

The Dynasts - Part Two

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ACT SECOND

SCENE I

THE PYRENEES AND VALLEYS ADJOINING

[The view is from upper air, immediately over the region that lies between Bayonne on the north, Pampeluna on the south, and San Sebastian on the west, including a portion of the Cantabrian mountains. The month is February, and snow covers not only the peaks but the lower slopes. The roads over the passes are well beaten.]

DUMB SHOW

At various elevations multitudes of NAPOLEON'S soldiery, to the number of about thirty thousand, are discerned in a creeping progress across the frontier from the French to the Spanish side. The thin long columns serpentine along the roads, but are sometimes broken, while at others they disappear altogether behind vertical rocks and overhanging woods. The heavy guns and the whitey-brown tilts of the baggage-waggons seem the largest objects in the procession, which are dragged laboriously up the incline to the watershed, their lumbering being audible as high as the clouds. Simultaneously the river Bidassoa, in a valley to the west, is being crossed by a train of artillery and another thirty thousand men, all forming part of the same systematic advance.

Along the great highway through Biscay the wondering native carters draw their sheep-skinned ox-teams aside, to let the regiments pass, and stray groups of peaceable field-workers in Navarre look inquiringly at the marching and prancing progress.

Time passes, and the various northern strongholds are approached by these legions. Their governors emerge at a summons, and when seeming explanations have been given the unwelcome comers are doubtfully admitted.

The chief places to which entrance is thus obtained are Pampeluna and San Sebastian at the front of the scene, and far away towards the shining horizon of the Mediterranean, Figueras, and Barcelona.

Dumb Show concludes as the mountain mists close over.
[image not archived]

SCENE II

ARANJUEZ, NEAR MADRID. A ROOM IN THE PALACE OF GODOY, THE
"PRINCE
OF PEACE"

[A private chamber is disclosed, richly furnished with paintings, vases, mirrors, silk hangings, gilded lounges, and several lutes of rare workmanship. The hour is midnight, the room being lit by screened candelabra. In the centre at the back of the scene is a large window heavily curtained.]

GODOY and the QUEEN MARIA LUISA are dallying on a sofa. THE PRINCE OF PEACE is a fine handsome man in middle life, with curled hair and a mien of easy good-nature. The QUEEN is older, but looks younger in the dim light, from the lavish use of beautifying arts. She has pronounced features, dark eyes, low brows, black hair bound by a jewelled bandeau, and brought forward in curls over her forehead and temples, long heavy ear-rings, an open bodice, and sleeves puffed at the shoulders. A cloak and other mufflers lie on a chair beside her.]

GODOY

The life-guards still insist, Love, that the King
Shall not leave Aranjuez.

QUEEN

Let them insist.

Whether we stay, or whether we depart,
Napoleon soon draws hither with his host!

GODOY

He says he comes pacifically... But no!

QUEEN

Dearest, we must away to Andalusia,
Thence to America when time shall serve.

GODOY

I hold seven thousand men to cover us,
And ships in Cadiz port. But then—the Prince
Flatly declines to go. He lauds the French
As true deliverers.

QUEEN

Go Fernando MUST!...

O my sweet friend, that we—our sole two selves—

Could but escape and leave the rest to fate,
And in a western bower dream out our days!—
For the King's glass can run but briefly now,
Shattered and shaken as his vigour is.—
But ah—your love burns not in singleness!
Why, dear, caress Josefa Tudo still?
She does not solve her soul in yours as I.
And why those others even more than her?...
How little own I in thee!

GODOY

Such must be.
I cannot quite forsake them. Don't forget
The same scope has been yours in former years.

QUEEN

Yes, Love; I know. I yield! You cannot leave them;
But if you ever would bethink yourself
How long I have been yours, how truly all
Those other pleasures were my desperate shifts
To soften sorrow at your absences,
You would be faithful to me!

GODOY

True, my dear.—
Yet I do passably keep troth with you,
And fond you with fair regularity;—
A week beside you, and a week away.
Such is not schemed without some risk and strain.—
And you agreed Josefa should be mine,
And, too, Thereza without jealousy! [A noise is heard without.]
Ah, what means that?
[He jumps up from her side and crosses the room to a window,
where he lifts the curtain cautiously. The Queen follows him
with a scared look.]

