

And none can say but all my life
I have his precepts kept ;
And summed the actions of the day
Each night before I slept.

I have a spouse, go ask of her,
If I defiled her bed ?
I have a king, and none can lay
Black treason on my head.

In Lent and on the holy eve,
From flesh I did refrain ;
Why should I then appear dismayed
To leave this world of pain ?

No ! hapless Henry ! I rejoice
I shall not see thy death ;
Most willingly in thy just cause
Do I resign my breath.

Oh, fickle people ! ruined land !
Peace thou wilt no more know ;
While Richard's sons exalt themselves,
Thy brooks with blood will flow.

Say, were ye tired of godly peace,
And godly Henry's reign,
That you did change your easy days
For those of blood and pain ?

What though I'm on a hurdle drawn,
And mangled by a hind,
I do defy the traitor's power,
He cannot harm my mind ;

What though, uphoisted on a pole,
My limbs shall rot in air,
And no rich monument of brass
Charles Bawdin's name shall bear ;

Yet in the holy book above,
Which time can't eat away,
There with the servants of the Lord
My name shall live for aye.

Then welcome death ! for life eterne
I leave this mortal life ;
Farewell, vain world, and all that's dear,
My sons and loving wife !

Now death as welcome to me comes,
As e'er the month of May ;
Nor would I even wish to live,
With my dear wife so stay."

Quoth Canynge, "'Tis a goodly thing
To be prepared to die ;
And from this world of pain and grief
To God in Heaven to fly."

And now the bell began to toll,
And clarions to sound ;
Sir Charles he heard the horses' feet
A-prancing on the ground :

And just before the officers
His loving wife came in,
Weeping unfeignèd tears of woe,
With loud and dismal din.

“ Sweet Florence ! now I pray forbear,
 In quiet let me die ;
 Pray God that every Christian soul
 May look on death as I.

Sweet Florence ! why these briny tears ?
 They wash my soul away,
 And almost make me wish for life,
 With thee, sweet dame, to stay.

’Tis but a journey I shall go
 Unto the land of bliss ;
 Now, as a proof of husband’s love,
 Receive this holy kiss.”

Then Florence, faltering in her say,
 Trembling these wordes spoke,
 “ Ah, cruel Edward ! bloody king !
 My heart is well-nigh broke :

Ah, sweet Sir Charles ! why wilt thou go,
 Without thy loving wife ?
 The cruel axe that cuts thy neck,
 It eke shall end my life.”

And now the officers came in
 To bring Sir Charles away,
 Who turned to his loving wife,
 And thus to her did say—

“ I go to life and not to death ;
 Trust thou in God above,
 And teach thy sons to fear the Lord,
 And in their hearts Him love :

Teach them to run the noble race
That I their father ran ;
Florence ! should death thee take—adieu !
Ye officers, lead on.”

Then Florence raved as any mad,
And did her tresses tear ;
“ Oh ! stay, my husband ! lord ! and life ! ”—
Sir Charles then dropped a tear.

Till tired out with raving loud,
She fell upon the floor ;
Sir Charles exerted all his might,
And marched from out the door.

Upon a sled he mounted then
With looks full brave and sweet ;
Looks that betrayed no more concern
Than any in the street.

Before him went the council-men,
In scarlet robes and gold,
And tassels spangling in the sun,
Much glorious to behold :

The Friars of Saint Augustine next
Appearèd to the sight,
All clad in homely russet weeds
Of godly monkish plight :

In different parts a godly psalm
Most sweetly they did chant ;
Behind their backs six minstrels came,
Who tuned the strung bataunt.¹

¹ A stringed musical instrument.

Then five-and-twenty archers came ;
Each one the bow did bend,
From rescue of King Henry's friends
Sir Charles for to defend.

Bold as a lion came Sir Charles,
Drawn on a cloth-draped sled,
By two black steeds in trappings white,
With plumes upon their head :

Behind him five-and-twenty more
Of archers strong and stout,
With bended bow each one in hand,
Marchèd in goodly rout :

Saint James's Friars marchèd next,
Each one his part did chant ;
Behind their backs six minstrels came,
Who tuned the strung bataunt :

Then came the mayor and aldermen,
In cloth of scarlet deck't ;
And their attending men each one,
Like eastern princes trick't.

And after them a multitude
Of citizens did throng ;
The windows were all full of heads,
As he did pass along.

And when he came to the high cross,
Sir Charles did turn and say—
“ O Thou, that savest man from sin,
Wash my soul clean this day ! ”

At the great minster windows sat
The king in mickle state,
To see Charles Bawdin go along
To his most welcome fate.

Soon as the sledge drew nigh enough,
That Edward he might hear,
The brave Sir Charles he did stand up
And thus his words declare—

“Thou seest me, Edward ! traitor vile !
Exposed to infamy ;
But be assured, disloyal man !
I'm greater now than thee.

By foul proceedings, murder, blood,
Thou wearest now a crown ;
And hast appointed me to die,
By power not thine own.

Thou thinkest I shall die to-day ;
I have been dead till now,
And soon shall live to wear a crown
For aye upon my brow ;

Whilst thou, perhaps, for some few years,
Shalt rule this fickle land,
To let them know how wide the rule
'Twixt king and tyrant hand :

Thy power unjust, thou traitor slave !
Shall fall on thy own head——”
From out the hearing of the king
Departed then the sled.

King Edward's soul rushed to his face,
He turned his head away,
And to his brother Gloucester
He thus did speak and say—

“To him that so-much-dreaded death
No ghastly terrors bring,
Behold the man! he spake the truth,
He's greater than a king!”

“So let him die!” Duke Richard said;
“And may each one our foes
Bend down their necks to bloody axe,
And feed the carrion crows.”

And now the horses gently drew
Sir Charles up the high hill;
The axe did glister in the sun,
His precious blood to spill.

Sir Charles did up the scaffold go,
As up a gilded car
Of victory, by valorous chiefs
Gained in the bloody war:

And to the people he did say,
“Behold, you see me die
For serving loyally my king,
My king most rightfully.

As long as Edward rules this land
No quiet you will know;
Your sons and husbands shall be slain,
And brooks with blood shall flow.

You leave your good and lawful king
When in adversity :
Like me, unto the true cause stick ;
And for the true cause die."

Then he, with priests, upon his knees,
A prayer to God did make,
Beseeching Him unto Himself
His parting soul to take.

Then, kneeling down, he laid his head
Most seemly on the block ;
Which from his body fair at once
The able headsman struck :

And out the blood began to flow,
And round the scaffold twine ;
And tears, enough to wash't away,
Did flow from each man's eyne.

The bloody axe his body fair
Into four partès cut ;
And every part, and eke his head,
Upon a pole was put.

One part did rot on Kynwulph hill,
One on the minster tower,
And one from off the castle gate
The crowèn did devour ;

The other on Saint Paul's good gate,
A dreary spectacle ;
His head was placed on the high cross,
In High-street most noble.

Thus was the end of Bawdin's fate :
 God prosper long our king,
 And grant he may, with Bawdin's soul,
 In Heaven God's mercy sing !

AN EXCELENTE BALADE OF CHARITIE :

AS WROTEN BIE THE GODE PRIEST, THOMAS ROWLEIE,¹
 1464.

IN Virgine the sultry sun 'gan sheen,
 And hot upon the meads did cast his ray ;
 The apple ruddied from its paly green,
 And the lush pear did bend the leafy spray ;
 The pied chelandry² sang the livelong day ;
 'Twas now the pride, the manhood of the year,
 And eke the ground was dight in its most deft³ aumere.⁴

The sun was gleaming in the mid of day,
 Dead still the air, and eke the welkin blue,
 When from the sea arist⁵ in drear array
 A heap of clouds of sable sullen hue,
 The which full fast unto the woodland drew,
 Shrouding at once the sunnès festive face,
 And the black tempest swelled and gathered up apace.

¹ "Thomas Rowley, the author, was born at Norton-Malreward, in Somersetshire, educated at the convent of St. Kenna, at Keynesham, and died at Westbury in Gloucestershire."—C.

² Goldfinch.

³ Neat.

⁴ Robe.

⁵ Arose.

Beneath a holm, fast by a pathway side,
 Which did unto Saint Godwin's convent¹ lead,
 A hapless pilgrim moaning did abide,
 Poor in his view, ungentle in his weed,²
 Long breast-full of the miseries of need.
 Where from the hailstone could the palmer fly?
 He had no hostel there, nor any convent nigh.

Look in his gloomèd face, his sprite there scan;
 How woe-begone, how withered, shrunken, dead!
 Haste to thy church-glebe-house,³ woe-stricken man!
 Haste to thy grave, thy only sleeping bed.
 Cold as the clay which will grow on thy head,
 Are Charity and Love among high elves;
 Knightès and barons live for pleasure and themselves.

The gathered storm is ripe; the big drops fall;
 The sun-burnt meadows smoke, and drink the
 rain;
 The coming ghastness doth the cattle 'pall,⁴
 And the full-flocks are driving o'er the plain;
 Dashed from the clouds the waters sweep again;
 The welkin opes; the yellow lightning flies;
 And the hot fiery steam in mighty wreathings dies.

List! now the thunder's rattling noisy sound
 Moves slowly on, and then discharging clangs,
 Shakes the high spire, and lost, expended, drowned,
 Still on the frightened ear of terror hangs;

¹ "It would have been *charitable* if the author had not pointed at personal characters in this Ballad of Charity. The Abbot of St. Godwin's at the time of the writing of this was Ralph de Bellomont, a great stickler for the Lancastrian family. Rowley was a Yorkist."—C.

² Dress.

³ Tomb.

⁴ Appal.

The winds are up ; the lofty elm-tree swangs ;¹
 Again the lightning and the thunder pours,
 And the full clouds are burst at once in stony showers.

Spurring his palfrey o'er the watery plain,
 The Abbot of Saint Godwin's convent came ;
 His chapournette² was dripping with the rain,
 His 'broidered girdle met with mickle shame ;
 He backwards told his bederoll³ at the same ;
 The storm increases, and he drew aside,
 With the poor alms-crauer near to the holm to bide.

His cloak was all of Lincoln cloth so fine,
 With a gold button fastened near his chin ;
 His autremete⁴ was edged with golden twine, [been ;
 And his peaked shoon a lord's might well have
 Full well it showed he thought great cost no sin.
 The trammels of his palfrey pleased his sight,
 For the horse-milliner⁵ his head with roses dight.

"An alms, sir priest !" the drooping pilgrim said,
 "Oh ! let me wait within your convent door,
 Till the sun shineth high above our head,
 And the loud tempest of the air is o'er ;
 Helpless and old am I, alas ! and poor.
 No house, no friend, no money in my pouch,
 All that I call my own is my silver crouche."⁶

¹ Swings.

² "A small round hat, not unlike the *shapournette* in heraldry, formerly worn by ecclesiastics and lawyers."—C.

