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• Sam Davis •

THE CONFEDERATE SCOUT

A Drama

x x

• ——— W. D. FOX ——— •



SAM DAVIS:

THE CONFEDERATE SCOUT.

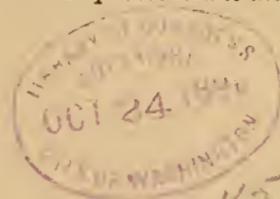
A Drama.

—
BY W. D. FOX. *an*

Murphysboro
Tenn.

34

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NASHVILLE, TENN.:
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NOTE.

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(2)

DEDICATION.

To her, whose changeless absence wrought such dole,
And empty made the life of him bereft;
To her, whose fleet and timeless exit left
His heart deranged and orbitless his soul,
These faulty lines are dedicate. What toll
Of plaudits or of blame the reader pays
Are owed the laggard hours of those days
Her 'parture left unfilled. Not Vergil's scroll
Nor parchment of the Grecian Rhapsodist,
Not Milton's feet nor Shakespeare's deathless verse
Holds language meet her virtues to rehearse;
And yet, though dearth of skill and words exist,
The author shall not scruple to essay
To twine this chaplet, wither though it may.

Murfreesboro, September 17, 1896.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

CONFEDERATES.

SAM DAVIS.....A Confederate Scout.
CAPT. E. COLEMAN.....Commander of Coleman's Scouts.
PHILIP BURKEA Scout.

OTHER SCOUTS.

CLAUDIA BURKEElder Sister to Philip Burke.
ESTHER BURKEYounger Sister to Philip Burke.

FEDERALS.

GEN. G. M. DODGE.....Commanding Federal Brigade.
CAPT. CASPAR HORNE,
COL. MADISON MILLER,
LIEUT. COL. T. W. GAINES,
MAJ. J. D. LATHROP,
CAPT. ARMSTRONG,
CAPT. CHICKASAW,
CHAPLAIN YOUNG,
SOLDIERS. }Of Dodge's Brigade.

NEGROES.

GAIUS.....Slave to the Burkes.
JUDE.....Friend to Gaius.
MELISSA.....Wife to Gaius.
FOUR BOYS.....Sons to Gaius.

Place.—In and near Pulaski. Time.—November, 1863.



SAM DAVIS:

THE CONFEDERATE SCOUT.

A TRAGEDY IN FIVE ACTS.

—
ACT I.

SCENE 1.—*The Burke homestead, near Pulaski.*

Enter CLAUDIA and ESTHER BURKE.

Esther. I would not wanton with his suit, my dear;
There is no need to shame his self-respect
Or chide his dignity. He is a man
Of worthy type, although no Southerner.
I would not play him harshly; bid him go
In kindly fashion, if determ'nedly.

Claudia. There is no need for cautious homilies.
You are too tender toward his wooing, sister.
I do but practice him i' th' warring art,
Using pert Cupid as his adversary—
Besides, I need him in a certain matter
Whereof you're ignorant; I'd tell it you,
But your meek conscience would not like it,
And would most peevishly beg me to stay.

Esther. Perhaps your own cries you the same ap-
peal,
That you're so well acquainted with mine's moods.

Claudia. No; never mine; mine is no nervous
sickling.

Esther. What is your purpose with the Union Cap-
tain?

Claudia. The future holds the answer.

Esther. Do you love him?

Claudia. To you that query wants a "Nay" for answer;
To him, it might be different.

Esther. Be warned,
Good *Claudia*, and attempt no trifling pranks.
These troublous times call for no careless deeds;
We must be guarded even in our thoughts.
We are engirded by a zealous foe,
One that will watch us with no lax espial
To turn our slightest trespass to our hurt.

Claudia. I feel o'ermuch our close enslavement
here;
I know how keenly we are spied upon
By those who hold us not in their affection.
I know how weak and very profitless
Are we that dally in inaction here
While yond upon the fields of ruthless battle
Our val'rous armies war for their just rights.

Esther. We that are stayed by circumstance of sex,
We cannot hope to fill a manly part:
What would you do?

Claudia. I know not what I'd do!
I ache to be of worth in this wild strife;
Yet when I look upon my womanish apparel
And note my feeble thews, I nigh despair.
I was not meant to be a woman, *Esther*;
I lack the docileness of will and temper,
The weakling soul and dull torpidity.

Esther. Shame to you, *Claudia*, to rail your kind
With such unjust reproach! You may find use;
Some fair occasion may intrude itself
Where even you may act a helpful rôle.

Claudia. May that time come with headlong promptitude!

Esther, I have a settled end in mind;
I had not thought to make it known to you,
For fear you'd counsel counter to my aim;
And yet I would you knew my purpose, sister.

Esther. Then tell it me.

Claudia. That I shall do, but mark,
I shall not listen to your contraries;
My spirit will o'erride all opposites!
You'll promise me my will and yours, my dear,
Shall not be disputants?

Esther. I promise you.

Claudia. I learn that Gen'ral Bragg has it in thought
To make a hasty passage through this section,
And has sent scouts among the enemy
To learn concerning all their force and movements—
From Captain Horne I shall obtain such knowledge.

Esther. He would not be a traitor, *Claudia.*

Claudia. I 'd teach him quite a gentler name for 's action.

Esther. What other name?

Claudia. Forbear your further questions—
I shall accomplish it.

Esther. What plan have you
Whereby you may transmit what you may learn
Into the friendly camp?

Claudia. Through these same couriers
I mentioned briefly since: I shall to them
Succeed in sending whatso'er I glean.
Dear *Esther,* these are loyal men and brave
That dare the chances of such per'lous duty!

Many will fall before their aim is compassed;
 And, Esther, there is one among their number
 Whose safety touches even you and me.

Esther. Our brother, Claudia?

Claudia. No, no; not he.
 'Tis one we knew two years or less ago,
 When we were schoolgirls there at Nashville,
 Where often at our uncle's bounteous home
 We met this noble youth.

Esther. Not Samuel Davis?

Claudia. Yes, even he.

Esther. This work were then well placed.
 A nobler, braver man is yet unborn.

A knock.

Come.

Enter GAIUS.

Well, what is it, Uncle Gaius?

Gaius. Yo'ng mistises, dar's er genterman at de do'
 whut 'quires fur Miss Claudyer.

Claudia. Do you know him, Uncle Gaius?

Gaius. I does n' prezackly know his entitlement,
 Mis' Claudyer, but yit his face 'pears mos' similus.
 He's dat yo'ng Yankee whut's been heah so num'ous
 ob late.

Claudia. Captain Horne? Then you invited him
 within?

Gaius. I reclined to 'vite him in ca'se I doesn' lak
 to resociate my yo'ng mistises wid sich er genterman
 widout dier pretik'ler reman's.

Esther. But he's a gentleman, Uncle Gaius.

Gaius. Has I state' dat he aint? I says "sich er

genterman." He w'ars de wrong color ob unicorn, Miss Esther, to be comin' to reverse wid you all.

Claudia. But you have been told every time he has come to admit him. Why do you keep him outside until you come to us?

Gaius. Ca'se I wants ter come an' see if you isn' change yo' min'. On sich er recasion as dis er change ob min' 'u'd be pacerfyin'. 'Sides, it 'pear lak he lak fur you to change yo' min', Miss Claudyer.

Claudia. You anger me, Gaius! Go at once and show him in here, and tell him that I will be down in a very few minutes.

Gaius. Dem wus orders. [Exit.

Claudia. Will you remain till my return, my dear? I shall be gone the briefest moment.

Esther. No;
I do not care to meet him at this time. [Exeunt severally.

Reënter GAIUS, showing in CAPT. HORNE.

Gaius. Tek dis cheer, sah.

Horne. Thank you, sir.

Gaius. Has you any funder reman's ob me, sah?

Horne. Yes, if you will, you may advise Miss Claudia of my presence.

Gaius. She's been 'vised, sah. [Going.

Horne. Here!

Gaius. Well, sah.

Horne. Why is it that you always refuse to let me in when I visit here?

Gaius. Now, you wants a fa'r answer to dat question?

Horne. I do.

Gaius. Den you will 'scuse my abruption if I says I doesn' lack yo' clo'es.

Horne. Don't like my clothes?

Gaius. Dat's jes whut I resarved, sah.

Horne. What's the matter with my clothes?

Gaius. Dey's ob de wrong color, sah.

Horne. Why, you sable old fool, I'm wearing them on your account.

Gaius. Dat'll do to w'isper to de moon, Marster; but hit don' fotch Gaius.

Horne. Why, don't you know that we are fighting to free you?

Gaius. To free me? Now, look heah, Marster, who does I 'long ter?

Horne. You should belong to yourself. I suppose, though, that you belong to Col. Burke.

Gaius. He's a w'ite man, ain't he?

Horne. Yes; what of that?

Gaius. You's a w'ite man, ain't yer?

Horne. Yes, but—

Gaius. Den dat recludes de figgerment. De Colonel, he's a w'ite man; you's a w'ite man. De Colonel's got sumpen you isn', an' you doesn' wan' de Colonel to hab it. You says to de Colonel: "Tu'n dat loose!" De Colonel say: "Damn 'f I do!" Den you redebbers to mek de Colonel tu'n loose, an' you two gits into er muss. Whar does I come in? You bofe is w'ite men; dat am de tail-eend ob de tale.

Horne. What do you mean by that?

Gaius. W'y, you bofe is w'ite men; I isn'. De fox an' de har' don' eat at de same table in Marsychusy any mo' dan dey does in Tennessee. You bofe is ob de same c'ar'ter an' de darky am not, darfo' de latter am allus de latter.

Horne. Do you not want to be free?

Gaius. Free? I is free. I gits all I can eat and w'ar free; I gits a home free; fac', sah, I gits all I wants free. Can yo' kin' ob freedum beat dat? I'd rudder hab free vittles dan a free man, eb'ry time.

Horne. You are an idiot.

Gaius. Den I oughtn' ter be free, an' you isn' oberly wise to redebber to mek me dat way. W'ut de debble you sta'ved-out w'ite trash wan' to come down heah an' raise a rumpus wid us fur? You is gwine ter git de bery hide larruped off'n yer. [*Aside.*] Lawd! Hit's er good thing de Colonel ain't heah; he'd bresh de bery life out'n me for talkin' to a gues' dat way.

Enter CLAUDIA.

'Scuse me! [*Exit.*]

Horne. [*Rising.*] Good afternoon, my dear Miss Claudia.

That pompous slave is most impervious.

Claudia. He irks me oft till I am angered with him; Yet his intent is always to our interest, So we endeavor to endure his capers.

Horne. Are all your slaves as arrogant as he?

Claudia. No, no; although in many cases, sir, Our stations seem exchanged with our slaves.

Horne. Miss Claudia, I come again to harass you With my dull pleadings. You will pardon me If I annoy you with my zealous wooing. I much deplore the chance that makes us foes;

Myself would readily forget this fact,
For, of all truth, I am no foe of yours.

Claudia. Still you are so to all that I hold dear.

Horne. I hold no enmity against them, truly.
'Tis but the accident of war that makes it;
This will be of but brief duration, surely.

Claudia. Why say you that?

Horne. I cannot think it lasting.

Claudia. Then one or t'other of the sides must fail.
Which do you think 'twill be?

Horne. I cannot say.

Claudia. This fatal strife has been afoot two years.
From out the plenitude of your full arms
Your generals have gathered regiments
With which they've brutally o'errun our land;
We're scant of numbers with your hordes compared,
But our armies war for justice solely,
And doubtless God will shield our rightful cause
And grant to us quick victory.

Horne. I, too,
Am oft lukewarm enough of zeal to wish
The end may come, no matter who the victors.
But need this war affect your private feelings?
Miss Claudia, forget this bickering,
This outside wrangle. What is it to you?
You are a woman, and this manly discord
Should weigh but lightly in your thoughts.

Claudia. You, Captain Horne, know not of what
you speak.
I am a woman, sir, yet what imports it?
As living coals behind the forger's hearth
Do fire to active heat the stubborn iron,
So woman, whensoever 'tis opportune,
When righteous strife steals off the bounden service

Of father, brother, or of plighted lover,
Should aye inflame and fire his cooling spirit.
I am a woman, yet would be a man,
That I might fling my little strength and courage
Into this fatal conflict.

Horne. I honor you,
Miss Claudia, for such loyal words, and much
I do commend your fervor. Pray you, leave
This most disturbing, sanguine theme of war.

Claudia. It is and must be my persistent topic.
What right have you, or any of your cause,
To say we shall not hold as lawful chattels
These slaves of ours? What further right than I
To say my neighbor shall not own his horse?
These slaves are ours, bought with our hard-earned
means,
And they're but robbers who would take them from us.

Horne. You are too harsh in your denunciation;
You do mistake right grievously the motives
That urge the action of our President.
But pass this heavy subject, dear Miss Claudia,
And bend your ear to what I'd say to you.
I know the story comes to you e'en as
The oft-repeated lesson to the schoolboy,
Most tedious and dull to him that listens;
I cannot vary it, nor give it different wording;
My ev'ry thought runs to the theme: "I love you."

Claudia. What would you do, since with big sentences
You do avow your spacious love for me,
What would you do t' attain to your desire
And have me to your life companionship?

Horne. What would I do? Why, anything I'd do
That was within the pale of honesty.

Claudia. And if it showed a hint of knavery?

Horne. Then I would not deserve you if I did it.

Claudia. Suppose to me it wore not such a raiment,
And came not to the eye of any other?

Horne. I could not hide it from myself, Miss
Claudia.

Claudia. But surely you could ward your own close
secrets.

However, Captain Horne, I did but try you;
Still, there's a task I fervently desire
Some friend to undertake. You are my friend,
But far from friendly to the cause I favor.
I am in want of one I know to be
In love with both myself and with my cause,
And none could love me loving not my cause.
You're not the man. I beg you to depart
And come no more into my home and presence.
I bear no rancor toward you, Captain Horne;
In truth, I bear you but the kindest feeling,
And I must not too frequent look upon you
For fear—I beg you, sir, to go at once.

Horne. I shall not go! There is no need for it!
I dare to hope you are not fain to look
With total apathy upon my suit.
Do I misjudge, or do you hold me hateful?

Claudia. You would misjudge if you should think
I hate you.
I will deal fairly with you, Captain Horne:
There is one thing, did you accomplish for me,
Your bounty should be named by your own tongue,
E'en though the naming did embrace myself.