QUEEN

A riot can it be?

GODOY

Let me put these out ere they notice them;
They think me at the Royal Palace yonder.
[He hastily extinguishes the candles except one taper, which
he places in a recess, so that the room is in shade. He then
draws back the curtains, and she joins him at the window, where,
enclosing her with his arm, he and she look out together.
In front of the house a guard of hussars is stationed, beyond

them spreading the Plaza or Square. On the other side rises in the lamplight the white front of the Royal Palace. On the flank of the Palace is a wall enclosing gardens, bowered alleys, and orange groves, and in the wall a small door.

A mixed multitude of soldiery and populace fills the space in front of the King's Palace, and they shout and address each other vehemently. During a lull in their vociferations is heard the peaceful purl of the Tagus over a cascade in the Palace grounds.]

QUEEN

Lingering, we've risked too long our chance of flight!

The Paris Terror will repeat it here.

Not for myself I fear. No, no; for thee! [She clings to him.]

If they should hurt you, it would murder me

By heart-bleedings and stabs intolerable!

GODOY [kissing her]

The first thought now is how to get you back

Within the Palace walls. Why would you risk

To come here on a night so critical?

QUEEN [passionately]

I could not help it—nay, I WOULD not help!

Rather than starve my soul I venture all.—

Our last love-night—last, maybe, of long years,

Why do you chide me now?

GODOY

Dear Queen, I do not:

I shape these sharp regrets but for your sake.

Hence you must go, somehow, and quickly too.

They think not yet of you in threatening thus,

But of me solely... Where does your lady wait?

QUEEN

Below. One servant with her. They are true,

And can be let know all. But you—but you! [Uproar continues.]

GODOY

I can escape. Now call them. All three cloak

And veil as when you came.

[They retreat into the room. QUEEN MARIA LUISA'S lady-in-waiting

and servant are summoned. Enter both. All three then muffle

themselves up, and GODOY prepares to conduct the QUEEN downstairs.]

QUEEN

Nay, now! I will not have it. We are safe;

Think of yourself. Can you get out behind?

GODOY

I judge so—when I have done what's needful here.—

The mob knows not the bye-door—slip across;

Thence around sideways.—All's clear there as yet.

[The QUEEN, her lady-in-waiting, and the servant go out hurriedly.

GODOY looks again from the window. The mob is some way off, the immediate front being for the moment nearly free of loiterers; and the three muffled figures are visible, crossing without hindrance towards the door in the wall of the Palace Gardens. The instant they reach it a sentinel springs up, challenging them.]

GODOY

Ah—now they are doomed! My God, why did she come!

[A parley takes place. Something, apparently a bribe, is handed to the sentinel, and the three are allowed to slip in, the QUEEN having obviously been unrecognized. He breathes his relief.]

Now for the others. Then—ah, then Heaven knows!

[He sounds a bell and a servant enters.

Where is the Countess of Castilofiel?

SERVANT

She's looking for you, Prince.

GODOY

Find her at once.

Ah—here she is.—That's well.—Go watch the Plaza [to servant].

[GODOY'S mistress, the DONA JOSEFA TUDO, enters. She is a young and beautiful woman, the vivacity of whose large dark eyes is now clouded. She is wrapped up for flight. The servant goes out.]

JOSEFA [breathlessly]

I should have joined you sooner, but I knew

The Queen was fondling with you. She must needs

Come hampering you this night of all the rest,

As if not gorged with you at other times!

GODOY

Don't, pretty one! needless it is in you,

Being so well aware who holds my love.—

I could not check her coming, since she would.

You well know how the old thing is, and how

I am compelled to let her have her mind!

[He kisses her repeatedly.]

JOSEFA

But look, the mob is swelling! Pouring in

By thousands from Madrid—and all afoot.

Will they not come on hither from the King's?

GODOY

Not just yet, maybe. You should have sooner fled!
The coach is waiting and the baggage packed. [He again peers out.]
Yes, there the coach is; and the clamourers near,
Led by Montijo, if I see aright.
Yes, they cry "Uncle Peter!"—that means him.
There will be time yet. Now I'll take you down
So far as I may venture.
[They leave the room. In a few minutes GODOY, having taken her down, re-enters and again looks out. JOSEFA'S coach is moving off with a small escort of GODOY'S guards of honour. A sudden yelling begins, and the crowd rushes up and stops the vehicle. An altercation ensues.]