³ "He told his beads backwards, a figurative expression to signify cursing."—C.

⁴ "A loose white robe worn by priests."—C.

⁵ "Certainly not a fifteenth-century word. But Stevens tells us he saw it, in 1776, over a shop in Bristol."—Skeat.

⁶ Cross.

“Varlet,” replied the Abbot, “cease your din ;
 This is no season alms and prayers to give,
 My porter never lets a beggar in ;
 None touch my ring who not in honour live.”
 And now the sun with the black clouds did strive,
 And shot upon the ground his glaring ray ;
 The Abbot spurred his steed, and eftsoons rode away.

Once more the sky was black, the thunder rolled,
 Fast running o’er the plain a priest was seen ;
 Not dight full proud nor buttoned up in gold,
 His cope and jape¹ were grey and eke were clean ;
 A limitour² he was of order seen,
 And from the pathway side then turned he,
 Where the poor almer lay beneath the holmen tree.

“An alms, sir priest !” the drooping pilgrim said,
 “For sweet Saint Mary and your order’s sake.”
 The limitour then loosened his pouch-thread,
 And did thereout a groat of silver take :
 The needy pilgrim did for rapture shake.
 “Here, take this silver, it may ease thy care,
 We are God’s stewards all, naught of our own we bear.

But ah ! unhappy pilgrim, learn of me.
 Scarce any give a rent-roll to their Lord ;
 Here, take my semicope,³ thou’rt bare, I see,
 ’Tis thine ; the saints will give me my reward.”
 He left the pilgrim, and his way aborde.⁴
 Virgin and holy saints, who sit in gloure,⁵
 Or give the mighty will, or give the good man power !

¹ “A short surplice, worn by friars of an inferior class and secular priests.”—C.

² A licensed begging friar.

³ A short cape or cloak.

⁴ Went on.

⁵ Glory.

Bent up his long strong bow and shield aborne,¹
 Commanding his retainers all to fight.
 Go rouse the lion from his hidden den,
 Let thy darts drink the blood of anything but men.

In the treed forest do the knights appear,
 William with might his bow en-iron'd plies ;
 Loud dins the arrow in the wolfin's ear ;
 He riseth boldly, roars, he pants, he dies,
 Forslagen² at thy feet let wolfin's be,
 Let thy darts drink their blood, but do not brethren
 slea.

Through the mirk-shade of twisting trees he rides,
 The frightened owlet flaps her dew-specked wing,
 The lording³ toad in all his passes bides ;
 The poisonous adders at him dart the sting.
 Still, still he passes on, his steed astrod,
 Nor heeds the dangerous way though leading unto
 blood.

The lioncel,⁴ from sultry countries brought,
 Couching beneath the shelter of the briar,
 At coming din doth raise himself distraught,
 He looketh with an eye of flames of fire.
 Go, stick the lion to his hidden den,
 Let thy darts drink the blood of anything but men.

With stealthy step the lion moves along,
 William, his iron-woven bow he bends,

¹ Burnished.

³ "Standing on their hind legs."—C.

² Slain.

⁴ A young lion.

With might akin to rolling thunder strong,
 The lion in a roar his sprite forth sends.
 Go slay the lion in his blood-stained den,
 But be thine arrow dry from blood of other men.

Swift from the thicket starts the stag away,
 The couraciers¹ as swift do after fly ;
 He leapeth high, he stands, he keeps at bay
 But meets the arrow and eftsoons doth die.
 Forslagen² at thy feet let wild beasts be, [slea.
 Let thy darts drink their blood, yet do not brethren

With murder tired, he slings his bow alyne,³
 The stag is decked with crowns of lily flowers,
 Around their helms they green leaves do entwine,
 Joying and revelous in the greenwood bowers.
 Forslagen by thy bolt let wild beasts be,
 Feast thee upon their flesh, do not thy brethren slea.

King. Now to the tourney ; who will first affray ?

Her. Nevylle, a baron, be that honour thine.

Bour. I claim the passage.

Nev. I dispute thy way.

Bour. Then there's my gauntlet on my gaberdine.⁴

Her. A lawful challenge, knights and champions digne,⁵
 A lawful challenge ! Let the trumpet sound.

[SIR SYMONNE *and* NEVYLLE *tilt.*

Nevylle is going man and horse to ground,

[NEVYLLE *falls.*

My lords, how doughtily the tilters join !
 Ye champions, here Symonne de Bourtonne fights,
 One hath he crushed ; assail him, O ye knights.

¹ Horse-courers.

² Slain.

³ "Across his shoulders."—C.

⁴ A loose upper garment.

⁵ Worthy.

Ferraris. I will against him go ; my squire, my shield,
Or one or other will do mickle deed ;
Before I do depart the tourney field,
Myself or Bourtonne hereupon will bleed.
My shield !

Bour. Come on, and fit thy tilt lance ethe,¹
When Bourtonne fights, he meets a doughty foe.
[*They tilt. FERRARIS falls.*
He falleth ; now, by heaven, thy wounds do
smethe²

I fear me, I have wrought thee mickle woe.
Her. Bourtonne his second beareth to the field.
Come on, ye knights, and win the honour'd shield.

Bergham. I take the challenge ; squire, my lance and steed,
I, Bourtonne take the gauntlet : for me stay.
But if thou fightest me, thou shalt have meed,
Some other I will challenge to the fray ;
Perchance from him I may possess the day,
Then I shall be a foeman for thy spear.
Herald, to the ranks³ of knightès say,
De Berghamme waiteth for a foeman here.

Clinton. But long thou shalt not 'tend ; I do thee 'fy ;
Like lightning dire shall my tilt-lance fly.

[BERGHAMME and CLYNTON tilt.

[CLYNTON falls.

Bergham. Now, now, Sir Knight, cast round thy
beaver'd eyne,⁴

I have borne down and eft do challenge thee.
Quickly begin, and seal thy fate or mine,
If thou discomfit, it will doubly be.

[BOURTONNE and BERGHAMME tilt.

[BERGHAMME falls.

¹ Easily.

² Smoke.

Skeat's rendering. Chatterton has "bankes."

⁴ Eyes.

Her. Symonne de Bourtonne hath now borne down
three,

And by the third hath honour of a fourth.
Let him be set aside, till he doth see
A tilting for a knight of gentle worth.
There cometh strange knights ; if courteous they,
It well becomes to give them right of fray.

1st Knight. Strangers we be, and humbly do we claim
The honour in this tourney for to tilt ;
Thereby to prove from cravens our good name,
Declaring that we gentle blood have spilt.

Her. Ye knights of courtesy, these strangers say,
Be ye full willing for to give them fray ?

[Five Knights *tilt with the strange
Knight, and are all overthrown.*

Bour. Now, by Saint Mary, if on all the field
Y-crased¹ spears and helmets be besprent,²
If every knight did hold a piercèd shield,
If all the field with champions' blood be stent,³
Yet to encounter him I am content.
Another lance, Marshal, another lance.
Albeit he with flames of fire y-brent,⁴
Yet Bourtonne would against him straight
advance,

Five knights have fallen down beneath his spear,
But he shall be the next that falleth here.

By thee, Saint Mary, and thy Son I swear,
That in what place yon doughty knight shall
fall,

Beneath the strong push of my levelled spear,
There shall arise a holy church's wall,
The which, in honour, I will Mary call,

¹ Broken.

² Scattered.

³ Stained.

⁴ Burned.

With pillars large, and spire full high and
 round.
 And this I faithfully will stand to all,
 If yonder stranger falleth to the ground.
 Stranger, be boun,¹ I challenge you to war,
 Sound, sound the trumpets, to be heard from far.

[BOURTONNE *and the* Stranger
tilt, Stranger falls.

King. The morning tilts now cease.

Her. Bourtonne is king.

Display the English banner on the tent;
 Round him, ye minstrels, songs of action sing,
 Ye heralds, gather up the spears besprent;²
 To king of tourney-tilt be all knees bent.

Dames fair and gentle, for your loves he fought;
 For you the long tilt-lance, the sword he shent,³
 He jousted, having only you in thought.
 Come minstrels, sound the string, go on each
 side,

Whilst he unto the king in state doth ride,

Mins. When Battle, smoking with new quicken'd gore
 Bending with spoils, and bloody dropping head,
 Did the mirk wood of ease and rest explore,
 Seeking to lie on Pleasure's downy bed,
 Pleasure, dancing from her wood,
 Wreathed with flowers of eglantine,
 From his visage washed the blood,
 Hid his sword and gaberdine.

With such an eye she sweetly him did view,
 Did so y-corven⁴ every shape to joy,

¹ Ready. ² Scattered about. ³ Broke, destroyed. ⁴ Mould.

His sprite did change into another hue,
His arms, nor spoils, might any thoughts
employ.
All delightsome and content,
Fire enshooting from his eyne,
In his arms he did her hent,¹
As the night-shade doth entwine.

So, if thou lovest Pleasure and her train,
Unknowing in what place her for to find,
This rule attend, and in thy mind retain ;
Seek Honour first, and Pleasure lies behind.

CHORUS FROM "GODDWYN."

WHEN Freedom, dressed in blood-stained vest,
To every knight her war-song sung,
Upon her head wild weeds were spread,
A gory weapon by her hung.
She dancèd on the heath ;
She heard the voice of death.

Pale-eyed Affright, his heart of silver hue,
In vain assayed her bosom to acale.²
She heard, unmoved, the shrieking voice of woe,
And sadness in the owlet shake the dale.
She shook the pointed spear,
On high she raised her shield,
Her foemen all appear,
And fly along the field.

¹ Hold.

² Chill.

Power, with his head far-stretched into the skies,
 His spear a sunbeam, and his shield a star ;
 Like flaming meteors twain he rolls his eyes,
 Stamps with his iron feet, and sounds to war.
 She sits upon a rock,
 She bends before his spear,
 She rises from the shock,
 Wielding her own in air.

Hard as the thunder doth she drive it on,
 Wit, closely mantled, guides it to his crown ;
 His long sharp spear, his spreading shield is gone,
 He falls, and falling, rolleth thousands down.
 War, gore-faced War, by Envy armed, aris^t,¹
 His fiery helm nodding to the air,
 Ten bloody arrows in his straining fist——

TO JOHN LADGATE.

(SENT WITH THE FOLLOWING SONG TO ELLA.)

WELL then, good John, since it must needs be so,
 That you and I a bouting match must have,
 Let it no breaking of old friendship do,
 This is the only favour that I crave.

Remember Stowe, the Bristol Carmelite,
 Who, when John Clarkynge, one of mickle lore,
 Did throw his gauntlet-pen with him to fight,
 He showed small wit, and showed his weakness more.

This is my 'formance, which I now have writ,
 The best performance of my little wit.

¹ Arose.

SONG TO ÆLLA, LORD OF THE CASTLE OF
BRISTOL IN DAYS OF YORE.