Horne. There are few things that I would leave
undone
If their accomplishment would make you mine
I cannot reck' what you would have me do,
But I have stable faith you would not quest
What I may not unblushingly attempt;
Yet, should I err, and should you make demand
That was not full accordant with my conscience,

I still would undertake it, solacing my soul
 With thought you had become my fitting comate
 By urging me to work dishonesty.
 You are to me all that is good or evil,
 For I do love you with my utmost power
 And heartily would sell my very honor
 If you, and only you, were purchaser.
 I say you this not that I have a thought
 You would desire of me aught odious,
 But mere to show my eagerness to win you
 And to what straits I would pursue the wish.

Claudia. The high esteem you put upon my worth
 Is pleasing, but I would you held me lesser.
 What I would ask would test your strength of love.

Horne. I burn to have you put me to the proof.

Claudia. Since I have pondered somewhat on the
 matter
 I deem it better that we let it pass.

Horne. What do you mean by that? Was it an art
 To try my loyalty?

Claudia. It was not such;
 It was and is a thing that you might do
 And win me to your having, yet a thing
 That haply might to you wear on its front
 A shameful aspect.

Horne. What is it?

Claudia. Would you know?

Horne. I would.

Claudia. Why so?

Horne. Not curiously; tell me.

Claudia. Then hear me: Gen'ral Bragg—but pledge
 me first
 You'll not repeat what I shall speak to you.

Horne. I grant the warrant.

Claudia. Bragg intends a movement
Through Tennessee—he's now at Mission Ridge—
He is desirous to possess the knowledge
Of how and where his enemies are trenched
And of what number is their strength composed.
I have the means by which to send such knowledge,
Could I obtain it. One that holds such rank
And post of vantage as yourself could easy
Procure the needed information.

Horne. That?
Surely you know such thing were treasonous!

Claudia. You, sir, may name it as you most prefer;
Still, this I would have done, and I am yours.

Horne. What? This? You do not mean—

Claudia. Why do I not?

Horne. Then by my soul, you shrink in my esteem!

I loved you, woman, even to my limit;
But you have used the quickest way to quell it!
What? Would you make of me a shameless traitor?
Throw o'er my life a cloak of foul dishonor?
Daub my fair name with vilest treachery?
Rob me of all that I was dolt enough
To think alone befitted me to win you?

Claudia. But you forget that none except yourself
Can be at fault if you should do this thing.

Horne. Do you not ask it of me?

Claudia. No, indeed!
I have but told you how you might be owner
Of her you vowed you would do much to claim;
'Tis you must stain yourself if there be stains.

Horne. You are not worth the love I gave to you.

Claudia. Place not too steep a value on your love.
 But this is of slight moment, Captain Horne:
 I am a Southern woman, love the South
 And will do all I may to speed its cause.
 My father and my brother wear the gray,
 And none can censure me that I am fervent
 In hoping the success of their just arms.
 That which I seek of you is trivial;
 To your meek soul my offer came, no doubt,
 Like splash of icy water to the flesh,
 But thinking on 't will lessen its effect.
 The deed that you might do could not be known
 To any save myself and this one other
 That would be sent to take what you would give.

Horne. Miss Claudia, is there no other course?
 Must I to own you come to you a traitor?
 Would you not quail the closing of the bargain
 If I should fall and seek you in this manner?
 Would—do you love me?

Claudia. I have said I'd wed you.

Horne. That is no answer! Do you love me?

Claudia. No;
 Yet I could love you if you wooed me rightly.

Horne. You are not what I thought you, if to win
 you
 I must begrime my chastity of name.
 I have been proud to think myself a beggar
 In perfidy and treason, yet it seems
 I must have store of these commodities
 To barter at the counter of your love.
 Miss Claudia, fix some other testament.

Claudia. There is no other. Let us close this mat-
 ter.

You say you will not do it; then, no more.
 I had not thought th' affair would end like this;
 Still I would urge no man to cross his will,

It were indelicate in me to press this,
 Because 't would seem that I did beg a master
 Whose lack of willingness made me immodest—
 So, good-bye, Caspar Horne. [Going.]

Horne. No! woman, no!
 I am a knave damned to the vilest shame,
 A knack and toy to your hypnotic will
 And what I do is but a madman's doing;
 But I shall claim you ere another month!
 A woman's beauty should inspire to virtue,
 But here it does drag down to deviltry.
 What pledge have I you would make good your
 promise?

Claudia. Is there a doubt that I should keep my
 pledge?

Horne. A doubt? Herefrom the world is heaped
 with doubt!
 I would not trust myself, since I am traitor;
 Nor you, since you have made me such a thing;
 Nor any else since I've lost faith in you.
 I must have earnest you will keep your word.

Claudia. I'll swear it to you.

Horne. That is insufficient.
 Bring me some witness to our verbal bond,
 Or else your signature to written contract.

Claudia. You are too zealous in your doubting, sir!
 I have no scruples 'gainst the signing; none.
 I do not like your palpable distrust!

Horne. And yet my word would need be yoked
 about
 With sureties as thick upon its front
 As gewgaws on a savage Afric's neck
 Before I'd trust it in a future test.

Claudia. Here is my father's desk, with ink and pen;
 Shape you the bond into what form you will.

She walks by; he goes to desk.

Horne. There is no paper here; wait, what is this?
A blank note only—nothing more it seems—
Still, I will make this do.

Sits and writes hurriedly.

Claudia. [*Aside as he writes.*] I win the combat,
But nowise feel a glow of victory,
For I have drabbled here a manly soul.

Horne. [*Rising.*] Read you as I have written; mark
the wording.

Claudia. [*Reads.*] “Pulaski, Tenn., Nov. 16, '63.
On demand I promise to pay to
Caspar Horne.....in marriage
Myself.....
For certain service to the Confederacy.”

Horne. It needs naught but your name affixed.

Claudia. [*Sits.*] Then, sir,
It shall not have a tedious awaiting.
[*Rising.*] 'Tis written. If there be aught further
lacked

Before you willing undertake the labor,
I pray you that you name it. I need nothing
But your bald word as full assurance, sir;
Since you demand a fuller gage of me,
I readily do give it. 'Tis a business deal
Wherein we both do get our equal share.

Horne. It is to you a trifling deal of business;
To me it is the loss of honesty,
Of righteous life and dear integrity.
The love of woman leads me to a feat
No other motive could have reached by half.
Like to a thief that stabs a man to heart
That he may own the jewel that he wears,
Yet by his deed destroys enjoyment of it,
So have I done to death my conscience' peace
To win a woman to my ownership.
Since I have killed all self-love by my action,
So fiercer will I cling to you and love you.

I will not ask of you one loving favor
 Until this covenant is 'filled completely;
 When that is done, and you are bonded mine,
 My chiefest aim will be to make you love
 The traitor whom you now can but despise.
 Think only that I do the South this service
 And keep but hate for those that war against you;
 There solely is a ground for condonation
 Of my most damned, malefic falsity! [Exeunt.]

ACT II.

SCENE 1.—Near Lynnvillev. Outposts of camp of Coleman's scouts.
 Burke on duty as picket.

Burke. This is a chafing duty and a lonesome;
 I'm wont to love a bit of solitude,
 But here, in truth, I'm cloyed and surfeited.
 I measure out the time with tedious tramp,
 The while my restive thoughts do race awild
 And circle seemingly the world about.
 To-day come up to me fair memories
 Of days when Peace, like to a happy mother
 Crooning sweet melodies to crowing offspring,
 Watched o'er the well-contented Southern home.

Enter DAVIS.

Halt!

Davis. Davis.

Burke. Which way, Sam?

Davis. To camp.

Burke. To camp?

Be merciful; the camp is gross with mirth.
 Lag here and kill this dread monotony
 That frets and so diseases my contentment;
 For, earnestly, I'm ill at heart, my friend.
 How think you of this endless strife and discord?

Davis. How think I of it? Why, I think 'tis well.

Burke. What will we gain if we are conquerors?
 What will our foes have won if they are winners?

Davis. What vagrant mood is galling you to-day?
You prate amiss. What brings such thoughts to you?
You were, I thought, as ardent in our cause
As any man that marched beneath our colors.
Is such fit speech from one of Coleman's scouts?

Burke. Perhaps my lonely guard has wrought
upon me;
But, Sam, I've grown impatient for the end.
Take you ourselves: upon the verge of manhood,
We would be masters of our time and deeds
Had we the fortune that is owed to us;
We would be toiling full of zealous ardor
To gain some place among the honourous.
As 'tis, we live with naught before our lives
But chance of dangers and disastrous conflicts,
With dull expectancy of death that hangs
About the neck of our anticipations.
I feel as though my life, which was ambitious
In other course than this calam'tous war,
Were parched e'en in the sprouting of its growth.
I have no wish to be accounted fervid
In the pursuit of fellow-creatures' lives.

Davis. You have grown heavy in your musings,
friend.
You are not minded that a soldier's craft,
Although, perchance, unfitting coil whereon
Your thread of life might easily be wound,
May be another's solest instrument.
Peace breeds the poet and the mouthy statesman,
Yet would the poet's verse be stale and vapid
Did not grim war and warrior's heroism
Make sounding themes whereon to hang his rhyme;
The statesman too would lapse to idleness
Did not the broils of nations feed his genius.
Impartial time apportions rightfully.
For me, I am unapt for aught but battles;
Until this struggle came I was as nothing,
A dreamy boy that moved in bygone days.

I drew my pleasures from the narrative
 Of swashing blade and clam'rous tournament.
 I longed to shift my life to years of yore
 And dwell within an age when manly strength
 Paired with a manly soul, and they as knight
 And his esquire were ever vigilant
 To rush to prop some honorable cause.
 When came the rumor of this mortal contest,
 Boy as I was, I ached to join the quarrel;
 At last when surly war had flung his gauntlet
 Full in the face of peace I lagged no longer.
 My parents fought my will with stubborn zeal,
 But I o'ermatched their arguments and reasons.
 Afire with love for our fair Southland's cause,
 And deathless in my hope to aid her arms,
 I stayed not till I was a 'vowed defender;
 And yet with all my eagerness I have done nothing.

Burke. But, Sam, what is the summing of it all?
 Suppose me one that burns with martial fever:
 I fling my life amid the blare and bloodshed;
 I 'quit me well. Another battle's on:
 Again I throw my furious zeal before the foe,
 And in the falling of an eyelash I am smitten—
 I sink to earth—am trod upon—no more—
 Mayhap I have some token that a comrade knows,
 And this begets me decent burial;
 Perchance I fill a grave o'er which the weeds
 And brooding grasses solely bow in sorrow.

Davis. And haply, too, your early fall were best;
 There is such thing as living past our worth.
 Think on the trait'rous Arnold: had he fallen
 On Quebec's heights, his fame had lived with Time.
 I cannot understand your mood, good Philip;
 You look too darkly on the matter, truly.
 Like mine, your thoughts to-day are on your home;
 You're lovesick for the homely fireside
 Where helpless womanhood doth weep in gloom.
 We are but boys, my friend, though we bear guns

And bluster mannishly among our fellows.
 A thought of home draws with 't a childish tear,
 And oft the tear is herald to a sob
 That swells our hearts beyond their limitations—
 Let me take up your post of duty here
 While you go mingle with the rollickers
 Who now are making merry at the camp.
 When you have shed yourself of morbidness,
 And soothed your gloom with pleasant raillery,
 Then will I yield to you your place again.

Burke. I thank you, Davis, for your kindness,
 But I must not throw off my cares on you—
 But Gracious Maker! what approaches yonder?

Davis. A negro, is it not?

Gaius. [*Without.*] I say, marster, marster, p'int dat
 gun anudder d'rection. I is de Lawd's an'inted.

Burke. I'd swear I knew that voice. Gaius!

Enter GAIUS, attired as a preacher, long coat, high collar, and bearing Bible.

Gaius. Bress Gawd! Is dat you, Marse Philip? I
 sholy is pacified to see yer. I is, bress Gawd! You
 looks well, Marse Philip.

Burke. What's the matter, Gaius? Why are you
 here? Why are you rigged out in this manner? Is
 anything wrong at home?

Gaius. Lawdy, Marse Philip, you is wuss dan a
 kittikism. You axes is dar sumpen wrong at home?
 Dar's sumpen wrong ebrywhar'—but yo' folkses is
 well, Marse Philip. Phew! I's we'ied, an's got ter
 res' fo' I can fabulate any furdur wid you. [*Sits.*]
 Marse Philip, how fur is dis fum de city of P'laski?

Burke. About fifteen miles, I think.

Gaius. Sho, boy! Now, go 'way! I's walked seb-
 enty sence 'istiddy. Howsomebber, you means as de
 crow fly, Marse Philip?

Burke. No, as he walks.

Gaius. Dat's tomfoolin', Marse Philip! It 'u'd tek er crow er mont' ter walk dem hunnerd miles. [*Recognizes Davis.*] Hi, boy! Ain't dis Marse Sam? You is p'intedly growed sence I last seed yer, yo'ng marster.

Davis. I have, Uncle Gaius, since you knew the bashful boy that used to visit at Mr. Burke's. Times have changed, old man, from what they were when you and I used to meet there at Nashville. But how are your young ladies, Uncle Gaius?

Gaius. Dey is fa'rly well; yit, lem'me reform you, yo'ng marsters, de debbil'll be ter pay ef dis ting goes much furder.

Burke. What do you mean?

Gaius. Dar's a Yanky cap'n keeps junin' 'round dar at home, an' he kinder keeps my teef on aidge.

Davis. What's he doing there?

Gaius. Co'tin' ob Miss Claudyer.

Davis. O! Miss Claudia?

Gaius. Dat's what I resarved; Miss Claudia; not Miss Esther, Marse Sam; not de yo'nges' ob 'em—but, Gawd lub you, Marse Philip! How's de Colonel? I trus'es he's well.

Burke. I hope so. Here, you have rattled away long enough now! What are you doing here? Have you no letter nor message?

Gaius. I has, sah.

Burke. Then turn it over to me quickly!

Gaius. It's not for you, Marse Philip.

Burke. For whom, then, is it?

Gaius. For Cap'n Coleman.

Burke. Who sent the message? Where is it? Give it to me!

Gaius. Marse Philip, you is too ha'sh and corrup' in yo' rema'ks. Dar is a heap might be said 'bout my bein' heah, but Cap'n Coleman am de pusson ter tek my missage. I is er soldier ob de 'Fed'racy.

Davis. Did you have any trouble in getting here, Uncle Gaius?

