EGMONT.

A Tragedy.

BY GOETHE.

Translated from the Original German

(WITH EXTRACTS AND SONGS BY BEETHOVEN, NEWLY ARRANGED FROM THE FULL SCORE, AND SCHUBERT'S SONG, "FREUDVOLL UND LEIDVOLL").

BY

ARTHUR DUKE COLERIDGE, M.A.,
LATE FELLOW OF KING'S COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE.

WITH AN ILLUSTRATION

BY J. E. MILLAIS, Esq., R.A.

LONDON:
CHAPMAN & HALL, 193 PICCADILLY.
1868.

[Right of Reproduction and Translation reserved.]
THIS TRANSLATION IS DEDICATED

to

THE RIGHT HON.

SIR JOHN TAYLOR COLERIDGE, D.C.L.,

ETC., ETC.,

BY HIS AFFECTIONATE NEPHEW.
PREFACE.

The translator will never forget the pleasure he experienced at Dresden in hearing Goethe’s “Egmont,” with the incidental music by Beethoven. The following version of this great play, in which the translator has endeavoured to adhere as closely to the almost untranslatable original as the English language would permit, is designed to make English students and lovers of music familiar at least with the outlines of the drama which had attractions for such musicians as Beethoven and Schubert.*

The overture by Beethoven has been omitted, and the less known music of the entr’actes and songs by the two composers before mentioned substituted in its place.

* For the benefit of English readers of German, I may mention that an annotated Edition of Goethe’s “Egmont,” by my friend, Professor Buchheim, will shortly be issued by the Clarendon Press. I am much indebted to that gentleman for several valuable suggestions in respect of this translation.
DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

MARGARET OF PARMA, Daughter of Charles V., and Regent of the Netherlands.
COUNT EGMONT, Prince of Gaure.
WILLIAM OF ORANGE.
THE DUKE OF ALVA.
FERDINAND, his natural son.
MACHIavel, in service of the Regent.
RICHARD, Egmont's Private Secretary.
SILVA, in Alva's service.
GOMEZ.
CLARA. — Käfchen
HER MOTHER.
BRACKEenburg, a Citizen's son.
SOEST, a Tradesman,
JETTER, a Tailor,
A Carpenter,
A Soapboiler,
BUYCK, a Soldier under Egmont.
RUYSUM, an invalid Soldier, and deaf.
VANSEN, a Clerk.

People, Attendants, Guards, &c.

SCENE—BRUSSELS.
EGMONT.

ACT THE FIRST.

Soldiers and Citizens practising with Cross-bows.

Jetter (a Tailor and Citizen of Brussels) steps forward, and bends his bow.


Soest. Come, fire away, and have done with it! You a'nt the man to beat me! Three inner rings, a shot you never made all your life. So I'm master for this year.

Jetter. Master and king into the bargain; who grudges you double honours? But then you shall pay double costs. You are to pay for your skill, as is fair.

Buyck. Jetter, I buy your shot of you, we'll go halves with the winnings, and I stand treat to the gentlemen. I have been here a long time, and owe for all sorts of civil turns. If I miss, mind, it shall be as if you had fired.

Soest. I ought to have a word in that, since, properly speaking, I lose by the bargain. Never mind Buyck, fire away!

Buyck. (Shoots.) Now, marker, attention! One—two—three—four.

Soest. Four rings! All right!

All. Hurrah! Three cheers for the king!
BUYCK. Thanks, gentlemen. Even master would be too high a title. Thanks for the honour.

JETTER. You have only to thank yourself for it.

RUYSUM. Let me tell you.

SOEST. What is it, old gentleman?

RUYSUM. Let me tell you. He shoots like his master. He shoots like Egmont.

BUYCK. I am only a poor bungler compared with him. He's a dead shot with the rifle; none can come near him. It's not a question of luck or being in the vein; not a bit of it! Make ready, fire, and a bull's-eye invariably! He taught me—and a rare noodle would any one be who served under him without learning something. Stop! don't let us forget, gentlemen—a king supports and feeds his people; so, wine! I say, and put it down to the king!

JETTER. We have agreed to a rule, that every man——

BUYCK. I'm a foreigner and a king, and don't care a rush for your laws and customs.

JETTER. I declare you are worse than the Spaniard; he has been obliged, up to our time at least, to respect them.

RUYSUM. What's he after?

SOEST (loud to RUYSUM). He wants to treat us; he won't hear of our all clubbing together, and that only the king should pay double.

RUYSUM. Let him do as he likes! Under protest, of course! 'Tis his master's way to be magnificent, and to have things done in a first-rate style.

All. Here's to his Majesty! Hurrah!

JETTER (to BUYCK). Your Majesty; that's what they mean.

BUYCK. Much obliged, if it must be so.

SOEST. Of course. A Netherlander is rather chary of pledging the health of his Spanish Majesty.
EGMONT.

RUYSUM. Who?
SOEST. Philip the Second, King of Spain.
RUYSUM. Our most gracious king and master! God grant him a long life, say I!
SOEST. Didn't you like his father, Charles the Fifth, better?
RUYSUM. God bless him! That was a king for you! His hand was over the world, he was all in all; and yet, if he met you, he'd greet you just as one neighbour does another; and if you felt awkward and constrained he had such a pleasant way of—aye—mind you. He walked out, rode out, just as he fancied, and only two or three followers. Why, we all cried when he gave up the government here to his son. I was saying, mind you—the son is a very different sort; he's more majestic.

JETTER. When he was here he never showed except in pomp and royal state. He says little enough, they tell me.
SOEST. He's not the man to rule us Netherlanders. Our Princes must, like ourselves, be jovial and free, live and let live. We a'nt to be snubbed or ground down either, good-natured fools as we may be.

JETTER. I don't see the king's much to complain of if he'd only got better counsellors about him.
SOEST. No, no! He has no affection for us Netherlanders; he doesn't take kindly to the people; how can we love him? he doesn't love us! Why is every one so fond of Count Egmont? why is he so great a favourite? Why, because only look at him and you see he likes us; good fellowship, kindliness, are in his eye; because he has nothing he wouldn't share with a needy man, ay, and with a man who needs it not. Long live Count Egmont! Buyck, it's for you to give the first toast. Give us your master's health.
BUYCK. With all my heart: Count Egmont! Hurrah!
RUYSUM. Conqueror of St. Quintin.
BUYCK. The hero of Gravelines.
All. Hurrah!
RUYSUM. St. Quintin was my last battle. I could hardly manage to crawl along and drag my heavy musket a step further. Spite of that, I contrived to give one last singe to the Frenchmen's whiskers, and got a farewell shot on the right leg myself.

BUYCK. Gravelines! Sharp work, gentlemen, I can tell you. We gained the day though. Didn't those French dogs burn and blaze right through Flanders? I think we gave them a warming though. The tough old varlets held their ground for a time; forward was our word, shoot and slash; then they began to make wry faces and their lines wavered. Then Egmont's horse was shot under him, and we went at it again for a time, pell-mell, man to man, horse to horse, troop against troop, on the broad flat sand right to the sea. All of a sudden down it came, as if from heaven itself, from the mouth of the river, bang, bang, cannon after cannon, right into the Frenchmen. They were English, who, as luck would have it, were sailing by from Dunkirk under Admiral Malin. I can't say they did us much good; they could only get within shot with their smallest vessels, and that wasn't near enough; they shot, moreover, right into the middle. It did good, however. It broke the French ranks, and gave us fresh pluck. Piff, paff! pell-mell! every one shot dead or shoved into the water. And the rascals were drowned the instant they tasted the water, while we Dutchmen rushed in after them. We, amphibious gentlemen, were as happy in the water as frogs, and cut into the foe and shot them down as if they had been
a parcel of ducks. All that got through were beaten to
death in their flight by the mattocks and pitchforks of the
peasant women. Why, his Gallic Majesty was forced to
stretch out his little paw and make peace. For this peace
you have to thank us and the great Egmont.

All. The great Egmont! Three times three, and one
cheer more!

Jetter. What a pity they didn't make him our Regent
instead of Margaret of Parma.

Sossest. Not a bit of it! Truth's truth. I'll not let
Margaret be run down. Now it's my turn. Our gracious
mistress! Long life to her!

All. Long life to her!

Sossest. Capital women in that family; no doubt of it.
Long live the Regent!

Jetter. She's a model of prudence and discretion in
everything, if she wasn't so hard and fast with the priests.
It's partly her fault, too, that we have these fourteen new
mitres quartered on us. What's the good of them, pray?
Are not they able to pitchfork foreigners into the snug
places, where formerly abbots out of the chapters used
to be chosen? And we are to believe it's all for the sake
of religion. Oh! I believe you. Three bishops were
quite enough for us; things were done decently and
respectably. Now every man must play the busybody,
as if the world could not get on without him, and every
minute there is some vexation and squabble. And the
more one routs it about the muddier the thing gets.

[They drink.]

Sossest. But it was the king's will; she can't change it
one way or the other.

Jetter. Then again we are not to sing the new psalms:
they are set to very pretty rhymes, and the tunes are
quite edifying. But not a note of them. Immoral songs
by dozens, if we like. And why? Why, they say they
smack of heresy, and heaven knows what. I've chanted
some of them myself; there's a dash of novelty in them,
but I find very little else.

Buck. Ask their leave! catch me! In our Province,
we sing just what we like, and I'll tell you why. Count
Egmont is our Stadtholder, and doesn't trouble his head
about such questions. In Ghent, Ypres, and the whole of
Flanders anybody sings them who has a mind to. (Aloud
to Ruyss.) Can anything have less harm in it than a
pious song—aye, old gentleman?

Ruyss. You are right. It's edifying, and all in the
way of godliness.

Jetser. But they contend it's not done in the right way,
not in their way; and anyhow, as it's dangerous, we had
better leave it alone. The officers of the Inquisition are
always sneaking and prowling about, and many a worthy
man has got himself into trouble. Nothing more was
wanting but a conscience muzzle. If I mayn't do as I
please, surely they might let me think and sing as I
please.

Soest. The Inquisition won't go down in these parts.
We are not men like the Spaniards, to have our consciences
enslaved. Nobles must get up early in the morning, if
they want to clip its wings.

Jetser. It's downright death. If the dear creatures
take it into their heads to break into my house whilst
I am sitting at my work and humming a French psalm,
without thinking about its badness or goodness, but
humming away because the tune is sticking in my throat,
pop! I'm taken up as a heretic and clapped into prison.
Or, if I am going through the country, and mix with a
knot of people listening to a new preacher—one of those who have come from Germany—I'm called a rebel on the spot, and stand a good chance of losing my head. Have you ever heard one of these preachers?

Soest. First-rate fellows! A short time ago I heard one of them preaching in a field before thousands and thousands of people. A very different kettle of fish, I can tell you, to that which our pulpit droners give us, smothering the people with their scraps of Latin. My man spoke out as if he meant it. He said we'd been led by the nose; we had been kept mere dolts, and he would show us a way of enlightenment. All this, mind, he proved you out of the Bible.

Jetter. Well, there may be something in it. I always said so myself, and I went into it pretty closely. It's been running in my head ever such a time.

Buyck. All the people flock after them.

Soest. I dare say, if they get what's new and good also.

Jetter. What does it matter? Surely every man should be allowed to preach after his own fashion.

Buyck. I say, gentlemen! You are chattering away, but you forget the wine and the Prince of Orange.

Jetter. Don't let us forget him. That man's a regular rampart. One has only to think of him to feel that if you hid behind him, the devil himself could not get at you. So here's to William of Orange! Hurrah!

All. Hurrah, hurrah!

Soest. Now, old gentleman, give us your toast!

Ruysum. Here's to old soldiers! to all soldiers! Hurrah, for war!

Buyck. Well done, old fellow! Here's to all soldiers! Hurrah for war!
Jetter. War, war! Do you know what you are bellowing about? It's quite natural you should talk so glibly about it. I can't tell you what dreary sort of fun it is for us. All the year round to hear the drum eternally beating, and nothing else, except how one company marched here and another there; how they came over this hill, and halted at that mill; how many fell in this battle, how many in that; how they rush on pell-mell, one lot winning, the other losing, and not a man for the life of him can tell who has won or lost what; how a town is taken, and its inhabitants slaughtered, and how it fares with the poor women and their innocent children. Sorry business, I assure you. And then one's thinking every minute, "Here they come! Our turn next."

Soest. That proves every citizen should be a well-trained soldier.

Jetter. Oh! of course well-trained, with a wife and children to help him. I'd a good bit sooner hear of soldiers than see them.

Buyck. I don't call that very civil.

Jetter. No offence to you. Once rid of the Spanish garrison; we breathed freely again.

Soest. What, did they press you the hardest?

Jetter. Mind your own business.

Soest. They were heavily billeted upon you——

Jetter. Hold your jaw!

Soest. They elbowed him out of the kitchen, cellar, room, and bed. [They laugh.

Jetter. You are a blockhead.

Buyck. Keep the peace, gentlemen! Must a soldier call out for peace? Since you won't hear anything about us, give us a toast of your own, a citizen's toast, mind.

Jetter. We are your men for that. Safety and Peace!
Soest. Freedom and Order!
Buyck. Bravo! We all like that.
[They clink their glasses, repeating the words in a loud,
joyous manner. The old man listens, and at last joins in.
All. Safety and Peace! Freedom and Order!

Palace of the Regent.

Margaret of Parma (in a hunting dress), Courtiers,
Pages, Servants.

Regent. I shall not ride to day; put off the hunt.
Tell Machiavel to come to me. [Exeunt all but the Regent.
The thought of these terrible events leaves me no repose.
I can find no amusement, no distraction; always haunted
by the same fancies, the same cares. The king will say
that they are the consequence of my leniency and forbearance; yet my conscience tells me every minute that
I have done what was wisest and best. Was it for me,
with a blind outbreak of fury to have fanned these flames
from the first? was I to spread the conflagration? I
hoped to encircle the flames and stamp them out. Yes,
my own heart and conscience speak approvingly of my
conduct, but how will my brother take it? For can it
be gainsayed that the arrogance of these foreign teachers
is daily increasing? They have blasphemed our sanctuary, upset the dull minds of the people, and conjured
up a spirit of giddiness amongst them. Unclean spirits
have mingled among the rebels, and fearful deeds have
been wrought, deeds horrible to think on; and which I
must report to the Court quickly and yet in full detail,
lest common rumour outstrips me, and lest the king think
we wish to keep something in the background. I see no
means, either by force or persuasion, of stemming the evil. Oh, what are we great ones upon the wave of humanity? We think to master it, and it tosses us hither and thither as it pleases.

**Enter Machiavel.**

*Regent.* Are the despatches to the king ready?

*Mach.* An hour from hence you can sign them.

*Regent.* Have you made the report sufficiently full and exact?

*Mach.* Full and circumstantial, as the king likes to have it. I describe the blind fury of the Iconoclasts breaking out first at St. Omer. How a raging multitude, armed with sticks, hatchets, hammers, ladders, and ropes, and followed by a few armed men, first attack the churches, chapels, and convents, drive out the devout worshippers, burst the barred gates, turn everything upside down, tear down the altars, destroy the statues of saints, deface the pictures, shattering, tearing, trampling under foot every sacred thing they find. How the rabble swell in numbers as they advance, and how the inhabitants of Ypres open their gates to them. With what incredible swiftness they destroy the cathedral, and burn the bishop’s library. How a vast crowd of people, seized with the same frenzy, spreads past Menin, Comines, Verviers, Lille, nowhere encountering opposition; and how in a single moment the vast conspiracy broke out all over Flanders.

*Regent.* Alas! your story makes my wounds bleed afresh, and then there is the fear that the evil will only grow greater and greater. Tell me your thoughts, Machiavel.

*Mach.* Pardon me, your Highness, my thoughts seem but idle fancies; and though you were always content
with my services, you have seldom cared to follow my
dvice. You used often to say in jest, "You see too far,
Machiavel. You ought to have been an historian: he
who acts must have an eye to the moment." And yet,
have I not foretold these events? Have I not seen it all
beforehand?

Regent. I too can see a great deal beforehand, which I
am unable to prevent.

Mach. One word saves many. Don't think of suppress-
ing the new faith. Let it have its run, separate its fol-
lowers from the true believers, give them churches of
their own, incorporate them into the civic constitution,
let its limits be theirs, and at a stroke you pacify the in-
surgers. All other measures are idle; you will bring
ruin on the land.

Regent. Have you forgotten the indignation with which
my brother treated the question whether we were to
tolerate the new faith, and his angry rejection of it?
Do you not know how warmly he urges on me, in every
letter, the maintenance of the true faith? that he will
not hear of the restoration of peace and unity at the ex-
 pense of religion? Does he not, even in the provinces,
keep spies, unknown to us, to find out any who incline to the
new way of thinking? Has he not, to our astonishment,
named to us this and that individual, who was secretly
guilty of heresy in our neighbourhood? Does he not
enjoin strictness and severity? and I am to be lenient?
am I to propose to him that he should be tolerant and
patient? Should I not lose all his confidence and trust?

Mach. I am well aware that the king commands, and
is careful you should thoroughly know his mind. You
are to restore peace and quiet by measures which only
embitter feelings more and more; measures which will
inevitably kindle the flames of war in every corner of the land. Reflect on what you are doing. The chief merchants are infected—the nobles, the people, the soldiers. What is the use of adhering to his ideas, when everything is changing around us? Would that some good genius would suggest to Philip that it is a king's duty rather to control citizens of rival creeds than to encourage them in mutual collision!

Regent. Never repeat such words again. I am aware that politics seldom leave truth and fidelity unspoiled, and that they shut out from the heart candour, large-heartedness, and toleration. In the worldly business, this, alas! is but too true; but shall we play with God as we do with one another? Are we to be indifferent to our established religion, for which so many have sacrificed their lives? Are we to surrender it to far-fetched, uncertain, and self-contradicting innovations?