OH thou, or what remains of thee,
Ælla, the darling of futurity,
Let this my song bold as thy courage be,
As everlasting to posterity.

When Dacia's sons, whose locks of blood-red hue,
Like kingcups bursting with the morning dew,
Arranged in drear array,
Upon the lethal day,
Spread far and wide on Watchet's shore;
Then didst thou furious stand,
And by thy valiant hand
Besprinkled all the meads with gore.

Hurled by thy sword they fell,
Down to the depth of hell
Thousands of Dacians went;
Bristolians, men of might,
Fought in the bloody fight,
And acted deeds full quaint.

Oh thou, where'er (thy bones at rest)
Thy sprite to haunt delighteth best,
Whether upon the blood-embued plain,
Or where thou kennest from far
The dismal cry of war,

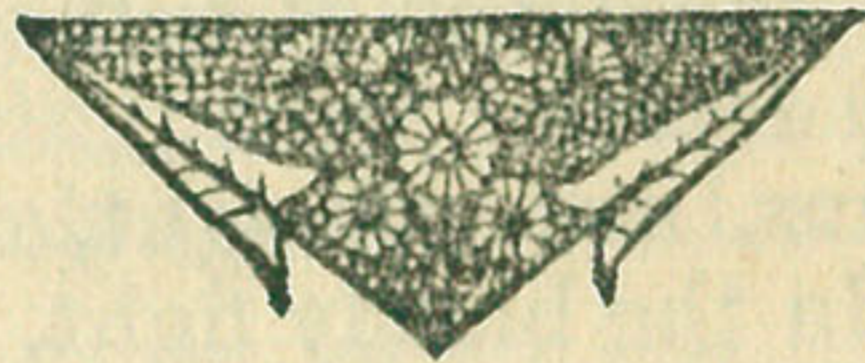
Or seest some mountain made of corse of slain ;
 Or seest the hatchèd ¹ steed
 A-prancing o'er the mead,
 And neigh to be among the pointed spears ;
 Or in black armour stalk'st around
 Embattled Bristol, once thy ground,
 And glowest, arduous, ² on the castle-stairs ;

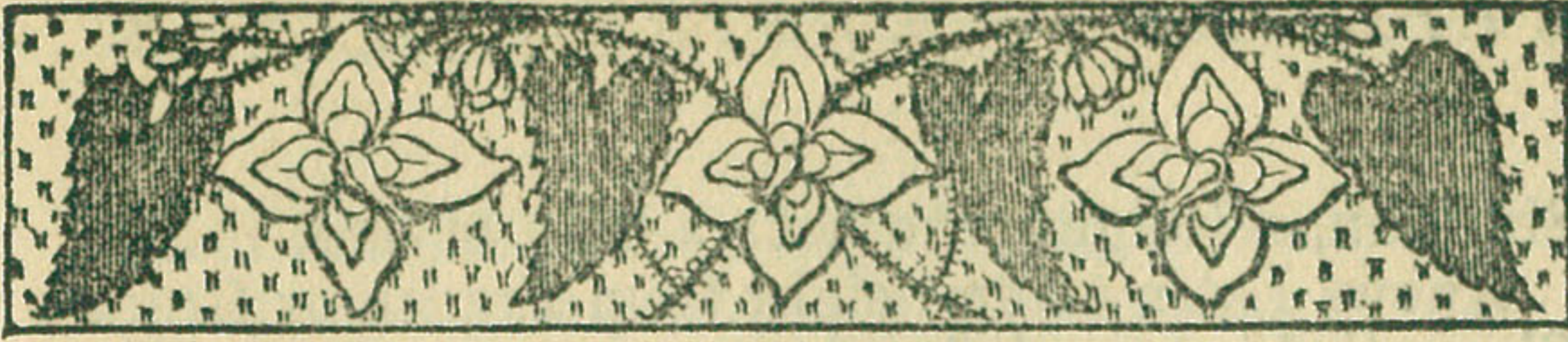
Or fiery round the minster glare, ³
 Let Bristol still be made thy care ;
 Guard it from foemen and consuming fire.
 Like Avon's stream engird it round,
 Nor let a flame enharm the ground,
 Till in one flame all the whole world expire.

¹ "Covered with achievements."—C.

² Burning.

³ For "glarest," or "dost glare."





ÆLLA,

A Tragycal Enterlude, or Discoorseynge Tragedie,

WROTENN BIE THOMAS ROWLEIE ;

*Plaiedd before Mastre Canynge, atte hys howse nempte the
Rodde Lodge ; also before the Duke of Norfolck,
Johan Howard.*

EPISTLE TO MASTRE CANYNGE ON ÆLLA.

'TIS sung by minstrels that in ancient time,
When Reason veiled herself in clouds of night,
The priest delivered all the law in rhyme,
Like painted tilting-spear to please the sight,
The which in its fell use doth make much dere,¹
So did their ancient lay deftly delight the ear.

Perchance in Virtue's cause rhyme might be then,
But oft now flieth to the other side ;
In holy priest appears the ribald's pen,
In wily monk appears the baron's pride ;
But rhyme with some, as adder without teeth,
Makes pleasaunce to the sense, but may do little scath.

¹ Hurt, damage.

232 *EPISTLE TO MASTRE CANYNGE.*

Sir John, a knight who hath a barn of lore,
Knows Latin at first sight from French or Greek ;
Plagueth his knowledge for ten years or more,
To settle on the Latin word to speak.
Whoever speaketh English is despised,
The English him to please must first be Latinised.

Vivian, a monk, a good requiem sings,
Can preach so well, each hind his meaning knows ;
Albeit these good gifts away he flings,
Being as bad in verse as good in prose.
He sings of saints who dièd for their God,
And every winter night afresh he sheds their blood.

To maidens, housewives, and unlearnèd dames,
He reads his tale of merriment and woe.
Laugh¹ loudly dinneth from the dull adrames ;²
He swells on praise of fools, still knows them so :
Sometimes at tragedy they laugh and sing,
At merry, mirthful tale some hard-drained water bring.

Yet Vivian is no fool, beyond his lines.
Geoffrey makes verse, as tradesmen make their ware ;
Words without sense full cunningly he twines,
Cutting his story off as with a shear ;
Wastes months on nothing, and (his story done)
No more you from it know, than if you'd ne'er begun.

Enough of others ; of myself to write,
Requiring what I do not now possess,
To you I leave the task ; I know your might
Will make my faults, my mint of faults, be less.
"Ælla" with this I send, and hope that you
Will from it cast away what lines may be untrue.

¹ Laughter. ² Churls.

Plays made from holy tales I hold unmeet,
 Let some great story of a man be sung ;
 When, as a man, we God and Jesus treat,
 In my poor mind we do the Godhead wrong.
 But let no words, which droorie¹ may not hear,
 Be placèd in the same. Adieu until anere.²

THOMAS ROWLEIE.

LETTER TO THE DYGNE³ MASTRE CANYNGE.

STRANGE doom it is, that in these days of ours
 Naught but a bare recital can have place ;
 Now shapely poesy hath lost its powers,
 And prosy history is only grace ;
 They pick up noxious weeds instead of flowers,
 And families, instead of wit, they trace :
 Now poesy can meet with no regrate,⁴
 Whilst prose and heraldry rise in estate.

Let kings and rulers, when they gain a throne,
 Show what their grandsires and great-grandsires bore,
 Emblazoned arms that, not before their own,
 Now ranged with what their fathers had before ;
 Let trades and town-folk let such things alone,
 Nor fight for sable in a field of or :
 Seldom or never are arms virtue's meed,
 She never to take mickle aye doth heed.⁵

¹ Purity ; modesty.

² Another time.

³ Worthy.

⁴ Esteem.

⁵ C. has—"She nillynge (unwilling) to take myckle aie doth hede," which is unintelligible. Skeat's rendering is—"She ne'er to take too much doth aye take heed."

A man askance upon a piece may look,
 And shake his head to stir his wit about ;
 Quoth he, if I quick glancing o'er this book,
 Should find therein that truth is left without ;
 Eke if unto a view perchance I took
 The long bede-roll of all the writing rout,
 Asserius, Ingulphus, Turgot, Bede,
 Throughout them all nought like it I could read.

Pardon, ye greybeards, if I say, unwise
 Ye are to stick so close and steadfastly
 To history ; you do it too much prize,
 Which hath diminished thoughts of poesy .
 Some paltry share you should to that alyse,¹
 Not making everything be history ;
 Instead of mounting on a wingèd horse,
 You on a cart-horse drive in doleful course.

Canynge and I from common course dissent,
 We ride the horse but give to him the rein,
 Nor will between craz'd mouldering books be pent,
 But soar on high and in the sunbeams sheen ;
 And where we find some flower, plucked, besprent,
 We take it, and from old rust doth it clean ;
 We will not chainèd to one pasture be,
 But sometimes soar 'bove truth of history.

Say, Canynges, what was verse in days of yore ?
 Fine thoughts, and couplets cleverly bewyren,²
 Not such as do annoy this age so sore,
 A formal pencil resting at each line.

¹ Allow.² Expressed.

Verse may be good, but poesy wants more,
 A boundless subject and a song a-dygne.
 According to the rule I have this wrought ;
 If it please Canynge I care not a groat.

The thing itself must be its own defence ;
 Some metre may not please a woman's ear.
 Canynge looks not for poesy but sense ;
 And noble, worthy thoughts are all his care.
 Canynge, adieu ! I do you greet from hence,
 Full soon I hope to taste of your good cheer ;
 Good Bishop Carpenter did bid me say,
 He wish'd you health and happiness for aye.

 ENTROUCTIONNE.

SOME soothing comfort 'tis to gentle mind,
 When they have forth redeemed their land from
 bane,¹

When they are dead, they leave their name behind,
 And their good deeds do on the earth remain ;
 Down in the grave we bury every stain,
 Whilst all their gentleness is made to sheen,²
 Like comely baubles seldom to be seen.

Ælla, the warden of this castle-stead,
 Whilst Saxons did the English sceptre sway,
 Who made whole troops of Dacyan men to bleed,
 Then closed his eyes, and closed his eyes for aye,
 We rouse him up before the Judgment day,
 To say what he, as clergyond,³ can ken,
 And how he sojourned in the vale of men.

¹ Ruin.

² Shine.

³ Taught.

ÆLLA.

PERSONNES REPRESENTEDD.

Ælla bie Thomas Rowleie, Preeste, the Aucthoure.
 Celmonde Johan Iscam, Preeste.
 Hurra Syrr Thybbotte Gorges, Knyghte.
 Birtha Master Edwarde Canynge.
 Odherr partes bie Knyghtes, Mynstrelles, etc.

Scene, Bristol.

Enter CELMONDE.

I.

Cel. Before yon ruddy sun hath driv'n his wain
 Through half his journey, dight in cloth of gold,
 Me, hapless me, he will a wretch behold,
 Myself, and all that's mine, bound in mischance's
 chain.