Gaius. Trufe am, boy, I isn' had nothin' 'cep' 't wus trouble. I lef' home 'istiddy ebenin'. I sca'sely got to de line fence whut provides de Colonel's plantation fum Marse Roberson's when one of dese consumptious Yankys toch er bennet neaf my ribs an' ax me whar wus I gwine. I 'spon' in de langwedge of dis book: "I's gwine 'bout my marster's business." Dat wusn' 'zackly de trufe, 'ca'se I wus gwine 'bout my yo'ng misteses' business. An' dat sassy Yanky 'peahed ter know 'twusn' so, fer he resarved mos' onpolitelike: "Yo' marster ain' got no business out dis way. Gimme de countin'-sign," den he say. I did'n know whut no countin'-sign wus, but I helt up bofe my han's and say: "Dese whut I do my countin' wid." Den he say: "Whar's yo' pass, ole man?" Wid dat I raise up my Testerman' say: "Dis am my pass, sah." He tuk de book, he did, and den ax: "Whar you gwine wid dis?" I 'spon' dat I wus gwine out in de countrysome fo' miles ter preach er cullod pusson's fun'al. He axes me, den, in er sorter don'-keer way: "How long's de nigger been daid?" An' I say: "'Bout seben mont's." Wid dat he drap de book an' look at me kinder' mazedlak, an' axes: "Does dese damn rebels hate to gib you up so bad dat dey jes' keep you lyin' round daid for er yeah 'r so, hopin' ter fin' some use fer you?" I 'splain dat de cullud pusson 'd been bu'ied, but dat de fun'al had'n' been preach'. After 'zaminin' an'

sarchin' all erbout me, he at de las' lemme go, and I's been rambleatin' ebery sence redeberin' to fin' de 'Fed'rate ahmy. I's less we'ied now, Marse Philip, an' I 'spec's I better hab er interfew wid de Cap'n. Whar kin I see him?

Burke. Down at the camp. Come, follow me there. [*Going.*]

Gaius. Marse Philip?

Burke. Well.

Gaius. Is de Colonel, Marse Reubin, down dar?

Burke. Why?

Gaius. 'Ca'se dis coat whut I has on—you knows dis coat, Marse Philip.

Burke. It looks like my father's best coat.

Gaius. Den de coat am not 'ceitful, for it is de Colonel's bes' coat, and I'd rudder he'd not kotch me spo'tin' in it. You know, Marse Philip, he mout not understan', an' you know de Colonel nebber gibbs you long to splain in. Marse Philip, do you think dat de Colonel 'd understan'?"

Burke. No, and I don't understand. You black rascal! You had best not be joking about this matter!

Gaius. Marse Philip, I rises to er p'int ob disorder. You has no jus' rights ter use sich ha'sh rema'ks ter me. I is on business for de 'Fed'racy, I is

Burke. Well, Why don't you blurt it out?

Gaius. It am sec'et business, Marse Philip. 'Sides, you owes respec' to my unicorn.

Burke. Where is it?

Gaius. Dese gray ha'rs, sah.

Davis. He has you there, Philip.

Burke. Come, let's get to Capt. Coleman's camp.

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE 2.—*Coleman's Camp. Soldiers in the background engaged in divers occupations and pastimes. Coleman in foreground, apart from others. Picket patrolling between.*

SOLDIERS' SONG.

To-night our hearts are cumbered ;
 Our souls are grave and drear ;
 Perchance our days are numbered,
 Our deaths, mayhap, are near ;
 And yet we will not grieve us,
 But bid our gloom to leave us,
 And with a song relieve us
 Of our woe.

For to-night we banish tears ;
 For to-night we still our sorrow ;
 For to-night we stifle fears,
 Yet what of the morrow,
 The doubtful morrow ?

To-night we dream of mothers,
 Of home and loved ones there,
 While each his heartache smothers
 Beneath a careless air,
 And sings in mimic gladness
 To calm his waxing sadness,
 And O, the searing madness
 And the woe!

To-night we banish tears
 While mock glee we borrow ;
 For to-night we stifle fears,
 Still, what of to-morrow,
 The fatal morrow ?

Coleman. This war drags on its dire, destructive course,

Sapping the people's substance as it passes.
 I feel that we do fight a failing battle,
 And God's decrees are 'gainst the Southern arms.
 There is too much of faint-heart slothfulness
 Among the headers of our soldiery.
 Bragg is too backward in his martial movements;

He will not put his projects to the test,
 But would chain up all doubt before he ventures.
 He that dares little, little doth achieve:
 Sagacity and tedious calculation
 May win in lesser, tamer business
 But war demands quick planning and performance.

Enter BURKE and GAIUS.

Burke. Captain, this is a fam'ly slave of ours:
 He comes to fetch some secret message hither,
 And will impart it unto none save you.
 With thought 'twere haply of some pithy moment
 I brought the man in haste.

Coleman. What is his name?

Burke. His name is Gaius.

Coleman. Well, old man, what is it?

Gaius. Marse Cap'n, dis 'munication am 'portant,
 an' I wus charged to gib hit to you by yo'se'f.

Coleman. You do not mistrust your young master,
 do you?

Gaius. Dese is jubous times, Marse Cap'n, an' we
 has ter be monst'ous keerful who we trus'es.

Burke. Here! You old fool!

Gaius. Marse Cap'n, I repeals to yo' perfection
 fum insult, sah.

Coleman. It's all right, Gaius; let us have your
 message.

Gaius. Jes' es you says, Marse Cap'n; jes' es you
 says.

*Deliberately removes his coat and vest; then takes off his high collar
 and hands it to Coleman.*

De missage am dar; right on de widin side of dat
 collar. Dat scuffy Yanky neber worminated on look-
 in' dar.

Coleman. [*Reads.*] "Desired information can be obtained. Send your trustiest messenger. His situation will be dangerous. A Federal officer promises procurement of plans. Send at once, direct to me.

CLAUDIA BURKE."

Burke, did your sister write this missive?

Burke. It is my sister's writing, sir.

Coleman.

Then, good!

I've been expectant of this news for days;
 Its coming means dispersion of our men.
 My preparations now are fully fledged
 And but await the chance to fly to action.
 To you I will unclose my purposes
 And leave unto your care delivery
 To ev'ry man his duty. Gaius, go;
 Get you your supper from the soldiers. [*Exit* GAIUS.
 Our situation here grows perilous:
 A part of Sherman's army even now
 Is camped at Shelbyville. The enemy
 Are shifting all their idler regiments
 From Nashville to McMinnville. Gen'ral Dodge
 Is strung from Lynnville to Pulaski. Now, mark:
 Tell Roberts he must start at nine to-night
 With messages to Bragg. Charge Moore to haste
 His course toward Fayetteville at earliest morning;
 And say to Greig that Athens, Alabama,
 Is meant to be his foremost scene of work.
 The others of our men, and I, myself,
 Will loiter hereabout some little while
 With hope to capture tidings of some weight.
 Tell me—this is the twentieth of the month—
 To-day one week let all that are behind
 Meet me at dawn of day upon the road
 That leads without Pulaski on the South—
 Three miles below the town is found the spot;
 From there we will attempt to reach our lines.
 Sufficient for the present; you may go.
 Dispatch young Davis me promptly. [*Exit* BURKE.

Though fate is full of scowls and scoffings,
 She seems half bent to help our strong desires.
 Of all the brave men in my company
 I know not one more faithful than this boy
 To whom I would ascribe this grievous duty.
 And it shall not be driv'n upon the youth;
 If his stout heart grows fearful of the task,
 He shall be freed of such a per'lous work.

Enter DAVIS.

My boy, you know not why I sent for you?

Davis. No, Captain, and I do not question you.

Coleman. I have a duty for you, and a grave one.

Davis. I'm ready for it, sir.

Coleman. First let me say
 What is the task; I know your readiness.
 I have received a secret notice; it
 Was sent by friends there at Pulaski.
 The message states that, waiting for us there,
 Is an account in full of all the arms
 And Fed'ral forces 'twixt us and Kentucky,
 And, too, the number of their military.
 Could we but send a loyal courier
 To bear this needed information thence,
 We would be gainers of a strong advantage.

Davis. When shall I start, sir?

Enter BURKE behind; acts dumb-show to soldiers.

Coleman. Be not heedless, Sam.
 The dangers lying 'tween this point and that
 Are of the gravest character; in truth,
 Each step that way would add a newer peril
 Until at last you would be hemmed and girded
 With eager dangers. This must be achieved;
 I deem it nigh the pale of possibility,
 Nor know on which extreme would fall the outcome.
 It is most needy of accomplishment;

If there is here a man that can o'ercome it,
Then he is now before me. Think you none
That I would fondle you to jeopardize
Your life. You, Davis, are a youth in years
But old in bravery and martial wit,
And my applause is winded by your merit.
I would not rank you less than heretofore
Should you quail back from this prodigious service
And tell me that you beg relinquishment
Of such a task. Oft have I given duty
Which you have zealously performed, but none
That pairs in magnitude with this, my friend.
Think well upon the matter; when your mind
Is stayed upon some course bespeak it to me.

Davis. Captain, there is no need for further thought.
My idea of a soldier's duty, sir,
Is that to him naught is impossible
That should be done. For you to say to me,
"Here is a work would benefit our cause,"
Means that I shall attempt it, even if
It seem as useless as to make endeavor
To climb to heaven by a steeple chase—
My service to the South is not by purchase.

Coleman. I give you honor, boy, for such bold
words,
And I'd account myself a favored leader
Had I but one such soldier in my ranks.

Davis. I ask no praise for doing what I should;
I shall begin my march this evening, sir,
And hope to bring all wished-for knowledge thence.
If I should not return rest with assurance
Fate were an enemy to my desires.

The soldiers behind assume an alert and expectant manner.

Coleman. Your hand, my boy—God speed and guard
your life!
And may you compass what you seek to do!
This is your charge: Proceed straight to Pulaski;

Gain Colonel Burke's home—for it is his daughter
 Who sends this message. She will bring you to
 This man who will divulge his army's secrets.
 Secure from him all likely information
 It's possible for you to get; but mark,
 The name of your informant must remain
 In your sole keeping; death and fatal torture
 Must not enforce you to reveal his name.

Enter picket hurriedly.

Picket. Away to horse! The Federals are there!

Pointing.

Coleman. Have they yet sighted us?

Picket.

I think not, sir.

Coleman. Then quietly mount each. Avoid the
 pike!
 Ride well upon the grass! Keep it in mind
 Where we shall meet. Let none forget his duty.

During remainder of scene scouts are one by one withdrawing.

[*To Davis.*] Remember you and fail not. First you must
 Prepare yourself to miss the watchful eyes
 Of prying enemies; invest yourself
 In fit disguise.

Davis. No, Captain, no; not that;
 In all else I will heartily obey you;
 But 'tis not as a spy I'd do this thing.

Coleman. Why, how is that?

Davis. As I am now, a soldier
 Who has not blushed to wear this well-worn gray,
 So shall I seek to work out your commands.
 I would not doff this suit of tattered gray
 For the habiliments of proudest monarch.
 I go not as a spy, but as a scout
 Charged with th' achievement of a patriot's duty,
 A true Confederate within, without!

[*Exeunt.*]

ACT III.

SCENE I.—*Dodge's headquarters at Pulaski. Table with maps, papers, etc., strewn upon it. Gen. Dodge, Col. Miller, Capt. Horne, and others seated.*

Dodge. Our plans are here in full. We'll crush the
foe

So speedily they scarce will know 'tis done.
Our forces are in trim for valid work.
Like a devouring flame or whelming flood
We're creeping steadily upon our foemen,
And shortly we will rout them utterly.
At Chattanooga lies all future action.
The enemy are massing at that point
And our strength is headed thitherward.
Note here; our whole procedure is outlined
Upon these maps.

Horne. What of our numbers, Gen'ral?

Dodge. They are detailed upon this lesser sheet.
Our force, full count, amounts to eighty thousand.
Grant's aim is to dislodge his adversary,
Intrenched on Missionary Ridge. This feat
Is at the charge of Sherman. Burnside's army
Is now encamped at Knoxville, and I hear
That Longstreet has been sent to drive him thence;
This weakens our opponents vitally.
Bragg's front will be attacked within five days—
About the twenty-third. Here is a letter
That came to-day from Gen'ral Sheridan;
He gives in full the Federals' designs.
He speaks with confidence of quick success
Unto the Union arms. The enemy
Are close beset near Chattanooga
And will be driven backward to the sea.

Horne. What of yourself? Will you be ordered
forward?

Dodge. I learn not so. Our southward march is
over.

The war cloud is being rifted in our fore
And Peace, like cloud-freed sun, will burst upon us.

Enter JUDE.

Jude. [*Awkward salute.*] Supper's done sarbed, mars-
ters.

Dodge. Horne, thrust those papers in yon drawer.
We may not use them after our return,
But it were well that they be kept together.

Exeunt all except JUDE.

Jude. De Cap'n nebber looked at me when he put
dem writin's erway. Wonner whut he wants wid 'em.
Yit, 'tain' none oh my consun. He pay me fer to git
dem papers an' not fer to ax merse'f fool axin's.

Goes to drawer and pulls out maps and papers.

De Cap'n gwine p'ruse dese writin's for hisse'f. He
say ter me, he did: "Judas, I wants you to percuor
dem papers whut de Gen'al hes in his office. You
watch whar I puts 'em, an' you git 'em an' tek 'em to
yo' cab'n an' fotch 'em ter me ter-night. Hit'il he'p
you git yo' freedum, an' 'sides, I'll pay you fer yo'
wuk." Wonner whut he gwine pay me.

Some of the papers fall from his hands.

Dey's pow'ful onruly. I'll jes' wrop dese little fellers
widinside of dis big 'un. Bress Gawd! 'Peah lak
dem sogers wus mekin' pickchers ob strings and
mobbles! Mighty crooked strings dey wus, too!
Guess dey meks dese nonsenses ter pass de time er-
way. Do' mek no diffunce whut dey fix 'em fer, I
gwine tu'n 'em ober to de Cap'n. [*Exit.*]

SCENE 2.—*Pulaski. Col. Burke's residence.*

Enter CLAUDIA and ESTHER BURKE.

Esther. You say he yielded to you in this matter;
That he consented to obtain the papers?

Claudia. Undoubtedly he did.

Esther. It is past credit!
I thought him, over all, an honest man.

Claudia. Such is no test of honesty, my dear.
He did no more than what his destiny
Had mapped he should do. He is but a man,
With manly tendencies and inclinations.
He says he loves—does more—he swears he loves,
And could you see his passion play upon him
You would not doubt his tongue spoke verity.
He does no more than I myself would do
If like reward were offered for my labor.
The strongest motive that can stir a man—
Or woman either—is his human love.
Give me the man that truly loves, my dear,
And if there be one thing he can deny
The one on whom he stays his adoration,
And I will show in him another man
Who can withstand with adamant firmness
Th' attack of ev'ry human sentiment.
This man loves me as I do love another
To win whose love I'd fling away myself
And all that tamer natures hold as dearest!

Esther. Nay, nay; you talk without your reason's
leave.
I knew not, sister, that you dreamt of love.