CROWD

Uncle Peter, it is the Favourite carrying off Prince Fernando.
Stop him!

JOSEFA [putting her head out of the coach]
Silence their uproar, please, Senor Count of Montijo! It is a lady only, the Countess of Castilofiel.

MONTIJO

Let her pass, let her pass, friends! It is only that pretty wench of his, Pepa Tudo, who calls herself a Countess. Our titles are put to comical uses these days. We shall catch the cock-bird presently!

[The DONA JOSEFA'S carriage is allowed to pass on, as a shout from some who have remained before the Royal Palace attracts the attention of the multitude, which surges back thither.]

CROWD [nearing the Palace]

Call out the King and the Prince. Long live the King! He shall not go. Hola! He is gone! Let us see him! He shall abandon Godoy!
[The clamour before the Royal Palace still increasing, a figure emerges upon a balcony, whom GODOY recognizes by the lamplight to be FERNANDO, Prince of Asturias. He can be seen waving his hand. The mob grows suddenly silent.]

FERNANDO [in a shaken voice]

Citizens! the King my father is in the palace with the Queen. He has been much tried to-day.

CROWD

Promise, Prince, that he shall not leave us. Promise!

FERNANDO

I do. I promise in his name. He has mistaken you, thinking you wanted his head. He knows better now.

CROWD

The villain Godoy misrepresented us to him! Throw out the Prince of Peace!

FERNANDO

He is not here, my friends.

CROWD

Then the King shall announce to us that he has dismissed him! Let us see him. The King; the King!

[FERNANDO goes in. KING CARLOS comes out reluctantly, and bows to their cheering. He produces a paper with a trembling hand.

KING [reading]

As it is the wish of the people—

CROWD

Speak up, your Majesty!

KING [more loudly]

"As it is the wish of the people, I release Don Manuel Godoy, Prince of Peace, from the posts of Generalissimo of the Army and Grand Admiral of the Fleet, and give him leave to withdraw whither he pleases."

CROWD

Huzza!

KING

Citizens, to-morrow the decree is to be posted in Madrid.

CROWD

Huzza! Long life to the King, and death to Godoy!

[KING CARLOS disappears from the balcony, and the populace, still increasing in numbers, look towards GODOY'S mansion, as if deliberating how to attack it. GODOY retreats from the window into the room, and gazing round him starts. A pale, worn, but placid lady, in a sombre though elegant robe, stands here in the gloom. She is THEREZA OF BOURBON, the Princess of Peace.]

PRINCESS

It is only your unhappy wife, Manuel. She will not hurt you!

GODOY [shrugging his shoulders]

Nor with THEY hurt YOU! Why did you not stay in the Royal Palace? You would have been more comfortable there.

PRINCESS

I don't recognize why you should specially value my comfort. You have saved you real wives. How can it matter what happens to your titular one?

GODOY

Much, dear. I always play fair. But it being your blest privilege not to need my saving I was left free to practise it on those who did. [Mob heard approaching.] Would that I were in no more danger than you!

PRINCESS

Puf!

[He again peers out. His guard of hussars stands firmly in front of the mansion; but the life-guards from the adjoining barracks, who have joined the people, endeavour to break the hussars of GODOY. A shot is fired, GODOY'S guard yields, and the gate and door are battered in.]

CROWD [without]

Murder him! murder him! Death to Manuel Godoy!

[They are heard rushing onto the court and house.]

PRINCESS

Go, I beseech you! You can do nothing for me, and I pray you to save yourself! The heap of mats in the lumber-room will hide you!

[GODOY hastes to a jib-door concealed by sham bookshelves, presses the spring of it, returns, kisses her, and then slips out.]

His wife sits down with her back against the jib-door, and fans herself. She hears the crowd trampling up the stairs, but she does not move, and in a moment people burst in. The leaders are armed with stakes, daggers, and various improvised weapons, and some guards in undress appear with halberds.]

FIRST CITIZEN [peering into the dim light]

Where is he? Murder him! [Noticing the Princess.] Come, where is he?