Mach. I pray you think no worse of me for all that I have said.

Regent. I know you and your entire truthfulness and fidelity. I know too that a man may be able and high-principled, and yet miss the nearest and best road for his soul's health. Other men there are, Machiavel, whom I must both esteem and blame.

Mach. To whom do you allude?

Regent. I must own, then, that Egmont this very day has deeply annoyed and irritated me.

Mach. How?

Regent. By his ordinary manner—his usual indifference and levity of conduct. I heard of the fatal news just as I was leaving church, attended by him and a number of others. I made no effort to restrain my sorrow, but complained loudly, as I turned to him, exclaiming, "See
what is going on in your province! And you, Count, put up with it; you, of whom the king expected everything."

**Mach.** And what answer did he make?

**Regent.** He answered as if it were a matter of the smallest import: "Were the Netherlands but content with their government, everything else would go smoothly enough."

**Mach.** Perhaps there was more of truth than discretion or piety in what he said. What feeling of solid confidence can we expect the Netherlander to have for us, when he sees that we are more interested in his possessions than in his welfare or his soul's health? Have the new bishops saved as many souls as they have feasted upon fat benefits? And are they not for the most part aliens? Hitherto, none but Netherlands have held the offices of Stadtholder; isn't it only too plain that the Spaniards have an intense longing for these posts? Will not a people prefer being ruled by their own countrymen, after their own fashion, rather than by foreigners; who, as soon as they set foot in the country, are again desirous of acquiring property at the sacrifice of everybody else; who regulate their measures by a foreign standard, and rule without friendliness or sympathy?

**Regent.** You range yourself on the side of our opponents.

**Mach.** In heart certainly not. Would that my judgment could be on the same side altogether as my heart.

**Regent.** To please you I should have to resign my regency to them; for both Egmont and Orange were in great hopes of stepping into my place. Formerly they were foes; now they are in common league against me, and sworn inseparable friends.

**Mach.** A dangerous pair.
Regent. To be candid, I fear Orange, and I fear for Egmont. Orange has sinister intentions; his thoughts reach far into the future, he is reserved, he seems to concede everything, he never contradicts, and under an appearance of profound deference, with the greatest deliberation he does precisely what suits him.

Mach. Egmont, on the contrary, steps forth freely, as though he were master of the whole world.

Regent. He holds his head as proudly as though the hand of majesty were not suspended over him.

Mach. The eyes of the people are all centered on him, and in their hearts they adore him.

Regent. He has never been afraid of seeming what he is, but acts as if none had a right to call him to account. He still bears the name of Egmont. He delights in hearing himself called Count Egmont, as though he would fain call to mind the fact that his ancestors were owners of Guelderland. Why not take his real title, Prince of Gaure? What is his aim? To revive once more claims long extinguished?

Mach. I consider him a true and faithful vassal of the king.

Regent. If he chose, what meritorious service he might render to the government, instead of causing us untold trouble and annoyance, without any benefit to himself. His social gatherings, banquets, and suppers, have done more to unite and cement the nobles together, than the most dangerous secret associations. In listening to his toasts his guests have imbibed a permanent frenzy, a giddiness of brain that does not pass away. How often have his quips stirred the feeling of the people; how astonished was the rabble with the new liveries and the foolish cockades of his menials!
MACH. I am satisfied he had no design in all this.

Regent. The result is bad enough. As I said before, he injures us, and does himself no good. He makes a joke of serious matters, and, not to appear careless or remiss, we must look gravely on his playful sallies. Thus one urges on another, and the thing we are striving to avert is sure to come to pass. He is more dangerous than the recognised head of a conspiracy; and I am much mistaken if the Court doesn’t give him credit for everything that is bad. I can’t help saying, that hardly a day passes without his wounding me to the very quick.

MACH. He seems to me to act conscientiously in all he does.

Regent. His conscience is a mirror of self-complacency. His bearing is often offensive. He often looks as if he lived in the complete conviction that he was master, and that it was only out of consideration that he did not make us feel that he wished to drive us from the land: that will come all in good time.

MACH. I beseech you, do not interpret too seriously his frank and happy temper, which deals so lightly with weighty matters. You only injure yourself and him.

Regent. I interpret nothing. I speak only of the inevitable consequences, and I know him. His national rank, and the Golden Fleece he wears on his breast, strengthen his confidence and his daring. Both can protect him from any sudden capricious outbreak of the king’s anger. Examine the present state of things carefully; for every misfortune that has befallen Flanders, he alone is to blame. From the first he connived at the conduct of these foreign teachers, he treated it too lightly; nay, I think it likely enough he chuckled inwardly at their giving us such trouble. Do not stop me. I will take this opportunity
to speak my mind about it! nay more, I will not fire my shot for nothing. I know where he is vulnerable. For he is vulnerable.

MACH. Have you summoned the Council? Is Orange coming?

REGENT. I have sent to Antwerp for him. I will drive them to a close reckoning for their conduct; they shall either act heartily with me in opposing the evil, or declare themselves rebels like the rest. Quick now with the despatches, and bring them me for my signature. Then with all haste send off the trusty Vasca to Madrid, he is indefatigable and faithful. My brother must learn everything first from his lips, therefore he must outstrip all flying rumours. Before he leaves I will speak to him myself.

MACH. Your orders shall be promptly attended to and carried out to the letter.

_Citizen's House._

CLARA. CLARA'S Mother. BRACKENBURG.

CLARA. Won't you hold this skein for me, Brackenburg? BRACKENBURG. Pray excuse me, Clara.

CLARA. What is the matter with you? Why deny me this little favour?

BRACK. When I hold the skein you fascinate me; I cannot escape your glance.

CLARA. Nonsense! Come and hold it!

MOTHER. (Knitting in her arm-chair.) Sing us something. Come, Brackenburg sings such a good second. You used to be cheerful, and I had always something to put me in spirits.

BRACK. Once.

CLARA. Let us sing, then.
EGMONT.

BRACK. As you please.

CLARA. Only mind and put plenty of fire and spirit into it. 'Tis a soldier's song, and a favourite of mine.

*(She winds the yarn and sings with Brackenburg.)*

**SONG.**

The drums they are beating!
The bugle is sounding!
My love, in full armour,
    Commands in the van,
Waves gaily his pennon,
    And marshals his clan.—
How these pulses are bounding!
This heart how it glows!
    Oh! had I but doublet,
And helmet and hose!
Through the gates with my lover
    Full boldly I'd ride,
And all the world over
    Would march at his side.—
Foes break at our volley,
    They waver and flee,
Oh pleasure of pleasure,
    A soldier to be!

*During the song Brackenburg repeatedly looks at Clara; at length his voice falters, the tears start in his eyes, he lets the skein fall, and goes to the window. Clara finishes the song by herself; her mother, half angrily, makes signs to her. She gets up, walks a few paces towards him, turns back as if irresolute, and sits down again.*
Mother. What's going on in the street, Brackenburg? I hear the sound of people marching.

Brack. It's the body-guard of the Regent.

Clara. At this hour? What can it mean? (She gets up and joins Brackenburg at the window.) That is not the usual daily guard; there are many more men! Nearly every man in the ranks! Oh Brackenburg! Do go and find out what it means. Something out of the way must have happened. Go, good Brackenburg, do me this favour!

Brack. I am off, and will soon be back again. (In leaving he offers his hand to her, she gives him hers.)

[Exit Brackenburg.

Mother. You manage to get rid of him pretty soon.

Clara. I am curious to know what's going on; and besides—don't be angry, mother—his presence pains me. I never know how I should behave to him. I have done him wrong, and my heart is stung at the thought that he feels this so keenly. It's too late. I cannot help it.

Mother. He's a fine true-hearted fellow.

Clara. I cannot help it, I must treat him kindly. My hand often closes unawares upon his when he presses mine so gently, so affectionately. I blame myself for deceiving him, and nourishing in his heart a useless hope. It's sad work. God knows I don't wish to deceive him. I don't wish him to hope, and I cannot let him despair.

Mother. That is not right.

Clara. I liked him once, and wish him well from my inmost soul. I could have married him, and yet I doubt if I was ever in love with him.

Mother. You would always have been happy with him.

Clara. I should have been provided for, and lived a peaceful life.

Mother. And all this has been trifled away by your folly.
EGMONT.

Clara. I am in a strange position. When I look back upon matters, I can understand, and then again I am at a loss. But only once let me look upon Egmont, and all is plain and intelligible; yes, I could comprehend much more than that. Oh! what a man he is! The idol of all the Provinces! Wrapped in his arms, ought I not to be the happiest creature in the world?

Mother. And what of the future, think you?

Clara. Ah! I only ask, does he love me? Does he love me? Can there be any doubt of it?

Mother. Sorrow of heart is all one has with one's children. How will all this end? Care and trouble, nothing but care and trouble! No good can come of it. You have brought sorrow on yourself and me also.

Clara. (Quietly.) Yet you never attempted to stop this at first.

Mother. Alas! no. I was too good. I always spoil you.

Clara. When Egmont rode past, and I ran to the window, did you scold me then? Didn't you come yourself to the window? When he looked up, smiled, nodded, and greeted me, did you object? Did you not think yourself honoured in your daughter?

Mother. Ay, go on; spare me no reproaches.

Clara. (With emotion.) Then when he came our way more frequently, and we knew very well that it was on my account, didn't you notice it with secret pleasure, yourself? And when I stood behind the panes, on the look-out for him, did my mother ever call me away?

Mother. Could I have dreamed it would go so far?

Clara. (With faltering accents and suppressed tears.) And one evening, when wrapped in his mantle, he surprised us as we were sitting at our lamp, who so obse-
quisously received him, whilst I remained in mute amaze-
ment, and as it were fastened to my chair?

Mother. And could I have ever dreamed that this un-
happy passion would so soon fascinate the prudent Clara?
Now I must bear the thought that my daughter——

Clara. (Weeping.) Mother! you take pleasure in
tormenting me.

Mother. Weep on—and make me still more wretched
with your tears. Is not my cup already full, now that my
only child is a castaway?

Clara. (Rising and speaking coldly.) A castaway?
Egmont's darling a castaway? What princess would not
envy poor Clara's place at his side? Oh mother, my own
mother! you were not wont to speak thus. Dear mother,
be kind to me! As for what the people think, or the
neighbours gossip—I care not. Why, this little room,
this humble dwelling, is a Paradise, since Egmont's love
lives in it.

Mother. One must be civil to him, I'm aware of that.
He is so cheerful, friendly, and open-hearted.

Clara. Oh! there's not a false drop of blood in him.
And then, mother, he is indeed the great Egmont. And
when he comes to me, how good he is! How gladly he
would screen from me his rank, his valour! How careful
he is for me! No hero; only the man, the friend, the lover!

Mother. Will he be here to-day?

Clara. Have you not seen me go again and again to
the window? how I listen when I hear any sound at the
door? Though I know well he won't come before night-
fall, yet from the moment I rise of a morning, I expect
him every minute. If only I were a boy, and could
always go with him to Court and everywhere, I could
carry his colours in the fight!
EGMONT.

Mother. You were always a giddy thing—grave and gay by turns—from a child. Can't you dress yourself a little finer than you are now?

Clara. Perhaps, mother, if I want to kill time. Yesterday, only think, some of his people passed by here, singing songs in his honour. At all events, his name I heard in the song. I couldn't understand all the rest. How my heart leaped into my throat! I should certainly have called them back if I had not felt ashamed.

Mother. Take care! your hasty temper will mar everything—you betray yourself before the people; just as lately at your cousin's house when you found the woodcut and the description, and then screamed out, "Count Egmont!" I grew red as fire.

Clara. Shouldn't I have called out? Why, it was the battle of Gravelines, and I found in the picture the letter C, and looked at the description beneath for it. There it was—"Count Egmont, and his horse shot under him." I felt a shudder, but afterwards couldn't help smiling at the figure of Egmont in the woodcut; he was as tall as the tower of Gravelines hard by and the English ships at the side. Sometimes, when I recollect my early notions of a battle, and what sort of a picture as a girl I drew of Count Egmont, when they used to talk of him, and of all the other counts and princes—and then think of me now!

Enter Brackenburg.

Clara. What news?

Brack. Nothing known for certain. In Flanders they say the insurgents have risen again, and that the Regent fears it may spread here. The castle is strongly garrisoned, thousands of citizens are at the gates, the streets
swarm with people. I must go to my old father with all haste. [As if about to go.

CLARA. Shall we see you to-morrow? I shall put on a smarter dress. My cousin is coming, and I am too shabby. Come, mother, help me a moment. Brackenburg, take away the book, and bring me another story of the same kind.

Mother. Farewell.

BRACK. (Offering his hand.) Your hand!

CLARA. (Refusing hers.) Next time when you come.

[Execunt Mother and Daughter.

BRACK. (Alone.) I had made up my mind to go away again at once; and now that she takes me at my word, and lets me go, my brain reels. Unhappy man! What! indifferent to the fate of thy fatherland, and the growing storm? Thy own fellow-countrymen or the Spaniard—are they one and the same to thee? heedest thou not who rules, and who is in the right? In my young school-days I was different indeed! If an exercise in elocution was set—such as Brutus's speech for liberty—Fritz was always ahead of others, and the rector would say: "If there was only more method in it, and everything was not so jumbled together." Oh! how my blood boiled and my heart beat! And now I crawl on, bewitched by a girl's eyes! Yet I cannot leave her. And yet she cannot love me! Ah, no! Yet she cannot quite have cast me off—not quite; half, next to nothing! I can bear this no longer. Can it be true what a friend lately whispered to me, that by night she secretly admits a man to her presence, while she always drives me from the house before evening coyly enough? No, it is not true; it is a lie—a base, foul lie! Clara is as pure as I am wretched. She has cast me off, and exiled me from her heart. Shall
EGMONT.

I live on thus? I cannot, cannot bear it! Already is my fatherland shaken to its centre by civil feuds; am I to slink away and perish like a caitiff? I will not endure it. At the clang of a trumpet, or the roar of a shot, the sound goes through and through me! but it does not rouse me to action, or bid me be a man, to join my comrades in the fray, to rush to the rescue, to do and dare. Base, degrading state! Far better I should end at once! A short time since I threw myself into the water; I sank, but nature in her throes was too strong for me. I was conscious I could swim, and saved myself against my will. Oh! could I but forget the time when she loved me, or seemed to love me. Why has that bliss gone through and through my soul? Why have these hopes consumed all the zest for life, whilst revealing to me far off the paradise beyond? And that first kiss—the only one. (Laying his hand upon the table.) Here we were alone. She had always treated me kindly and friendly—then she seemed to yield—she looked at me—my brain swam, and I felt her lips upon my own. And now—die, unhappy one! why linger? (He draws a phial from his pocket.) Healing poison! I stole thee from my brother's medicine-chest, and I will use thee yet. Thou shalt release me from this heart-sickness, this reeling brain, this sweat of death. Once, and for ever, this shall make me free!
ACT THE SECOND.

A Square in Brussels.

Enter, at the same time, Jetter and a Master Carpenter.

Carpenter. Didn't I say so beforehand? Eight days ago, I said at the Guild-house we should have troublesome business.

Jetter. Is it a fact they have plundered the churches in Flanders?

Carp. Churches and chapels they have entirely demolished, and left nothing standing but the four bare walls. The veriest scum of a rabble! That's what damages our good cause. We ought long ago to have formally protested—pressed our rights firmly on the Regent, and taken our stand upon them. If we now speak or hold meetings, they'll say we are making common cause with the rebels.

Jetter. Ay, every one's first thought is: Why should I poke my nose into it? The neck and the nose are near neighbours.

Carp. I tremble when a rabble becomes riotous—a lot of people who have nothing to lose. They use that as a pretext to which we likewise must needs appeal, and thus entail misfortune on the country.

Enter Soest.

Soest. Good-day, gentlemen! What news? Is it true that the Iconoclasts are making straight for this place?
EGMONT.

Carp. They shan't touch a brick here.

Soest. A soldier just now stepped into my shop to buy tobacco, and I put some questions to him. The Regent, so brave and discreet a woman usually, has for once lost all self-possession. Things must be come to a pretty pass when she has taken to skulking behind her own soldiers. The castle is strongly garrisoned. They even say that she intends to fly from the town.

Carp. She shan't budge an inch! Her presence protects us, and we shall protect her much better than her mustachioed guards. And if she sticks up for our rights and liberties, we'll treat her well and stick to her.

**Enter a Soapboiler.**

Soapboiler. A bad business! a nasty business! Things getting unsettled; everything going crooked. Mind you keep the peace, or they'll treat you as rioters.

Soest. Here come the seven wise men of Greece.

Soapb. I know there are numbers who in secret hold with the Calvinists, abuse the bishops, and don't spare the king. But a loyal subject, a sincere Catholic!—

[By degrees other people join the speakers and listen.

**Enter Vansen.**

Vansen. God save you, gentlemen! What news?

Carp. Don't have anything to do with him; he's a bad fellow.

Jetter. Isn't he secretary to Dr. Wiets?

Carp. He has tried a number of masters already. First of all he was a clerk, and as one master after another dismissed him for roguish conduct, he now bungles as a notary and lawyer, and tipples brandy like a fish.

[More people act in groups.}
VANSEN. So, here you are, all of a heap, and rubbing your heads together. I won't say, it isn't worth talking about.

SOEST. There I agree with you.

VANSEN. Now if one of you had the pluck, and if one of you had brains, we might break the Spanish chains at once.

SOEST. Sir! you must not talk thus. We have sworn to the king——

VANSEN. And the king to us. Mark that!

JETTER. All right; let's know what you think.