Claudia. 'T is wonder that you knew not of it, Es-
ther.
It is a marvel that no slipping word
Or heedless action of mine own has told you.
You are a woman, Esther, who can love
And in your modesty of habitude
Could easy screen it from your nighest friend;
But I—I have not in me that fine patience
And ductileness of spirit that withholds
And circumscribes my native heat of blood.

Esther. Yet, loving not this man, loving another,
You traffic with and sell yourself to him
On no more cause than fatuous patriotism?

Had you no thought upon the date of reck'ning?
Your promise out, you needs must marry him.
Had you no count of that?

Claudia. Yes, Esther, yes;
But only in a dim, unsettled way.
I felt that fate would shunt that worst extreme.
I could but think the haps of rav'nous war
Would rid me of such ultimate result.
Treason, like Murder, is a faulty actor
And cannot long pretend as Innocence.
Therein lay all the hope of my escape.

Esther. Claudia, who is this other that you love?

Claudia. Ask not of him, my sister.

Esther. Tell me, Claudia.

Claudia. No, Esther. Yet, perhaps, some day I shall.

Esther. Is he Sam Davis?

Claudia. Were it he, my dear,
I could not store my love in fitter garner.
But, pray, what vagrant fancy hinted him?
He's but a boy, a shaveling of a man;
And women's hearts like mine yearn after men
Who show as men.

Esther. He shows as much a man
As any could be cited.

Claudia. Charier, my dear;
Such prompt retort may tell more than you would.
Were I besought too near, I might not vouch
There are not some of my close family
Who do not hate him.

Enter GAIUS.

Gaius!

Gaius. Hi! Yo'ng misteses, I is back erg'in. An'
I is had er jub'lee time, too, yo'ng misteses.

Claudia. What have you done, Gaius? Tell me quickly, Gaius. Did you get to Capt. Coleman's camp?

Gaius. Did I git dar? Sart'in I did. Foun' Cap'n Coleman, Marse Philip, Marse Sam, an' de whole 'Fed'rate ahmy. An' lemme refo'm you, yo'ng misteses, de 'Fed'rate ahmy am pow'ful small. Jes' no mo' dan er han'f'l ob sogers. Min', I nebber demented on dat fac' to Marse Philip, nur Marse Sam, fur I re-jec's ob hu'tin' anybody's feelin's, but it am de gawsp'l trufe, dey ahmy am monst'ous 'significant!

Claudia. But what have you done?

Gaius. Hit am all right, Miss Claudyer; I fotch him wid me.

Esther. Who, Uncle Gaius? Philip?

Gaius. No; Marse Sam Davis. I knows you recermembers him, Miss Esther, doesn' you? He's de fines' repeahin' yo'ng soger in de whole 'Fed'rate ahmy. He's growed sence he was dar at Nashville; he's growed mos' dis way, howsomebber.

Extending his arms from his sides.

Claudia. Where is he, Gaius?

Gaius. Out dar in dis darky's cab'n.

Esther. Bring him here, Uncle Gaius.

Claudia. Be careful, Gaius. See that no one sees you enter. Are you sure no one knows you are here?

Gaius. Yes, Miss Claudyer, we is been mo' keef'ler dan keef'l could be. Dese is keef'l times, yo'ng misteses, an' dis darky resis' dat he ain' no fool.

Claudia. Then go and prove it. [Exit GAIUS.]

Esther. I would it were some other that had come! I tremble in a ravishment of dread

Lest he were seen. What would be done with him
If he were snared while here?

Claudia. Ask not of that;
He shall be kept in safety.

Esther. Still, I fear!
O sister, would they kill him? Strike him down
As though he were some beast, and not their kind?
They'd not dare kill him, would they, *Claudia*?

Claudia. Esther, be not so uselessly dismayed.
You do betray more trepidation than
I thought was in a family of Burkes.

Reënter GAIUS with DAVIS.

Gaius. Here's Marse Sam, yo'ng misteses.

Davis. This is a joyous ending to my journey.
I'm overglad to greet you both again.

Claudia. It pains us that this bloody season, sir,
And your own hazardous employment, too,
Filch from our meeting such large scope of pleasure.

Davis. Let not my danger occupy your care—
And you, Miss Esther? How you look yourself!
Two years have wrought their changes otherwhere,
But not a day has set its alteration
Upon your face.

Claudia. [*Aside.*] He makes no note of mine.

Esther. I cannot speak in sim'lar terms of you;
You have grown broader, stronger than you were.

Davis. Despite war's scant provision for her slaves,
I have gained breadth.

Claudia. Gaius, watch the outer door
And see that no one comes upon us here. [*Exit GAIUS.*]

Davis. An apt precaution that, Miss *Claudia*;
My pleasure had allowed my care to doze
And all my vigilance was playing truant.

Claudia. [*Aside.*] Not truant, but the lover. Leave it so
 Since Esther is receiver of his love.
 [*Aloud.*] Tell us, how got you thro' the foeman's lines?

Davis. Old Gains was the causer of success:
 He did engage the picket with much clamor
 As he recounted with a boundless zeal
 How he had journeyed for so many miles
 That he might preach a buried mortal's soul
 From out hot hell into a blissful heaven.
 His tale was of such humorous ingredients
 It filled the guard with utter merriment
 And while he bent and groaned in stifled mirth
 I slipped unnoted past.

Esther. Good, loyal Gaius!

Claudia. Esther, keep you our guest in company
 While I make sure approach is barred to any
 Who would enhance the danger of his stay. [*Going.*]

Davis. Miss Claudia, my errand cries for haste
 If that I came for is at hand and ready
 'Twere best that my delay be of the briefest.

Claudia. There is no chance that you depart to-
 night.
 My portion of the work is incomplete,
 And will be 'till to-morrow night at closest.
 Content yourself with us; you shall be safe.

Davis. A world of danger could not mar my stay.
 [*Exit CLAUDIA.*]

Esther, I pray your heart be as unchanged
 As that pure beauty of your comely face.
 Remember you that night two years ago,
 When I, a merest boy, aroused and eager,
 Was drawn to hasten to my country's need?
 But how I first sought you, and while war's din
 Was clanging in my ear, I begged of you
 The precious favor of your love?

Esther. I do;
 And as we gaged our dual loyalty
 The battle's thund'rous volume pealed afar
 Like some resounding, deep-toned wedding march;
 Its mighty notes close welded our fond hearts,
 And numbed the dread of coming separation.

Davis. Sweet Esther, I have loved you since that
 parting.
 The thought of you has been my constant goad.
 I did no thing, I undertook no duty,
 But you were mingled in its execution.
 My dreams of you have spurred the lagging march;
 When soul and body, fagged, still struggled on
 Almost at point of mutual surrender,
 Your parting words would steal into my ear
 And urge me to the uttermost endeavor.
 The gelid winds of winter lost their chill,
 And summer breezes seemed the gentler more
 When I would muse upon your loving words.
 Like tortured soul of faithful devotee
 Who suffers persecution, blows, and death,
 Yet through it all keeps heavenward its hope,
 So, through the haps and hazards of the battle
 My doting spirit forward yearned to you.
 This brief reward will much elate my courage
 And stay me for all coming jeopardies.

Esther. Do you so much love me, unworthy me?

Davis. None could thus minimize your worth save
 you.
 Love you? Sweet one, that was an idle question;
 Yet I would answer it: My ardent worship
 Strives not to show itself in outward pageant
 Of kisses hot and physical embrace,
 But in my eye and in the stubborn words
 That my fond heart would drive upon my tongue.
 It reaches far below all smooth expression,
 And in its silence shows such adoration
 As speechless Persian rose to nightingale.

Esther. To hear such words from you makes over-
plain
How e'en one hour of joy is full compeer
To months of gloom. And yet how lowering
When that glad hour is spent! Sam, must you go?
May we not ward you in a strict concealment
Until some crisis lulls this bitter warfare?

Davis. Forget not, dear, I came upon a charge
That lacks fulfillment.

Esther. Yes, I know, I know,
And would not ask you to forego your duty.
I will not drag the speculative future
Into the present, lest it fright my pleasure.

Davis. Esther, who is this man, this renegade,
From whom we shall obtain the Fed'ral plans?

Esther. I cannot say, except he is a man
That bears no forecast of his treachery
Upon his face.

Davis. I do contemn the coward,
Albeit I never yet have seen his face.
I fain would shun a meeting with the man
Lest I be driven to affront him deeply.

Reënter CLAUDIA, unobserved.

What is the price at which he sells his honor?

Claudia. [*Aside.*] His query gets material response.
[*Aloud.*] It is not safe you still remain below;
You must upstairs, perhaps e'en to the garret.
We know not who may be an enemy.
Some meddling gadabout may peer within,
And, mischief-bent, probe out our dearest secret.
[*To Davis.*] Come with me; Esther, keep you watch
without. [*Exeunt.*]

SCENE 3.—*Gaius's Cabin.* Enter MELISSA, *guily dressed.*

Melissa. It tek dat ole darkey a monst'ous long
time ter git hisse'f ready fur dat pahty. Gaius!
Gaius!

Gaius. [*Poking head within.*] Don' git so onpatient, 'oman! I jus laks mer w'ite ves' an' mer razor.

Melissa. Whut fur you gwine tek dat razor?

Gaius. Now, dat's er fool question. What fur you 'oman folkses tek yo' smellin' salts? A razor am er nigger's nerve tonic. Dar is sarcumstanders whar in de heat ob discushion er razor am de bes' agri-fier a man can git. Dat razor goes, er I stays ter home.

Melissa. Hurry yo'se'f, den, nigger. [*Gaius withdraws.*] If dat man mek me miss dat pahty, I'll mek him grieve fur de day he ma'ied me. [*A loud knock.*] Don' knock down dat do'. Whoebber you is, come in.

Enter JUDE with banjo.

Jude. How is you, Miss M'lissy?

Melissa. Sho', Jude! Whut fur you bang on dat do' dat way? You knows you is welcome.

Jude. Dat so, Miss M'lissy, but I nebber protrudes on de pribacy ob er lady. I nebber furgits dat some day I may be er genterman—dat is, if dese Yan-kys don' git whapped. Whar's Gaius?

Melissa. In de naix room.

Jude. Is you all gwine down to Miss Kinkhead's pahty?

Melissa. We is, if dat lazy darky ebber gits hisse'f ready.

Jude. Is yo' boys gwine wid you?

Melissa. Dey sho is. Dat crowd ob niggers 'll fa'rly bile ter hab dem boys sing fur 'em.

Jude. Call 'em in heah, Miss M'lissy.

Melissa. Shack! Shad! Nigger! You boys come heah!

Jude. Whar'd you git dem names, Miss M'lissy?

Melissa. Dem's Bible names, Jude; named fur dem three Jewrusalemites whut wus flung inter de lion's den fur callin' ole Noey bal'headed. [*Enter four little negroes.*] Jude wants ter heah you boys sing. Git yo'se'ves in chune w'ile I stirs up dat slofe'ful daddy ob yo's. [*Exit.*]

SONG: "BLACK MAMMY, AUNT CHLOE."

Air: "Be Home Early To night."

My memory turns to the days of the past
 Ere war brought its change and regret;
 Th' old homestead beloved and the pleasures it held
 Are things I can never forget.
 My father's bent form and my mother's sweet voice
 Come back from the years long ago;
 But dearer than aught
 That awakens my thought
 Is the face of "Black Mammy," Aunt Chloe.

Chorus.

O, I loved old "Black Mammy," Aunt Chloe;
 O, I loved old "Black Mammy," Aunt Chloe.
 Though black was her visage, her heart was not so;
 O, I loved my "Black Mammy," Aunt Chloe.

When childish companions aggrieved me with hurts
 Or pained me with taunts or with jeers;
 When mother rebuked me for mischievous deeds
 Or father reproved me to tears;
 When ailments of youth made me fretful and cross
 And wearied my heart with their woe,
 In my need for relief
 Did I carry my grief
 To the breast of "Black Mammy," Aunt Chloe.

But fled are the times and the pleasures of yore
 And I far away from their joy;
 The serious thoughts of the work-laden man
 Have crushed out the innocent boy;
 And yet, though my years should attain to fourscore
 And my senses be feeble and slow,
 I feel that my mind
 In its chambers would find
 The face of "Black Mammy," Aunt Chloe.

Gaius. [*Entering.*] Heah! Come on now! Le's git ter dat pahty!

Passes over and exit, followed by Melissa, Jude, and boys.

SCENE 4.—*The Burke Residence.*

Enter CLAUDIA BURKE and HORNE.

Claudia. I do not like your moody discontent.
Did I once give my will to any purpose,
I'd not estop to argue with my conscience.

Horne. But I cannot subdue my scruples, wholly.

Claudia. Why do you let your mind be busy thus?
'Tis easy, seems to me, to quell misgivings.
Say to your mind: "On this side lies the labor,
On th' other is the wages for the work;
So: is the guerdon equal to the task?"
Would you renounce the bargain you have made?

Horne. No, Claudia, no.

Claudia. Then silence your sick qualms,
The show of which makes harsher my own task.
I have no more to give than that I've offered.

Horne. 'Tis ample, that—but see you not my fear?
I hold you in my closest, fondest love,
And would do naught that put in jeopardy
My chance of wedding you. This deed I shrink from;
Yet you, whose good opinion I would own,
Beg me take up the work with fast assurance
That it accords with your desire in full.
I feel you would not ask of me an action
The doing which by me would irk your pleasure—
I have borne out your huge request entirely
And have with me to-night the wanted papers—
As yet my treason has not grown to fact,
And still is left me time for drawing back.

Claudia. You little know the way to woo a woman.
She is not won by hesitating methods.

Say you such things to show me how abhorrent
To you is such a caitiff as myself?
Would you impel me to annul my purpose?
A man has lost the base of moral effort
When he blots out his self-respect; that only
Demarcates him from soulless, brutish beasts.
He that contemns himself is more despised
Than he that has a universe's scorn,
And yet stands favored in his own esteem.

Claudia. Forgive me, Captain Horne; bear with
my moods;
It has been years since I had seen this boy;
I then was but a romance-smitten girl
That saw in ev'ry comely man a hero.
I spoke of him as of some old-time picture
That brought back memories of yesterdays
That know not of the serious to-days.

Horne. Cannot to-days be bright as former ones?

Claudia. If 'twere not for this terror-breeding war
And its attendant woes, perchance they might.

Horne. Will you be happy when you've married
me?

Claudia. Will you endeavor so to have me be?

Horne. Yes; on my very life and soul, I will!

Claudia. With such hot zeal, I cannot think you'd
fail.

Horne. You know the thing most lacking ere you
are so?

Claudia. That I should love you? Yes, I fully
know it.