PRINCESS

The Prince of Peace is gone. I know not wither.

SECOND CITIZEN

Who is this lady?

LIFE-GUARDSMAN

Manuel Godoy's Princess.

CITIZENS [uncovering]

Princess, a thousand pardons grant us!—you

An injured wife—an injured people we!

Common misfortune makes us more than kin.

No single hair of yours shall suffer harm.

[The PRINCESS bows.]

FIRST CITIZEN

But this, Senora, is no place for you,

For we mean mischief here! Yet first will grant

Safe conduct for you to the Palace gates,
Or elsewhere, as you wish

PRINCESS

My wish is nought.

Do what you will with me. But he's not here.

[Several of them form an escort, and accompany her from the room and out of the house. Those remaining, now a great throng, begin searching the room, and in bands invade other parts of the mansion.]

SOME CITIZENS [returning]

It is no use searching. She said he was not here, and she's a woman of honour.

FIRST CITIZEN [drily]

She's his wife.

[They begin knocking the furniture to pieces, tearing down the hangings, trampling on the musical instruments, and kicking holes through the paintings they have unhung from the walls. These, with clocks, vases, carvings, and other movables, they throw out of the window, till the chamber is a scene of utter wreck and desolation. In the rout a musical box is swept off a table, and starts playing a serenade as it falls on the floor. Enter the COUNT OF MONTIJO.]

MONTIJO

Stop, friends; stop this! There is no sense in it—

It shows but useless spite! I have much to say:

The French Ambassador, de Beauharnais,

Has come, and sought the King. And next Murat,

With thirty thousand men, half cavalry,

Is closing in upon our doomed Madrid!

I know not what he means, this Bonaparte;

He makes pretence to gain us Portugal,

But what want we with her? 'Tis like as not

His aim's to noose us vassals all to him!

The King will abdicate, and shortly too,

As those will live to see who live not long.—

We have saved our nation from the Favourite,

But who is going to save us from our Friend?

[The mob desists dubiously and goes out; the musical box upon the floor plays on, the taper burns to its socket, and the room becomes wrapt in the shades of night.]

[image not archived]

SCENE III

LONDON: THE MARCHIONESS OF SALISBURY'S

[A large reception-room is disclosed, arranged for a conversazione. It is an evening in summer following, and at present the chamber is empty and in gloom. At one end is an elaborate device, representing Britannia offering her assistance to Spain, and at the other a figure of Time crowning the Spanish Patriots' flag with laurel.]

SPIRIT OF THE YEARS

O clarionists of human welterings,
Relate how Europe's madding movement brings
This easeful haunt into the path of palpitating things!

RUMOURS [chanting]

The Spanish King has bowed unto the Fate
Which bade him abdicate:

The sensual Queen, whose passionate caprice
Has held her chambering with "the Prince of Peace,"
And wrought the Bourbon's fall,
Holds to her Love in all;
And Bonaparte has ruled that his and he
Henceforth displace the Bourbon dynasty.

II

The Spanish people, handled in such sort,
As chattels of a Court,
Dream dreams of England. Messengers are sent
In secret to the assembled Parliament,
In faith that England's hand
Will stouten them to stand,
And crown a cause which, hold they, bond and free
Must advocate enthusiastically.

SPIRIT OF THE YEARS

So the Will heaves through Space, and moulds the times,
With mortals for Its fingers! We shall see
Again men's passions, virtues, visions, crimes,
Obey resistlessly

The purposive, unmotivated, dominant Thing
Which sways in brooding dark their wayfaring!

[The reception room is lighted up, and the hostess comes in. There arrive Ambassadors and their wives, the Dukes and Duchesses of RUTLAND and SOMERSET, the Marquis and Marchioness of STAFFORD,

the Earls of STAIR, WESTMORELAND, GOWER, ESSEX, Viscounts and Viscountesses CRANLEY and MORPETH, Viscount MELBOURNE, Lord and Lady KINNAIRD, Baron de ROLLE, Lady CHARLES GRENVILLE, the Ladies CAVENDISH, Mr. and Mrs. THOMAS HOPE, MR. GUNNING, MRS. FITZHERBERT,

and many other notable personages. Lastly, she goes to the door to welcome severally the PRINCE OF WALES, the PRINCES OF FRANCE, and the PRINCESS CASTELCICALA.]