II.

Ah ! Bertha, why did Nature frame thee fair ?
 Why art thou all that painting can bewreene ?¹
 Why art thou not as coarse as others are ?
 But then thy soul would through thy visage
 sheen,²
 That shines upon thy comely semykeene,³
 Like nut-brown clouds, when by the sun made
 red,
 Or scarlet, with choice linen cloth ywreene ;⁴
 Such would thy sprite upon thy visage spread.
 This day, brave Ælla, doth thine hand and heart,
 Claim as his own to be, which ne'er from his must
 part.

¹ Express.

² Shine.

³ Countenance.

⁴ Covered.

III.

And can I live to see her with anere? ¹
 It cannot, must not, nay, it shall not be!
 This night I'll put strong poison in the beer,
 And him, her, and myself, at once will slea.
 Assist me, Hell! let devils round me 'tend,
 To slay myself, my love, and eke my doughty
 friend. [Exit.]

Enter ÆLLA and BERTHA.

Æl. Not when the holy priest did make me knight,
 Blessing the weapon, telling future deed,
 How by my hand the hardy Dane should bleed,
 How I should often be, and often win in fight;

IV.

Not when I first beheld thy beauteous hue,
 Which struck my mind and roused my softer
 soul;
 Not when from armèd horse in fight did view
 The flying Dacyans o'er the wide plain roll,
 When all the troops of Denmark made great dole,
 Did I feel joy with such a force as now,
 When holy priest, the healer of the soul,
 Did knit us both in a fast-binding vow;
 Now holy Ælla's happiness is great,
 And Fate hath now y-made his woes for to emmate. ²

V.

Ber. My lord and husband, such a joy is mine;
 But maiden modesty must not so say,

¹ Another.

² Lessen:

Albeit thou may'st read it in mine eyne,
 Or in my heart, where thou shalt be for aye ;
 In sooth, I have but recompensed thy faie ;¹
 For twelve times twelve the moon hath been
 yblent,²
 As many times hath vied the god of day,
 And on the grass her rays of silver sent,
 Since thou didst choose me for thy love to be,
 And acting in the same most faithfully to me.

VI.

Oft have I seen thee at the noon-day feast,
 Enthronèd by thyself, for want of peers,
 And while thy merry men did laugh and jest,
 On me thou seem'st all eyes, to me all ears.
 Thou watchest me as if in hundred fears,
 Lest a disdainful look to thee be sent,
 And offerings mad'st me, more than thy compeers,
 Of scarfs of scarlet, and fine parament ;³
 All thy intent to please was but to me,
 I say it, I must strive that thou rewarded be.

VII.

Æl. My little kindnesses which I did do,
 Thy gentleness doth picture them too great.
 Like monstrous elephants my gnats do show ;
 Thou dost my thoughts of paying love amate.⁴
 But had my actions stretched the roll of fate,
 Snatched thee from hell, or brought heav'n
 down to thee,
 Laid the whole world a footstool at thy feet,
 One smile would be sufficient meed for me.

¹ Constancy, faith.³ Robes of scarlet, apparel.² Blinded.⁴ Destroy.

I am love's borrower, and can never pay,
But be his borrower still, and thine, my sweet for
aye.

VIII.

Ber. Love, do not rate your services so small,
As I to you, such love unto me bear ;
For nothing past will Bertha ever call,
Nor on a food from Heaven think to cheer.
As far as this frail brittle flesh will spare,
Such, and no further, I expect of you ;
Be not too slack in love, nor over dear ;
A small fire than a loud flame proves more true.
Æl. Thy gentle words do thy sweet nature ken,¹
To have more learning far than is in many men.

IX.

Enter CELMONDE and MINSTRELS.

Cel. All blessings shower on gentle Ælla's head !
Oft may the moon, in silver shining light,
In varied changes varied blessings shed,
Extending far abroad mischances night ;
And thou, fair Bertha ! thou, fair dame so bright,
Long mayst thou with Ælla find much peace,
With happiness as with a robe, be dight,
With every changing moon new joys increase !
I, as a token of my love to speak,
Have brought you jugs of ale, at night your care to
break.

X.

Æl. When supper's past we'll drink your ale so strong,
Bring't life or death.
Cel. Ye minstrels, chant your song.

¹ Know.

XI.

Minstrels' Song, by a Man and Woman.

Man. Turn thee to thy shepherd swain,
 Bright sun hath not drunk the dew.
 From the flowers of yellow hue ;
 Turn thee, Alice, back again.

XII.

Wom. No, deceiver, I will go,
 Softly tripping o'er the leas,
 Like the silver-footed doe,
 Seeking shelter in green trees.

XIII.

Man. See the moss-grown daisied bank,
 Peering in the stream below ;
 Here we'll sit, on dewy dank,
 Turn thee, Alice, do not go.

XIV.

Wom. I've heard of yore my grandame say,
 Young demoiselles should never be,
 In the sylvan month of May,
 With young men by the greenwood tree.

XV.

Man. Sit thee, Alice, sit and hark,
 How the blackbird chants his note,
 The goldfinch and the grey morn lark,
 Chanting from their little throat.

XVI.

Wom. I hear them from each greenwood tree,
 Chanting out so blatantly,
 Telling in their songs to me,
 Mischief is when you are nigh.

XVII.

Man. See along the meads so green,
 Pièd daisies, king-cups sweet ;
 All we see, by none are seen,
 None but sheep set here their feet.

XVIII.

Wom. Shepherd swain, my dress you hold,
 Out upon you ! let me go,
 Leave me, sir, or I will scold,
 Robin, this your dame shall know.

XIX.

Man. See ! the crooked bryony
 Round the poplar twist his spray ;
 Round the oak the green ivy
 Flourisheth and liveth aye.

XX.

Let us seat us by this tree,
 Laugh, and sing to loving airs ;
 Come, and do not bashful be,
 Nature made all things by pairs.

XXI.

Modest cats will after kind ;
 Gentle doves will kiss and coo.
Wom. But man, must be ywrynde,¹
 Till sir priest make one of two.

XXII.

Man. By the child of Mary born,
 To-morrow, soon as it is day,
 I'll make thee wife, nor be forsworn,
 So 'tide me life or death for aye.

XXIII.

Wom. What doth keep us, but that now,
 We at once thus hand in hand,
 Unto minister should go
 And be linked in wedlock's band ?

XXIV.

Man. I agree, and thus I plight
 Hand and heart and all that's mine ;
 Good Sir Roger do us right
 Make us one at Cuthbert's shrine.

XXV.

Both. We will in a cottage live,
 Happy though of no estate ;
 Every day more love shall give,
 We in goodness will be great.

¹ Repulsed.

XXVI.

Æl. I like this song, i' faith I like it well ;
 And there is money for your singing now.
 But have you none that married blessings tell ?

Cel. In marriage blessings are but few, I trow.

Minst. My lord, we have ; and, if you please, will sing,
 As well as our hoarse voices will permit.

Æl. Come then, and see you sweetly tune the string,
 And stretch and fashion all your human wit,
 To please my dame.

Minst. We'll strain our wit and sing.

XXVII.

First Minst. The budding floweret blushes at the light,
 The meads are dappled with the yellow hue ;
 In daisied mantle is the mountain dight,
 The tender cowslip bendeth with the dew ;
 The trees enleafèd, unto heaven straught,
 When gentle winds do blow, to whistling din are
 brought.

XXVIII.

The evening comes and brings the dew along ;
 The ruddy welkin shineth to the eyne ;
 Around the ale-stake minstrels sing the song,
 Young ivy round the door-post doth entwine ;
 I lay me on the grass ; yet, to my will,
 Albeit all is fair, there lacketh something still.

XXIX.

Second Minst. So Adam thought long since in Paradise,
 When heaven and earth did homage to his mind ;

In woman only man's chief pleasure lies,
 As instruments of joy are those of kind.¹
 Go, take a wife unto thine arms, and see
 Winter and dull-hued hills will have a charm for thee.

XXX.

Third Minst. When Autumn sad but sun-lit doth appear,
 With his gold hand gilding the falling leaf,
 Bringing up Winter to fulfil the year,
 Bearing upon his back the ripened sheaf ;
 When all the hills with woolly seed are white,
 When lightning-fires and gleams do meet from far the
 sight ;

XXXI.

When the fair apple, flushed as the even sky
 Doth bend the tree unto the fertile ground ;
 When juicy pears, and berries of black dye,
 Do dance in air and call the eye around ;
 Then, foul the eve may be, or be it fair,
 Methinks my heart's content is dashed with some dark
 care.

XXXII.

Second Minst. Angels are formed to be of neither kind,
 Angels alone from passion's play are free,
 There is a somewhat ever in the mind,
 That, without woman, cannot stillèd be,
 No saint in cell, but having blood and tere,²
 Doth find the sprite to joy at sight of woman fair.

¹ Nature.² Health, feeling.

XXXIII.

Women are made not for themselves but man,
 Born of his bone, and child of his desire ;
 And from a useless member first began,
 Y-wrought with much of water, little fire ;
 Therefore they seek the fire of love, to heat
 The milkiness of kind,¹ and make themselves complete.

XXXIV.

Albeit, without woman, men were peers
 To savage kind, and would but live to war ;
 But woman oft the sprite of peace so cheers,
 Joined in angelic joy they angels are !
 Go, quickly take thee to thy bed a wife,
 Be cursed or highly blest in proving married life.

Another Minstrel's Song, by SIR THYBBOT GEORGES.

XXXV.

As Elinour by the green arbour was sitting,
 As from the sun's heat she hurried,
 She said, as her white hands white hosen were
 knitting,
 "What pleasure it is to be married !

XXXVI.

My husband, Lord Thomas, a forester bold,
 As ever clove pin or the basket,
 Doth never a comfort from Elinour hold,
 I have it as soon as I ask it.

¹ Nature.

XXXVII.

When I lived with my father in merry Cloud-dell,
 Though 'twas at my choice to mind spinning,
 I still wanted something, but what ne'er could tell,
 My sire's barbèd.¹ hall had nought winning.

XXXVIII.

Each morning I rise, do I set all my maidens,
 Some to spin, some to curdle, some bleaching ;
 If any new entered do ask for my aidance,
 Then quickly you find me a-teaching.

XXXIX.

Lord Walter, my father, he lovèd me well,
 And nothing unto me was needing ;
 But should I again go to merry Cloud-dell,
 In truth it would be without redeynge."²

XL.

She said, and Lord Thomas came over the lea,
 As he the fat deerkins was chasing,
 She put up her knitting, and to him went she ;
 So we leave them both kindly embracing.

XLI.

Æl. I like eke this ; go in unto the feast,
 We will permit you antecedent³ be ;
 There sweetly sing each carol, and loud jest,
 And there is money, that you merry be.
 Come, gentle love, we will to spouse-feast go,
 And there in ale and wine shall drowned be every woe.