Horne. Will 't ever be?

Claudia. Why are you doubtful ever?

Horne. Because, it seems I've picked the errant
way
By which to travel to your inmost heart.

Claudia. Would you not love me though I loved
not you?

Horne. What do I now?

Claudia. Well, would you marry me,
Knowing I loved you not?

Horne. Pray, what thing else
Has "toled" me to this point? My ev'ry act
Of recent time will answer your inquiry.
Have I not bartered my integrity
For your unloving self? Have I not placed
Your worth beyond that of my country? Look you
And mark the coward shifting of my eye,
From which has fled the glow of honesty.
I cannot hope to keep ev'n your respect,
And yet you shall be mine. I have your word
Besides what else I have more binding on you.

Claudia. Fear not but I shall keep the covenant.

Horne. The breaking of it 'tokens death t' us both.

Claudia. You do not threat me?

Horne. No! God witness me!
'Tis not a threat, but an unerring truth.
Such is the measure of my mighty passion
That death, both yours and mine, were needs achieved
Ere I could tame my furious, love-mad soul.
My better self rebukes in me such utterance,
But hint of losing you kills the reproof.
My course has been one long-drawn misadventure:
I look back o'er my traversed field of life,
And find no flower but the crushed Adonis;
But in the untrod landscape of the future
I yearn for fairer and more fragrant blooms.

Claudia. Think you that flowers of such longed-for
sweetness
Can spring from soil so sterile of nutrition?
What pleasing drink can well from crime-befouled
And turbid source?

Horne. Time clears the foulest stream:
The dregs and sediment will seek the bottom;
And, tho' they're there, it needs a fresh derangement
To drive them to the surface. No stream courses
From source to sea unsullied.

Claudia. Captain Horne,
The time is here when you fulfill your contract;
You're ready?

Horne. I am ready; but you mean
The time is near, not that it has arrived?

Claudia. Suppose I mean the other? That the hour
Is even here?

Horne. I'd meet it readily.

Claudia. Th' expected courier is here.

Horne. But you—

Claudia. I know I led you to infer not so,
And I did so that I might first determine
If you still held to your pronounced intent.

Horne. I make no murmur at your patent doubt;
Bring you the man.

Claudia. Await me but a moment. [Exit.]

Horne. Since it must be, the respite of a day,
A week, a month, would lessen not the deed,
But my sick thoughts would build its magnitude.
The sooner done the speedier its survival.
My state seems like some debt-vexed trafficker's,
Who daily sees his ruin nearer hasting;
Knowing it must be, he despairs, and begs

The quick approach of worldly failure.
 The guardian stone that did inclose my honor
 From my soul's entrance has been rolled away,
 And now 'tis honor's empty sepulcher.

Reënter CLAUDIA with DAVIS.

Claudia. This, Captain Horne, is Mr. Samuel Davis.

Horne. No need for courtesies betwixt us two.
 You know for what you come; likewise do I;
 The things you seek are here. [*Drawing out papers.*]

Davis. Then give them me.

Horne. I shall, but you must first avouch an oath
 My name shall never pass your lips.

Davis. I swear—
 And yet I shall not; I will give my word;
 That only should suffice this present case.

Horne. Nay, you must swear.

Davis. A simple promise, sir,
 Is as obliging on an honest man
 As vows kiss-stamped upon the holy Bible;
 But, since you urge the giving of the oath,
 I swear your name shall never 'scape my mouth.

Horne. I thank you, sir. [*Gives papers.*]

Davis. Your thanks are useless, sir.
 I shall not plead of you a counter pledge,
 For witnessing the doing of this act
 Constrains me to prejudge your promises.

Horne. Forbear your strictures. It concerns not
 you
 Whatever be my course.

Davis. I yearn to know
 What price could move a man to such an action.

Horne. Sir, you are pert!

Davis. And you, sir, what are you?
My very spirit seethes within my bosom
When I do front a traitor!

Horne. [*Claudia starts between.*] Spare such speech;
There is a lady present.

Davis. And her presence, sir,
Saves you the hearing of uncomely truths.

Horne. I have no quar'l with you. Becalm your
spleen,
Which finds a causeless outbreak. [*Sits.*]

Davis. Suffer me
To say your company is lacking elsewhere.

Horne. [*Rising.*] Sir, you are copious of offensive
speech!
I will not brook renewal of your rudeness!
You have o'ertopped your bounds.

Davis. There are no bounds
An honest man is called to cede to traitors!

Horne. You are a fool! A brash-brained simple-
ton!
A repetition of your epithet,
And I will kill you as it leaves your tongue!

Davis. You are a traitor, sir. [*Horne draws his sword.*]
Unsheathe your weapon!
The sight of it shall not estay my speech!
Strike if you will; I shall not ward the blow!

Horne puts up sword.

I feel myself some tinctured with your treason
Since I possess the fruitage of your sin.
God pity you and pardon your offense,
Which stands conspicuous and boldly lettered
Within the cumbrous catalogue of crimes—
The price? What was the price of such a deed?

Can jewels or the clink of suasive gold
 Buy men of honor? Tell me, man, your price.
 Where is that thing in all the round of treasures
 Can peer a man's integrity? Your price?

Horne. Since you so burn to know, my price is
 there! [*Pointing to Claudia. Exeunt.*]

ACT IV.

SCENE 1.—*Gaius' Cabin. Gaius, Melissa, and Jude, the last with a banjo.*

Gaius. Jude, I's monst'ous 'joiced dat you is come ober to-night; an' I is furdermo' pow'ful glad dat you fotch yo' banjer wid you. Er banjer am de meloniouises' implement ob pledger dat dar is. Ain' dat so?

Jude. Hit jes' is!

Gaius. An' er banjer widout er nigger to menage it am jes' nowhar. Ain' dat de trufe?

Jude. Hit jes' is!

Gaius. A w'ite man don' stan' no show whutsome-ebber wid er banjer. De nigger am de banjer's true lub. Hit's jes' lak you teks er sutin gal whose lubber you isn'. You talks wid her an' mirates ober her lubliness; you spresses yo' refraction in de mos' sweetnin' tums, and all dat, but she don' spon. She jes' sets col' an' diffunt lak: 'ca'se why, you isn' her true lub. Dat's de way wid er w'ite man an' er banjer.

Jude. Hit sho is dat!

Gaius. M'lissy, isn' I right 'bout dat?

Melissa. You is, Gaius; you sut'inly is.

Gaius. An' dat dismembers me ob ernudder thawt. You tek M'lissy an' me; we is husban' and wife. We is to one ernudder jes' lak de strings ob er banjer is to de head. She am de strings an' I is de head. You sees dat, doesn't you? I meks merse'f cl'ar?

Jude. Not altergedder so.

Gaius. Hit's jes' dis way, Jude. She am de strings an' I is de head. One am natcherly rebliged to hab de udder. Jes' so. Whut 'u'd de strings be widout de head? Jes' strings, dat's all. Whut 'u'd de head be widout de strings? Jes' er head, dat's all. Darfo', de head need de strings an' de strings need de head; or, to spress hit in diffunt tums, dey bofe is got ter hab bofe. Darfo' put 'em bofe tergedder, an' dar you is: de sweet an' melonious chunes ob ma'ied bliss!

Jude. You is right! 'You sho is!

Gaius. Fu'dermo', I meks de 'oman out'n de strings; 'ca'se why, she mos' usury mek all de noise in de fambly, while de man jes stan' an' tek it. Dat's whut de head do.

Melissa. Jes' heah dat nigger! Hit 'pear lak he de strings, now!

Jude. Hit do look dat way, Miss M'lissy.

Gaius. W'en er w'ite man gits holt ob er banjer hit allus min' me ob er fambly rookus. Dem strings an' dat head don' git 'long tergedder er bit. De strings dey git fretted an' de head jes' kotches de debbil. Dar is udder p'intns erbout er banjer dat is similus to ma'ied folkses, but I rejec's ter 'faberlate on 'em jes' now; 'ca'se why, I wants ter heah dat insterment ob yo's, Jude. Gimme dat chune whut I laks so much.

Jude plays and sings.

SLAVE DAYS.

Tune: DIXIE.

I's pinin' fur dem slave days;
 Back dar my min' do wander;
 I's pinin' fur dem slave days;
 On dem my thoughts do ponder.
 In all dis vas' creation
 I gits no consolation
 Like musin' on dem slave times ob long ago.

Chorus.

I's pinin' fur dem slave days,
 I's pinin' fur dem slave days;
 Fur freedom am not whut I thought 't 'u'd be;
 My life am sad an' cheerless,
 My eyes am dry an' tearless;
 I's longin' fur dem slave days fo' I wus free.

Ole Marster's daid an' bu'ied;
 Ole Miss done cross de ribber,
 An' dis ole darkey's moun'in,
 No mo' he'll see 'em ebber.
 I's yearnin' fur dey orders
 To seek de hebenly borders,
 I's pinin' fur to follow whar dey may go.

Dese darkeys heah 'round me
 'Pears ob anudder breedin';
 Dey well can do widout me,
 An' dem I is'n' needin';
 I's longin' fur de message
 Ter tek de hebenly passage,
 Dar whar my folks is gone I wants to go.

Gaius. Watermillions am no reproach ter dat, I'd rudder be repa'r'd ter finger dem strings dat way dan ter be de presentent.

Jude. W'ich presentent?

Gaius. Dar ain' but one presentent; dat's Presentent Davis.

Jude. Lawd! he ain' no presentent.

Gaius. You is grabely mistook. What am de den?

Jude. He's er axerdent.

Gaius. Whut de diffunce?

Jude. Why, de diffunce am mighty cl'ar. Er present am one whut am one at de presen' time, an' er axerdent am one whut am jes' axin' ter be one at de presen' time, an' one dat may be one some time, an' den ag'in may nebber hap'n ter be at all. Marse Linkim am de presentent, an' Marse Davis am de axerdent.

Melissa. Gaius, is it Marse Sam Davis whut is de axerdent?

Gaius makes signs of caution to Melissa which are unobserved by her, but which do not escape Jude.

Jude. [*Aside.*] Dat's de yo'ng man whut Gaius allus talkin' 'bout seein' dar at Nashville, an' lakin' so much.

Melissa. I gwine ax Marse Sam Davis in de mawnin' if he am de axerdent ob de Fed'racy.

Gaius. [*Making signs.*] Shet up, 'oman.

Jude. [*Aside.*] I wonners whut dat mean.

Melissa. Gaius, you is pow'ful brash dis ebenin'. Whut de matter wid you? Ain' I got er right ter ax Marse Sam Da—

Gaius. 'Oman, I'll mash yo' mouf ef you does'n hesh up.

Jude. [*Aside.*] She gwine ax Marse Sam Davis in de mawnin'.

Melissa. You's er fool. I ain' gwine hesh. I ain' sed nuffin.

Gaius. 'Pear lak I heahs dem yo'ng bucks t'arin' 'roun' dar in de naix room. M'lissy, mek 'em come in heah an' sing w'ile Jude picks de banjer. [*Aside.*] I wonners ef dat nigger respec' sumpen. He 'pear pow'ful 'spicious.

Melissa. Better let dem boys be, Gaius. 'Sides, I wants ter know—

Gaius. You go fotch 'em in heah remejitly!
[*Exit Melissa.*]

Jude. [*Aside.*] Gaius look pow'ful 'sturbed. Sumpen ain' right somewhar.

Gaius. [*Aside.*] Whoebber said dat de Lawd made 'oman out 'n er rib wus all wrong; 'case why, I b'lieves she wus made ontirely ob tongue.

Reënter MELISSA.

Melissa. Whut fur does you rejec' ter my axin' Marse Sam—

Gaius. 'Oman, go, fotch dem boys heah. [*Exit Melissa.*] [*Aside.*] Banjer strings! Banjer strings! Gawd! How dey jes' keeps twangin' on dat one chune!

Jude. [*Aside.*] Dars's sho sumpen behin' all dis, an' I gwine fin' it out. [*Aloud.*] What fur she keep talkin' 'bout dat Marse Sam Davis?

Gaius. Gawd knows. Dat nigger 'oman gwine crazy. Don' you mek no mention ob it on de outside, but dat 'oman ob mine is sholy toch heah. [*Pointing to head.*] She gits in dem mewanderin's ob min' bery of'n dese days.

Reënter MELISSA with four boys.

Dar now, dar dem triflin' yo'ng bucks. Git out dat banjer, Jude, an' let dese no 'count brats sing er song or two. [*Boys sing.*] You yo'ng rascals git ter bed now. [*Exeunt boys.*] Jude, de Lawd sont me an' M'lissy er obers'ply ob dem yo'ngsters.

Jude. Dey 'pears to be bery good boys.

Gaius. I s'poses dey's erbout es good es dey wus meant ter be.

Jude. Well, I mus' be gittin' home.

Gaius. Yo' visit pow'ful short ternight, Jude. Well, come ober whenebber you gits time.

Jude. I mos' sut'inly gwine do dat, Gaius. [*Aside.*] I gwine fin' out whut dem two niggers is got on dey min'.
[*Stops to listen before exit.*]

Gaius. M'lissy, you is a fool. Yes, you is, you is er fool, er rank ole fool! You done put 'spicions in dat nigger's head, an' he gwine 'casion trouble. Min' whut I tells you, he gwine 'casion trouble. Marse Sam Davis am in danger. Don' you open yo' mouf to me. You done put Marse Sam in danger wid yo' long tongue. I gwine mek has' to de big house and refo'm Marse Sam and de yo'ng leddies dat dar gwine be trouble. You git ter dem onmannerly young bucks. [*Exeunt.*]

SCENE 2.—*Col. Burke's residence.*

Enter CLAUDIA BURKE and DAVIS, the latter ready for departure.

Davis. You are a noble woman; one of those
Whose fast devotion to the Southern cause
Keeps hope within the breasts of us rough soldiers.
You women are the safe repositories
Wherefrom we struggling warriors draw our strength,
Our valor, and encouragement.

Claudia. Too fulsome
Are you in taling our slack worth.

Davis. Not so.
And you I do esteem among the noblest;
But you shall not make such a sacrifice
As you do contemplate. I shall await
Another coming of this faithless knave,
Replace these papers in his ownership,
Arm him with selfsame weapon as myself,
And, after charging him look to his safety,
Shall wrest them from his keeping; if not that,
My death shall be his license to retain them.

Claudia. No, no; you shall not do it.

Davis. Who shall hinder?

Claudia. Myself; you have no warrant to intrude
Your hindrance in this matter.

Davis. 'Twould release
And rid you of your rigorous agreement.

Claudia. Freedom wears not such comely counte-
nance,
But I can easy lack of its possession;
So, let the matter be as I would have it—
Apprise me how our arms deport themselves.