LADY SALISBURY [to the Prince of Wales]

I am sorry to say, sir, that the Spanish Patriots are not yet arrived. I doubt not but that they have been delayed by their ignorance of the town, and will soon be here.

PRINCE OF WALES

No hurry whatever, my dear hostess. Gad, we've enough to talk about!

I understand that the arrangement between our ministers and these noblemen will include the liberation of Spanish prisoners in this country, and the providing 'em with arms, to go back and fight for their independence.

LADY SALISBURY

It will be a blessed event if they do check the career of this infamous Corsican. I have just heard that that poor foreigner Guillet de la Gevrilliere, who proposed to Mr. Fox to assassinate him, died a miserable death a few days ago the Bicetre—probably by torture, though nobody knows. Really one almost wishes Mr. Fox had—. O here they are!

[Enter the Spanish Viscount de MATEROSA, and DON DIEGO de la VEGA. They are introduced by CAPTAIN HILL and MR. BAGOT, who escort them. LADY SALISBURY presents them to the PRINCE and others.]

PRINCE OF WALES

By gad, Viscount, we were just talking of 'ee. You had some adventures in getting to this country?

MATEROSA [assisted by Bagot as interpreter]

Sir, it has indeed been a trying experience for us. But here we are, impressed by a deep sense of gratitude for the signal marks of attachment your country has shown us.

PRINCE OF WALES

You represent, practically, the Spanish people?

MATEROSA

We are immediately deputed, sir,

By the Assembly of Asturias,

More sailing soon from other provinces.

We bring official writings, charging us

To clinch and solder Treaties with this realm
That may promote our cause against the foe.
Nextly a letter to your gracious King;
Also a Proclamation, soon to sound
And swell the pulse of the Peninsula,
Declaring that the act by which King Carlos
And his son Prince Fernando cede the throne
To whomsoever Napoleon may appoint,
Being an act of cheaterly, not of choice,
Unfetter us from our allegiant oath.

MRS. FITZHERBERT

The usurpation began, I suppose, with the divisions in the Royal Family?

MATEROSA

Yes, madam, and the protection they foolishly requested from the Emperor; and their timid intent of flying secretly helped it on. It was an opportunity he had been awaiting for years.

MRS. FITZHERBERT

All brought about by this man Godoy, Prince of Peace!

PRINCE OF WALES

Dash my wig, mighty much you know about it, Maria! Why, sure, Boney thought to himself, "This Spain is a pretty place; 'twill just suit me as an extra acre or two; so here goes."

DON DIEGO [aside to Bagot]

This lady is the Princess of Wales?

BAGOT

Hsh! no, Senor. The Princess lives at large at Kensington and other places, and has parties of her own, and doesn't keep house with her husband. This lady is—well, really his wife, you know, in the opinion of many; but—

DON DIEGO

Ah! Ladies a little mixed, as they were at our Court! She's the Pepa Tudo to THIS Prince of Peace?

BAGOT

O no—not exactly that, Senor.

DON DIEGO

Ya, ya. Good. I'll be careful, my friend. You are not saints in England more than we are in Spain!

BAGOT

We are not. Only you sin with naked faces, and we with masks on.

DON DIEGO

Virtuous country!

DUCHESS OF RUTLAND

It was understood that Ferdinand, Prince of Asturias, was to marry a French princess, and so unite the countries peacefully?

MATEROSA

It was. And our credulous prince was tempted to meet Napoleon at Bayonne. Also the poor simple King, and the infatuated Queen, and Manuel Godoy.

DUCHESS OF RUTLAND

Then Godoy escaped from Aranjuez?

MATEROSA

Yes, by hiding in the garret. Then they all threw themselves upon Napoleon's protection. In his presence the Queen swore that the King was not Fernando's father! Altogether they form a queer little menagerie. What will happen to them nobody knows.

PRINCE OF WALES

And do you wish us to send an army at once?

MATEROSA

What we most want, sir, are arms and ammunition. But we leave the English Ministry to co-operate in its own wise way, anyhow, so as to sustain us in resenting these insults from the Tyrant of the Earth.

DUCHESS OF RUTLAND [to the Prince of Wales]

What sort of aid shall we send, sir?