¹ Armour-hung.² Wisdom, deliberation.³ To go before.

XLII.

ÆLLA, BERTHA, CELMONDE, MESSENGER.

Mess. Ælla, the Danes are thundering on our coast,
 Like shoals of locusts, cast up by the sea ;
 Magnus and Hurra, with a doughty host,
 Are raging, to be quenched by none but thee ;
 Haste, swift as lightning, to these rovers flee,
 Thy dogs alone can tame this raging bull.
 Haste, quickly, for full near the town they be,
 And Wedëcester's roll of doom is full.
 Haste, haste, O Ælla, to the battle fly,
 For in a moment's space ten thousand men may die.

XLIII.

Æl. Beshrew thee for thy news ! I must be gone.
 Was ever luckless doom so hard as mine ?
 Thus from enjoyment dear to war to run,
 To change the silk vest for the gaberdine.¹
Ber. O ! like an adder let me round thee twine,
 And shield thy body from the shafts of war.
 Thou shalt not, must not, from thy Bertha ryne,²
 But hear the din of trumpets from afar.
Æl. O love ! was this thy joy, to show the treat,
 Then rudely to forbid thy hungered guests to eat ?

XLIV.

O my upswelling heart, what words can say
 The pains, that passeth in my soul ybrent ?³
 Thus to be torn upon my spousal day,
 O ! 'tis a pain beyond entendement.⁴

¹ A loose upper garment ; here probably in the sense of a military cloak. ² Run. ³ Burnt up. ⁴ Comprehension.

Ye mighty Gods, and are your favours sent,
 As thus, firm fastened to a load of pain?
 Must we aye hold in chase the shade content,
 And for a body but a shade obtain?
 O! why, ye saints, oppress ye thus my soul?
 How shall I speak my woe, my sad, my dreary dole?

XLV.

Cel. Sometimes the wisest lacketh poor man's rede.¹
 Reason and cunning wit oft flee away.
 Then, master, let me say with homaged dread
 (Beneath your foot low laid) my counsel say;
 If thus we let the matter still delay,
 The foe is every instant gaining foot,
 My lord, pray let the spearmen, dight for fray,
 And all the booted soldiers go about.
 I speak, my lord, but only to uprise
 Your wit from marvel and the warrior to alyse.²

XLVI.

Æl. Ah! now thou putttest arrows in my heart,
 My soul doth now begin to see hersel'.
 I will uprise my might, and do my part,
 To slay the foemen in my fury fell.
 But how can tongue my ramping fury tell,
 Which riseth from my love to Bertha fair?
 Nor could the devil, and the might of hell,
 Create impleasaunce³ of so black a gear.⁴
 Yet I will be myself, and rouse my sprite
 To act full bravely and go meet the bloody fight.

¹ Counsel, advice.³ Annoyance.² Set free.⁴ Appearance, dress

XLVII.

Ber. No, thou shalt never leave thy Bertha's side,
 Nor shall the wind upon us blow alleyne;¹
 I, like an adder, will unto thee bide,
 'Tide life, 'tide death, it shall behold us twain.
 I have my part of dreary dole and pain.
 It bursteth from me at the hidden eyne;²
 In tides of tears my dying sprite will drain
 If dreary dole is thine, 'tis two times mine.
 Go not, O Ælla; with thy Bertha stay,
 For with thy comeliness my sprite will go away.

XLVIII.

Æl. Oh! 'tis for thee, for thee alone I feel,
 Yet I must be myself; with valour's gear
 I'll crown my heart, and clothe my limbs in steel,
 And shake the bloody sword and stained spear.
Ber. Can Ælla from his breast his Bertha tear?
 Is she so rough and loathsome to his sight?
 Deceitful wight! is deadly war so dear?
 Thou prizest me below the joys of fight.
 Thou shalt not leave me, albeit the earth
 Hung pendant by thy sword, and craved for thy
 morthe.³

XLIX.

Æl. Didst thou know how my woes, as stars ybrent,⁴
 Headed by these thy words, do on me fall,
 Thou wouldest strive to give my heart content,
 Waking my sleeping mind to honour's call.
 Of happiness, I prize thee more than all
 Heaven can me send, or cunning wit acquire,

¹ Alone. ² Eyes. ³ Death. ⁴ Burning, in this passage.

Yet I will leave thee, on the foe to fall,
Returning to thine eyes with double fire.

Ber. Must Bertha favour ask and be denied?
Receive at once a dart, in happiness and pride?

L.

Do stay, at least till morrow's sun appears.

Æl. Thou knowest well the Dacians' mighty power;
With them a minute worketh bane for years;
They undo realms within a single hour.
Rouse all thy honour, Bertha; look attoure,¹
Thy bleeding country, which for hasty deed
Calls, for the ruling of some doughty power
To stay its spoilers, make its foemen bleed.

Ber. Rouse all thy love; false and deceitful wight,
Nor leave thy Bertha thus upon pretence of fight.

LI.

Thou needst not go, until thou hast command
Under the signet of our lord the king.

Æl. And wouldst thou make me then a recreant?
Holy Saint Mary, keep me from the thing!
Here, Bertha, thou hast put a double sting,
One for thy love, another for thy mind.

Ber. Offended, Ælla, thy upbraiding blynge,²
'Twas love of thee that foul intent ywrynde.³
Yet hear me supplicate, to me attend,
Hear from my bursting heart the lover and the
friend.

LII.

Let Celmonde in thine armour-suit be dight,
And in thy stead unto the battle go,

1 Around.

2 Cease.

3 Disclosed.

Thy name alone will put the Danes to flight,
The air that bears it would press down the foe.

Æl. In vain thou wouldst me recreant do ;¹

I must, I will fight for my country's weal,
And leave thee for it. Celmonde swiftly go,
Tell my Bristowans to be dight in steel ;
Tell them I scorn to ken them from afar,
But leave the virgin bridal-bed for bed of war.

[*Exeunt* CELMONDE and Messenger.]

LIII.

Ber. And thou wilt go ? O my upswelling heart !

Æl. My country waits my march, I must away ;

Albeit I should go to meet the dart

Of certain death, yet here I would not stay.

But thus to leave thee, Bertha, doth asswaie²

More torturing pains than can be said by tongue.

Yet rouse thy honour up and await the day,

When round about me songs of war they sing.

O Bertha, strive my grief to drive away,

And joyous see mine arms dight out in war's array.

LIV.

Ber. Hard is the penance, yet I'll strive

To keep my woe close hidden in my breast ;

Albeit naught may to me pleasure give,

Like thee I'll strive to set my mind at rest.

Yet oh ! forgive, if I have thee distressed ;

Love, doughty love, will bear no other sway.

Just as I was with Ælla to be blest,

Fate foully thus hath snatchèd him away.

It was a pain too doughty to be borne, [y-torn.

Without a flood of tears and breast with sighs

¹ Make.

² Cause. It is unauthorised.

LV.

Æl. Thy mind is now thyself; why wilt thou be
 All fair, all kingly, all so wise in mind.
 Only to let poor wretched Ælla see,
 What wondrous gems he now must leave behind?
 O Bertha fair, watch every coming wind,
 On every breeze I will a token send;
 On my long shield thy name engraved thou'lt find;
 But here comes Celmonde, worthy knight and
 friend.

Enter CELMONDE.

Cel. Thy Bristol knights for thy forthcoming lynge;¹
 Each one athwart his back his long war shield
 doth sling.

LVI.

Æl. Bertha, adieu! but yet I cannot go.
Ber. Life of my sprite, my gentle Ælla stay;
 Torture me not with such a dreary woe.
Æl. I must; I will; 'tis honour calls away.
Ber. O my distracted heart, burst, burst in twaie.²
 Ælla, for honour flies away from me!
Æl. Bertha, adieu! I may not here now stay.
 I'm flying from myself in flying thee. [*Exit.*
Ber. O, Ælla, husband, friend, and master, stay.
 He's gone, he's gone, alas! perchance he's gone
 for aye. [*Exit.*

LVII.

CELMONDE, alone.

Cel. Hope, holy sister, sweeping through the sky,
 In crown of gold, and robe of lily white.

¹ Long.² Twain.

Which far abroad in gentle air doth fly,
 Meeting from distance the enraptured sight,
 Albeit oft thou takest thy high flight,
 Wrapped in a mist, and with thine eyes yblent,¹
 Now comest thou to me with starry light ;
 Unto thy vest the red sun is adente ;²
 The summer-tide and month of May appear,
 Painted with cunning hand upon thy wide
 aumere.³

LVIII.

I from a night full hopeless am adawed,⁴
 Astonished at the sweetness of the day.
 Ælla, by nought more than his myndbruche⁵
 awed,
 Is gone, and I must follow, to the fray ;
 Celmonde can ne'er from any battle stay.
 Doth war begin ? There's Celmonde in his
 place ;
 But when the war is done I'll haste away.
 The rest from 'neath time's mask must show its
 face.
 I see unnumbered joys around me rise,
 Forth standeth future doom, and joy doth me alyse.⁶

LIX.

Oh honour, honour, what is by thee hanne ?⁷
 Happy the robber and the cottager,
 Who knows not thee, or is to thee bestanne,⁸
 And nothing does thy mickle ghastness fear.

¹ Blinded. ² Fastened. ³ Robe or girdle. ⁴ Awakened.
⁵ Emulation, says Chatterton. Bailey has "mindburch, a
hurting of honour and worship."
⁶ Release, says Skeat. Chatterton has "quit." ⁷ Gained.
⁸ Lost.

Fain would I from my bosom all thee tear,
 For there, thou scatterest thy lightning brand ;
 And for my withered soul, thou art the gare ;¹
 Slain is my comfort by thy fiery hand ;
 As some tall hill, when winds do shake the ground.
 It wasteth all abroad, by bursting hidden wound.

LX.

Honour ! what is it ? 'tis a shadow's shade,
 A thing of witchcraft, but an idle dream ;
 One of the monsters which the church hath made,
 Men without souls and women for to fleme.²
 Knights who oft know the loud din of the beme,³
 Should pay no heed to such enfeebling ways,
 Make every action, like their souls, be breme,⁴
 And for their chivalry alone have praise.

Oh thou, whate'er thy name,
 Or Zabalus⁵ or Queed,⁵
 Come, steel my sable sprite
 For strange and doleful deed ! [*Exit.*]

LXI.

Enter MAGNUS, HURRA, and HIGH PRIEST, with the
Army, near Watchet.

Mag. Quick, let the offerings to the gods begin.
 To know of them the issue of the fight,
 Put both the blood-stained sword and dagger in,
 Spread quickly all around the holy light.

¹ Cause.² Terrify.³ Trumpet.⁴ Brave.⁵ The devil.