OTHERS. Let him speak—he knows what's what—he's a sharp one.

VANSEN. I had an old master, who had heaps of parchment rolls, charters of old foundations, contracts, and title-deeds. He had a passion for the rarest books. In one of them was the whole history of our constitution: In the first instance, we Netherlands were governed by our own princes, who ruled in every respect according to hereditary laws, privileges, and customs. Our ancestors treated their sovereign with all reverence so long as he ruled as he ought, but if once he overstepped the limits of his authority, they kept a very sharp look-out for their own interests. The States at once interfered, for every province, however small and insignificant, had States and a Diet of its own.

CARP. Hold your jaw! we knew all that long ago. Every respectable citizen knows as much about the Constitution as he needs.

JETTER. Let him speak; one can be always learning something fresh.

SOEST. He's quite right.

SEVERAL. Go on, go on! we don't get this kind of thing every day.
VANSEN. Citizens you are, all the world over! You live on without thinking; and as you carry on the trade you inherited from your parents, so you let the government ride rough-shod over you just as it pleases. You don't examine the origin, the history, or the rights of a regent, and you have to thank your own neglect that the Spaniard has drawn a net over your ears.

SOEST. Who troubles himself about that as long as he can get his daily bread?

JETTER. Devil take it! Why didn't some one come forward and put us up to these things in time?

VANSEN. Well, I tell it you now. The king of Spain, who by good luck rules over all these provinces collectively, has no more right to administer rule here than the petty princes who used to possess them separately. Do you understand that?

JETTER. Explain it to us.

VANSEN. It's as clear as the sun at noonday. Must you not be judged according to your own provincial codes? What's the reason of that?

A Citizen. To be sure!

VANSEN. Has not a citizen of Brussels different rights to the man of Antwerp, the man of Antwerp different to the man of Ghent? How's that?

Another Citizen. By heaven!

VANSEN. But if you let things go on in this way, matters will take a very different turn. Fie on you! What Charles the Bold, Frederick the Warrior, and Charles the Fifth failed to do, Philip now does by the agency of a woman.

SOEST. Yes, yes; the old princes tried it on also.

VANSEN. No doubt; but our forefathers were sharp enough. If they had a grudge against their sovereign,
they got hold very likely of his son and heir, kept him
as a hostage, and wouldn't let him free except on the best
of terms for themselves. Our fathers were the right sort of
fellows; they knew what they wanted; they knew how to
set about their business, and to get it done. They were
men of the right sort, and consequently our privileges are
clear, and our rights secured to us.

Soest. What are you saying about our rights?

All. Our rights, our privileges! Tell us about our
privileges.

Vansen. We people of Brabant are most admirably
provided for, though all other provinces have their parti-
cular privileges. I have read it all.

Soest. Tell us.

Jetter. Do.

A Citizen. Pray go on.

Vansen. First of all we read: "The Duke of Brabant
shall be our good and faithful sovereign."

Soest. Good!—is this the word?

Jetter. Faithful!—is that true?

Vansen. Just as I tell you. He is bound to us, as we
are to him. Secondly: "He is not to exercise in respect
of us any force or arbitrary will; he is not even to give
any sign of it, or think of allowing it under any kind of
prettext."

Jetter. Capital! not to exercise it.

Soest. And give no sign of it!

Another. Nor think of allowing it—that's the chief
point. To allow it to no one—on no pretext.

Vansen. In express words.


A Citizen. Yes, we must have it.

Others. The book! the book!
Another. We will go to the regent with the book.

Another. You shall be spokesman, doctor.

Soapb. Oh, the blockheads!

Others. Give us something more out of the book.

Soapb. If he says another word, I'll knock his teeth down his throat.

People. We'll see who dares touch him. Tell us about our privileges. Have we any more privileges?

Vansen. Yes, several, of the best and most wholesome sort, too. For instance, here's a passage: "The sovereign shall neither improve the condition of the clergy nor increase their numbers, without the consent of the nobles and the States." Mark that! And he's not to tamper with the constitution of the country.

Sørst. Is that so?

Vansen. I'll show it you in black and white, written two or three hundred years ago.

A Citizen. And we tolerate the new bishops? The nobles must protect us, we will revolt!

Others. And we allow ourselves to be overawed by the Inquisition?

Vansen. It's your own fault.

People. We have Egmont still; we have Orange still; they'll look after our interests.

Vansen. Your brethren in Flanders have begun the good work.

Soapb. You dog! (Strikes him.)

Others: (Interfering and calling out.) Are you a Spaniard?

Another. What! strike a respectable citizen?

Another. This learned man?

[They rush upon the Soapboiler.

Carp. For heaven's sake, peace! [Others join the fray.
Citizens. What does it all mean?

[Boys whistle, throw stones, set on dogs. Citizens stand staring; people run about; others walk up and down quietly; others play practical jokes, shout and hurrah.

Others. Freedom and privileges! Privileges and freedom!

Enter Egmont, with followers.

Egmont. Peace, peace, my friends! What's all this? Peace, I say! Part them!

Carp. My gracious lord, you come like an angel from heaven. Hush! Don't you see? Count Egmont! Caps off to Count Egmont!

Egmont. Here, too! What are you about? Citizen against citizen! Are you mad? Within a stone’s throw of the Regent? Disperse! every man to his business. It's a bad sign when you turn work days into holidays. What was the matter?

[The tumult gradually subsides, and the people form a circle round him.

Carp. They are fighting about their privileges.

Egmont. Which they will destroy wantonly! And who are you? You seem honest people.

Carp. I'm sure we want to be.

Egmont. What's your business?

Carp. Carpenter, and head of the guild.

Egmont. And you?

Soest. A shopkeeper.

Egmont. And you?

Jetter. A tailor.

Egmont. I remember, you have worked at liveries for my people. Your name is Jetter.
EGMONT.

JETTER. You honour me to remember it.

EGMONT. I don’t easily forget any one whom I have once seen or spoken to. As far as in you lies, good people, keep the peace! You are quite enough in bad odour as it is. Do not irritate the king any further; after all, the power is his. A respectable citizen, who honestly and industriously maintains himself, has everywhere as much freedom as he wants.

Carp. Oh yes! that is just our grievance. By your leave, your grace, it’s the idle loungers and lazy sots who squabble from sheer idleness, and from mere hunger scrape for privileges. They tell heaps of lies to credulous and inquisitive people, and, to be treated to a pot of beer, will set disturbances on foot which will make thousands wretched. That’s just what they like. We mount too safe a guard over our goods and chattels; they would like to smoke us out with firebrands.

EGMONT. You shall have every kind of assistance; measures have been taken to meet effectually the evil. Show a bold front to the new creed, and never believe that sedition will ever secure a people’s rights. Stay at home; allow no crowds to assemble in the streets. Sensible men can do a great deal.

[In the meantime the largest part of the crowd has dispersed.

Carp. Thanks, your excellency—thanks for your good advice. All that we can do we will. (Exit EGMONT.) A gracious gentleman—a real genuine Netherlander! There’s nothing Spanish about him.

JETTER. If we only but had him for a regent! It’s a pleasure to follow him.

SOMER. The king will never do that. That post he always reserves for his own kindred.
JETTER. Did you notice his dress? It was the newest cut, and Spanish fashion.

Carp. A handsome gentleman!

JETTER. His neck would be a fine breakfast for the headsman!

SOEST. Are you mad? What an idea!

JETTER. Silly enough, that such a thing should come into one's head. Can't help it, though. Whenever I see a long handsome neck, willy nilly, the thought will come uppermost—What a capital neck for carving! Those cursed executions! One can't rid one's mind of them. If I see a parcel of schoolboys swimming, and a naked back crops up, I immediately think of the dozens I have seen belaboured with the cane. When a comfortable paunch meets me in the street, thinks I, I fancy I see him roasting at the stake. In my dreams at night I feel twinges in every limb. One can't be comfortable even for a single hour; all cheerfulness and fun I've forgotten long ago. These terrible visions are ever hovering before my eyes.

EGMONT'S Residence.

[The Secretary at a table strewn with papers; he rises impatiently.]

Secretary. Still he comes not! And here have I been waiting now these two hours, pen in hand, the papers before me; and just to-day I should have liked to have left early. I feel the ground burning under my feet; they almost tingle from impatience. "Mind and be punctual to the moment"—such were his final orders before leaving; and now he comes not. There is such a deal to be done, I shall not have finished before midnight. He certainly is very indulgent to me, but I'd rather he were
strict, and let one go at the regular time. I could then make my own arrangements. A good two hours ago he left the Regent; who knows whom he may have met on the way?

Enter Egmont.

Egmont. Tell me, how do things look?
Secretary. I am ready, and three couriers are waiting.
Egmont. I certainly kept you too long; you seem vexed.
Secretary. According to your orders I have been waiting a long time. Here are the papers.
Egmont. Donna Elvira will be angry with me, when she learns that I have kept you.
Secretary. You are pleased to be merry.
Egmont. Nay, nay, don't be ashamed. I congratulate you on your good taste. She is pretty; and I rather like your having a friend at court. What do the letters say?
Secretary. All sorts of things, but very little that is cheering.
Egmont. Then it is well for us that we find comfort at home, and need not to expect it from abroad. Have many letters arrived?
Secretary. Plenty, my lord; and three couriers await your orders.
Egmont. Go on then—let me hear the most important!
Secretary. They are all important.
Egmont. One after the other, only don't lose time.
Secretary. Captain Breda writes an account of further proceedings in Ghent and the adjoining neighbourhood. The tumult has for the most part been allayed.
EGMONT.

EGMONT. He speaks, I suppose, about isolated cases of mischief and reckless folly, still?

Secretary. Yes, plenty of such things are still going on.

EGMONT. Spare me!

Secretary. They have arrested six more who pulled down the image of the Virgin at Verviers. He wants to know if they are to be hanged, like the others?

EGMONT. I am tired of hanging—let them be flogged at the cart-tail, and sent about their business.

Secretary. There are two women amongst them; are they to be flogged also?

EGMONT. He may dismiss them with a warning.

Secretary. Brink, of Breda's company, wants to marry. The captain hopes you won't allow him. There are so many women with the troops, he writes, that on our march, they look more like a gypsies' caravan than soldiers in marching order.

EGMONT. Well, let him be the last then! He is a fine young fellow; besides that, has begged me so imploringly before I came away. This, however, is the very last time I will allow it, though I can't bear refusing the poor fellows their best pastime. They have quite enough to put up with as it is.

Secretary. Two of your people, Seter and Hart, have abused a poor girl, the daughter of an innkeeper. She was alone when they attacked her, and the wench could not defend herself.

EGMONT. If the girl be honest, and they used force, Breda must have them flogged three days in succession; and if they have any property, he is to confiscate enough to make a portion for the poor girl.

Secretary. One of the foreign preachers, passing on a secret mission through Comines, has been discovered.
EGMONT.

He maintained on his oath he was just leaving for France. By law his head is forfeited.

EGMONT. Let him be brought quietly to the frontier, and then assured that the second time he will not get off so easily.

Secretary. A letter from your steward. He writes that money is coming in only by driblets; that it's all he can do to send the required sum within the week; the insurrection has brought the greatest confusion upon everything.

EGMONT. Money must be forthcoming; how to get it—that's his look-out.

Secretary. He promises to do everything in his power, and as a last resource, proposes to sue and arrest Raymond, whose debts to you are of long standing.

EGMONT. He certainly promised to pay.

Secretary. The last time he stated his own time, a fortnight.

EGMONT. Well, give him another fortnight's law; after that he may proceed against him.

Secretary. You are right. It is not inability to pay, it's want of good will. When he sees you mean business, he will stop trifling. The steward further goes on to say, he thinks it advisable to withhold for half a month the salary of the old soldiers, widows, and others to whom you have granted pensions; meantime he might hit upon some plan; they can afford to shift for themselves.

EGMONT. How are they to shift? These people want money more urgently than I. He must not do that.

Secretary. How then would you have him raise the money?

EGMONT. That is no affair of mine, it is his business. He was told so in a former letter.
EGMONT.

Secretary. And therefore he makes these proposals.

Egmont. They are no good at all: he must think of something else. Let him plan something feasible, and, above all, procure the money.

Secretary. I have once more before me the letter from Count Oliva. Forgive my reminding you of the fact. If any one deserves an explicit answer it is the old Count. You wanted to write to him yourself. He certainly loves you as a father.

Egmont. I can't manage it. And of the many things I hate, writing is of all others the most hateful. You imitate my hand so well, do you write in my name. I expect the Prince of Orange. I cannot manage it; but I wish that his anxieties should be calmed by some reassuring answer.

Secretary. Give me some idea of your opinion. I will frame the answer forthwith, and lay it before you. It shall be so written, that in a court of law it might pass for your handwriting.

Egmont. Give me the letter. (After having glanced at it.) Good, worthy old man! Wert thou in thy youth so careful? Didst thou never scale a rampart? Didst thou hang back in the rear of battle, as prudence bids? The faithful, anxious soul! My life and happiness are all he thinks of, without ever feeling, that he is already dead who lives but for his own safety. Write to him to be easy on my account. I act as I am obliged to, and shall take care of myself. Let him use his court influence in my favour, and rest assured of my hearty gratitude.

Secretary. Nothing more? He will never be content with that.

Egmont. What more can I say? If you want a longer letter, you must coin the words yourself. It all
turns upon a single point; he wishes me to lead a life I cannot live. I am cheerful, take things easily, and live freely, that constitutes my happiness, which I would not barter for the security of a tomb. My whole being revolts against the Spanish mode of life, and I have no wish to regulate my steps according to the new solemn measures of the Court. Do I live merely to think of living? Am I to refuse the enjoyment of the present moment in order to secure the next? And am I to consume that again in cares and anxious thoughts?

Secretary. Pray, my lord, deal not so unkindly and hardly with the honest man! As a rule, you are kindly to all. Tell me but one kindly word to comfort your generous friend. Mark how considerate he is—the delicacy of his touch.

Egmont. But always on the same note. He knows of old how odious these admonitions are to me. They are no good, but merely harass me. And if I were a somnambulist, and walked on the dangerous ledge of a house; would it be friendly to call out to me by name, to warn me, wake me, and thus to kill me? Let each man take his own line, and look out for his own safety.

Secretary. It suits you to have no fear, but whoever knows and loves you—

Egmont. (Looking at the letter.) He brings up again the old stories—our sayings and doings one evening, in the overflow of conviviality and wine; and what proofs and conclusions have been drawn from them, and sent posting through the whole kingdom. Well, what then? we had fools' caps and fools' toggery embroidered on the sleeves of our lackeys; and afterwards we changed this absurd decoration for a bundle of arrows, a still more dangerous symbol for all who are determined to invent a
meaning where no meaning exists. Yes, such and such a folly, in a moment of merriment, owed its birth to us. It was our doing that a noble troop, with beggars' wallets and a nickname of their own choosing, reminded the king with mock humility of his duty. Yes, we did it! What does it signify after all? Is the mummercy of a Carnival high treason? Will they grudge us the scanty motley rags for rampant youth and lively imaginations to clothe the bare nakedness of life with? Take life too seriously, and what is its worth? If the morning wakes us not to new joys, and the evening finds us with no joy to hope for, is it worth while to dress and undress? Does the sunshine on me to-day, that I may ponder on the things of yesterday? that I may guess and solve that puzzle which will not be guessed or put together—the destiny of the morrow? Spare me such considerations, let us leave them to pedants and court minions. Let them think, plan, prowl and sneak, reach and filch all they can. If you can put any of this into your letter, without turning it into a volume, I'm content. The good old man attaches too much importance to everything. Thus the friend who has long held our hand, presses it more firmly just as he lets it go.

Secretary. Pardon me. The man on foot becomes giddy when he sees a man driving past him at a furious speed.

Egmont. Child! child! forbear! Lashed as it were by unseen spirits, the sun steeds of time rush away with the light chariot of our destiny. We can do nothing but calmly and courageously grasp the reins, and turn the wheels now to the right, now to the left, here from the precipice, there from the rock. Who shall say whither we are tending? We scarcely know whence we come.

Secretary. My lord, my lord!
EGMONT.

EGMONT. I stand high, but I can and must rise still higher. I have courage, hope, and strength. I have not yet attained the pinnacle of my career; when once I stand there, I will stand there firmly, fearlessly. If I am to fall, then let a thunderclap, a hurricane, nay, a false step of my own, plunge me headlong into the abyss; there shall I lie with thousands of others. I have never disdained to throw for small winnings in the game of blood and death with my brave comrades in battle; shall I be haggling now, when the whole worth of a free life is at stake?

SECRETARY. Oh, my lord! You know not what you say. God help you!

EGMONT. Collect your papers—Orange is coming. Finish all that is most urgent, to enable the couriers to leave before the gates are closed. The rest may wait. Put off the letter to the Count till to-morrow. Be sure and visit Elvira, and remember me to her. Inquire for the Regent's health; they say she is unwell, though she conceals it. [Exit Secretary.

Enter Orange.

EGMONT. Welcome, Orange; you seem ill at ease.

ORANGE. What say you of our conference with the Regent?

EGMONT. I found nothing out of the common in the way she received us. I have often seen her act thus. She seemed indisposed.

ORANGE. Did you not observe that she was more reserved than usual? At first she expressed in a qualified manner her approbation of our conduct in the late insurrection; then she remarked it might be viewed in a false light; then she turned the channel of conversation into her old and favourite topic, that people never fully
recognised or appreciated her kind conciliatory way and friendship for us Dutchers; that nothing ever turned out happily; that the end must be she would weary of it, and the king decide finally other measures. Did you hear that?