Davis. The outlook yields small hope—we're sore
beset—
Our armies are hard taxed for full provision.
Although our men keep up a cheerful seeming,
Despair is creeping to their inner hearts.

Claudia. Is Sherman bent toward Chattanooga now?

Davis. He is, and our brave soldiery are stung
With dull affright when they do think upon
Their women and their children, for they know
The pitiless and cruel temp'rament
Of Gen'ral Sherman. He has shown already
A want of mercy that strikes dread dismay
To ev'ry Southern soldier when he thinks
Upon his 'fenseless ones as likely prey
To fierce and devastating vandals.
My soul becomes prophetic when I dwell
In mind upon the fortunes of the future:
Should Bragg be ousted from his present stronghold,
Should he be beaten backward to the ocean,
And should there be no bulwark left to us
Betwixt our foemen and the sea, I chill
With awe and horror at the final outcome.
My inward sight appalls me with its pictures:
I see our homes made prey to savage flames;
I see our mothers, wives, and sisters, all,

Abused by coarse and impious marauders;
 I see our sacred churches and our schools,
 Our hallowed monumental edifices,
 Our grand remembrancers of 'parted greatness,
 Our ev'ry cherished and beloved pile
 Go down before their greedy vandalism.
 Cities that stand in majesty and splendor,
 Whose brilliant spires and lustrous cupolas
 Entrap the wayward rays of Southern suns,
 Will change their brightness to the hues of night.
 Old men, too feeble for the bouts of battle,
 Will fall beneath the hands of ruthless devils;
 While children, innocent of warfare's meaning,
 Will meet stern death with pleading little mouths
 And heart-appalling pleas for pity.

Claudia.

Stay!

Enough! You must begone, and haply you,
 With what you have obtained, may aid our arms
 And thus avert this most disastrous fate.
 The probable events that you foreshadow
 Make manifest my sacrifice is needed.

Enter ESTHER hastily.

Esther. Sam, you must go—there's danger in your
 stay.

Davis. Where is the danger?

Esther.

Gaius—he is there—

He says a slave but shortly left his cabin
 With inkling of your presence in this house.
 Make ready and be off!

Claudia. [*To Esther.*] His overcoat. [*Esther brings it.*]
 Your papers, are they safe?

Davis.

Within my boot.

Claudia. What else is not about you?

Davis.

All is here.

Commotion without.

Esther. Pray heaven, it be not they!

Claudia. Come! come with me!

Hurried commands without.

Davis. A moment—*Esther*, good-bye.

Esther grasps his arm.

Claudia. Loose him, *Esther*!
Haste! quick! come after me! [*Going.*]

Heavy steps without.

Here! this way! come!

As they try to pass out they are met by soldiers.

First Soldier. Halt! Come no further!

Davis. [*Drawing pistol.*] Back! Bar not my way!

Second Soldier. Up with your hands! You are surrounded!

Claudia. [*Stepping between Davis and soldiers.*] Quick!
The other door!

Davis turns, and is met by soldiers from opposite side.

Third Soldier. Down with your weapon!

Soldiers at his back rush upon him; he is overcome.

Esther. O gracious God, thy mercy! [*Rushes to Davis.*]
They will kill you?

Tell me they will not.

Davis. Aye, they will not, *Esther*;
I am a soldier of the Southern army,
Arrayed in uniform. I am no spy,
And only as a spy would they have grounds
On which to kill me.

Esther. I thank thee, Heaven!

First Soldier. Come! out of here!

Exeunt soldiers with Davis, Esther following.

Claudia. O hateful! All for nothing!
 Does it so end? My labors grounded thus?
 The picture of my hopes, so near completion,
 One erring stroke to turn into a daub?
 The sculpture while being raised to 'ts pedestal
 To slip the grasp and lie in reckless fragments?
 Had I but urged him forth at proper chance!
 I could not lose that stinted recompense,
 One quarter-hour's close companionship;
 But now, for that forbidden greediness,
 Like lovelorn Orpheus' half-recovered spouse,
 He has been snatched into Plutonic gloom.

Enter HORNE hurriedly.

Had you a part in this? Speak! Give me answer!

Horne. By heaven, no! What think you of me,
 woman?

Claudia. I do contemn and loathe you!

Horne. So do I
 Loathe and contemn myself.

Claudia. Why came you here
 So nigh upon his capture, if it be
 The capture were not of your own direction?

Horne. Peace, woman! You are daft! Arraign not
 me
 For his betrayal, for I knew not of it
 Until I heard of it at Dodge's quarters.
 You are unjust!

Claudia. Make no such charge on me!
 What proof have I to think you did it not?

Horne. You have my word.

Claudia. A traitor's word!

Horne. Woman,
 You violate all fairness! Spare me that.

Claudia. What have you spared to me?

Horne. I've taken naught
That came not of your primal offering.
I am the thief, you the recipient,
And neither may condemn the other.

Claudia. What will they do with him?

Horne. I cannot tell.

Claudia. They will not kill him?

Horne. It were hard to say.
Still, I think not. You'll pardon me my haste,
But I must go; perhaps I shall be needed. [*Going.*
Claudia [*returning*], you do unfairly doubt my faith.
You only hold in pawn my honesty;
I never shall have means for its redemption,
Yet you should be the last to taunt my lack
And penury of honor.

Claudia. Quiet your reproof;
You did not know the mover of my doubt;
His capture poisons my anticipated draught.
Will you demand defrayment of my dues
When that I purchased proves unstable ware?

Horne. I have fulfilled my portion of the compact,
And shall exact of you what's owed to me.

Claudia. So have it, sir. If I had but succeeded
And wrought the South such good as I designed,
'Twould have been full surcease for all ills else;
But here my failure is made doubly harsh,
In that I pay the price yet lose my purchase.
I shall not strive to shun my destiny,
But I shall be a sharp remembrancer
To keep your conscience ever cognizant
Of your despoiled and pillaged honesty! [*Exeunt.*

SCENE 3. *Dodge's Headquarters.* DODGE, GAINES, and HORNE
seated.

Dodge. This is a serious business, Colonel Gaines.
It is indeed a galling thought to me

That tells me at my very elbow—aye,
 Within my close official family—
 There lurks a traitor.

Gaines. It is wonderful;
 My wildest thought would never have alighted
 Upon such vicious and disloyal deed.

Dodge. Who is the man?

Gaines. I've fagged my brain with guesses.

Dodge. Horne, what is your conjecture?

Horne. I have none, sir.

Dodge. I momentarily expect this youthful rebel.
 I've sent for him that I may talk with him,
 And, if his mind be probal to my questions,
 I shall determine who the traitor is.
 I'll give the man his life if he will tell;
 E'en more, I'll give him passport to his lines.

Gaines. Such spacious price will purchase your
 desire.

Dodge. I know not so—the boy is firm and stead-
 fast.

Enter GUARD *with* DAVIS.

Withdraw and guard the entrances. [*Guard withdraw.*]

HORNE *offers to pass out.*

No need

For your withdrawal, Captain Horne.

HORNE *returns.*

[*To Davis.*] Young man,
 You know how vital is our charge against you;
 You are a spy and—

Davis. You mistake the word;
 I am no spy!

Dodge. We will not quibble terms.
 Enough to say that you were late possessed

Of information that is dear to us;
Where you procured it I am fain to learn;
Will not you tell it me?

Davis. No, General Dodge.

Dodge. Doubtless you know your hazardous position?

Davis. I do, and will accept what it entails.

Dodge. And if it should be death?

Davis. I should not falter.

Dodge. Think on this thing, young man. Act not in haste.

The man who gave these plans into your hands
Is near myself; your sacrifice to him
Would add but scant extent unto his safety.
I should uncover soon his trait'rous name,
And death would close his treacherous career.
You are too brave to die. When this strife ends
Such men as you are needed to upbuild
A newer generation. Him you shield
Should not be suffered to encumber earth.

HORNE again offers to pass out.

Did not you hear my recent order, sir?

HORNE returns.

[*To Davis.*] Give me his name.

Davis. I cannot do it, sir.

Dodge. That solely will preserve you your life.

* *Davis.* I feel that I will have to die, and soon,
But even death shall not enforce the name.
There is no earthly power can constrain
My utterance of the name that you would know.
I do not blame you for your course of action;
Doubtless you do esteem your strict behavior
Consonant with your duty as a soldier.
As for myself, I quail not from your sentence,

For I believe I do but what my God
And much-loved country do require of me.

Dodge. Young man, I much regret the exigence
That orders me to act the seeming tyrant.

Showing papers.

This is a summons for a martial court;
The persons cited here are near at call.
Unless you open to my knowledge, sir,
The name of him was faithless to our cause,
I must convene at once this grave tribunal,
That it may make disposal of your case.
Knowing the grievous charge, and doubtless guilt,
They must adjudge for you a present death.
Your life hangs to the yielding of this name.

Davis. You have undoubted power, Gen'ral Dodge,
To make to-night my final destiny,
But I deny your right to sentence me
As though I were a spy. You can but mark
My uniform, which is a warranty
Of honest warfare.

Dodge. We'll not argue that.
I do admire your stubborn fealty,
And would do overmuch to spare your life;
But these harsh times call for our sharpest tempers,
And Pity must not mask herself as Justice.
I beg with hearty and unfeignèd zeal
That you compel me not to seal your fate.

Davis. 'Tis bootless to prolong this conference;
I shall not grant what you demand of me.
'Tis nor respect nor love for him I shield
That ties me to the course I here pursue,
For I abhor and utterly contemn
The craven-souled poltroon who has betrayed you.
I hold him in my ultimate disgust!
He stands before the bar of my poor judgment
Charged with the very dregs of human vice!
I would not change my probable brief span
For an eternity of his cursed years!

Dodge. You will not give the name?

Davis. Again, sir, no!

Dodge. Here, Colonel Gaines, call in these men,
 [*Gives papers*] And presently court-martial this rash boy.
 Yourself is one of the commission, sir,
 And Captain Horne another. [*Exit GAINES.*]

Now, young sir,
 You have elected what shall be your doom;
 I do deplore your choice.

Davis. I thank you, sir,
 For the pronouncement of your sympathy,
 Yet I much fear your manifest regret
 Comes of your failure to break through my will
 Rather than of a wish to spare my life.

Dodge. You gravely wrong my sincere interest.

[*Reënter Col. GAINES with Col. MILLER and others.*]

Gaines. Your order has been carried out in full;
 The summoned officers and men are here.

Dodge. Proceed with promptness with your labors,
 sirs.
 Read first the order, Captain Horne.

Horne. [*Reads.*] "Headquarters Left Wing Sixteenth A. C., Pulaski, Tenn., November 22, 1863. General Order Number Seventy-two. A Military Commission is hereby appointed to meet at Pulaski, Tenn., on the 23d inst., for the trial of Samuel Davis. Detail for the Commission: 1. Col. Madison Miller, Eighteenth Missouri Infantry Volunteers. 2. Lieut. Col. T. W. Gaines, Fiftieth Missouri Volunteers. 3. Maj. J. D. Lathrop, Thirty-ninth Iowa Infantry Volunteers. 4. Capt. Caspar Horne, Twenty-seventh Iowa Volunteers, Judge Advocate. By order of Brig. Gen. G. M. Dodge, J. W. Barnes, Lieut. and A. A. G."

Dodge. Read you at once the charge against th' accused.

Horne. [*Reads.*] "It is charged that the prisoner, Samuel Davis, in the service of the so-called Confederacy, was apprehended on the night of November 22, 1863, having in his possession certain plans and information concerning the position of the Federal forces, and that therefore he is a spy."

Dodge. Use expedition. Call the witnesses.

Horne. J. D. Lamar.

First soldier takes the stand.

What know you of this case?
Tell what you know with utmost brevity.

First Soldier. Last night at eight I was detailed by Col. Gaines to take a squad of men and hasten to the residence of Col. Burke and there capture a Confederate spy. I obeyed the order, and the prisoner is the man we captured.

Horne. Were any papers found upon his person?

First Soldier. We found certain important maps and plans upon him, besides a letter addressed to Gen. Bragg from one Capt. E. Coleman, of the Confederate service.

Horne. What was the nature of these documents?

First Soldier. They were maps of the position of our armies, letters detailing the number of our forces and our plans of procedure.

Horne. That will suffice; stand down. Call Andrew Marr.

Dodge. There is no want for further witnesses; The night grows old. Besides, the testimony Of these that follow is but parallel To what has just been giv'n.

Horne. [*Rising.*] But, General—

Dodge. Spare your dissent. Sum up the case in haste.

Horne. [*Aside.*] This is but sham and semblance of a trial—

O God! that I were saved all further action!
 [*Aloud.*] Ah, General, I feel a sudden sickness,
 And beg that you replace me with some other.

Dodge. There is no one at hand in lieu of you;
 Be brief and curt; perhaps 'twill shortly pass.

Examines papers and writes.

Horne. [*Aside.*] O piteous Christ! May I not shun this thing?

Must I inveigh against this man? I, that
 Am trebly guiltier than he, be his accuser?
 Must I dwell on my crime and call it his?
 Shall I be balance for his innocence
 And seeming guilt to weigh up the result
 And show by evidence which tips the beam?

Dodge. Judge Advocate, we wait your further duty.

Horne. You, gentlemen of the Commission know
 How grave is the position that you fill,
 And it is needful that you use no haste
 In coming to the judgment that you render.
 The time demands brief sentences of me;
 The office that engages my weak service
 Is one that calls for fair and neutral action.
 I shall not practice tortuous argument
 For or against this man who stays your sentence.
 He stands before you here alleged a spy.
 Some traitor has betrayed our plans to him—
 And here I pause a moment in my course
 To say how damned and odious is he
 That thus foreswore his manly loyalty.
 Collated with the doings of this man,
 How cursedly more guilty is the other! [*Dodge arises.*
 Compared with him this man looms out a god!
 My tongue lags, panting for the words
 That rightly tell the shameless deviltry
 Of him, the false, perfidious miscreant,
 Who thus made traffic of his country's cause!

Dodge. [*Aside to Horne.*] Digress not to the other.
Close the business.

Horne. The waning night asks curtness of my
speech;
Yet I would beg deliberation, sirs,
Ere you pronounce the fate of him accused.
Though true he came against our interests
And with intent to work our injury,
Yet he did come garbed in the uniform
Of the misguided force that war against us.
He is devout in his allegiance
To the rebellious—

Dodge. [*Aside to Horne.*] Pray, what moves you, man?
What need for you to touch upon such matters?