HIGH PRIEST *singeth.*

Ye who, high in murky air,
 Deal the seasons foul or fair,
 Ye who, when ye were in ire,
 Wreathed the moon in robe of fire,
 Moved the stars, and did unbind
 Every barrier to the wind ;
 When the foaming waves distressed,
 Striving to be overest,¹
 Sucking in the spire-girt town,
 Swallowing whole nations down,
 Sending death, on plagues astrod,²
 Moving like the earthe's God,
 To me send your hest divine,
 Light enlighten all mine eyne,³
 That I may now undevice⁴
 All the actions of th' emprise.⁵

[Falleth down and afterward riseth.]

Thus say the gods : " Go issue to the plain,
 For there shall mint of mighty men be slain."

LXII.

Mag. Why, so there ever was when Magnus fought,
 Oft have I scattered terror through the host,
 E'en through their swords, like demon sore dis-
 traught,
 Hath Magnus pressing wrought his foemen
 loaste.⁶

As when a tempest vexeth sore the coast,
 The welling wave the sandy strand doth tear,

¹ Uppermost.

² Astride.

³ Eyes.

⁴ Explain.

⁵ Enterprise.

⁶ Loss.

So have I in the war the javelin toss'd,
 Full many a champion's breast received my
 spear.
 My shield, like summer marshy fen-fire droke,¹
 My lethal spear is like a lightning-melted oak.

LXIII.

Hur. Thy words are great, full high of sound, and eke
 Like thunder, to the which doth come no rain.
 It lacketh² not a doughty hand to speak;
 The cock doth say the least, yet armed is he
 alone.
 Certès thy wordès great, thou might'st have sayne³
 Of me, and many more, who eke can fight,
 Who both have trodden down the aventayle,⁴
 And torn the helms from heads of mickle might.
 So then since might so great is placèd in thy hand
 Let blows thine actions speak, and by thy courage
 stand.

LXIV.

Mag. Thou art a warrior, Hurra, that I ken,
 And greatly famèd for thy handy deed.
 Thou fightest but 'gainst maidens and not men,
 Nor aye thou makest armèd hearts to bleed.
 Oft I, caparisoned on bloody steed,
 Have seen thee far beneath me in the fight,
 With corpses I bestrewing every mead,
 And thou amazed, and wondering at my might.

¹ This line is unintelligible. The original is—"Mie sheelde lyche sommere morie gronfer droke." "Droke" means dry.

² Here equal to "needeth." ³ Said.

⁴ Beaver, or part of a helmet that admits the air.

Then wouldest thou come in for my renome,¹
Albeit thou would'st run away from bloody doom.

LXV.

Hur. How ! but he stayed, my rage—I know aright
Both thee and thine may not be worthy peene;²
Eftsoon I hope we shall engage in fight,
Then to the soldiers all thou wilt bewreene.³
I'll prove my courage on the armèd green,
'Tis there alone I'll tell thee what I be.
If I wield not the deadly spear adeene,⁴
Then let my name be full as low as thee.
This my indented shield, this my war-spear,
Shall tell the falling foe if Hurra's heart can fear.

LXVI.

Mag. Magnus would speak, but that his noble sprite
Is filled with rage, he knows not what to say.
He'd speak with blows, in drops of blood he'd
write,
And on thy head would paint his might for aye.
If thou against a wolfin's rage would'st stay,
'Tis here to meet it ; but if not then, go,
Lest I in fury should my arms display,
Which to thy body will work mickle woe.
Oh ! I am mad, distraught with burning rage,
No seas of reeking gore will my chaf'd heart assuage.

LXVII.

Hur. I know thee, Magnus, well ; a wight thou art
That dost but slide along in pained distress,

¹ Renown. ² Punishment. ³ Disclose. ⁴ Worthily.

Strong bull in body, lion's whelp in heart,
 I almost wish thy prowess were made less !
 When Ælla (name dressed up in ugsomeness ¹
 To thee and recreants) thundered on the plain,
 How didst thou through the first of flyers press !
 Swifter than wingèd arrow didst thou reyne, ²
 A running prize on saint's day to ordain,
 Magnus, and none but he, the running prize will
 gain.

LXVIII.

Mag. Eternal plagues devour thy cursed tongue !
 Myriads of adders prey upon thy sprite !
 Mayst thou feel all the pains of age whilst young,
 Unmann'd, uney'd, excluded aye the light,
 Thy senses, like thyself, enwrapped in night,
 A scoff to foemen, and to beasts a peer,
 May forkèd lightning on thy head alight,
 May on thee fall the fury of th' unweere, ³
 Fen-vapours blast thy every manly power,
 May thy curs'd body quick the loathsome pains
 devour !

LXIX.

Fain would I curse thee further but my tyngue ⁴
 Denies my heart the favour so to do ;
Hur. Now by the Dacian gods, and Heaven's king
 With fury, as thou didst begin, pursue ;
 Call on my head all tortures that be rou, ⁵
 Curse on, till thine own tongue thy curses feel ;

¹ Terror.² Run.³ Storm.⁴ Tongue.⁵ Terrible.

Send on my head the blighting lightning blue,
 The thunder loud, the swelling azure rele.¹
 Thy words are high of din, but naught beside,
 Curse on, good chieftain, fight with words of mickle
 pride.

LXX.

Mag. But do not waste thy breath lest Ælla come.
 Ælla and thou together sink to hell !
 Be your names blasted from the roll of doom !
 I fear not Ælla, that thou knowest well.
 Disloyal traitor, wilt thou now rebel ?
 'Tis ordered that thy men be linked to mine,
 Both sent as troops of wolves to slaughter fell ;
 But now thou wantest them to be all thine.
 Now, by the gods that rule the Dacian state,
 Speak thou in rage once more, I will thee dysregate.²

LXXI.

Hur. I prize thy threats just as I do thy banes,³
 The seed of malice and of passion all.
 Thou art a stain unto the name of Danes ;
 Thou only to thy tongue for proof canst call.
 Thou art a worm so grovelling and so small,
 I with thy blood would scorn to foul my
 sword,
 But with thy weapons would upon thee fall,
 And like thy own fear, slay thee with a word.
 I Hurra am myself, and aye will be,
 As great in valorous acts and in command as thee.

¹ Wave.

² Meaning uncertain, probably "desert" or "withdraw from."

³ Curses.

LXXII.

Enter a Messenger.

Mes. ¹ Cease your contentions, chiefs ; for as I stood
 Upon my watch, I spied an army coming,
 Not like a handful of a frightened foe,
 But black with armour, moving terribly,
 Like a black full cloud, that doth go along
 To drop in hail and help the thunder-storm.

Mag. Are there many of them ?

Mes. Thick as the ant-flies in a summer's noon,
 Seeming as though they sting as keenly too.

LXXIII.

Hur. What matters that ? let's set our war-array.
 Go sound the trump, let champions prepare,
 Not doubting, we will sting as fast as they.
 What ? dost thou lose thy blood ? is it for fear ?
 Wouldst thou gain the town, and castle-stere,²
 And yet not battle with the soldier guard ?
 Go, hide thee in my tent beneath the lere,³
 I of thy body will keep watch and ward.

Mag. Our Gods of Denmark know my heart is good.

Hur. For naught upon the earth, but to be raven's food !

LXXIV.

Enter a Second Messenger.

Mes. As from my tower I saw the coming foe,
 I spied the crossèd shield and bloody sword,

¹ This speech and that of the second messenger are in blank verse.

² "The hold of the castle."—C. Skeat conjectures "castle stair."

³ Leather covering.

The furious Ælla's banner ; within ken
 The army is. Disorder through our host
 Is flying, borne on wings of Ælla's name ;
 Stir, stir, my lords.

Mag. What? Ælla! and so near!
 Then Denmark's ruined ; oh, my rising fear!

LXXV.

Hur. What dost thou mean? this Ælla's but a man.
 Now by my sword, thou art a very berne.¹
 Of late I did thy coward valour scan,
 When thou didst boast so much of action derne,²
 But I to war, my doings quick must turn,
 To cheer the footmen on to mighty deed.

Mag. I to the knights on every side will burn,
 Telling them all to make her foemen bleed.
 Since shame or death on either side will be,
 My heart I will uprise, and in the battle slea.³

[*Exeunt.*

LXXVI.

ÆLLA, CELMONDE, and Army near Watchet.

Æl. Now having done our matins and our vows,
 Let us for the intended fight be boune,⁴
 And every champion put the joyous crown
 Of certain victory upon his glistening brows.

LXXVII.

As for my heart, I own it is, as e'er
 It has been in the summer-sheen of fate,

¹ Child.

² Terrible.

³ Slay.

⁴ Ready.

Untrammelled by the hideous garb of fear ;
 My blood upswoln, and with mastery state,
 Boils in my veins, and rolls in rapid rate,
 Impatient for to meet the piercing steel,
 And tell the world that Ælla died as great
 As any knight who fought for England's weal.
 Friends, kin, and soldiers, in black armour drear,
 My actions imitate, my present bidding hear.

LXXVIII.

There is no house, all through this fate-girt isle,
 That hath not lost some kin in these fell fights,
 Fat blood hath surfeited the hungry soil,
 And towns aflame have lighted up the nights.
 In robe of fire our holy church they dights,¹
 Our sons lie stiffened in their smoking gore ;
 Up from the root our tree of life they pights,²
 Vexing our coast, as billows do the shore.
 Ye men, if ye are men, display your name,
 Burn up their troops, like to the roaring tempest
 flame.

LXXIX.

Ye Christians, do as worthy of the name,
 These spoilers of our holy houses slea ;³
 Burst, like a cloud, from whence doth come the
 flame,
 Like torrents, gushing down the mountains, be.
 And when along the green their champions flee,
 Swift as the red devouring lightning-brand
 That haunts the flying murderer o'er the lea,
 So fly upon these spoilers of the land.

¹ Deck.² Pluck.³ Slay.

Let those that are unto their vessels fled,
Take sleep eterne upon a fiery flaming bed.

LXXX.

Let coward London see her town on fire,
And strive with gold to stay th' invader's hand ;
Ælla and Bristol set their thoughts far higher,
We fight not for ourselves but all the land.
As Severn's bore deposits banks of sand,
Pressing it down beneath the running stream,
And with terrific din sucks in the strand,
Bearing the rocks along in fury breme,¹
So will we bear the Dacian army down,
And through a storm of blood will reach the champion's
crown.

LXXXI.

If in this battle luck deserts our gare,²
To Bristol they will turn their fury dire ;
Bristol, and all her joys, will sink to air,
Burning, perforce, with unaccustomed fire.
Then let our safety doubly move our ire,
Like wolves, that, roving for the evening prey,
Doth see the lamb and shepherd near the briar,
Doth th' one for safety, th' one for hunger slay.
Then when the raven³ croaks upon the plain,
Oh ! let it be the knell to mighty Dacians slain !

LXXXII.

Like a red meteor shall my weapon shine,
Strong as a lion's whelp I'll be in fight,

¹ Fierce.² Cause.³ In reference to the Danish standard, which bore a raven ;
also lxxxv. 2.