Egmont. Not all of it; my mind was intent on something else at the time. She is a woman, dear Orange, and women look for universal passive submission to their gentle yoke; they expect every Hercules to lay aside his lion's-skin, and swell the number of their devoted shuttle-holders; and because they are peaceably intentioned, the ferment which excites a people, the storm raised by powerful rivals against each other, may all be settled by a friendly word, and the most hostile elements be reconciled at their feet. That is her case; and in her impotency to carry out her aims, her only alternative is to be cross-humoured, to complain of ingratitude and unwise conduct, to threaten us with fearful prospects for the time to come, and with her departure.

Orange. Do not you think she means this time to carry out her threat?

Egmont. Never! How often have I seen her on the point of starting! Where is she to go to? Here she is a stadholder, a queen. Think you she could endure wearisome, ignoble days of vegetation at her brother's court? or to visit Italy, and go the dull round of old family connections?

Orange. One does not give her the credit of being capable of such a resolution, because you have seen her hesitate and hang back; still, she can do it if she chooses; new circumstances may urge her to take the step so long postponed. What if she went after all, and the king sent some one else?
EGMONT. Why, he would come, and find enough to do. He would come armed with vast schemes and projects for setting everything in order, for subduing and keeping things together; and to-day he would be busy with this trifle, to-morrow with that, and the day following with some unlooked-for obstacle; one month he would spend in planning, another in dudgeon over the failure of his plans, and half a year would be consumed in anxieties about one single province. With him also would time pass, his head grow giddy, and things go on in the old routine; so that, instead of sailing in the broad open seas, on a track mapped out beforehand, he may thank God if, in a storm like this, he steered his ship clear of the rocks.

ORANGE. What if any one advised the king to make an attempt?

EGMONT. What sort of attempt?

ORANGE. To see what a body without a head could do?

EGMONT. How?

ORANGE. Egmont, for years past I have had upon my mind our relations to those about us. I stand perpetually looking on at a game of chess, and I think no move of my adversary's unimportant; and as men of leisure investigate with elaborate care the secrets of nature, so do I deem it the duty, nay, the very vocation of a prince, to know the intentions and dispositions of all parties. I have reason to fear an outbreak. For a long time the king has acted on certain principles; he finds them absolutely profitless. What more likely than that he should try another tack?

EGMONT. I do not think so. When a man is getting old after making numerous efforts, and finds after all he cannot set the world to rights, he must end at last by growing tired of it.
EGMONT.

Orange. One thing he has not yet attempted.
Egmont. What?
Orange. To spare the people and annihilate the princes.
Egmont. How many have dreaded that long ago? Never fear that.
Orange. Once I feared it; by degrees I suspected it, and finally I considered it a certainty.
Egmont. Has the king more loyal servants than us?
Orange. We serve him after our own fashion; and among ourselves we may confess, that we know how to distinguish the king's rights from our own.
Egmont. Does not every one do the same? We are his subjects, and give him loyally his due.
Orange. But if he expected more, and called that disloyalty which we consider the holding of our just rights?
Egmont. We shall be able to defend ourselves. Let him summon all the Knights of the Golden Fleece; we wish to be tried.
Orange. What if judgment were given before the trial—punishment before the sentence?
Egmont. That were an injustice which Philip never would be guilty of; a folly I never expect from him or his advisers.
Orange. And if they were unjust and foolish?
Egmont. No, Orange, it is impossible. Who would venture to lay hands upon us? To take us prisoners, would be a vain, fruitless enterprise. No, they dare not raise the standard of tyranny so high. The breath of wind which should waft this news over the land would kindle a mighty fire. And what would be their object? The king alone cannot judge and condemn us; and would they, like assassins, attack our life? They cannot wish that. A formidable league would in a moment weld the
entire nation together. Hatred and eternal divorce from the crown of Spain would be energetically proclaimed.

Oran. The flames would then rage over our graves, and the blood of our enemies flow as a vain atonement. Let us reflect, Egmont.

Egmont. But how should they?

Oran. Alva is on the way.

Egmont. I do not believe it.

Oran. I know it.

Egmont. The Regent would not own it.

Oran. So much the more am I convinced. The Regent will make room for him. I know his bloodthirsty mind, and he brings an army with him.

Egmont. Again to harass the provinces? It will create deep discontent among the people.

Oran. The leaders will be seized.

Egmont. No! no!

Oran. Let us withdraw to our provinces! There we will strengthen ourselves; he will not at once have recourse to open violence.

Egmont. Must we not welcome him on his arrival?

Oran. We can remain indifferent.

Egmont. What if on his arrival he summon us in the name of the king?

Oran. We contrive some subterfuge.

Egmont. If he presses the point?

Oran. We beg to be excused.

Egmont. And if he insists?

Oran. The less reason for us to come.

Egmont. And then war is declared, and we are rebels.

Oran. Orange, be not misled by caution. I know that fear cannot make you yield. Consider this step!

Oran. I have considered it.
EGMONT. Consider what you will be the cause of, if you are mistaken—of the most ruinous war that ever yet wasted a country. Your refusal will be the signal that will summon at once the provinces to arms, that will justify every act of cruelty to perpetrate which Spain has at all times so eagerly sought a pretext. What we by dint of patient endurance have so long tamed and kept under, you with a single nod will goad on to the most awful confusion. Think of the towns, the nobles, the people! Think of commerce, agriculture, trade! Picture to yourself the murder, the devastation! The soldier looks on calmly as his comrade falls dead by his side in battle; but you will be met by the dead bodies of citizens, children and women floating down the stream, so that you will look on with horror, and no longer know whose cause you are defending, whilst those for whose freedom you unsheathed your sword are perishing, one by one. And what will be your feelings, if you must confess to your own self: "I took up arms for my own safety!"

ORANGE. We are not simply individuals, Egmont. If it becomes us to sacrifice ourselves for thousands, it equally becomes us to spare ourselves for thousands.

EGMONT. He who spares himself must suspect himself.

ORANGE. He who knows himself can safely advance or retreat.

EGMONT. Your own conduct makes the evil you dread a certainty.

ORANGE. It is politic and courageous to front the evil we cannot avoid.

EGMONT. In so great a danger, the faintest hope must be taken into account.

ORANGE. Our last inch of dependable ground is taken from us. The abyss yawns before our eyes.
EGMONT.

EGMONT. Is the king's favour such a narrow path?
ORANGE. Not narrow exactly, but slippery.
EGMONT. By heaven! you do him injustice. I cannot
bear he should be so meanly thought of. He is Charles's
son, and incapable of meanness.
ORANGE. Kings do nothing mean.
EGMONT. People ought to know him better.
ORANGE. It is just this knowledge which urges us not
to abide the issue of a dangerous experiment.
EGMONT. No experiment is dangerous, if we only have
the courage to meet it.
ORANGE. You excite yourself, Egmont.
EGMONT. I must see with my own eyes.
ORANGE. Would that for once you could see with mine!
My friend, because you keep your eyes open, you think
that you see. I go. Wait for Alva's arrival, and God be
with you! Perhaps my refusal will save you. It may
be, the dragon may think his victim not worth the catch-
ing, unless at one gulp he can devour us both. It may
be, he will delay, the more surely to effect his purpose,
and meantime you may see the matter in its true light.
But then quick! quick! save, save yourself! Farewell;
let nothing escape your observation: mind how many
soldiers he brings with him; how he garrisons the town;
what power the Regent retains; how your friends are
prepared. Send me tidings, Egmont.
EGMONT. What do you wish?
ORANGE. (Grasping his hand.) Be persuaded; go with
me.
EGMONT. How, in tears, Orange?
ORANGE. There is nothing unmanly in weeping for a
lost man.
EGMONT. You think me lost?
EGMONT.

ORANGE. You are lost. Take heed. Your respite is but for a short time. Farewell. [Exit.

EGMONT. (Alone.) Strange that the thoughts of other men should have such an influence over us! I should never have thought of it, but this man infects me with his anxiety. Away! It is a drop of blood foreign to my nature! Dear Mother Nature, cast it out from me! And surely there is still one gentle remedy left for smoothing the furrows from my brow.
ACT THE THIRD.

* Palace of the Regent.

MARGARET OF PARMA.

Regent. I might have anticipated this. Ah! when we lead a life of toil and trouble, we always think we are doing the most we can; and he who looks on from a distance and gives orders, believes he only asks us to do what we can. Oh ye kings! I could never have believed this would have so fretted and annoyed me. To govern is so sweet! And to abdicate?—I know not how my father did it; but I will do it too.

[Machiavel appears in the background.

Regent. Come hither, Machiavel. I am thinking over this letter from my brother.

Mach. May I know what it contains?

Regent. As much delicate consideration for me, as anxiety for his provinces. He is loud in praise of the unflinching firmness, the assiduity and fidelity with which I have hitherto watched over his royal prerogative in these provinces. He condole with me that the intractable people give me such trouble. He is so perfectly convinced of the soundness of my views, so heartily satisfied with the prudence of my conduct, that I should almost say the letter is written in a too complimentary strain for a king—certainly for a brother.

Mach. It is not the first time that he has expressed to you his just satisfaction.
Regent. But it is the first time that it is a mere phrase.

Mach. I do not understand you.

Regent. You shall. For after this preamble he adds, that without troops, without a small army, I shall always cut a poor figure here. We were wrong, he says, in listening to the complaints of the inhabitants, and withdrawing our troops from the provinces. A garrison, he says, which weighs heavily on the citizens, will prevent them, by sheer weight, from moving too freely.

Mach. It would greatly irritate the public mind.

Regent. The king however thinks—mark this—he thinks that an able general, one who never makes any concession, will soon settle the business with people, nobles, citizens, and peasants, and therefore he sends, with a powerful army,—the Duke of Alva.

Mach. Alva?

Regent. You are surprised?

Mach. You say, he sends. Surely he asks whether he ought to send?

Regent. The king asks not—he sends.

Mach. Then you will have a well-tried warrior in your service.

Regent. In my service? Speak plainly, Machiavel.

Mach. I would not anticipate you.

Regent. And I would fain dissemble. I feel it deeply, very deeply. I had much rather my brother spoke out his mind openly, than put his name to formal despatches, drawn up by a Secretary of State.

Mach. Should they not consider?

Regent. I know them thoroughly. They would like to see everything swept clean away; and not daring to act themselves, entrust any one with their confidence who
comes besom in hand. Oh! I fancy I see the king and his council embroidered on this tapestry.

MACH. So vividly?

Regent. Not a feature wanting. There are good men amongst them. The honest Roderick, so experienced, so temperate, who does not aspire too high and yet neglects nothing; the outspoken Alonzo, the laborious Freneda, the staunch Las Vargas, and others, their confederates, when the good cause is uppermost. But there sits the gaunt Alva, with brazen front and deep eye of fire, muttering about woman’s weak kindness, untimely concession, and that women can ride broken-in horses well enough, but are themselves bad riding-masters, and such like pleasantries, which in former times I was obliged to endure from the lips of gentlemen politicians.

MACH. You have chosen good strong colours for your picture.

Regent. Confess, Machiavel, in my entire sketch from which I could paint a portrait, there is no tint so yellowish, so black, so jaundice-like, as Alva’s complexion, and as the colour with which he paints. He sets every one down at once as a blasphemer or a traitor, for under this catalogue they can all at once be broken on the wheel, impaled, quartered, and burnt.—The good I have done here dwindles, I dare say, into nothing when they look at it from a distance, just because it is good.—Then he dwells upon every past act of licentiousness, he reminds them of every breach of the peace long ago appeased and settled; and so the king sees nothing but mutiny, discord, and outrageous conduct; he fancies that people here are devouring one another, when the momentary outbreak of an undisciplined mob has with us become a long-forgotten thing. He feels a deadly hatred against
the poor people; they appear odious to him, almost beasts and monsters; he looks around for fire and sword, and fancies, thus men are subdued.

_Macb._ You seem to me too impassioned; you take the matter too gravely. Are you not still Regent?

_Regent._ I know that. Alva will bring his instructions from the king. I have grown old enough in statecraft to know how one can be shelved without being removed from office. First, he will bring his mandate, with powers imperfectly and equivocally defined; then he will take more and more into his hands, for the power will be his. If I resent this, he will pretend he has secret instructions; if I ask leave to see them, he will put me off with some excuse; if I insist, he will show me a paper having no reference to the matter in question; if I am still dissatisfied, he will take no notice of my word at all. Meanwhile he will have accomplished what I dread, and thwarted all my wishes.

_Macb._ I wish I could contradict you.

_Regent._ His harshness and cruelty will exasperate anew that spirit which, with unspeakable patience, I succeeded in calming. I shall be an eye-witness of the destruction of my own work, and moreover I shall be made the scapegoat.

_Macb._ Your highness must wait for the result.

_Regent._ I am sufficiently my own mistress to keep quiet. Let him come; I will make way for him with the best grace I can, before he dislodges me.

_Macb._ What, will you take this important step so suddenly?

_Regent._ It will be harder for me than you suppose. Those, accustomed to rule, who are in the habit of holding in their hands every day the destiny of thousands,
descend from the throne as into the grave. But better far this, than to move as a shadowy spectre amongst the living, and to be intent on maintaining with hollow authority a place which another has inherited and now possesses and enjoys.

**Clara's Dwelling.**

**Clara and her Mother.**

*Mother.* Such love as Brackenburg's I have never seen. I thought it was only to be met with in romances.

*Clara.* *(Pacing up and down the room, humming a song.)*

"Happy alone are the mortals that love."

*Mother.* He is uneasy at your relations with Egmont; and, I think, if you were a little kind to him, if you wish it, he would marry you.

*Clara.* *(Sings.)*

**SONG.**

Cheerful  
And tearful,  
With phantasies vain!

Yearning  
And burning  
In passion and pain!

Death-stricken, triumphant

To heaven above!

Happy alone

Are the mortals that love!

*Mother.* Have done with that old jingle.

*Clara.* Don't abuse it; it's a song full of meaning. I have often sung a grown child to sleep with it.
Mother. Oh! you only think of your love. It makes you forget everything else. You should have a due respect for Brackenburg, I tell you. He may make you happy one day yet.

Clara. He?

Mother. Oh, yes! a time will come!—You children never look ahead, and turn a deaf ear to our experience. Youth and happy love all come to an end, and then comes a time when one thanks God if one can slip into shelter anywhere.

Clara. (Trembles, and after a pause starts up.) Mother, let that time come, just as death must come. To think of it beforehand is dreadful! And when it comes!—if we must—then we shall behave as best we can.—Egmont, to live without thee! (Weeping.) No! I cannot, I cannot!

Enter Egmont (dressed in a trooper's cloak, his hat drawn over his face).

Egmont. Clara!

Clara. (Uttering a cry and starting back.) Egmont! (She rushes forward to meet him.) Egmont! (Embracing him and leaning upon him.) My own, my darling! you are here then!

Egmont. Good evening, mother.

Mother. God be with you, noble sir! My child here had nearly pined away, waiting for you so long. All day long she has been talking and singing about you.

Egmont. You will give me some supper?

Mother. Too much honoured—if we only had anything.

Clara. Of course! Be at ease, mother, I have arranged everything; I have prepared something. Don't betray me, mother.

Mother. Poor fare enough.
CLARA. You will see! When he is with me I am not hungry at all; he should then have no great appetite when I am with him.

EGMONT. Do you think so?

(CLARA stamps with her foot and turns away pettishly.)

EGMONT. What is the matter with you?

CLARA. How cold you are to-day! You have not yet offered to kiss me. Why do you keep your arms folded in your cloak, like a babe? Neither soldier nor lover ought to keep his arms muffled up.

EGMONT. Sometimes, darling, sometimes. When a soldier is lying in ambush, and would by strategy get the better of his foe, then he collects himself, folds himself up in his own arms, so to speak, and thinks out his deep-laid scheme. And a lover——

Mother. Will you not sit down and make yourself comfortable? I must go to the kitchen; when you are here Clara forgets everything else. You must take what you can get.

EGMONT. Your goodwill is the best seasoning.

[Exit Mother.

CLARA. And what is my love, then?

EGMONT. Whatever you like.

CLARA. Compare it with something, if you have only the heart to do so.

EGMONT. First, then. (Throws aside his cloak, and appears in a splendid dress.)

CLARA. Dear me!—

EGMONT. Now my arms are free. (Embraces her.)

CLARA. Stop! you will spoil your dress. (She steps back.) How splendid! I dare not touch you.

EGMONT. Do you like it? I promised, you know, to come once dressed as a Spaniard.
Clara. I didn't worry you about it for some time; I thought you had rather not. Ah! and the Golden Fleece too!

Egmont. There it is; now you see it.

Clara. Did the emperor put this on you?

Egmont. He did, darling! and this chain and order confer on their wearer the noblest privileges. I recognise on earth no judge over my actions other than the Grand Master of the Order, with the assembled chapter of knights.

Clara. Oh! you might let the whole world sit in judgment over you! The velvet is so lovely! and the lacework and the embroidery! I don't know where to begin to admire.

Egmont. Feast your eyes as long as you please!

Clara. And the Golden Fleece! Once you told me its history, and said it was a sign of everything great and valuable, everything that a man, by dint of toil and industry, can acquire. It is very precious. I can liken it to your love—I carry it, like this, next to my heart—and then again—

Egmont. And then again?

Clara. Then again the comparison fails.

Egmont. How so?

Clara. I have not gained it by dint of toil and industry; I have not deserved it.

Egmont. It is different in love. You deserve it for having made no efforts to seek it—and those for the most part obtain it who seek it not.

Clara. Do you know that from your own experience? have you made this proud remark on your own account? You, adored by all the people?

Egmont. Oh! that I had only done something for
them! that I could do something for them! It is from their own good feeling that they love me.

CLARA. Of course you were with the Regent to-day?

EGMONT. I was.

CLARA. Are you on good terms with her?

EGMONT. It would seem so. We are friendly and useful to one another.

