but I wanted more. [*Exit.*

Prince. Why does our prophet Merlin stand apart,
Sadly observing these our ceremonies,
And not applaud our joys with thy hid knowledge?
Let thy divining art now satisfy
Some part of my desires; for well I know
'T is in thy power to show the full event,
That shall both end our reign and chronicle.
Speak, learned Merlin, and resolve my fears,
Whether by war we shall expel the Saxons,
Or govern what we hold with beauteous peace
In Wales and Britain?

Merl. Long happiness attend Pendragon's reign!
What heaven decrees, fate hath no power to alter:
The Saxons, sir, will keep the ground they have,
And by supplying numbers still increase,

Till Britain be no more. So please your grace,
I will in visible apparitions,
Present you prophecies which shall concern
Succeeding princes, which my art shall raise,
Till men shall call these times the latter days.

Prince. Do it, my Merlin,
And crown me with much joy and wonder. [*MERLIN strikes.*

Hoboyes. Enter a king in armour, his shield quarter'd
with thirteen crowns. At the other door enter divers
Princes who present their crowns to him at his feet, and
do him homage; then enters Death and strikes him; he
growing sick, crowns Constantine. [*Exeunt.*

Merl. This king, my lord, presents your royal son,
Who in his prime of years shall be so fortunate,
That thirteen several princes shall present
Their several crowns unto him, and all kings else
Shall so admire his fame and victories,
That they shall all be glad
Either through fear or love, to do him homage;
But death (who neither favors the weak nor valiant)
In the midst of all his glories, soon shall seize him,
Scarcely permitting him to appoint one
In all his purchas'd kingdoms to succeed him.

Prince. Thanks to our prophet
For this so wish'd - for satisfaction,
And hereby now we learn that always fate
Must be observ'd, whatever that decree.
All future times shall still record this story,
Of Merlin's learned worth, and Arthur's glory.
[*Exeunt Omnes.*

THE END.