Like falling leaves the Dacians shall be slain,
 Like a loud-sounding stream shall be my might.
 Ye men who would deserve the name of knight,
 Let bloody tears by all your dirks be wept ;
 To coming times no chronicler shall write,
 When England had her foemen, Bristol slept.
 Yourselves, your children, and your fellows cry
 Go, fight in honour's cause, be brave, and win or die.

LXXXIII.

I say no more ; your heart the rest shall say.
 Your sprite will find that Bristol is its place ;
 To honour's house I need not mark the way,
 In your own hearts you may the footpath trace,
 'Twixt fate and us there is but little space ;
 The time is now to prove yourselves true men ;
 Draw forth the burnished bill with easy grace,
 Rouse, like a wolf quick rousing from his den.
 Thus I undraw my blade ; begone thou sheath !
 I'll put it not in place till it is sick with death.

LXXXIV.

Sold. On, Ælla, on ; we long for bloody fray,
 We long to hear the raven sing in vain ;
 On, Ælla, on ; we certès gain the day,
 When thou dost lead us to the lethal plain.
Cel. Thy speech, O master, fireth the whole train ;
 They pant for war as hunted wolves for breath.
 Go, and sit crowned on corpses of the slain,
 Go now and wield the massive sword of death.
Sold. From thee, O Ælla, all our courage reigns,
 Each one in fantasy doth lead the Danes in chains.

LXXXV.

Æl. My countrymen, my friends, your noble sprites
 Speak in your eyes and do your master tell,
 Swift as the rain-storm to the earth alights,
 So will we fall upon these robbers fell :
 Our mowing swords shall plunge them down to
 hell,
 Their thronging corpses shall make dark the
 stars.
 The cellars bursting with the slain shall swell,
 Proving to coming times our famous wars ;
 In every eye I see the flame of might,
 Shining abroad, like to a hill-fire in the night.

LXXXVI.

When pencils of our famous fight shall say,
 Each one will marvel at the valiant deed ;
 Each one will wish that he had seen the day,
 And bravely helped to make the foemen bleed ;
 But for their help our battle will not need,
 Our force is force enough to stay their hand ;
 We will return unto this greenèd mead,
 O'er corses of the foemen of the land.
 Now to the war let all the trumpets sound,
 The Dacian troops appear on yonder rising ground.
 — Chiefs, head your bands, and lead.

LXXXVII.

DANES *flying, near Watchet.*

First Dane. Fly, fly, ye Danes ; Magnus the chief is
 slain,
 The Saxons come with Ælla at their head ;

Let's strive to get away to yonder green.

Fly, fly ; this is the kingdom of the dead.

Second Dane. O gods ! have thousands by my weapon
bled,

And must I now for safety fly away ?

See ! far scattered all our troops are spread,

Yet I will singly dare the bloody fray.

But no ! I'll fly and murder in retreat,

Death, blood, and fire shall mark the going of my feet.

LXXXVIII.

Third Dane. While thinking how to 'scape the furious
foe,

As near unto the billow'd beach I came,

Far off I spied a sight of mickle woe,

Our stately vessels wrapped in sails of flame.

The armèd Dacians who were in the same,

From side to side fled the pursuit of death,

The swelling fire their courage doth inflame,

They leap into the sea, and bubbling yield their
breath ;

Whilst those that are upon the bloody plain

Are death-doomed captives ta'en, or in the battle slain.

LXXXIX.

Hur. Now by the gods, Magnus, discourteous knight,

By craven deed hath brought us mickle woe,

Expending all the tall men in the fight,

And placing valorous men where fools might go.

Since then our fortune hath been turnèd so,

Gather the soldiers left to future shappe,¹

¹ Bailey has "shap, fate or destiny," but the meaning is not clear.

To some new place for safety we will go,
 In future day we will have better hap.
 Sound the loud trumpet for a quick forloyne,¹
 Let all the Dacians quick unto our banner join.

XC.

Through hamlets we will carry death and dole,
 Bathe in hot gore and wash ourselves therein ;
 Gods ! here the Saxons like a billow roll.
 I hear e'en now the swords' detested din !
 Away, away, ye Danes, to yonder pen,²
 We now will make retreat in time to fight again.
[*Exeunt.*

XCI.

CELMONDE, *near* Watchet.

Cel, Oh for a sprite all fire ! to tell the day,
 The day which shall astound the hearer's rede,³
 Making our foemen's envying hearts to bleed,
 And bearing through the world a famous name for aye.

XCII.

Bright sun had in his robes been dight,⁴
 From the red East he flitted with his train.
 The hours drew away the pall of night,
 Her sable tapestry was rent in twain.
 The dancing streaks bedeckèd heaven's plain,
 And on the dew did smile with shimmering eye,
 Like drops of blood which doth black armour stain,
 Reflected in the burnish that doth stand close by,
 The soldiers stood upon the hillè's side,
 Like young enleafèd trees that in a forest bide.

¹ Retreat. ² Hill. ³ Mind, thought. ⁴ Decked.

XCIII.

Ælla rose like the tree beset with briars,
 His tall spear shining as the stars at night,
 His eyes appearing like a flame of fire :
 When he encouraged every man to fight,
 His gentle words did move each valorous knight,
 It moveth them as hunters lyoncel ;¹
 In trebled armour is their courage dight,²
 Each warring heart for praise and glory swells ;
 Like gentle washing of the winding stream,
 Such did the murmuring sound of the whole army
 seem.

XCIV.

He leads them on to fight ; oh then to say
 How Ælla looked, and looking did each cheer,
 Moving as though a mountain in the fray,
 When loud a whirlwind doth its bosom tear.
 To tell how every look would banish fear,
 Would ask an angel's pencil or his tongue.
 Like a tall rock that riseth heaven-were,³
 Like a young wolf both furious and strong,
 So did he go, and mighty warriors head,
 With gore-depicted wings, victory round him fled.⁴

XCV.

The battled joined ; sword upon sword did ring ;
 Ælla was chafed as maddened lions be ;
 Like falling stars he did the javelin fling,
 His mighty weapon, mighty men did slea,⁵

¹ Young lions.² Deckerd.³ Heaven-ward.⁴ Probably for "flew."⁵ Slay.

Where he did come the frightened foe did flee,
 Or fell beneath his hand, as falling rain,
 With such a fury he did on them dree,¹
 Hills of their corpses rose upon the plain.
 Ælla, thou art—but stay, my tongue, say nee;²
 How great I him may make, still greater he will be.

XCVI.

Nor did his soldiers see his acts in vain;
 Here a stout Dane upon his compeer fell;
 Here lord and peasant sunk upon the plain,
 Here son and father trembled into hell.
 Chief Magnus sought his way, and shame to tell,
 He sought his way for flight; but Ælla's spear
 Upon the flying Dacian's shoulder fell
 Quite through his body, and his heart did tear;
 He groaned, and sunk upon the gory green,
 And with his corse increased the piles of Dacians
 sleene.³

XCVII.

Spent with the fight the Danish champions stand,
 Like bulls whose strength and wondrous might
 are fled;
 Ælla, a javelin gripped in either hand,
 Flies to the throng and dooms two Dacians dead.
 After his act, the army all y-sped;
 From every one unerring javelins flew;
 They plied their doughty swords; the foemen bled;
 Full three of four of mighty Danes they slew.
 The Danes, with terror ruling at their head,
 Threw down their banner tall, and like a raven fled.

1 Rush.

2 Naught.

3 Slain.

XCVIII.

The soldiers followed with a mighty cry,
 Cries that might well the stoutest hearts dismay.
 Swift as their ships, the vanquished Dacians fly ;
 Swift as the rain upon an April day,
 Pressing behind, the English soldiers slay :
 But half the tithes of Danish men remain.
 Ælla commands they should the slaughter stay,
 But bind them prisoners on the bloody plain.
 The fighting being done I came away,
 In other fields to fight a more unequal fray.

XCIX.

Enter a Squire.

My servant squire, prepare a flying horse,
 Whose feet are wings, whose pace is like the
 wind.
 Who will outstrip the morning light in course,
 Leaving the mantles of the night behind ;
 Some hidden matters do my presence find.
 Give out to all that I was slain in fight,
 If in this cause thou dost my order mind,
 When I return, thou shalt be made a knight.
 Fly, fly, begone ; an hour is a day
 Quick deck my best of steeds and bring him here—
 away ! [Exit Squire.]

C.

Ælla is wounded sore, and in the town
 He waiteth, till his wounds be brought to ethe.¹

¹ Ease, relief.

And shall I from his brows pluck off the crown,
 Making the victor in his victory blethe? ¹
 Oh no! full sooner should my heart's blood smethe, ²
 Full sooner would I tortured be to death!
 But—Bertha is the prize; ah! it were ethe, ³
 To gain so great a prize with loss of breath,
 But then renown eterne—it is but air,
 Bred in the phantasy and only living there.

CI.

Albeit everything in life conspire
 To tell me of the fault I now should do,
 Yet would I hastily assuage my fire,
 And the same means, as I shall now, pursue.
 The qualities I from my parents drew
 Were blood and murder, mastery and war;
 These I will hold to now, and heed no moe ⁴
 A wound in honour, than a bloody scar.
 Now, Ælla, now I'm planting of a thorn,
 By which thy peace, thy love, and glory shall be torn.

CII.

Scene—Bristol. BERTHA and EGWINA.

Ber. Gentle Egwina, do not preach me joy;
 I cannot joy in anything but weere. ⁵
 Oh! that aught should our happiness destroy,
 Flooding the face with woe and briny tear!

Egw. You must, you must endeavour for to cheer
 Your heart unto some comfortable rest.
 Your husband from the battle will appear,
 In honour and in greater love be dress'd;

¹ Bleed, ² Smoke, ³ Easy, ⁴ More, ⁵ Grief.

But I will call the minstrel's roundelay,
 Perchance the soothing sound may chase your
 grief away. [Enter Minstrels.

CIII.

Mins. Oh sing unto my roundelay ;
 Oh drop the briny tear with me ;
 Dance no more on holiday ;
 Like a running river be !
 My love is dead,
 Gone to his death-bed,
 All under the willow tree !

CIV.

Black his hair as the winter night,
 White his throat as the summer snow,
 Red his cheek as the morning light,
 Cold he lies in the grave below.
 My love is dead,
 Gone to his death-bed,
 All under the willow tree !

CV.

Sweet his tongue as the throstle's note ;
 Quick in dance as thought can be ;
 Deft his tabor, cudgel stout,
 Oh, he lies by the willow tree.
 My love is dead,
 Gone to his death-bed,
 All under the willow tree !

CVI.

Hark ! the raven flaps his wing
 In the briery dell below ;
 Hark ! the death-owl loud doth sing,
 To the night-mares as they go.
 My love is dead,
 Gone to his death-bed,
 All under the willow tree !

CVII.