CLARA. And at heart?

EGMONT. I wish her well. We each have our own views; that makes no difference. She is an excellent woman; understands her people, and would see quite far enough, even if she were less suspicious. I give her some trouble, because she is always thinking I have secrets, and I have none.

CLARA. None at all?

EGMONT. Well! a little reserve, perhaps. All wine, in the course of time, leaves some sediment in the cask. Orange is for her much better company, and always like a new problem. He has managed to get the credit of perpetually harbouring some secret design; she is always spelling his face, to divine his thoughts; or dogging his steps, to learn what direction he will take.

CLARA. Does she dissemble?

EGMONT. She is a regent—and do you ask?

CLARA. Pardon me; I meant, is she false?

EGMONT. Neither more nor less than any one determined to attain their object.

CLARA. I could not get on in such a world. But then, she has the spirit of a man; she is of another sort than we plain cooks and sempstresses. She is great, brave, determined.

EGMONT. Yes, when matters don't go on too roughly. Just now, however, she is losing her composure.
Clara. How so?

Egmont. She has, too, a slight moustache on her upper lip, and an occasional attack of gout. A perfect Amazon!

Clara. A majestic woman! I should be afraid to appear before her.

Egmont. Yet you are not usually timid! You certainly would not be afraid—mere maidenly bashfulness. (Clara looks down, takes his hand, and leans upon him.) I understand, darling; you can look up. (He kisses her eyes.)

Clara. Let me not speak! let me cling to thee! Let me look into thine eyes, and there find everything—hope and comfort, joy and sorrow! (She embraces him, and gazes intently on him.) Tell me! Oh tell me! I hardly understand! Art thou Egmont? Count Egmont? The great Egmont, who makes such a stir in the world? of whom all the newspapers speak, to whom the provinces are so attached?

Egmont. No, Clara. I am not he.

Clara. How?

Egmont. Look here, Clara! let me sit down. (He sits, she kneels on a footstool before him, rests her arms on his knees, and looks up at him.) That Egmont is a stern, morose, cold-hearted Egmont, who must be reserved, and assume now this aspect and now that; harassed, misconstrued, perplexed, when people think him gay and high-spirited; beloved by a people which does not know its own mind; honoured and revered by multitudes with whom it is hopeless to deal; surrounded by friends to whom he cannot trust himself; watched by men who by any means would harm him; toiling and striving, often without aim, generally without pay. Ask me not how such an one fares, how such an one feels. But this
Egmont. Clara, is calm, open-hearted, happy, loved and cherished by the best of hearts—a heart he knows so thoroughly and so well—a heart which, in full love and confidence, he presses to his own. (He embraces her.) That is thy Egmont!

Clara. So let me die! The world has no joys for me after this!
ACT THE FOURTH.

A Street.

JETTER, Carpenter.

JETTER. Hey! neighbour—one word.
Carpenter. Go your way, and hold your tongue.
JETTER. Only one word.—No news?
Carp. Nothing, except that once more we are forbidden to speak.
JETTER. How?
Carp. Just step near this house! Take care! Just after he arrived, the Duke of Alva published a decree, by which two or three found talking together in the street are, without trial of any kind, to be held guilty of high treason.
JETTER. Dear me!
Carp. To talk on state matters is forbidden on pain of imprisonment for life.
JETTER. Alas for our liberty!
Carp. And nobody shall, on pain of death, abuse a measure of government.
JETTER. Alas for our heads!
Carp. And fathers, mothers, children, friends, kinsmen, and servants, are invited, by great promises, to disclose what goes on in the circle of their family, before a tribunal specially appointed.
JETTER. Let us go home.
Carp. And the obedient are promised that they shall not suffer any harm in person, honour, or property.

Jetter. How gracious! My spirits began to sink the moment the duke entered the town. Since that time the whole sky seems to me veiled in black crape, hung in such deep folds, that one must stoop down to avoid touching it.

Carp. And how do you like his soldiers? They are a different sort of crab to what we have been used to.

Jetter. Fie! How one loathes the sight of such troops marching up and down the streets! As straight as tapers, eyes to the front, and the whole line stepping like one man. And when they act sentry, and you pass one of them, you'd fancy he wanted to look you through and through; he looks so stiff and surly that you fancy you see a gaoler at every corner. They are not my sort at all. Our militia were jolly fellows; they took some liberties, stood with their legs astride, their hat slouched over their ears; they lived and let live; but these fellows are like machines, with a devil inside.

Carp. If such a fellow were to call out "Halt!" and level his gun at you, do you think one would halt?

Jetter. I should feel like a dead man.

Carp. Let us go home.

Jetter. No good will come of it. Good-bye!

Enter Soest.

Soest. Friends! Neighbours!

Carp. Hush! let us go home.

Soest. Do you know?

Jetter. A great deal too much.

Soest. The Regent is gone.
JETTER. Then God help us!

Carp. She was our last protection.

Soest. She left all at once, and secretly. She could not agree with the duke; she sent word to the nobles that she will come back again; not a soul believes it.

Carp. God forgive the nobles for leaving this new scourge on our necks. They might have staved it off. Our privileges are gone.

JETTER. For heaven’s sake, not a word about privileges! I smell the scent of an execution morning; the sun will not come out; damp fogs are about.

Soest. Orange also is gone.

Carp. Then we are forsaken utterly!

Soest. Count Egmont is still here.

JETTER. Thank God for that! Now may all the saints strengthen him to do his very utmost! he is the only man who can do us any good.

Enter Vansen.

Vansen. Do I find at last one or two men who have not given in?

JETTER. Now do us the favour to pass on!

Vansen. You are uncivil.

Carp. This is no time for pretty speeches. Does your back itch again? are your wounds cured already?

Vansen. Fancy asking a soldier about his wounds! If I had minded blows, I should have never got on at all.

JETTER. It may turn out more seriously.

Vansen. It seems that you feel from the rising storm a pitiable weakness in your limbs.

Carp. Your limbs will soon be quivering elsewhere, if you do not keep quiet.
EGMONT.

VANSEN. Poor wretched mice! The moment the master of the house fetches a new cat, ye are in despair! It's only a little different; we shall get on in the same way we used to; you will see!

Carp. You are an impudent rascal.

VANSEN. Oh you blockhead! Let the duke have his own way. The old tom-cat looks as if he had devoured devils instead of mice, and could not now digest them. For the present let him alone; he too must eat, drink, and sleep like other people. I have no fear as long as we bide our time. At first he goes at it tooth and nail; but he too will find out afterwards that it's better to live in the larder, among flitches of bacon, and sleep there at night, than to be catching at solitary mice in the corn-loft. Go to! I know the stadholders.

Carp. What liberties such a fellow as this may take! Had I ever dared utter such a thing, I shouldn't consider myself safe for a moment.

VANSEN. Never fear! God in heaven knows nothing of you, poor worms, much less the Regent.

Jetter. You blasphemous villain!

VANSEN. I know some who would be better off had they a dash of tailor's blood in their veins, in place of their heroic courage.

Carp. What do you mean by that?

VANSEN. Hum! I mean the Count.

Jetter. Egmont! What has he to be afraid of?

VANSEN. I'm a poor devil; his losses of a single evening would keep me a whole year round. And yet he might very well give me his income for a whole year, only to have my head on his shoulders for a quarter of an hour.

Jetter. You think yourself mighty wise. But the
very hairs of Egmont’s head are more knowing than your brains.

VanSen. What stuff you talk! but they are not more subtle. These grandees are the very first to be taken in. He shouldn’t be so confiding.

JetTer. What nonsense he talks! Such a princely gentleman.

VanSen. Just because he is not a tailor.

JetTer. You foul-mouthed villain!

VanSen. I only wish he had your courage in his limbs for a single hour, that it would fret, worry, and torment him, until he would be obliged to leave the town.

JetTer. You talk sheer nonsense; he is as safe as the stars in heaven.

VanSen. Have you ever seen a shooting star? It was gone in a moment!

Carp. Who will dare touch him?

VanSen. Who? Will you perhaps present it? If they arrest him, will you stir up an insurrection?

JetTer. Ah!

VanSen. Will you risk your ribs in his behalf?

Soest. Eh!

VanSen. (Mimicking.) Ah! Oh! Eh! Gape away through the whole alphabet. So it is, and will be! God preserve him!

JetTer. I shudder at your impudence. What should so upright and noble a man have to fear?

VanSen. The scoundrel has the best of it all over the world. Even when sentenced to death he fools the judge; as a judge he is only too glad to set down with delight the accused as a guilty man. I have had to copy a protocol, where the commissary got a deal of praise and pay from the court, because he contrived on the trial to make
out an honest fellow, against whom they had a grudge, to be a rascal.

Carp. There again you lie in your throat. What can they want to get out of a man by examination, if he is innocent?

Vánsen. Oh you numskull! When nothing is to be got out of a man, they can always work something in. Innocence makes a man rash, nay, even insolent. At first they put their questions gently, and the prisoner, proud of his innocence, as they call it, comes out straight with many points of evidence which a wiser man would keep back; then the inquisitor forms fresh questions out of the materials thus supplied, ever keeping a sharp look-out for some slight contradiction; then he fastens the snare round his victim, and once let the poor devil be surprised into saying too much here, too little there, or suppress, God knows why, from some whim or other, some paltry detail, or allow himself to be intimidated, then we’re on the right scent; and, believe me, the beggarwomen don’t look for rags out of the sweepings with more care than such a manufacturer of villains—from trifling, crooked, distorted, disjointed, suppressed, well-known, denied informations and circumstances, cobbles together a ragged scarecrow, so at least to be able to hang his victim in effigy; and the poor devil may thank his stars if he can actually see himself hanged.

Jetter. That fellow’s got a glib tongue of his own.

Carp. This may do very well with flies; but wasps laugh at your webs and meshes.

Vánsen. That depends on the sort of spiders. The lanky duke, now, has exactly the look of your garden spider; not the paunch-bellied sort, which ain’t so dangerous, but the long-footed, small-bodied fellow, that
grows lean over his victuals, that spins delicate and slender threads, but all the more tough notwithstanding.

JETTER. Egmont is Knight of the Golden Fleece: who dare touch him? He can only be judged by his peers, and the knights of his order duly summoned and assembled. It's your foul mouth and evil conscience that make you talk this gibberish.

VANSEN. Do you suppose I wish him harm? It's all the same to me. He is a very good sort of gentleman. Some good friends of mine, who would have swung for a certainty elsewhere, he let off with a sound flogging. Now be off with you! Be off, I myself advise you. I see yonder again the patrol on their rounds, and the men don't look as if they would drink and fraternise with us. We must go gently to work, and wait for our turn. I have a couple of nieces and a publican, a relation of mine, to entertain them; and if they don't succeed in making them civil, they are downright wolves.

The Palace of Eulenberg, residence of the Duke of ALVA.

SILVA and GOMEZ meet one another.

SILVA. Have you carried out the duke's orders?
GOMEZ. Strictly. All the day patrols are under orders to meet at the appointed hours, on the different spots I have pointed out to them. Meanwhile, they march as usual through the town, to maintain order. No one knows of the other, but fancies the order concerns him alone. Thus in a moment the cordon can be drawn, and all the approaches to the palace be occupied. Know you the reason of this order?

SILVA. Blind obedience is what I am accustomed to. And whose commands does one obey so easily and cheer-
fully as the duke's? The issue soon proves that his command was right.

Gomez. Well! well! I am not surprised at your becoming as reserved and monosyllabic as the duke, since you must be constantly about him. Accustomed as I am to the lighter service of Italy, the service here seems strange to me. As for loyalty and obedience, I am still the same man as of old, but I have acquired a fondness for talk and discussion. Here, you are all silent, and are never at ease. The duke to my mind resembles a brazen tower without gates, the garrison of which must have wings. Only lately I heard him say at the table of a jovial, cheery fellow, that he was like a common pot-house, with a signboard hung out of the window, to allure idlers, beggars, and thieves.

Silva. And did he not by his silence bring us here?

Gomez. There is nothing to be said against that. He certainly did! Those who witnessed his skill in bringing the troops here out of Italy, they saw something. What a wary march he stole through the ranks of friends and foes, through the French, royalists, and heretics, through the Swiss and the confederates, maintaining throughout the strictest discipline, and achieving a march—people thought so fraught with danger—easily and without let or hindrance! We certainly have seen something, and could take a lesson.

Silva. Here too! is not everything as still and quiet as though there had never been any rising at all?

Gomez. Well, for matter of that, it was pretty quiet when we came.

Silva. The provinces have become far more tranquil. If any one does move, it is only to escape; but their way will soon be barred, I suppose.
Gomez. Now more than ever will the duke be in good odour with the king.

Silva. And it is of paramount importance to us to retain the duke's favour. When the king comes here, the duke, and every one recommended by him, is sure to be rewarded.

Gomez. Do you really believe the king will come?

Silva. So many preparations are being made, that I think it highly probable.

Gomez. They do not convince me.

Silva. Anyhow, do not speak about it! For if the king does not intend to come, it is perfectly certain he would have people believe he intends to.

Enter Ferdinand, Alva's natural son.

Ferdinand. Is my father not yet up?

Silva. We expect him.

Ferd. The princes will soon be here.

Gomez. Will they come to-day?

Ferd. Orange and Egmont.

Gomez. (Aside to Silva.) I think I understand.

Silva. Well, then, keep it to yourself.

Enter the Duke of Alva. (As he comes forward the rest withdraw into the background.)

Alva. Gomez!

Gomez. (Advancing.) My lord.

Alva. You have distributed the guards and given them their orders?

Gomez. With the greatest care. The daily patrols——

Alva. Enough. Wait in the gallery. Silva will apprise you of the moment you are to concentrate them, and
EGMONT.

occupy the approaches leading to the palace. You know the rest.

GOMEZ. Yes, my lord.

ALVA. Silva.

SILVA. Here, my lord.

SILVA. All that I have ever most highly prized in you, courage, determination, and irresistible action, must be shown to-day!

SILVA. Let me thank you for the opportunity of proving that I am the same old servant as ever.

ALVA. As soon as the princes have entered my house, lose not a moment in arresting Egmont’s private secretary. Have you made every preparation for seizing others who are marked for arrest?

SILVA. Trust in us. Their fate shall overwhelm them as surely and terribly as an eclipse of the sun, which men have surely reckoned on.

ALVA. Have you had them narrowly watched?

SILVA. Every one of them, Egmont particularly. He is the only one whose behaviour, since you came here, has not altered. He does nothing but ride about the live-long day; invites his friends, and at table is as agreeable and jovial as ever; he plays at dice, shoots, and of a night slinks off to his mistress. Not so the others, who have made a notable change in their mode of living. They stay at home: judging from the outside of their houses, you would think there was an invalid within.

ALVA. Be quick then, before they recover in spite of themselves.

SILVA. I shall make them come. By your orders we overwhelm them with officiousness and honours. They are oversawed; as a matter of policy they thank us, but in anxious tones, they feel that the best course they can
pursue is to escape; not a soul will dare move a step, they hesitate, cannot unite themselves; their fellow-feeling prevents them from taking individually any bold measure. They would be glad to escape from all suspicion, and make themselves only more and more suspected. I already rejoice on seeing your whole project realised.

Alva. I am only pleased when the thing is done, and my mind is not quite at ease even at that; for there is always enough left to give grounds for anxiety and thought. Fortune is capricious; she often ennobles the commonplace and the worthless, and dishonours the most deeply-laid schemes with a poor ordinary result. Tarry until the princes come; then order Gomez to occupy the streets, and hasten yourself to arrest Egmont's secretary and the other intended prisoners. When this is done, come back and tell my son, that he may bring me the tidings in the council chamber.

Silva. I hope this evening I shall be able to appear before you. (Alva approaches his son, who has hitherto been standing in the gallery.) I hardly dare whisper it to myself, but my hopes waver. I fear matters will not turn out as he anticipates. I see before me spirits who, calm and thoughtful, are weighing in black scales the doom of princes and of many thousands. Slowly does the beam swing up and down; the judges seem buried in thought; at last one scale sinks, the other rises, moved by the caprice of destiny, and then all is decided.

[Exit.

Alva. (Advancing with Ferdinand.) How did you find the town?

Ferd. All is quiet. I rode about from street to street, as if for my amusement. Your well-distributed patrols keep the people so much in fear, that they do not venture
to whisper, or murmur a syllable. The town looks like a plain, when the storm flashes from a distance no bird, no beast, is to be seen which is not making hastily for a place of shelter.

**ALVA.** Did you notice nothing further?

**Ferd.** Egmont, with some of his friends, rode into the market-place; we saluted each other. He was mounted on an unbroken charger, which I could not help admiring.

"Let us be quick, and break in our horses," he called out, "we shall soon want them!" He added, he should see me again to-day: he is coming here at your bidding, to take counsel with you.

**Alva.** He will see you again.

**Ferd.** Of all the nobles I know here he is my favourite. To all appearance we shall be friends.

**Alva.** The same hot-headed, rash youth as ever; I recognise in you the giddy-mindedness of your mother, which led her to throw herself unreservedly into my arms. Appearances have drawn you rashly on to make many a dangerous connection.

**Ferd.** You will find me dutiful and submissive.

**Alva.** For the sake of your youthful blood I forgive this rash affection, this reckless, cheerful temper. Only forget not the mission entrusted to me, and the part I should like to assign to you in it.

**Ferd.** Don't think of me, spare me not if anything needs to be done.

**Alva.** *(After a pause.)* My son!

**Ferd.** My father!

**Alva.** The princes will be here soon—Orange and Egmont. It is from no mistrust that I have withheld from you till now that which is about to take place. They will not go from hence.
Ferd. What is your design?