PRINCE OF WALES

We are going to vote fifty millions, I hear. We'll whack him, and preserve your noble country for 'ee, Senor Viscount. The debate thereon is to come off to-morrow. It will be the finest thing the Commons have had since Pitt's time. Sheridan, who is open to it, says he and Canning are to be absolutely unanimous; and, by God, like the parties in his "Critic," when Government and Opposition do agree, their unanimity is wonderful! Viscount Materosa, you and your friends must be in the Gallery. O, dammy, you must!

MATEROSA

Sir, we are already pledged to be there.

PRINCE OF WALES

And hark ye, Senor Viscount. You will then learn what a mighty fine thing a debate in the English Parliament is! No Continental humbug there. Not but that the Court has a trouble to keep 'em in their places sometimes; and I would it had been one in the Lords instead. However, Sheridan says he has been learning his speech these two days, and has hunted his father's dictionary

through for some stunning long words.—Now, Maria [to Mrs. Fitzherbert], I am going home.

LADY SALISBURY

At last, then, England will take her place in the forefront of this mortal struggle, and in pure disinterestedness fight with all her strength for the European deliverance. God defend the right!

[The Prince of Wales leaves, and the other guests begin to depart.]

SEMICHORUS I OF THE YEARS [aerial music]

Leave this glib throng to its conjecturing,
And let four burdened weeks uncover what they bring!

SEMICHORUS II

The said Debate, to wit; its close in deed;
Till England stands enlisted for the Patriots' needs.

SEMICHORUS I

And transports in the docks gulp down their freight
Of buckled fighting-flesh, and gale-bound, watch and wait.

SEMICHORUS II

Till gracious zephyrs shoulder on their sails
To where the brine of Biscay moans its tragic tales.

CHORUS

Bear we, too, south, as we were swallow-vanned,
And mark the game now played there by the Master-hand!
[The reception-chamber is shut over by the night without, and the point of view rapidly recedes south, London and its streets and lights diminishing till they are lost in the distance, and its noises being succeeded by the babble of the Channel and Biscay waves.]
[image not archived]

SCENE IV

MADRID AND ITS ENVIRONS

[The view is from the housetops of the city on a dusty evening in this July, following a day of suffocating heat. The sunburnt roofs, warm ochreous walls, and blue shadows of the capital, wear their usual aspect except for a few feeble attempts at decoration.]

DUMB SHOW

Gazers gather in the central streets, and particularly in the Puerta del Sol. They show curiosity, but no enthusiasm. Patrols

of French soldiery move up and down in front of the people, and seem to awe them into quietude.

There is a discharge of artillery in the outskirts, and the church bells begin ringing; but the peals dwindle away to a melancholy jangle, and then to silence. Simultaneously, on the northern horizon of the arid, unenclosed, and treeless plain swept by the eye around the city, a cloud of dust arises, and a Royal procession is seen nearing. It means the new king, JOSEPH BONAPARTE. He comes on, escorted by a clanking guard of four thousand Italian troops, and the brilliant royal carriage is followed by a hundred coaches bearing his suite. As the procession enters the city many houses reveal themselves to be closed, many citizens leave the route and walk elsewhere, while many of those who remain turn their backs upon the spectacle.

KING JOSEPH proceeds thus through the Plaza Oriente to the granite-walled Royal Palace, where he alights and is received by some of the nobility, the French generals who are in occupation there, and some clergy. Heralds emerge from the Palace, and hasten to divers points in the city, where trumpets are blown and the Proclamation of JOSEPH as KING OF SPAIN is read in a loud voice. It is received in silence.

The sunsets, and the curtain falls.

[image not archived]

SCENE V

THE OPEN SEA BETWEEN THE ENGLISH COASTS AND THE SPANISH PENINSULA

[From high aloft, in the same July weather, and facing east, the vision swoops over the ocean and its coast-lines, from Cork Harbour on the extreme left, to Mondego Bay, Portugal, on the extreme right. Land's End and the Scilly Isles, Ushant and Cape Finisterre, are projecting features along the middle distance of the picture, and the English Channel recedes endwise as a tapering avenue near the centre.]