Horne. [*Aside.*] O God! To stay this tragical pa-
rade,
And take my place where stands he innocent!
[*Aloud.*] I've but a word to add to that I've said:
I would not hide the pris'ner's heavy fault
Behind laudations of his steady firmness
In so withholding from our eager ears
The name of him who has beduped our trust.
May God forgive the recreant infidel
Whose place is there instead of that brave boy!

Dodge. [*Aside to Horne.*] Be done! You do amaze
me with your rantings!
Your speech is openly impertinent.

Horne. I shall be done with but one statement
more:
This man is young, and shows of spacious worth.
His sole apparent fault is that strong fire,
With which he has endeavored to bear out
The duty set for his accomplishment.
The crime lies not with him, but with that other
Whose cursèd action wills this consequence—
To him who stands arraigned before you here.
I beg you, gentlemen, cou well the case,

Lest after years condemn your present judgment.
I do beseech—

Dodge. [*Aside to Horne.*] Fool! Hold your witless
gabble!

You seemingly forget your proper office.
Be done at once!

Horne. The case, sirs, rests with you.

Dodge. [*To Commission.*] Lose little time in framing
your report.

The Commission confer.

[*To Horne.*] You suffered admiration for this boy
To overawe and cow your sense of fairness.
What need had you to sum his virtues up?
When duty cried for censure of his crime?
You cramped th' opinions of the judges, sir,
And haply warped their fair discrimination.

Horne. I spoke but truth of him.

Dodge. But spoke too much.
The case demanded harsher treatment, sir.
You trod full softly on his trespasses,
But moved with thund'rous tramp upon his virtues.

Horne. I pray you to excuse my errantry;
I was not well, and hardly could control
My utterance.

Dodge. I grant you the excuse.

Gaines. Gen'ral?

Dodge. Are you in readiness?

Gaines. We are.

Dodge. Read your report.

Gaines. [*Reads.*] "The Commission, finding the ac-
cused guilty as alleged, do therefore sentence him,
the said Samuel Davis, of Coleman's Scouts, in the

service of the so-called Confederate States, to be hanged by the neck until dead at such time and place as the commanding general shall direct, two-thirds of the Commission concurring in the sentence."

Dodge. The verdict is in keeping with the guilt. Give me the paper.

The paper is given; he sits and writes.

Davis. [*Aside.*] God! what shameless death! [*Aloud to Horne.*] I thank you for your kindly plea for me.

Horne. [*To Davis.*] I would it had effected your release.

Dodge. [*Rises and reads.*] "I hereby approve the sentence of the Commission, and same shall be carried out on Friday, November 27, 1863, between the hours 10 A.M. and 2 P.M." Young man, heard you the judgment passed upon you?

Davis. I could not other.

Dodge. What concerning it?

Davis. I had not thought to die ingloriously,
Like some base thief or shameless murderer.
I hoped my harshest foe would yield me voice
In choosing in what manner I might die.
I am a soldier, and I fain had died
A soldier's death. Your sentence reads not so.
I will not utter aught against my hangmen,
Yet I would say I envy not their office.
I'd liefer be myself than any here!
I feel no sore regret at meeting death!
My conscience sits atop my unblanched soul,
And bids me fearless to approach the end! [*Exeunt.*]

ACT V.

SCENE 1.—*Dodge's Headquarters. Dodge and Horne.*

Dodge. I recognize the sense of what you say;

The trial was some hasty and informal,
Yet there was purpose in its brevity.

Horne. May I inquire the purpose?

Dodge. Certainly;
It was our aim to make the trial brief
And something lacking of accustomed fairness,
And, too, the doom was planned to be severe,
That we might simulate a want of mercy,
And thus inspire the man with hopelessness;
That only will impel the name of him
Who has debased himself with this foul treason.

Horne. Judge you the youth will ever yield the
name?

Dodge. I think he will when once he 'comes re-
minded
The secret kept means doubtless death to him.

Horne. The man will die ere he reveals the name.

Dodge. I think you err. The morning will decide.
But may I ask why you so heartily
Have sought to veer us to more clement judgment?

Horne. 'Twas bare humanity.

Dodge. Humanity
Without some fellow-feeling scarce could lead
A man to plead o'ermuch for 's enemy.

Horne. What else, think you, did prompt my
prayer for him?

Dodge. Why, approbation of the man's fixed firm-
ness,
Unmoved by prayer, threats, or soft persuasion;
I deemed 'twas that that moved you.

Horne. And were right;
His stanch resolve is more than wonderous.

Dodge. Horne, have you thought upon the meteless
guilt
And degradation of an act like this?

Horne. I have, sir.

Dodge. Did you think that in our ranks
There was so base a man, so vile a villain,
As would have done this shameless, cursèd deed?
As one who searches for some wanted thing,
And in his seeking puts to much disorder
The place where he employs his scrutiny,
So my exploring thoughts in their vain quest
Have put my mind in reckless disarray.
I cannot grasp the temper of the coward
Who would betray the cause he had espoused.
What would you name, had you appraisalment of it,
As wages full for such nefarious feat?

Horne. No wage could peer with what was gi'en
in change.

Dodge. Gold has been said to have seductive skill,
To numb the conscience and allay its warnings;
The din of clinking coin held Judas' soul
Unmindful of compunctuous appeals
What time he sold the safety of the Christ;
And yet my mind will not accept the thought
That such unworthy gain can drug a man
And filch of him his honor and fair virtue.
What current reason could excuse such action?

Horne. Your query is too massive for response.

Dodge. And still there is an answer to it,
Else this ignoble thing were yet undone.
I would I had the craven in my presence!
I think if I could fix him in my eye,
As I do you, his coward soul would shift
And cringe as though in physical distress!
His dastard spirit, languid with affright,
Would shriek aghast as I should say to him
In stentor accents: "You, you are the traitor!"

Horne. [*Cowering.*] No! no!

Dodge. I meant not to accuse you, man!
 [*Aside.*] My God! He cannot be the traitor! He?
 [*Aloud.*] Tell me! You—Caspar Horne!—

Enter SOLDIER hastily; salutes.

Well, what is it?

Soldier. Gen'ral, a squad of Rebel scouts at hand.
 The guard at picket nine just fired upon them.

Dodge. What point holds picket nine?

Soldier. The eastern post.

Dodge. Go, Captain Horne; engage your company
 And use all speed to apprehend these scouts.
 Report to me at once on your returning.
 [*To soldier.*] Go with him.

Exeunt HORNE and SOLDIER.

They grow bold; in truth they do.
 But, how is this? He cannot be the man;
 Yet how he cowered as if conscience-smit;
 I should not have detailed him on this duty;
 If he should be the traitor, he would flee
 And cozen Justice of her due demands.
 I will without and charge an officer
 To follow after and keep wind of him. [*Exit.*]

SCENE 2.—*Within the Prison.* DAVIS and ESTHER.

Davis. Why did you come, dear Esther. It was ill
 For you to add this agony of mind
 To your already ponderous distress.

Esther. Why did I come? Your question is un-
 just;
 I could not have remained aloof from you
 When I well knew my presence were some comfort.
 Sam, I have been to Gen'ral Dodge; have sobbed
 My anguished prayers into his listless ears;
 Have begged, as contrite suppliants beg of God

When hot despair arouses their entreaties,
That he forbear his cruel execution.

Davis. Yet he refused.

Esther. Too true! He did refuse;
He thrust me off with blunt denial; spoke
In piteous-seeming terms of stubborn duty
That forced his will to this unkindly course.
Sam, I shall go to him again.

Davis. For what?

Esther. I know the name for which he'd give your
life.

Davis. Well?

Esther. I shall go to him and tell it him.

Davis. Yet you have sworn you would not do it,
Esther.

Esther. I know it; but your life is worth far more
Than my integrity.

Davis. It is not so!
I do forbid you touch that theme again!
My life concerns you only to that measure
That's bounded by my love; save my life thus,
And you will lose my love. You own no right
To use unseemly means to ransom me.
You shall not play Calanthe to my ear;
I am as sternly bound as Damon's hostage,
And will as readily confront my death!
Forgive me, *Esther*, my apparent curtness;
It pricks me hard to use such words with you,
But I will not attempt to scotch the course
Of this dread fate by hurling neath its tires
Mine own or your fair probity. No more.
What is the hour?

Esther. 'Tis near the stroke of ten.

Davis. The fatal hour! How I cling to life!
 My soul hangs trembling on the hope
 That he will come between me and the gallows.
 Christ! How that word sears and consumes my will!
 What may come after were of slack account
 When measured with the manner of my death!
 He will not let me die. There still is left
 Enough of good in his distempered soul
 To bar him from such idle sufferance.
 When I am called to undergo my sentence
 He will cry out, proclaim himself the culprit,
 And free me of such vile, despised death.

Goes to window.

The scaffold! How the noise of saw and hammer
 Do rasp and thump their horror to my heart!

Clock strikes.

Esther, I hear the striking of the clock,
 And it hath sound as of a fun'ral knell.

Drum and Fife.

Listen, as though in mock'ry of its mood,
 There comes the shrill-pitched piping of the fife,
 And, blending with it, sounds the rattling clatter
 Of kettledrum; and now I hear the even tramp
 Of marching men. The hour is at hand!
 Esther, I love you, and you love me, Esther?

Esther. You know how well.

Davis. It pains to say good-bye,
 When good-bye means eternal severance.
 Esther, grieve not for me when I am dead;
 Let not my fall obscure your further life;
 Let the sad past sleep with the yesterdays;
 Throw all your hopes upon the future's main,
 And Time will drive the vessel of your life
 Far from the gloomy shores of sad to-day.

Commotion without; commands given.

Death's treble order comes to close my life;
 His "Ready, Aim," have passed his deadly lips,
 And "Fire" hangs half uttered on his tongue—
 I'm ready—Esther, God be with you, dear—
 Esther?—What! kindly nature has relieved her.

Enter CAPT. ARMSTRONG, *provost marshal.*

Her senses are aswoon—Esther, good-bye—

Armstrong. The time is come.

Davis.

I'm ready for it, sir.

Provost marshal handcuffs him.

See that she has some care before we go.

Armstrong. I'll send to her at once. Come, let us
 forth.

Exeunt DAVIS and ARMSTRONG; *scene closes.*

SCENE 3.—COL. BURKE'S *residence.* CLAUDIA *at window.*

Claudia. O gracious Heaven! The pity of it all!
 A muffled din pervades the entire city;
 Nature appears to vent but husky whispers
 And goes about her tasks with deadened footfall.
 All things seem at a pause with sense attent
 To miss no feature of his execution!
 One scanty half hour more, and then the end.
 I cannot let him die when one brief sentence,
 A spoken name, would signal his reprieve.
 Can I not fetch myself to speak that name?
 I've sworn myself to silent secrecy;
 I've bound myself unto a fixed stake
 And must abide in tortured ecstasy
 While he, God's noblest man, is done to death!
 Is there no circumstance, no apt provision,
 In the stern canons of our human virtue
 Will license me t' infringe my given oath
 And speed me to the rescue of this hero?

Enter GAIUS *in haste.*

Gaius. Miss Claudyer!

Claudia. Yes, Gaius.

Gaius. Dar's fo' or fi' sogers out dar wid ernudder hurt one on er stretcher. Dey ax me ter ax you if dey can fotch 'im in de house.

Claudia. Do you know who the wounded man is?

Gaius. No, Miss Claudyer; I didn't c'larly git er look at 'is face. He 'peah fum his clo'es ter be one ob dese Yanky o'ffcers.

Claudia. Have him brought in here at once.

Exit GAIUS.

Poor man! Death has become so common to us
Its presence gets bare courtesy of comment.
He got his wound, no doubt, by accident,
Or in some broil, else in some private quarrel;
None of the foe is near enough for battle.

Enter four soldiers with HORNE on stretcher.

You! Captain Horne?

Horne. Yes, Claudia.

Claudia. You're hurt?

First Soldier. He must not talk; he's badly wounded, Miss.

Claudia. Place him upon this couch. Be gentle with him.

How came he wounded?

First Soldier. By the enemy:
He was detailed to apprehend some scouts
The enemy had sent into our lines.
One desp'rate fellow would not yield his weapon,
And in the stubborn struggle of his capture
He fired a shot into the Captain's shoulder.

Claudia. How serious is the hurt?

First Soldier. I cannot say;
'Tis in the lung; the blood has quit its flow,

And if his wound be not deranged afresh
 There may be some strong chance for his survival.
 We needs must leave him here an hour or so
 Till we may make disposal of our pris'ners.
 We'll stand a guard without to meet your call,
 And will dispatch a surgeon in all haste. [*Exeunt soldiers.*]

Horne. Claudia, come here beside me.

Claudia. I am here.

Horne. Claudia, my life has rounded up its days,
 And this the last.

Claudia. You should not talk.

Horne. No matter.

I'll do it quietly. 'Tis fitter so:
 The future held but little brightness for me,
 You were the only gleam I had before me,
 And that was dimmed and even nigh eclipsed
 By the black cloud of my dishonesty.
 Fate has directed that the evil pact
 Betwixt us two should not find consummation.

Claudia. You will not die.

Horne. I reckon otherwise.
 I shall not see the sunset of to-day.

Claudia. Are you so sure your death is quite so
 near?

Horne. I truly am.

Claudia. Then duty calls your action.

Horne. What duty?

Claudia. The rescue of Sam Davis.

Horne. I owe no further service to the man.
 I have discharged all bounden obligations.

Claudia. Yet with one sentence you can save his
 life.

Horne. That sentence shall not reach an utterance.
I did not place his life in jeopardy,
Nor shall I move one pace toward his succor.

Claudia. But, Capt. Horne—

Horne. Stay, Claudia; no more.

Claudia. Why should I stay? What profits it to
you
Since your life-coil is now nigh most unwound?
What boots it you refuse to do this thing?
Let me but write a line to Gen'ral Dodge,
And you append your signature unto it,
And this brave youth will 'scape the penalty.

Horne. And publish to the world my falsity?

Claudia. What matters that? 'Twould be none
short of right.

Your treason is a thing of fact, and what
Imports it now if all the world should know it?
To keep it hidden lessens not the treason;
Besides, this were some small amends therefor;
This would disperse the murky clouds and gloom
That hang about the sunset of your life.

Horne. You ask too much. You wade beyond my
depth.

You do forget my claim is yet unpaid,
And I shall die in lack of that reward
That was the purchase price of my good name.
But let that be. You'll be the happier
That you had not to pay the stipend fixed.

Claudia. The time for action wanes full rapidly.
You, Captain Horne, have sworn with daily vows
That you so loved me that there was no thing
You would not keenly labor to achieve
If its achievement did augment my pleasure;
Yet now you do deny what I most yearn for.

Horne. My promises and wishes *then* were selfish:
I saw *you* at the end of ev'ry labor.