Alva. Their arrest has been determined on.—You are astonished! Now learn what you have to do; when all is over you shall know the reasons. The time is too short to explain them now. With you alone I wish to confer on matters of the greatest secrecy and importance; a strong tie keeps us linked together; you are very dear to me; on you I would like to bestow everything. Not merely the habit of obedience I would impress on you; I would engender, if I could, in your mind the power to speak out, to execute and command; I would leave to you vast possessions, and to the king a most useful servant; the best I have should be yours, that you may know no sense of shame in appearing among your brothers.

Ferd. Oh! how much I owe you for the love you bestow on me alone, whilst a whole empire stands in awe of you!

Alva. Now listen to what is to be done. As soon as the princes have entered, every approach to the palace will be occupied. Gomez has orders for that. Silva will hasten to arrest Egmont's secretary and others who are most suspected. You will have to command the guards at the gates and in the courtyards. Take especial care to place the soldiers most to be relied on in the adjoining rooms. Wait in the gallery till Silva returns, and bring any ordinary piece of paper, as a signal that his commission has been successful. Remain in the ante-chamber till Orange withdraws; follow him; I will detain Egmont here, on the pretext of having to say something further to him. At the end of the gallery call on Orange to give up his sword; summon the guards; make sure at once of that most dangerous man; and I will seize Egmont here.
EGMONT.

Ferd. I obey, father. For the first time with a heavy and anxious heart.

Alva. I forgive you; this is the first great day in your life.

Enter Silva.

Silva. A courier from Antwerp. Here is Orange’s letter! He is not coming.

Alva. Did the courier say so?

Silva. No; my heart says so.

Alva. Out of your mouth speaks my evil genius. (After reading the letter he makes a sign to both, and they retire to the gallery. Alva, solus, in front of the stage.) He comes not! He puts off to the last moment to declare himself. He has the courage not to come! So then, contrary to all expectation, the prudent man is this time prudent enough to act imprudently. The clock moves on! Within a move or two of its hand will a great deed be done, or the opportunity be lost past recall; for it can neither be retrieved nor concealed. I had long and maturely weighed the entire matter; I had even presupposed this emergency, and resolved how it was to be met; and, now that the time for acting has arrived, my mind is distracted anew with doubt and hesitation. If he escapes me, is it good policy to arrest the others? Shall I procrastinate, and let Egmont and his friends escape me, with others too, numbers of whom are now, perhaps to-day only, in my power? What! Does fate subdue even thee—the unsubdued? How long designed! how well prepared! how vast, how grand the scheme! How hope had neared her aim! And now, at the critical moment of decision, thou art placed between two evils; thou dost grasp in the dark future as in a lottery; the
lot is not yet revealed; thou canst not know whether it be a prize or a blank! (He becomes attentive, like one hearing a noise, and walks to the window.)—'Tis he! Egmont! Did your horse carry you hither so gaily, without starting at the scent of blood, or at the spirit with the naked sword which receives you at the gate?—Dismount!—There, now you have one foot in the grave! and now you have both! Ay, now stroke him, and pat his neck for the last time, for his gallant service! And I have no choice left. The infatuation which brings Egmont hither cannot deliver him into my hands a second time! Hark! (Ferdinand and Silva enter hastily.) Do as I bid you; I cannot change my mind. I shall detain Egmont here at all hazards, until you bring me tidings from Silva. Then keep close at hand. Thee, too, fate has defrauded of the proud distinction of seizing with thine own hand the king's most bitter foe. (To Silva.) Hasten! (To Ferdinand.) Go to meet him!

(Alva remains a short time alone, and walks up and down in silence.)

**Enter Egmont.**

Egmont. I come to learn the king's orders; to hear what service he requires of his ever true and loyal servant.

Alva. He desires, of all things, your counsel.


Alva. I grieve at his falling us in this important moment. The king wishes for your counsel and your opinion on the way and means of restoring to the provinces their former tranquillity. He hopes for your zealous co-operation in allaying these tumults, and establishing in these provinces complete and permanent order.
EGMONT.

EGMONT. You might know better than I do that matters are already tranquil enough, and were still more so, till the appearance of fresh troops struck new terror and anxiety into men's minds.

ALVA. You seem to intimate that it would have been more advisable had the king never put me in the position of consulting you at all.

EGMONT. Pardon me! It is not for me to judge whether the king ought to have sent the army, whether the weight of his majestic presence alone would not have had a more powerful influence. The army is here—the king is not. But we should indeed be ungrateful were we to forget our obligations to the Regent. Let us acknowledge she quieted the rebels by her conduct, which was prudent as well as brave, this too by means of force and authority, by powers of persuasion, and artful policy, and that, within a few months, she brought back to their duty, to the admiration of the world, a rebellious people.

ALVA. I do not deny it. The tumult is quelled, and all seem forced back within the limits of obedience. But does it not depend on the caprice of any one to outstep them? Who shall hinder the people from breaking out afresh? Where is the power that can restrain them? Who will answer for their future loyalty and submission? The only pledge we have is their own good-will.

EGMONT. And is not the good-will of a people the surest, the noblest pledge? By heaven! when can a king feel himself safer, except it be when all stand for one, and one for all? When is he safer against his enemies, at home and abroad?

ALVA. Surely, we are not to persuade ourselves that this is the case here now?

EGMONT. Let the king proclaim a general pardon, and
tranquillise men's minds; then it will soon be seen how loyalty and devotion return with returning confidence.

Alva. What! Are the treasonable and sacrilegious to be allowed to remain free, and go unpunished? Are they to live, a standing example to others, that monstrous crimes may go unpunished?

Egmont. And should not a crime of frenzy or infatuation rather be overlooked than cruelly punished—especially when there is sure hope and the certainty that the mischief will not recur again? Did such policy ever make kings less safe? Are not those who can pardon, compassionate, despise an offence offered to their dignity, held in honour by men of all ages? Are they not for this very reason compared to God himself, who is far too great to be offended with every idle word and blasphemy?

Alva. And therefore should the king stand up for the honour of God and religion, and we for the authority of the king. It is our duty to avenge that which our superiors disdain to resent. In my judgment, not a single guilty man should exult in his impunity.

Egmont. Do you expect you will be able to get them all in your power? Do we not hear daily that panic is driving them hither and thither, and driving them out of the country? The wealthiest will escape with their property, their children, and their friends; the poor will bring their services and industry to neighbouring countries.

Alva. They will, if one cannot prevent them. Therefore, the king demands of every prince counsel and aid, and seriousness of every stadtholder; not only a mere account of how matters are, of what might happen if things were allowed to run on in their present groove.
EGMONT.

To face a gigantic evil, to beguile one’s self with hope, to trust to time, and now and then to strike about us, as some actor in a farce at the Carnival, so that there should be some noise, and we should seem to be doing something when we would fain do nothing; is not this, I say, giving colour to a suspicion that the lookers-on contemplate with pleasure a revolt which they would not choose to arouse, but would have no objection to encourage?

EGMONT. (On the point of breaking out in a passion, but controls himself, and speaking, after a short pause, with composure.) The drift of every intention is not obvious at once, and the intentions of many a man are misconstrued. Thus we hear on all sides that the king intends not so much to rule the provinces by uniform and clearly-defined laws, to uphold the majesty of religion, and to give his subjects universal peace, but rather unconditionally to subdue them, to defraud them of their ancient rights, to appropriate their property, to limit the fair prerogatives of the nobles, for the sake of which alone the nobles are ready to devote themselves to him, soul and body. Religion, they say, is only a gaudy screen, behind which any one may work out a dangerous plot with all the greater ease. The multitude on their knees adore the sacred embroidered symbols, whilst behind lurks the fowler who would fain entrap them.

Alva. Must I hear this from you?

EGMONT. These are not my own sentiments! I am the mere mouthpiece of what is loudly and widely talked of by rich and poor, wise and foolish. The Netherlands fear a double yoke, and who will stand surety to them for their liberty?

Alva. Liberty? a fine word, if rightly understood. What kind of liberty would they have? What is the
freedom of the most free? To act rightly!—and the king will not prevent them from doing so. No, no! they do not think themselves free if they cannot injure themselves and others. Would it not be better to abdicate than to rule such a people? When foreign foes threaten us, on whom no citizen, occupied only with his own selfish interest, bestows a thought, and the king demands help then they fall out among themselves, and as it were conspire with the enemy. Far better is it to restrain them, to treat them as children, and teach them what is for their real good. Believe me, a people grows neither old nor wise; a people is ever childish.

Egmont. But how rarely do kings attain to mature reason! And are not the many justified in trusting their interests to the many in preference to one? Ay, and not even to the one, but to the few attached to the one—that class of people at court who have grown old under their master's eyes. They alone, I suppose, have the right to wisdom.

Alva. Perhaps just because they are not left to themselves.

Egmont. And therefore they would leave no one else to act by themselves. Do what you like; I have answered your questions, and I repeat: it won't do! it will never do! I know my countrymen. They are men worthy of treading God's earth; every man complete in himself; a little monarch in his way, firm, active, able, loyal, and clinging to ancient customs. It is difficult to obtain their confidence; it is easy to maintain it. Firm and stubborn! Press them you may; oppress them you cannot!

Alva. (Who during the conversation has looked round several times.) Would you dare repeat all you have said to me in the king's presence?
EGMONT. The worse surely for him, were I to be intimidated by his presence! The better for him, and for his people, were his presence to encourage me and inspire me with confidence in speaking my thoughts still more freely.

ALVA. I can listen to what is of service as well as he.

EGMONT. I would say to him: It is an easy matter for the shepherd to drive a whole flock of sheep before him: the ox draws the plough unresistingly; but as for the noble horse, that you would ride, you must inform yourself of his thoughts and ways, and demand of him nothing unreasonable, nor unreasonably. For this reason the citizen desires to retain his ancient constitution, and to be governed by his own countrymen, because he knows how he is guided, because he may expect from them unselfishness and sympathy in his fate and fortunes.

ALVA. And should not the Regent have the right to alter that ancient usage? Is it not this that constitutes his fairest prerogative? What is there lasting in this world? Should the government of a state last for ever? Must not, in course of time, every relation change? and for this very reason an old constitution of needs originate a thousand evils, because it does not comprehend the present condition of the people? These ancient rights, I fear, are keenly relished because they serve as loopholes for the prudent and the powerful to slink through, to the prejudice of the people, to the prejudice of the whole community.

EGMONT. And these arbitrary changes, these unfettered encroachments of the supreme power, are they not signs to us, that one wishes to do that which thousands ought not to do? He alone wishes to be free—to be able to gratify every wish, to realise every intention. And if
EGMONT.

we gave him our entire confidence, as a beneficent and wise king, will he be any security to us for his successors, that none of them shall govern without consideration, without forbearance? And who will rescue us from absolute, capricious rule, when he sends us his servants, his courtiers, who, ignorant of the country and its needs, govern just as they please, encounter no opposition, and are conscious of being accountable to no one.

Alva. (Who has again looked round.) There is nothing more natural than that a king should wish to rule by himself, that he should prefer entrusting with his orders those who best understand him, who wish to understand him, and will enforce his will unconditionally.

Egmont. And it is equally natural for a citizen to prefer being ruled by one born and reared in the same country with himself, whose ideas of right and wrong coincide with his own, whom he can look on as a brother.

Alva. And yet, the nobles have unequally shared with their brethren.

Egmont. That happened centuries ago, and men bear it now without repining. But if new men were sent, without any urgent necessity, who wished to repeat the old story of enriching themselves at the expense of the nation—if the people found themselves exposed to a harsh, bold, uncompromising rapacity—a ferment would be the consequence, which would not easily die out.

Alva. You tell me what I ought not to hear. I too am a stranger here.

Egmont. That I tell this to you proves that I do not mean yourself.

Alva. Anyhow, I had rather not hear this from you. The king despatched me hither with the hope that I should find assistance from the nobles. The king will
have his way. The king, after deep deliberation, has seen what is best for the interests of his people. Matters cannot go on as they have hitherto. It is his will to curtail their power for their own ultimate welfare; to force on them, if it be necessary, their own salvation; to sacrifice all mischievous citizens, that the rest may be enabled to enjoy in peace the blessings of good government. Such is his resolve. I am commissioned to make this known to the nobles, and in his name I ask for their advice "how" to do it, not "what" to do—for he has decided what.

Egmont. Your words, alas! justify the fears of the people, the general fear! He has then resolved upon what no prince should resolve. The energy, the spirit, and self-respect of his people he means to weaken, suppress, and destroy. He would ruin the innermost core of their nature, of course with a view of promoting their happiness. He would annihilate them, in order to make something of them, so that he can rule them at his ease, that they may become something quite different. If his intention be good, it is a misguided one! It is not the king whom we oppose; but only that king who takes the first unfortunate steps to enter upon a wrong path.

Alva. Such being your opinions, to attempt to reconcile our views seems hopeless. You must have a poor opinion of the king, and a mean one of his counsellors, if you doubt that all this has not been considered, examined, and duly weighed. I am not commissioned to balance once more every argument for and against. From the people I demand obedience, and of you, their chiefs and nobles, I call for heart and hand, as guarantees of this unconditional duty.

Egmont. Demand our heads, and the thing is done at
once. Whether he bend his neck to such a yoke, or stoop before the falling axe—is all the same to a noble-minded man. I have spoken much, but all in vain; I have made the air vibrate, but accomplished nothing further.

Enter Ferdinand.

Ferd. Pardon my interruption. Here is a letter, and the bearer is impromptu for the answer.

Alva. Allow me to see what the letter contains.

[Steps aside.

Ferd. (To Egmont.) 'Tis a noble horse that your people have brought for you.

Egmont. By no means one of the worst. I have had him a good while; I think of parting with him. If you like him, we shall, I dare say, agree about the bargain.

Ferd. Wait, and we'll see about it.

Alva. (Makes a sign to his son, who retires to the background.)

Egmont. Farewell! You may dismiss me; for, by heaven, I know not what more to say.

Alva. Happily for you, chance has prevented you from betraying your mind still further. Incidentally you disclose your heart's deepest secrets, and bring a more serious accusation against yourself than ever your bitterest foe could bring forward.

Egmont. This reproach touches me not; I know myself well enough, and I know how attached I am to the king; far more than many, who by serving him only serve themselves. Reluctantly I leave this argument unsettled, and can only trust that the service of our sovereign and the welfare of our country may soon unite us. It may be that another conference, and the presence of the other
princes who to-day are absent, will in a propitious moment 
realise what to-day seems impossible. With this hope I. 
take my leave.

ALVA. (Who at the same time makes a sign to FERDINAND.)
Stop, Egmont!—your sword!

[The centre door opens. The gallery is lined with guards, 
who remain motionless.

EGMONT. (After a pause of astonishment.) This, then, 
was your intent? Was it for this purpose I was summoned?
(Snatching at his sword, as if to defend himself.) Am I then 
defenceless?

ALVA. The king commands. You are my prisoner.

[At the same time soldiers enter from both sides.

EGMONT. (After a pause.) The king?—Orange! Orange!
(After a pause, gives up his sword.) Take it, then. It 
has far oftener been unsheathed in the king's cause than 
my own life.

[He goes out by the centre door, the troops who are in 
the room follow him. Then ALVA's son. ALVA 
remains standing. The curtain falls.
ACT THE FIFTH.

A Street. Evening. Dusk.

CLARA. BRACKENBURG. Citizens.

BRACKENBURG. Dearest, for the love of heaven, what will you do?

CLARA. Come with me, Brackenburg! Surely you do not know the world; we shall free him of a certainty. For what can equal their love for him? Every man, I'll be sworn, feels in his breast a burning desire to save him, to avert danger from so precious a life, and to restore freedom to the freest of men. Come! All that is wanting is a voice to summon them together. The memory of all they owe him is still fresh in their souls, and well they know that his strong arm alone saves them from ruin. For his sake, for their own sakes, they must hazard everything. And what do we venture? The most, our life, which, if he falls, is not worth the keeping.

BRACK. Unhappy one! You do not know the power which shackles us as with bands of iron.

CLARA. I do not think it invincible. Let us not waste time in idle, useless talk! Here come some of our old, honourable, trusty friends! Hark ye, friends—neighbours, hark! Say, how fares it with Egmont?

Carpenter. What does the child want? Tell her to be silent.

CLARA. Step closer, that we may speak gently, till we
are united and stronger. We have not a moment to lose! Bold tyranny, that dares to put him in chains, already draws the dagger to murder him. Oh, my friends! As twilight grows darker, my fears increase. I dread this night. Come! we will divide, and running quickly from one quarter to another, we will call out the citizens. Let every man take up his old weapons. We meet again in the market-place, and our rush will carry forward every one with us. The enemy will see themselves surrounded and overwhelmed, and will be crushed. What can a handful of lacqueys do to oppose us? And he will return to the midst of us once more, see himself rescued, and for once in his life thank us—us, who are deeply indebted to him. Perchance he will see—nay, he certainly shall see—again the glow of the morning sun in the free heavens.

Carp. What ails thee, maiden?

Clara. Can you misunderstand me? I speak of the Count; I speak of Egmont.

Jetter. Speak not the name! The name is fatal.

Clara. Not speak the name! How? not that name? Who does not mention it on every occasion? Where is it not written? In yonder stars I have often read it, every letter traced in fire. Not speak his name? What mean you? Friends, good, kind neighbours, you are dreaming! Rouse yourselves! Do not stare at me so anxiously! Look not so scared from one side to the other! I only utter what every one wishes. Is not my voice the voice of your own heart? Who would not in this awful night, before retiring to his restless couch, throw himself on his knees, to implore, from heaven, his freedom? Ask each other! Let every one ask himself! and who will not repeat with me, "Egmont's liberty, or death!"