DUMB SHOW

Four groups of moth-like transport ships are discovered silently skimming this wide liquid plain. The first group, to the right, is just vanishing behind Cape Mondego to enter Mondego Bay; the second, in the midst, has come out from Plymouth Sound, and is preparing to stand down Channel; the third is clearing St. Helen's point for the same course; and the fourth, much further up Channel,

is obviously to follow on considerably in the rear of the two preceding. A south-east wind is blowing strong, and, according to the part of their course reached, they either sail direct with the wind on their larboard quarter, or labour forward by tacking in zigzags.

SPIRIT OF THE PITIES

What are these fleets that cross the sea
From British ports and bays
To coasts that glister southwardly
Behind the dog-day haze?

RUMOURS [chanting]

SEMICHORUS I

They are the shipped battalions sent
To bar the bold Belligerent
Who stalks the Dancers' Land.
Within these hulls, like sheep a-pen,
Are packed in thousands fighting-men
And colonels in command.

SEMICHORUS II

The fleet that leans each aery fin
Far south, where Mondego mouths in,
Bears Wellesley and his aides therein,
And Hill, and Crauford too;
With Torrens, Ferguson, and Fane,
And majors, captains, clerks, in train,
And those grim needs that appertain—
The surgeons—not a few!
To them add twelve thousand souls
In linesmen that the list enrolls,
Borne onward by those sheeted poles
As war's red retinue!

SEMICHORUS I

The fleet that clears St. Helen's shore
Holds Burrard, Hope, ill-omened Moore,
Clinton and Paget; while
The transports that pertain to those
Count six-score sail, whose planks enclose
Ten thousand rank and file.

SEMICHORUS II

The third-sent ships, from Plymouth Sound,
With Acland, Anstruther, impound
Souls to six thousand strong.

While those, the fourth fleet, that we see
Far back, are lined with cavalry,
And guns of girth, wheeled heavily
To roll the routes along.

SPIRIT OF THE YEARS

Enough, and more, of inventories and names!
Many will fail; many earn doubtful fames.
Await the fruitage of their acts and aims.

DUMB SHOW [continuing]

In the spacious scene visible the far-separated groups of
transports, convoyed by battleships, float on before the wind
almost imperceptibly, like preened duck-feathers across a pond.
The southernmost expedition, under SIR ARTHUR WELLESLEY, soon
comes to anchor within the Bay of Mondego aforesaid, and the
soldiery are indefinitely discernible landing upon the beach
from boats. Simultaneously the division commanded by MOORE, as
yet in the Chops of the channel, is seen to be beaten back by
contrary winds. It gallantly puts to sea again, and being joined
by the division under ANSTRUTHER that has set out from Plymouth,
labours round Ushant, and stands to the south in the track of
WELLESLEY. The rearward transports do the same.
A moving stratum of summer cloud beneath the point of view covers
up the spectacle like an awning.
[image not archived]

SCENE VI

ST. CLOUD. THE BOUDOIR OF JOSEPHINE

[It is the dusk of evening in the latter summer of this year,
and from the windows at the back of the stage, which are still
uncurtained, can be seen the EMPRESS with NAPOLEON and some
ladies and officers of the Court playing Catch-me-if-you-can by
torchlight on the lawn. The moving torches throw bizarre lights
and shadows into the apartment, where only a remote candle or two
are burning.]

Enter JOSEPHINE and NAPOLEON together, somewhat out of breath.
With careless suppleness she slides down on a couch and fans
herself. Now that the candle-rays reach her they show her mellow
complexion, her velvety eyes with long lashes, mouth with pointed
corners and excessive mobility beneath its duvet, and curls of
dark hair pressed down upon the temples by a gold band.
The EMPEROR drops into a seat near her, and they remain in silence

till he jumps up, knocks over some nicknacks with his elbow, and begins walking about the boudoir.]

NAPOLEON [with sudden gloom]

These mindless games are very well, my friend;
But ours to-night marks, not improbably,
The last we play together.

JOSEPHINE [starting]

Can you say it!

Why raise that ghastly nightmare on me now,
When, for a moment, my poor brain had dreams
Denied it all the earlier anxious day?

NAPOLEON

Things that verge nigh, my simple Josephine,
Are not shoved off by wilful winking at.
Better quiz evils with too strained an eye
Than have them leap from disregarded lairs.