Now—now, there is no goad, no luring bribe,
 And all my ardent eagerness is spent.
 Why beg you for the safety of this man?

Claudia. Since you are frank with me, I'll be as
 open;
 Nothing there is more dear to my weak heart
 Than is the life of him for whom I plead;
 I've loved him since he was a merest boy,
 And I a simple, unawakened schoolgirl.

Horne. You love him?

Claudia. Yes.

Horne. And told not me?

Claudia. Ought I have done so? Did you ask of
 me
 Whether I loved another? I was fair
 In all my dealing with you, Captain Horne;
 And now I come to you in humbleness
 And pray you that you quit me of my oath.
 Give me his life. Accede me his release.
 Quick! for the mortal hour is at hand!
 I have bare time to hasten to the scaffold.

Martial music.

I hear the deadly *cortége* on its progress!
 I do beseech, sir, that you spare me him!

Horne. Claudia, I cannot. Make no further prayers.
 I cannot blazon to the mouthy world
 My guilt, my base, accursed treachery!
 My comrades think me honest to our cause:
 I could not have them to remember me
 With meteless loathing and extreme despite.
 Then what if, after all, I should not die?
 They'd nourish me to strength, care closely for me,
 Inspect with jealous eye my daily health,
 So that they might atone my heinous sin
 By hanging me.

Claudia. Yet you will let him hang?
And for your crime?

Horne. I have no blame in that.
He dared the dangers of his enterprise;
In that I had no part nor due concern.

Distant drums.

Claudia. O God! Hear you the distant beat of
drums?
Will you lie here and know this murder done?
Give me release. Let me go to his rescue!

Horne. Peace, woman! Ask no more of me!

Claudia. Then, so!
I'm done with pleading. Coward! craven! traitor!
My tongue can syllable no term so foul
As will define your unmatched loathsomeness!
Vile, vicious gull! Weak, nerveless puppet!
You knave of treachery and odium!
You thing of rent and shredded honor!

Horne. You are creator of this prodigy.

Claudia. It is not so! The creature sprang full-
grown
From out the dormant baseness of your soul!

Drums.

O piteous Heaven! Make lenient his heart.
Look! Caspar Horne, I go to his relief!
I'll break my oath to you and save his life! [*Going.*]

Horne. And thus become the thing you so despise?
Go, and become a fitting fellow to myself;
I'll live till your return to give you welcome.

Claudia. [*Returns.*] Absolve me from my vow! Leave
me to go;
Give me the contract that I gave to you,
That I may make it witness to the truth,
And free this hero from a hempen noose.

Horne. And put me in his stead? I say you no!

Claudia. It needs a new Promethean messenger
To bring some spark of heaven to your soul.

[*Clock strikes.*] O Christ! it is the hour of his death!
Give me that paper.

She excitedly attempts to find the contract.

Give it me! Be quick!

You will not let him die! The hour has struck!
He must be saved! Give me the covenant!

Horne. Claudia, keep back! You press upon my
wound!

Claudia. And you on mine! O pity! Let me go!

She attempts to go; he clutches her hand.

Horne. You must not go!

Claudia. Devil nor God shall stay me!

She struggles to go; he to prevent her.

Pray God I be in time! Release me, sir!

In the fierce struggle he is pulled from the couch.

Horne. My wound doth bleed anew! Claudia, I
sink!

Leave me not now! I choke and grow afaint!
Tell not my crime! O God! the blood wells up!
The flood gates of my life are broke asunder!
Claudia, I die! Let my disgrace be kept!
Keep still the carping world in ignorance! [Dies.]

Claudia. Forgive me, God, if I'm his murderer!

Searches his bosom and finds the contract.

O kindly Heaven! I pray there yet is time!

Exit hastily.

SCENE 4.—*At the scaffold. Soldiers in background and at sides.
Davis seated on bench in foreground. Capt. Armstrong and others
near.*

Davis. Captain, how long, think you, have I to live?

Armstrong. Bare fifteen minutes.

Davis. Brief, in truth, the time,
But amply long for me to bulge its bounds
With a review of all my evil doings.
Howe'er, I will not muse upon such things,
For meager space is now accorded me
To make erasures in my tome of life.
The volume is full brief and badly writ,
But dull repentance shall expunge no blot
Nor interline one page with vain excuses.
As it is written, it is written so.
Captain, tell me the tidings from the front.

Armstrong. The latest battle is but two days old.

Davis. Where was it fought?

Armstrong. At Missionary Ridge.

Davis. And who the victors, sir?

Armstrong. Your enemies.

Davis. Recount to me some features of the contest.

Armstrong. My tongue cannot keep step with such a theme.

Howbeit, I'll curtly tale some of its points:
Bragg showed a battle line twelve miles in length;
Our force outranked their foes by thirty thousand.
Toward the south there towered brawny Lookout,
While to the east loomed Missionary Ridge.
The bouts and skirmishes of the first two days
Are owed but terse and limited regard.
Upon the morning of the twenty-fifth
The broil began, and like mad ocean's billows
These seas of men advanced and made retreat,
Surged on anew and made a new retirement,
Until like waves upon the fretted main
Their very violence wore out their action;
With nightfall came the after-tempest peace
Athwart the fearful wreckage of the battle.

Davis. Poor Southland! Pitiful your gloomy
plight!

Your sore-taxed strength doth swale beneath its odds
And scarce a twelve-month more ere you go down.
Thank God, I shall not witness your defeat!
I fain had learned far more auspicious news,
Yet had I so my mind had been so joyous
'Twould have robbed death of comely gravity,
While now my humor suits my gruesome fall.

Armstrong. The final moment is at hand.

Davis. [*Rising.*] I'm ready.

Armstrong. Young man, you cannot know with
what regret
I do discharge the office put upon me.
Your post is much the choicer of the two,
And I myself would almost readier die
Than to fulfill this charge.

Davis. Rue not so deeply
The labor that is set for your performance.
My heart has no harsh feeling toward yourself.
You are a soldier, and but do your duty.

Armstrong. I thank you for your kind assurances—

Sounds of approaching hoofbeats.

Who is it rides with such an eager haste?
Pray God he comes with pardon or reprieve!

Davis. I do not hope for either.

Armstrong. Yet, how welcome
Were either!

Davis. [*Aside.*] True, O Christ! how true!

Enter CAPT. CHICKASAW hurriedly.

Chickasaw. Young sir,
I come from Gen'ral Dodge.

Davis. What is your message?

Chickasaw. He eagerly will grant you life and pardon
If you but name the traitor.

Davis. No!

Armstrong. Think, sir:
'Tis better that you yield to his request.
It is not yet too late.

Davis. It is too late!

Armstrong. Look you upon yon lethal instrument;
It rises as a grim and fatal menace
To your young life. You should not die like this.
Accept the terms that Gen'ral Dodge here offers
And fly a death so alien to your merit.

Davis. If you've no more than that to proffer me,
It were as well that you desist at once.
Tell Gen'ral Dodge had I a thousand lives,
And the relinquishment of each should sear
And scorch my inmost soul with agony,
I'd lose them all before I'd name this man!
Thank him for his concernment for my life
And say I died with umbrage toward none
Who had an office in my taking-off.

Armstrong. [To *Chickasaw.*] Bear back this message
to the General. [Exit *Chickasaw.*]

[To *Davis*] Young man, you've cut asunder your sole
hope.

Davis. Let it so be. I know my situation:
I have not lightly chose this hated death.
Last night I wrote a letter to my mother,
And as I penned it, there, between the lines
Stood out the picture of my boyhood's home.
I saw each loved one in his proper place;
Barring but him who stands before you here
There was none missing from the homely hearth.

Upon each face there dwelt a poignant woe:
 The tidings of my death had reached their hearts.
 This morning as I left my odious cell
 There lay within it, reft of active sense,
 She who is closer to my cumbered soul
 Than ev'ry organ of my sentient being.
 Those were the times for me to hesitate!
 Conduct me to my fate, sir.

Armstrong leads him to the gibbet; the Chaplain precedes him up.

Armstrong.

Chaplain, to your duty.

Chaplain. [*Prays.*] O Thou, the God of heaven and
 of earth,

Look on this scene with piteous concern.
 Forgive the hard occasion that commands
 This office to thy most reluctant servants.
 O pardon Thou the sins and faults of him
 Who stands to-day without thy massive gates
 And knocks for entrance to Thy sinless domain.
 We know, O God, that this our current deed
 Will live in human annals till that hour
 When thy last trump shall rouse th' immortal world
 To shake death's manacles from its cramped limbs,
 E'en till the grave gives up its sheeted millions,
 Until the desert yields its scattered bones,
 Until stern ocean frees its shackled thralls
 And bids them to Thine ultimate tribunal:
 Therefore, O God, if that this deed be ill,
 Raise Thy protest, forbid its further course,
 That we damn not our souls by its completion.
 If 't be Thy will that presently he die
 Into Thy hands we do commend his spirit.

Enter DODGE hastily.

Dodge. Withhold the execution!

Armstrong.

Is he pardoned?

Dodge. Your answer lies with him, sir. [*To Davis.*] I
 have come

To offer you one last advantage, boy.
Give me this traitor's name, and you are free.

Davis. I am now free, but did I grant this name
I'd bind my conscience to a slavery
'Neath which 'twould sweat and groan in endless serf-
dom.

You waste your words.

Dodge. This is the final tender:

Approaches scaffold closely.

I know this traitor; will you second me
If I do name him?

Davis. No! You would but guess.

Dodge. [*Aside to Davis.*] Bend down your ear. Is Cas-
par Horne the man?

Davis. [*Aside.*] God! Does he know? But no! it
cannot be!

For if it were his terms were then fulfilled
And he would bid me from the scaffold. [*Aloud.*] Sir,
I've spoke my last to you.

Dodge. Then, have it so!
I've done my uttermost to save your life;
You are your own sole executioner.
Here, Provost Marshal, order on the work. [*Exit.*]

Armstrong. If you have more to say, let it be said.

Davis. [*Handing trinkets to Chaplain.*] Into your keep-
ing do I place these trinkets:

Yonder, where join the branches of the Stone,
She dwells to whom I owe my short existence:
Send these to her and tell her of my death.
Tell her I ever tried to be the man
Her pride and longings begged I should be,
And that I died for that I thought my duty.
Tell her that through my ev'ry act has run
The current of her precepts and desires.

Say that my life was offered me, but that
The price was not coequal with its value.
Say this to her, and whatsoever else
Your kindly sympathy may prompt you to.
I've done—Hangman, your duty next—Be sure—

He steps upon the trap; the trap is sprung.

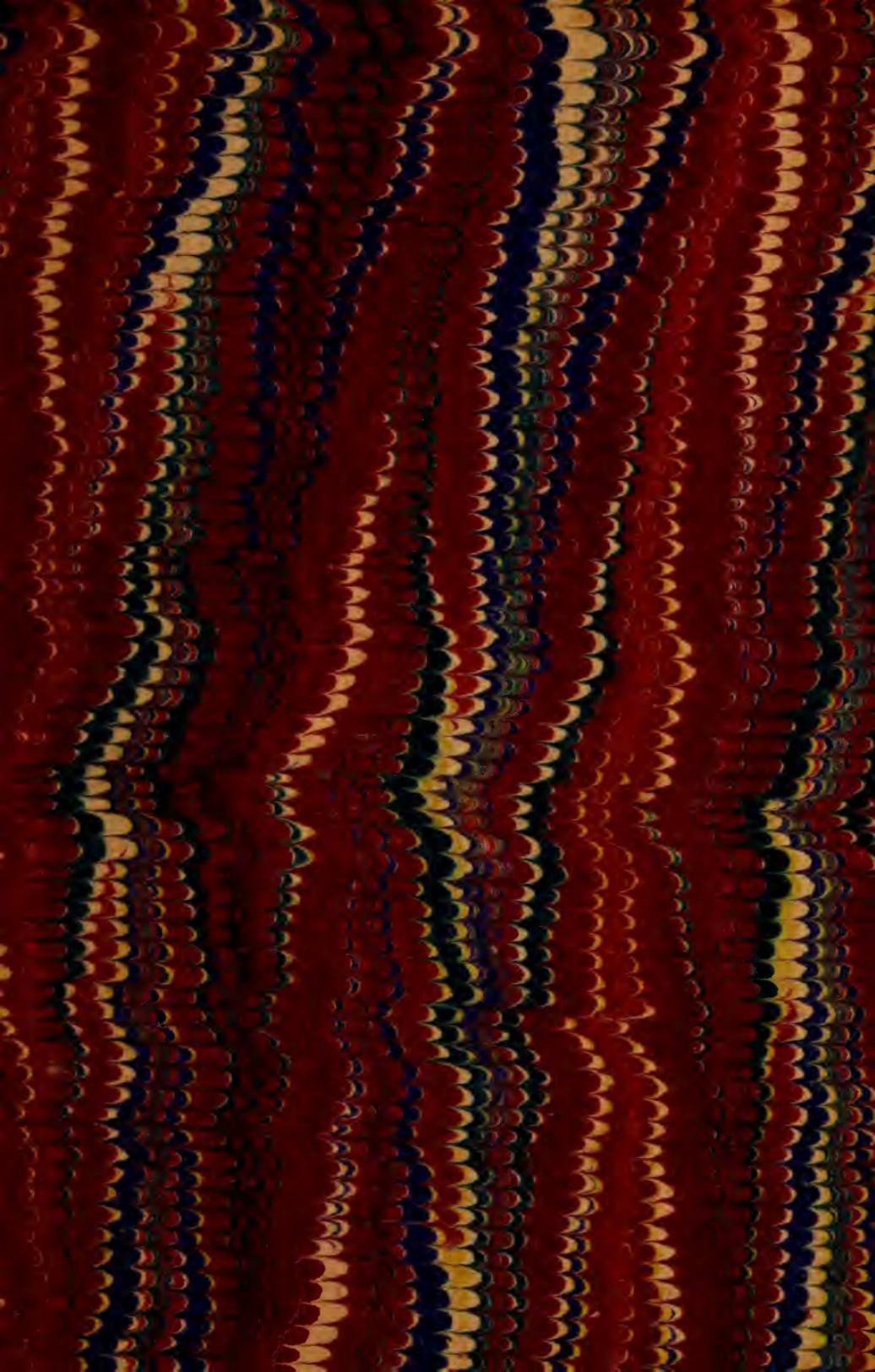
Commotion without; enter CLAUDIA BURKE.

Claudia. Merciful God! 'Tis over! Hateful spite,
That stayed my timely coming! Gracious Heaven!
Why could I not have saved his matchless life?
Davis and Dodge—the after years will yoke
These names in memory as martyr, tyrant—
O cruel chance! What more is left for me?

Swoons; curtain.

THE END.





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