Jetter. God help us! this will do mischief.
CLARA. Stay! stay! and shrink not away at the bare mention of his name, whom in old times you crowded so joyously to meet! When report announced his arrival, and it was whispered, "Egmont is coming! he comes from Ghent!" then did the citizens living in the streets through which he must pass think themselves happy indeed. And when the trample of his horse's hoofs was heard, every one threw away his work, and a look of joy and hope shot like a sunbeam from his face over the care-worn faces that peered from the windows. Then you lifted up your children at your door-steps, and pointed to them, "See, that is Egmont! Egmont, the tallest man there! He it is who will bring you better times than your poor fathers lived to see." Let not your children one day ask you, "What has become of Egmont? where are the better times you promised?" And now we bandy idle words, do nothing, and betray him.

SOEST. Shame on you, Brackenburg, to let her go on like this! Check the mischief.

BRACK. Dear Clara! let us go. What will your mother say? Perhaps——

CLARA. What! do you think me a child, or mad? Perhaps what? You will not remove from my mind by mere hope this dreadful certainty. Ye ought to hear me, and ye shall, for I see ye are amazed; ye are no longer your former selves. Glance back but once through the present danger, on what has passed—on what has just passed. Turn your thoughts to the future. Could ye live, will ye live, were he to perish? With his last breath expires the last spark of freedom. What was he to you? For whom did he rush into the greatest danger? He bled, and was healed of his wounds for you alone. The grand heart, the support of all of you, is now confined in a
dungeon, and the horrors of a treacherous murder hover round him. Perhaps he is now thinking of you, hoping in you—he who was wont only to give and to grant.

_Carp._ Come, gossip!

_Clara._ And I have not arms and sinews as ye have; but I have what ye have not, courage and contempt for danger. Oh, that my breath could but inflame you! Could I but by pressing you to my heart warm you into valour! Come! I will march in the midst of you! As an unarmed banner by waving leads on a noble band of warriors, so shall my spirit flame over your heads, and love and valour shall unite a wavering and scattered multitude into an army of avenging heroes!

_Jetter._ Take her away! I pity her.

[Exit Citizens.

_Brack._ Clara, see you not where we are?

_Clara._ Where? Under the vault of heaven, which seemed so often to arch itself with greater glory when the noble Egmont walked beneath it. Out of these very windows have they looked, four or five heads one above another; at these very doors the caitiffs stood, scraping and bowing, if he condescended to look down upon them. Oh, how I loved them, for the honour they paid him! Had he been a tyrant, they might have calmly looked on at his fall. But they loved him!—Oh, ye hands! so swift to doff your hats to salute him, the sword ye cannot grasp! And we, Brackenburg, is it for us to upbraid them? These arms which have so often held him fast, what now do they for him?—Stratagem has done so much in the world. You know all the by-ways and secret passages of the ancient castle. Nothing is impossible; suggest some plan.

_Brack._ If you would only come home—
Clara. Well.

Brack. There at the corner I see Alva's guard; let the voice of reason speak to your heart. Do you take me for a coward? Do not you believe that I could die for your sake? Here both of us are mad, I as well as you. Do you not see it is impossible? If you could but collect yourself! You are beside yourself.

Clara. Beside myself! For shame! You, Brackenbury, are beside yourself. When you were loudest in the hero's praises, called him your friend, refuge, and hope, cheered him as he passed, then I stood in my corner, half opened the window, and hid myself as I listened, and my heart beat higher than that of any of you! Now once again it beats higher than all yours! In the hour of need you slink away, deny him, and feel not that when he falls you perish.

Brack. Come home!

Clara. Home?

Brack. Recollect yourself—look around you! These are the streets where, on holy days only, you used to walk when you went modestly to church, and resented with excess of coyness, when I approached you, my kind and friendly words. Now you stand, speak, and act before the eyes of the whole world. Recollect yourself, love! What good can it lead to?

Clara. Home! Yes, I recollect myself. Come, Brackenbury—come home! Know you where my home lies?

[Exeunt.]
EGMONT.

A Prison.

A lamp burning, a couch in the background.

EGMONT (alone).

Old friend! ever faithful sleep, dost thou too fly me, like the rest of my friends? How thou wast wont self-bidden to descend upon my free brow, cooling my temples as with a fair myrtle wreath of love! Amidst the din of battle, on the waves of life, I rested in thy arms, breathing lightly like a healthful child. When storms whistled through branch and leaf, when the topmost boughs swayed and creaked, still the core of my inmost heart remained unmoved. What stirs thee now? what unhinges thy firm and steadfast mind? I feel it; it is the sound of the murderous axe, which grates at my root. I still stand upright, but a shudder goes through and through me. Yes, the treacherous power is victorious; it undermines the firm, lofty tree, and, before the bark withers, thy leafy crown falls shattered and crushing to the earth. Why at this moment canst not thou, who so often hast shaken off great sorrows, like mere bubbles, from thy brow—why art thou powerless to scare away this grim foreboding which in a thousand shapes ebbs and flows within thee? Since when seems death to thee so terrible? Death, on whose varying forms thou used to look as calmly as on other shapes of this familiar world? —It is not he, the impetuous foe, with whom the healthy spirit yearns in emulation to grapple; it is the dungeon, the foretaste and emblem of the grave, alike loathsome to the hero and the coward. How irksome was it to me while seated on my cushioned chair, whilst the princes in stately assemblies considered, in endlessly recurring
speeches, questions easily to be decided, and between the gloomy walls of the hall, the rafters of the ceiling seemed to crush me. Then would I break away in hot haste, and with a deep-drawn breath leap to my horse's back. And away we flew to scenes that harmonised with our spirit, to the broad fields, where nature's choicest gifts exhale from earth, and through the heavens the benedictions of the stars came trembling down to us; where, like earth-born giants, we rise strengthened from the contact with our mother earth; where we feel humanity and human desires in every vein; where the desire to press forwards, to overcome, to grasp, to possess, to use one's strength, animates the soul of the young huntsman; where the soldier, with swift stride, asserts his native right to the whole world, and rushes in dreadful freedom, like a hail-storm, through meadow, grove, and wood, ignoring every boundary traced by the hand of man.

Thou art but a shadow, a dream of past happiness, so long my portion; whither has fate so treacherously led thee? Does she refuse thee to meet the sudden death thou hast never feared in open daylight, in order to prepare thee for a foretaste of the grave—a mouldy, loathsome grave? Oh rank, nauseous breath, exhaling from these very dungeon stones! Already my blood freezes, and my foot shrinks from the bed of rest as from the grave. Oh care, care! Thou, who dost begin to murder before the time be ripe—forbear!—Since when has Egmont been so alone and lonely in the world? It is doubt, not happiness, that deadens all feeling in thee. The justice of the king, to which thou trustedst since thy birth; the friendship of the Regent, which thou must own in fairness bordered on love itself—are these gone, vanished on a sudden, like a fiery meteor of the night, leaving thee alone, alone
on thy gloomy journey? Will not Orange, at the head of thy friends, make some bold enterprise for thee? Will not the people muster, and with gathering tide of power deliver their old friend? Ye walls, which shut me in, oh! shut not out from me the well-meant zeal of so many ardent spirits! And may the inspiration of valour, which my glance was wont to kindle in them, now return, reflected from their brave hearts on mine! Yes, they are gathering in myriads! they come! they stand beside me! With earnest prayer they beseech heaven, and ask a miracle; and if no angel sweep down on earth for my deliverance, I see them seize their spears and swords! The gates are cleft open, the bolts are driven in, the walls yield to their blows, and Egmont steps forth to hail in joyfulness the freedom of the dawn of day! How many a well-known face receives me with frantic joy! Ah! Clara, wert thou a man, thee surely should I see here, first and foremost of all, and should have to thank thee for what it is so hard to thank a king—liberty!

Clara's House.

Clara.

Clara. (Enters from her chamber, carrying a lamp and a glass of water. She places the glass upon the table, and steps to the window.) Brackenburg, is it you? What else could it be? No one yet? Nobody! I will set the lamp in the window, that he may see that I am still awake—that I still watch for him. He promised to bring me tidings. Tidings! Dreadful certainty!—Egmont condemned to die!—What tribunal dare summon him? and they condemn him! Does the king condemn him, or the duke?
And the Regent withdraws! Orange hesitates; so do all his friends!—Is this the world, the fickleness and treachery whereof I have heard so much, but experienced nothing? Who could be base enough to be hostile to my beloved? Could malice be found strong enough to send a nation's favourite to swift destruction? Yet so it is—it is so! Oh Egmont! I thought thee safe before God and man—safe as if I held thee in mine arms! What was I to thee? Thou calledst me thine own; to thy life I devoted my whole being.—What am I now? In vain do I stretch out my hand to the net which fetters thee. Thou helpless, and I free!—Here is the key of my chamber door. I can go in and out, just as the fancy takes me; to help thee I am powerless!—Oh bind me fast, that I may not despair! and hurl me into the deepest dungeon, that I may beat my head against the damp walls, and groan for liberty, and dream how I would deliver him, were I not restrained with fetters. Now I am free, and in freedom lies the misery of our weakness.—I know but too well that I cannot stir hand or foot to help him. Alas! even this, the small part of thy being, thy Clara, is like thee, a prisoner, and, apart from thee, musters her ebbing powers to grapple with the agonies of death. I hear a timid step—a cough—Brackenburg—'tis he!—Good, unhappy man, thy fate remains still unchanged; the maiden of thy choice opens the door for thee at night! and alas! to what a fatal meeting!

Enter Brackenburg.

Clara. You look so pale, so frightened!—Speak, Brackenburg, what is the matter?

Brack. By dangerous and roundabout ways I have come
to you. The main streets are occupied; through lanes and alleys I have stolen to you.

CLARA. Tell me what is going on.

BRACK. (Sitting down.) Oh! Clara, let me weep! I loved him not! He was the rich man, who enticed to his better pasture the poor man's one ewe lamb. I never cursed him. God created within me a true and gentle heart. My life ebbed away from me in sorrow, and each day I hopped to pine away.

CLARA. Forget all that, Brackenburg! Forget thyself. Speak to me of him! Is it true? Is he condemned?

BRACK. He is! I know it for certain.

CLARA. And still lives?

BRACK. Yes; he still lives.

CLARA. How can you be sure of that? Tyranny will murder the noble one in the night time! His blood flows unseen by all human eyes. The bewildered people lie in anxious slumber, dreaming of deliverance, dreaming of the fulfillment of impotent hopes; whilst his spirit, indignant with us, forsakes the world. He is dead!—deceive me not! deceive not thyself!

BRACK. No, he lives, assuredly!—And the Spaniards, alas! are preparing, for the people they will crush and trample on, an awful spectacle, to stamp out for ever the aspirations of every heart that yearns for freedom.

CLARA. Go on, and utter calmly my own death-warrant also! I draw nearer and nearer to the blessed fields of promise, and the balm of comfort is already wafted over me from those peaceful realms. Say on!

BRACK. I could see from the faces of the sentinels, and gather from casual words I picked up here and there, that some awful spectacle was preparing in the marketplace. I stole on, through side paths and well-known
passages, to my cousin’s house, and from a back window looked out on the market-place.—Torches were waving to and fro within a large circle of Spanish soldiers. I strained my eyes, unaccustomed to such a sight, and saw a black scaffold emerging from the gloom; it was dark, large, and lofty; I shuddered at the sight. Several people were busy in veiling over with black cloth all the woodwork as yet exposed and uncovered. Last of all they covered the steps with black; I saw it distinctly. They seemed busy in preparing for the consecration of a hideous sacrifice. A white crucifix, which gleamed like silver through the darkness, was raised aloft on one side. The awful certainty became plainer and plainer. Torches were still waving here and there; gradually they disappeared, and were extinguished. On a sudden night’s terrible spectacle was lost again in darkness.

Clara. Hush! Brackenburg, be still! Let this veil rest on my soul! The spectres have vanished, and do thou, gentle night, lend thy pall to the earth, so perturbed within itself; she can endure no longer the awful burden; shuddering, she tears open her deep chasms, and engulfs the murderous scaffold. And the God whom they desecrate by calling him to witness their rage, sends his bright messenger from heaven; at whose holy touch the bolts and bars are unlocked, and he encircles our loved one with a soft halo of light, and leads him lovingly and gently through the darkness to liberty. Thither, also, through the darkness, leads my secret path where I shall meet him.

Brack. (Keeping her back.) My child, whither wouldst thou go? What dost thou venture on?

Clara. Softly, my friend, lest some one awake! lest we awake ourselves! Brackenburg, you know this phial?
I stole it from you once in play, when you used in fretful tones to threaten premature death. And now, my friend——

Brack. In the name of all the saints!

Clara. You cannot hinder me. Death is my portion! Grudge me not the gentle and speedy death which you had in store for your own self. Give me your hand! The moment I open that dark gate, from which there is no return, would that I could tell you, as I press your hand, how well I loved you, how deeply I pitied you! My brother died young; I chose you to supply his place. Your heart resisted this, tormenting itself and me; both were wretched; you demanded, with ever-increasing passion, what was never destined for you. Forgive me, and farewell! Let me call you brother! It is a name embracing many other names. Take with true heart the last sweet flower of the departing spirit—take this kiss!—Death unites all. Brackenburg, it will unite us also!

Brack. Then let me die with you! Share it! Share it! There is enough to quench two lives!

Clara. Live on! You should live, you can live! Help my mother, who, without you, would pine away in poverty! Be to her what I can no longer be! live together and lament for me! Weep for our country, and for him who alone could have preserved it! This generation will never be quit of this sorrow; the rage of vengeance itself cannot annihilate it. Live on, poor souls, through a time not worthy the name of time! To-day, on a sudden, the world stands still; the wheels of time stop; a few seconds more, and my pulse will cease to beat. Farewell!

Brack. Oh! live with us, as we live for you alone! In killing yourself you kill us also. Oh! live on, and
endure! We will both stand near you, and nothing shall part us from you, whilst ever-watchful love shall prepare for you sweet comfort in her life-giving arms. Be ours! ours! I dare not say mine!

CLARA. Hush, Brackenburg! You feel not what you touch upon. Where you see hope, I only see despair.

BRACK. Share your hope with the living! Pause on the brink of the precipice, look down, and then look back on us!

CLARA. I have conquered; call me not back to the struggle!

BRACK. You are distraught; veiled in night you seek the depth. Not yet is every light extinguished, yet many days!—

CLARA. Alas! alas for you! Cruelly you rend the veil before mine eyes. Yes, the day will dawn! Despite the mists which gather around, it must and will dawn! The citizen looks out timidly from his window; the night leaves behind a dark blot; he gazes, and fearfully the scaffold grows as morning dawns. Racked with fresh pains, the desecrated image of the Saviour uplifts to the Father its imploring eyes. The sun will not venture forth; he will not mark the hour when Egmont is doomed to die. Sluggishly the fingers of the clock go their round, and one hour strikes after another! Hold! Now is the time! The thought of daybreak scares me to the grave!

[She goes to the window, as if to look out, and then secretly drinks the poison.]

BRACK. Clara! Clara!

CLARA. (Goes to the table, and drinks water.) Here is the rest! I do not invite you to follow me. Do as you think right; farewell! Put out this lamp quietly, and without delay; I am going to rest. Go away noiselessly,
EGMONT.

CLOSE THE DOOR AFTER YOU. SOFT! WAKE NOT MY MOTHER.
GO, SAVE YOURSELF! SAVE YOURSELF! IF YOU WOULD NOT APPEAR
MY MURDERER.

BRACK. SHE LEAVES ME FOR THE LAST TIME—THE SAME
THING EVER! OH! WOULD THAT THE HUMAN SOUL COULD SEE
MY LOVE FOR HER, MY BROKEN HEART! SHE LEAVES ME TO
MYSELF ALONE; AND DEATH AND LIFE ARE ALIKE HATEFUL TO ME.
TO DIE ALONE!—WEEP YE THAT LOVE! THERE IS NO HARDER
FATE THAN MINE! SHE SHARES WITH ME THE CUP OF DEATH,
AND SENDS ME AWAY—AWAY FROM HER SIDE! SHE DRAWS
ME AFTER HER, AND THRUSTS ME BACK AGAIN TO LIFE. OH,
EGMONT! HOW ENVIOUS THY LOT! SHE GOES BEFORE THEE;
THE CROWN OF VICTORY FROM HER HAND WILL BE THINE; SHE
WILL BRING THE BLISS OF HEAVEN TO THEE!—AND SHALL I
FOLLOW? AGAIN TO STAND ALOOF? TO CARRY THIS ETERNAL
JEALOUSY TO THOSE REALMS?—ON EARTH THERE IS NO ABIDING
PLACE FOR ME, AND HELL AND HEAVEN OFFER EQUAL TORTURE.
HOW WELCOME TO THE UNFORTUNATE WOULD BE THE DREAD HAND
OF ANNIHILATION!

[EXIT.

THE SCENE REMAINS UNCHANGED FOR SOME TIME—MUSIC
ILLUSTRATING CLARA'S DEATH. THE LAMP WHICH BRACKEN-
BURG HAD FORGOTTEN TO EXTINGUISH FLICKERS OCCASIONALLY,
AND THEN GOES OUT. THE SCENE THEN CHANGES TO A PRISON.

EGMONT ASLEEP ON A COUCH. A RUSTLING OF KEYS IS HEARD;
THE DOOR OPENS, SERVANTS ENTER WITH TORCHES. FERDINAND,
ALVA'S SON, AND SILVA, FOLLOW, ACCOMPANIED BY SOLDIERS.
EGMONT STARTS FROM HIS SLEEP.

EGMONT. WHO ARE YOU WHO SO CRUELLY SCARE AWAY SLEEP
FROM MINE EYES? WHAT MEAN YOUR VAGUE, DEFANT LOOKS?
WHY THIS FEARFUL PROCESSION? WITH WHAT DREAD PHANTOM
ARE YOU COME TO CHEAT MY HALF-AWAKENED SPIRIT?