See ! the white moon shines on high ;
 Whiter is my true love's shroud ;
 Whiter than the morning sky,
 Whiter than the evening cloud.
 My love is dead,
 Gone to his death-bed,
 All under the willow tree !

CVIII.

Here, upon my true love's grave,
 Shall the barren flowers be laid ;
 Not one holy saint to save
 All the coldness of a maid.
 My love is dead,
 Gone to his death-bed,
 All under the willow tree !

CIX

With my hands I'll twist the briers
 Round his holy corpse to gre ;¹

¹ Grow.
 (18)

Elfin fairy, light your fires,
 Here my body still shall be.
 My love is dead,
 Gone to his death-bed,
 All under the willow tree !

CX.

Come, with acorn-cup and thorn,
 Drain my heart's blood away ;
 Life and all its goods I scorn,
 Dance by night, or feast by day.
 My love is dead,
 Gone to his death-bed,
 All under the willow tree !

CXI.

Water-witches, crowned with reeds,
 Bear me to your deadly tide.
 I die ! I come ! my true love waits !—
 Thus the damsel spoke, and died.

Ber. This singing hath what ought to make it please,
 But my unhappy fate bereaves me of all ease.

[*Exeunt.*

CXII.

Scene—Watchet. ÆLLA.

Æl. Curse on my tardy wounds ! bring me a steed !
 I will away to Bertha by this night ;
 Albeit from my wounds my soul doth bleed,
 I will away, and die within her sight.

Bring me a steed with eagle-wings for flight ;
 Swift as my wish, and, as my love is, strong.
 The Danes have wrought me mickle woe in
 fight,
 In keeping me from Bertha's arms so long.
 Oh ! what a doom was mine, since mastery
 Can give no pleasure, nor my land's good light
 mine eye !

CXIII.

Ye gods, how is a lover's temper formed !
 Sometimes the same thing will both curse and
 bless,
 One time 'tis frozen, then by the same thing
 warm'd,
 Now stretchèd forth, and now again made
 less.
 'Tis Bertha's loss which doth my thoughts possess.
 I will, I must away ; why stays my steed ?
 My servants, hither haste ; prepare a dress,
 Which couriers in hasty journeys need.
 Oh heavens ! I must away to Bertha's eyne,¹
 For in her looks I find my being doth entwine.
[Exit.]

CXIV.

Scene—Bristol. CELMONDE.

Cel. The world is dark with night ; the winds are still,
 Faintly the moon her pallid light makes gleam,
 The uprist sprites the silent churchyard fill,
 With elfin fairies joining in the dream ;

¹ Eyes.

The forest shineth with the silver leme ;¹
 Now may my love be sated in its treat ;
 Upon the bank of some swift-running stream,
 At the sweet banquet I will sweetly eat.
 This is the house ; ye hinds, in haste appear.

Enter a Servant.

Go tell to Bertha straight, a stranger waiteth here.
 [*Exit Servant.*]

CXV.

Enter BERTHA,

Ber. Celmonde ! ye saints ! I hope thou hast good news.

Cel. The hope is lost ; for heavy news prepare.

Ber. Is Ælla well ?

Cel. He lives ; and still may use
 The promised blessings of a future year.

Ber. What heavy tidings then have I to fear ?

Of what mischance didst thou so lately say ?

Cel. For heavy tidings quickly now prepare ;
 Ælla sore wounded is, in deadly fray ;

In Wedëcester's walled town he lies.

Ber. O my distracted breast !

Cel. Without your sight he dies.

CXVI.

Ber. Will Bertha's presence ease her Ælla's pain ?

I fly ; new wings do from my shoulders spring.

Cel. My steed without will swiftly bear us twain.

Ber. Oh ! I will fly as wind, and no way lunge ;²

¹ Light.

² Linger.

Swiftly caparisons for riding bring.

I have a mind winged with the lightning's
plume.

O Ælla ! Ælla ! didst thou know the sting,
The which doth canker in my true heart's room,
Thou wouldst see plain thyself the cause to be.
Arise, upon thy love, and fly to meet with me.

CXVII.

Cel. The steed on which I came is swift as air,
My servants, too, do wait me near the wood ;
Quickly with me unto the place repair,
To Ælla I will give you conduct good.
Your eyes, like healing balm, will staunch his
blood,
Help on his wounds, and give his heart all cheer.
Upon your eyes he holds his livelihood ;
You do his sprite and all his pleasure bear.
Come, let's away, albeit it is moke,¹
Yet love will be a torch to turn to fire night's smoke.

CXVIII.

Ber. Albeit tempests did the welkin rend,
Rain, like to falling rivers, did fierce be,
Though earth with air inflamèd did contend,
Though every breath of wind with plagues did
slee,²
Yet I to Ælla's eyes eftsoon would flee ;
Albeit hawthorns did my flesh enseam,
Owlets, with screeching, shaking every tree,
And water-adders wriggling in each stream,

¹ Dark.² Slay.

Yet would I fly, nor under covert stay,
 But seek my Ælla out; brave Celmonde, lead the way.
[*Exeunt.*

CXIX.

Scene—A Wood. Enter HURRA and Danes.

Hur. Here in this forest let us watch for prey,
 Revenging on our foemen our ill war;
 Whatever shall be English we will slay,
 Spreading our dreaded character afar.
 Ye Dacian men, if Dacian men ye are,
 Let not but blood sufficient for you be;
 On every breast in gory letters scar,
 What sprites you have, and how those sprites
 may dree,¹
 And if ye get away to Denmark's shore,
 Eftsoons we will return, and vanquished be no more.

CXX.

The battle lost a battle was indeed;
 Nor fiends themselves could stand so hard a
 fray;
 Our very armour and our helms did bleed,
 The Dacian's sprites, like dew drops, fled
 away.
 It was an Ælla did command the day;
 In spite of foemen, I must say his might.
 But we in peasant's blood the loss will pay,
 Showing that we know how to win in fight.
 We will, like wolves enloosed from chains, destroy,
 Our arms, like winter night, shut out the day of
 joy.

¹ Endure, bear:

CXXI.

When swift-foot time doth roll the day along,
 Some hamlet shall unto our fury brende ;¹
 Bursting like rock, or e'en a mountain strong,
 The tall church-spire upon the green shall bend.
 We will the walls and ancient turrets rend,
 Destroy each tree which golden fruit doth bear,
 Down to the gods the owners thereof send,
 Besprinkling all abroad sad war and bloody
 weere,²
 But first to yonder oak-tree we will fly,
 And thence will issue out on all that cometh by.
[*Exeunt.*

CXXII.

Scene—Another part of the Wood. CELMONDE and
 BERTHA.

Ber This darkness doth affray my woman's breast,
 How sable is the spreading sky array'd !
 Happy the cottager who lives to rest,
 Nor is at night's appalling line dismayed.
 The stars do scantily the sable braid ;
 Wide are the silver beams of comfort wove ;
 Speak, Celmonde, does it make thee not afraid ?
Cel. Darker the night, the fitter time for love.
Ber. Sayest thou for love ? Ah ! love is far away.
 Fain would I see once more the ruddy light of day

CXXIII.

Cel. Love may be nigh, would Bertha call it here.
Ber. How, Celmonde, dost thou mean ?

1 Burn.

2 Grief.

Cel. This Celmonde means—
 No beam, no eyes, no mortal men appear,
 Nor light, an act of love for to bewreene;¹
 Naught in this forest but this torch doth sheen,²
 The which put out doth leave the whole in night.
 See how the branching trees do here entwine,
 Making this bower so pleasing to the sight;
 This was for love first made and here it stands,
 That herein lovers may enlink in true love's bands.

CXXIV.

Ber. Celmonde, speak what thou mean'st, or else my
 thoughts

Perchance may rob thy honesty so fair.

Cel. Then hear and know, hereto I have you brought,
 My long-hid love unto you to make clear.

Ber. Oh, heaven and earth! what is it I do hear?
 Am I betrayed? where is my Ælla, say?

Cel. Oh, do not now to Ælla such love bear,
 But furnish some on Celmonde's head.

Ber. Away!
 I will begone, and grope my passage out,
 Albeit adder-stings my legs do twine about.

CXXV.

Cel. Now, by the saints, I will not let thee go,
 Until thou dost my burning love amate.³
 Those eyes have causèd Celmonde mickle woe,
 Then let their smile first take him in regrate.⁴
 O! did thou see my bosom's troublous state,
 There love doth harrow up my joy and ethe!⁵

¹ Disclose.² Shine.³ Quench.⁴ Favour.⁵ Ease.

I wretched am, beyond the help of fate,
 If Bertha still will make my heart veins blethe.¹
 Soft as the summer flowerets, Bertha, look,
 Full ill I can thy frowns and hard displeasure brook.

CXXVI.

Ber. Thy love is foul ; I would be deaf for aye,
 Rather than hear such deslavatie² said ;
 Quickly fly from me and naught further say ;
 Rather than hear thy love, I would be dead.
 Ye saints ! and shall I wrong my Ælla's bed ?
 And would'st thou, Celmonde, tempt me to the
 thing ?
 Let me begone, thou man of sable heart !
 Or heaven and her stars will take a maiden's part.

CXXVII.

Cel. Since then you will not let my suit avail,
 My love will have its joy, although with
 guilt,
 Your limbs shall bend, albeit strong as steel,
 The murky season will your blushes hylte.³
Ber. Help, help, ye saints ! Oh that my blood was
 spilt !
Cel. The saints at distance stand in time of need ;
 Strive not to go ; thou canst not, if thou wilt,
 Unto my wish be kind, and naught else heed.
Ber. No, foul deceiver, I will rend the air
 Till death do stay my din, or some kind passer
 hear.

¹ Bleed.² Impure passion.³ Hide.

CXXVIII.

Help, help, oh God !

Enter HURRA and Danes.

- Hur.* Ah ! that's a woman's cry.
I know it ; say, who are you, that be there ?
- Cel.* Ye hinds, away ! or by this sword ye die.
- Hur.* Thy words will ne'er my spirit's seat appear.
- Ber.* Save me, oh, save me from this ravisher.
- Hur.* Stand thou by me ; now say thy name and land,
Or quickly shall my sword thy body tear.
- Cel.* Both I will show thee by my mighty hand.
- Hur.* Beset him round, ye Danes.
- Cel.* Come on, and see
If my strong sword may settle what I be.
[*Fight all against CELMONDE ; many Danes
he slayeth, and falleth to HURRA.*]

CXXIX.

- Cel.* Oh ! I forslagen¹ am ! Ye Danes now ken
I am that Celmonde, second in the fight,
Who did at Watchet so forslay your men ;
I feel mine eyes to swim in eterne night—
To her be kind. [Dieth.]
- Hur.* Then fell a worthy knight.
Say, who art thou ?
- Ber.* I am great Ælla's wife.
- Hur.* Ah !
- Ber.* If against him ye harbour foul despite,
Now with the deadly anlance² take my life.

¹ Slain

² Sword.