SILVA. THE DUKE SENDS US TO TELL YOU YOUR SENTENCE.
EGMONT.

EGMONT. Do you bring with you the executioner to carry it out?

SILVA. Listen, and you shall know what awaits you.

EGMONT. This befits you and your base conduct! Hatched in the night, brought forth in the night. So let this foul deed of injustice hide itself!—Stand boldly forth, thou with thy sword hidden beneath thy mantle; here is my head, the freest that was ever torn by tyranny from human shoulders.

SILVA. You err! What just judges determine on, they will not hide from the face of day.

EGMONT. Then does this insolence surpass all thought and belief!

SILVA. (Takes the death-warrant from one of the attendants, unfolds it, and reads.) "In the name of the king, and by virtue of the special powers delegated to us by his Majesty to sit in judgment on all his subjects of whatever degree or rank, even the Knights of the Golden Fleece, we declare—"

EGMONT. Can the king delegate that authority?

SILVA. "After a fair, strict, legal trial, we declare you, Henry, Count Egmont, Prince of Gaure, guilty of high treason, and pronounce the sentence: that at break of day you be taken from this prison to the market-place, and there, in sight of the people, and as a warning to traitors, you be beheaded with the sword. Given at Brussels. (The date and year so indistinctly read that the audience cannot hear them.) Ferdinand, Duke of Alva, President of the Council of the Twelve." You know your fate. A short time remains for you to prepare yourself, to set your house in order, and take leave of your friends.

[Exit SILVA and followers. FERDINAND remains, and two torch-bearers. The stage dimly lighted.
EGMONT.

EGMONT. (For a time lost in contemplation, allows SILVA to retire without taking notice. He thinks himself alone, and on looking up sees Alva's son.) What! you still remain? Will you increase my horror and amazement by your presence? Will you perchance carry back to your father the welcome message that I yield to an unmanly despair? Go! tell him he deceives neither the world nor me. First of all they will gently whisper it behind the back of that ambitious man, then they will proclaim it in louder and louder tones, and the moment he descends from his dizzy height a thousand voices will proclaim that it was not the welfare of the state, nor the dignity of the king, nor the tranquillity of the provinces that brought him hither. For his own ends he has counselled war, that the warrior might show his worth in war. He has stirred up this fearful tumult, that his presence might be thought necessary. And I fall a sacrifice to his odious malice, his contemptible envy. Yes, I know it, and I, the dying man, the mortally wounded, may say so: long has he, the haughty man envied me; and long has he plotted for my ruin and destruction. Years ago, when in early days we played at dice together, and the heaps of gold at his side passed rapidly over to mine, then he stood in mute fury, while feigning composure, and inwardly consumed with passion, more at my good fortune than his own loss. I still remember his flashing eyes, the paleness which would betray itself, when we shot for a wager at a public festival, before many thousands of people. He challenged me, and both nations looked on; Spaniards and Netherlands were there wagering and hoping. I had the best of it: his ball missed; mine hit the mark; a shout of joy from my friends rent the air. Now his shot strikes me. Tell him that I know it, that I know him, that the world de-
spises every trophy raised by the cunning of a paltry spirit. And you, if a son can wander from a father's path, practise shame betimes, and blush for him, whom you would fain honour with your whole heart.

Ferd. I listen to you, without interposing! Your reproaches weigh me down, like heavy blows upon a helmet; I feel the shock, but I am armed: I am stricken, but not wounded; what I do feel is the anguish of a broken heart. Alas! alas! that I should have lived to witness such a sight; to be sent to witness such a spectacle as this!

Egmont. What! you utter lamentations? What moves, what troubles you? Is it a tardy remorse, in your having lent your services to this odious conspiracy? You are so young, and look so happy. You were so trustful and loving to me. So long as I looked on you, I felt reconciled with your father. And just as cunning, more cunning than he, you have decoyed me into the toils. You are the hateful one! Whoever trusts in him, let him do so at his own peril; but who in trusting you ever feared danger? Go! Go! Rob me not of the few short moments that are left me! Go; let me compose my thoughts, forget the world, and thee first of all!

Ferd. What can I say to you? Here I stand and look on you, yet see you not, and am not conscious of myself. Shall I excuse myself? Shall I assure you, that only at the last moment, at the very last moment, I became aware of my father's intentions, that I acted as the forced, passive machine of his will? What good can come of any opinion you may have respecting me? You are lost, and I, unhappy that I am, stand here, to assure you of it, and to pity you.

Egmont. What strange voice, what unlooked-for
comfort meets me thus on my passage to the grave? You, the son of my first, of almost my only enemy, you pity me? You are not among my murderers? Speak! Tell me! for whom shall I take you?

Ferd. Cruel father! Yes, I recognise you in this command. You knew my heart, my disposition, which you often so have blamed as the inheritance from a soft-hearted mother. To mould me into your likeness was the object of sending me hither. You force me to look on this man at the brink of the yawning grave, in the grasp of an arbitrary doom, that I should feel the deepest sorrow, that I should be indifferent to every fate, and callous, happen what may.

Egmont. I am amazed! Calm yourself! be firm, speak like a man!

Ferd. Oh! that I were a woman! that they might say to me: what moves thee, what troubles thee? Tell me of some greater, more hideous outrage; make me a witness of some more dreadful deed. I will then thank you, I will say to you, this was nothing.

Egmont. You wander. Where are you?

Ferd. Let my passion me rave, let me give vent to my great sorrow! I will not appear firm, when my whole heart gives way. Must I see you here? You! Oh horrible! You understand me not! And how should you understand me? Egmont! Egmont! [Falls on his neck.

Egmont. Solve me this mystery!

Ferd. No mystery.

Egmont. Why are you so deeply moved by the fate of a stranger?

Ferd. Not a stranger! you are no stranger to me. It was your name which in the early days of my youth shone before me like a star of heaven. How often have
I inquired and asked after you! The child's ideal is the youth, the youth's ideal is the man. Thus, you were alway in advance of me, and I saw you without envy in front of me, and constantly stepped after you. At last I hoped to see you; I did see you, and my heart flew towards you. I fixed on you as my model, and when once I saw you, I chose you once again. Now I hoped to be entirely with you, to live with you, to cling to you, to—— All those hopes are now vanished, and I see you here!

Egmont. My friend, if it can be of any comfort to you, take this assurance, that in the first moment my heart flew towards you. Now listen! let us have a few quiet words together. Tell me: is it your father's firm, earnest purpose to kill me?

Ferd. It is.

Egmont. This sentence then is no poor scarecrow, to terrify me, to punish me through fear and intimidation, to lower me, and then to raise me up again with royal condescension.

Ferd. Alas! no. At first I flattered myself with this illusory hope; and even then to see you in this condition filled me with sorrow. Now it is reality! No, I cannot command myself. Who will aid or counsel me how to escape that which is unavoidable?

Egmont. Listen! If your soul be so intent on my rescue, if you abhor the tyranny which fetters me, then save me! The moments are precious. You are the son of an all-powerful father, and are yourself powerful.—Let us fly! I know the roads; the means of escape cannot be unknown to you. These walls and a few leagues are all that separate me from my friends. Loosen these fetters, bring me to them, and become one of us! The day will surely come when the king will thank you
for my rescue. Now he is taken by surprise, and it may be he knows nothing of what has taken place. Your father ventures on a rash deed, and his Majesty, however startled, must needs sanction what has passed and gone. You are thinking? Oh! think out for me the way to freedom. Speak, and feed the hope of a living spirit!

Ferd. No more! no more! Each word from you increases my despair. Here there is no outlet, no plan, no escape. It is this that grieves me, that seizes and tears my heart asunder. I myself have drawn the meshes of the net. I know that the knots are firm and tight. I know that craft and courage are powerless to break through a single passage; I am conscious that with you and all the rest I am fettered. Should I utter a complaint, if I had left a single thing untried? I have prostrated myself at his feet, prayed, entreated. He has sent me hither, to shatter in one moment all the joy and happiness in life that yet remained to me.

Egmont. And there is no deliverance?

Ferd. None!

Egmont. (Stamping with his foot.) No deliverance!—Sweet life! Sweet, pleasant use of being and activity! Must I part from thee! so submissively to part! Not in the hurry of battle, the clash of arms, the din and fray, dost thou send me a hasty farewell; thine are no hurried words of parting; thou dost not shorten the moment of separation. Let me yet once more grasp thy hand, once more behold thy eyes, feel with all my soul thy beauty, thy worth, and then resolutely tear myself away and say, farewell!

Ferd. And must I stand by and helplessly look on, powerless to aid or restrain you? Oh! what voice could give vent to such a sorrow? What heart would not break in fronting this bitter woe?
EGMONT. Calm thyself!

Ferd. You can calm yourself, you can be resigned, and bowing to stern necessity you can meet heroically this hard fate. What can I do? What ought I to do? You conquer yourself and us; you overcome; I survive you and myself. In the revelry of the banquet I have lost my light, in the din of battle my standard. Before me lies the future, empty, entangled, full of sorrow.

EGMONT. Young friend, whom, by a strange fatality, I win and lose at the same time, you who feel and suffer for me the pains of death, look on me now! You lose me not. If my life was a mirror, where you saw yourself reflected so gladly, so also let my death be! Men are not together only, when with each other; the distant and the departed as well live for us. I have lived enough for myself, I shall live for you. My daily life has been a joyful one; I have done my duty every day promptly, as my conscience dictated to me. Now my life ends, as it might have done long, long ago, on the sands of Gravelines. I shall cease to live, but I have lived. So should you, my friend, love your life, and fear not death!

Ferd. You could have saved yourself for our sakes, and you should have done so. You are your own destroyer. Often have I heard wise men, foes and friends too, contending at length about your worth; but they agreed at last, and none ventured to deny this: "That Egmont was playing a dangerous game." Oh! how often I yearned to warn you! Had you then no friends?

EGMONT. I was warned.

Ferd. And when I found again all those accusations detailed in the charge, and your answers! They were strong enough to excuse you, but not cogent enough to exculpate you——
EGMONT.

EGMONT. Enough of this! Man thinks he guides his life, and leads himself, whilst his spirit is drawn on irresistibly to his destiny. Let us think no more on this subject! I can rid myself easily of these thoughts, not so easily of my anxieties for this country! yet she too will be cared for. Freely shall my blood flow if it can be shed for many, and bring peace to my people. Alas! this will not be. Still, it is unbecoming a man to speculate on things which he can no longer by thought or action influence. If you can check or regulate the destructive power of your father, do so! Who could do that?—Farewell!

Ferd. I cannot go.

EGMONT. Let me earnestly commend my followers to you. I have true and good men in my service; keep them from ruin and misfortune. How fares it with Richard, my secretary?

Ferd. He is gone before you. He has been executed as your accomplice in high treason.

EGMONT. Poor soul!—One word more, and then farewell! I can no more. However sternly the spirit may be occupied, nature at last asserts irresistibly her rights; and as a child who enjoys refreshing slumber, though the deadly serpent coils around him, so does the weary one lay down once more before the gate of death, and rests in deep repose, as though a long, long journey were yet before him.—One word more! I know a maiden; you will not despise her because she was mine. Now that I commend her to your care, I die calmly. You are a noble-minded man; a woman who finds such a one, is safe. Is old Adolph free and alive?

Ferd. That active old man, who always followed thee on horseback?

EGMONT. The same.
FERD. He lives; he is free.

EGMONT. He knows her abode; be guided by him, and never let him want to his dying day, for having shown you the way to such a treasure.—Farewell!

FERD. I cannot leave.

EGMONT. (Drawing him towards the door.) Farewell!

FERD. Oh! one moment more!

EGMONT. No more farewells, my friend!

[He accompanies FERDINAND to the door, and then breaks away from him. FERDINAND, overcome with sorrow, leaves hastily.]

EGMONT. (Alone.)

EGMONT. Cruel man! Thou didst not think to do me this good office through thy own son. Through him I am now quit of care and sorrow, fear, and every anxious thought. Gently and pressingly, nature calls for her last tribute. It is past! it is decided! And that which yesternight kept me wakeful and in suspense on my couch, now with resistless certainty lulls my senses. (He seats himself upon the couch. Music.) Sweet sleep! Thou comest like pure happiness, most readily when unsought, unbidden. Thou unravellest the knots of intense thought, and blendest together images of joy and sorrow; the circle of secret inner harmonies flows on unhindered, and, mantled in sweet delirious visions, we die away in forgetfulness, and cease to be.

[He falls asleep. Music accompanies his sleep. Behind his couch the wall seems to open, and a bright vision appears. Freedom, draped like an angel, with a halo, rests upon a cloud. Her features are like CLARA's, and she bends towards the sleeping hero. Her ex-
expression is sad, she seems to pity him. She soon recovers herself, and with animated gesture shows him the bundle of arrows, then the staff and cap. She bids him be of good cheer, and whilst indicating to him that his death will bring freedom to the provinces, she acknowledges him as a conqueror, and holds out to him a laurel crown. As she approaches him with the wreath, Egmont moves like one restless in sleep, and reclines with his face turned to her. She holds the wreath over his head, and waves it to and fro. Martial music; drums and fifes are heard in the distance: the moment the music is heard, the apparition vanishes. The music grows louder. Egmont awakes. The prison is faintly lighted by the dawn. His first impulse is to lift his hand to his head. He stands up and looks around, whilst keeping his hand on his head.

The crown has vanished! Thou beauteous image, the dawn of day has scared thee away! Yes, they were before mine eyes, linked together, the two sweetest joys of my heart. Divine liberty borrowed the shape and form of my beloved one; the sweet maiden arrayed herself in the celestial robe of my friend. In a serious moment they appear united;—more serious than lovely.—With blood-stained feet the vision stood before me, the waving folds of her garment were spotted with blood. It was my blood, and the blood of many noble spirits! No! It was not shed in vain! Forward, brave people! The goddess of victory leads you! And as the sea breaks through your barriers, so do you pull down the rampart of tyranny, and sweep it away, as by a deluge, from off the land which she usurps! (Drums—the sound comes nearer.) Hark! hark! How often has that sound called me to rush
swiftly to the field of battle and of victory! How light-hearted were my comrades as they marched on their path, beset with danger and glory! From this prison I too go forth to meet a glorious death. I die for that freedom for which I have lived and fought, to which I am now a willing sacrifice. (*The background is occupied by Spanish soldiers armed with halberds.* Yes! lead them on! Close your ranks! I fear ye not! I am used to stand in front of spears, opposed to spears, and to feel, with death threatening around, in the vigour of life more intensely. (*Drums.*) The foes encircle thee on every side! The swords are gleaming! Comrades! Courage! Behind you stand your parents, your wives, your children! (*Pointing to the guard.*) And these obey the mere word of their leader, not the voice of their heart. Guard your hearths and homes! And fall joyfully, as I give you an example, to save that which you hold most dear!

[Drums. As he goes out through the guards, towards the door at the back of the scene, the curtain falls. Music. Concluding with a symphony expressive of victory.

LONDON: PRINTED BY WILLIAM CLOWES AND SONS, STAMFORD STREET AND CHARING CROSS.
hose!

Through the gate with my lover,
march by his side.

wa-ter and flee.

Oh! pleasure, of
I boldly I'd ride and all the world o'er would

Foes break at our volley they

'sures, A Soldier to be, Oh! pleasure, of
pleas'ure, A Sol'dier to be,
hose!

Through the gate with my lov-
march by his side.

wa- ver and flee. Oh! plea- sure,
full boldly I'd ride And all the world o'er would
Foes break at our volley they
pleasures, A soldier to be, Oh! pleasure, of
pleasure, A Soldier to be,
TEARFUL.

*dolce.*

*Cheerful and tearful with*

*Yearning and burning in*

*Death stricken, triumphant To*

*e mortals that love, Happy alone ... are the*
mortal, the mortal that love. Cheerful and tearful.

a tempo.

pain.

dolce.

lone are the mortal, the mortal that love,

love, the mortal that love, that love.
No 6.

Poco Sostenuto
e Risoluto.

andante agitato molto legato e espress:

sotto voce.
CLARA'S

No 7.

Larghetto.

\[\text{pp} \]

\[\text{poco } f \rightarrow \text{ poco } f \rightarrow \text{ p} \]

She extinguishes the [...]

No. 8.

Poco Sostenuto.

p sotto voce.

Vivace.

thou unravell'st the
knots of intense thought
and blendest together
images of joy

Piu Moto.
a tempo.

we die away in forgetfulness and cease to be.

Poco Vivace.

Andante con Moto.

molto p

sempre legato.
SLEEP!
neer comme
like a pure joy.

unasked for, unsought by prayer.

tempo I°

the tide of secret inner harmonies flows on unheeded and mantled in sweet dolorous visions.

to sleep, the music continues.


Allegro ma non Troppo.

dolce sempre p
f indicating Egmont's death.
Rained by Egmont's death for his native Country.

Freedom draws near, to place the crown on Egmont's head.

Timpani.

the drums beat louder.
Fight for your hearths and homes, and fall joyfully as I
give you an example, to save that which you hold most dear.

No. 9.

Allegro con Brio.
PHONY.
CLAR

VOICE.

Cheerful

Piano.

Phantasies vain,

burning In pas

(8)
SONG.

SCHUBERT.

and tearful with

Yearning and

Passion and pain.
To heaven alone... are the mortals that love,

... are the mortals that
A FINE IS INCURRED IF THIS BOOK IS NOT RETURNED TO THE LIBRARY ON OR BEFORE THE LAST DATE STAMPED BELOW.

485 2
MAR 15 75

CANCELLED

WIDENER
MAR 15 1998
CANCELLED