JOSEPHINE

Maybe 'tis true, and you shall have it so!—
Yet there's no joy save sorrow waived awhile.

NAPOLEON

Ha, ha! That's like you. Well, each day by day
I get sour news. Each hour since we returned
From this queer Spanish business at Bayonne,
I have had nothing else; and hence by brooding.

JOSEPHINE

But all went well throughout our touring-time?

NAPOLEON

Not so—behind the scenes. Our arms a Baylen
Have been smirched badly. Twenty thousand shamed
All through Dupont's ill-luck! The selfsame day
My brother Joseph's progress to Madrid
Was glorious as a sodden rocket's fizz!
Since when his letters creak with querulousness.
Napoleon el chico 'tis they call him—
Napoleon the Little, so he says.

Then notice Austria. Much looks louring there,
And her sly new regard for England grows.
The English, next, have shipped an army down
To Mondego, under one Wellesley,
A man from India, and his march is south
To Lisbon, by Vimiero. On he'll go
And do the devil's mischief ere he is met

By unaware Junot, and chevyed back
To English fogs and fumes!

JOSEPHINE

My dearest one,
You have mused on worse reports with better grace
Full many and many a time. Ah—there is more!...
I know; I know!

NAPOLEON [kicking away a stool]

There is, of course; that worm
Time ever keeps in hand for gnawing me!—
The question of my dynasty—which bites
Closer and closer as the years wheel on.

JOSEPHINE

Of course it's that! For nothing else could hang
My lord on tenterhooks through nights and days;—
Or rather, not the question, but the tongues
That keep the question stirring. Nought recked you
Of throne-succession or dynastic lines
When gloriously engaged in Italy!

I was your fairy then: they labelled me
Your Lady of Victories; and much I joyed,
Till dangerous ones drew near and daily sowed
These choking tares within your fecund brain,—
Making me tremble if a panel crack,
Or mouse but cheep, or silent leaf sail down,
And murdering my melodious hours with dreads
That my late happiness, and my late hope,
Will oversoon be knelled!

NAPOLEON [genially nearing her]

But years have passed since first we talked of it,
And now, with loss of dear Hortense's son
Who won me as my own, it looms forth more.
And selfish 'tis in my good Josephine
To blind her vision to the weal of France,
And this great Empire's solidarity.
The grandeur of your sacrifice would gild
Your life's whole shape.

JOSEPHINE

Were I as coarse a wife
As I am limned in English caricature—
[Those cruel effigies they draw of me!]
You could not speak more aridly.

NAPOLEON

Nay, nay!

You know, my comrade, how I love you still
Were there a long-notorious dislike
Betwixt us, reason might be in your dreads
But all earth knows our conjugality.
There's not a bourgeois couple in the land
Who, should dire duty rule their severance,
Could part with scanter scandal than could we.

JOSEPHINE [pouting]

Nevertheless there's one.

NAPOLEON

A scandal? What?

JOSEPHINE

Madame Walewska! How could you pretend
When, after Jena, I'd have come to you,
"The weather was so wild, the roads so rough,
That no one of my sex and delicate nerve
Could hope to face the dangers and fatigues."
Yes—so you wrote me, dear. They hurt not her!

NAPOLEON [blandly]

She was a week's adventure—not worth words!
I say 'tis France.—I have held out for years
Against the constant pressure brought on me
To null this sterile marriage.

JOSEPHINE [bursting into sobs]

Me you blame!

But how know you that you are not the culprit?

NAPOLEON

I have reason so to know—if I must say.
The Polish lady you have chosen to name
Has proved the fault not mine. [JOSEPHINE sobs more violently.]
Don't cry, my cherished;
It is not really amiable of you,
Or prudent, my good little Josephine,
With so much in the balance.

JOSEPHINE

How—know you—

What may not happen! Wait a—little longer!

NAPOLEON [playfully pinching her arm]

O come, now, my adored! Haven't I already!
Nature's a dial whose shade no hand puts back,

Trick as we may! My friend, you are forty-three
 This very year in the world— [JOSEPHINE breaks out sobbing again.]
 And in vain it is
 To think of waiting longer; pitiful
 To dream of coaxing shy fecundity
 To an unlikely freak by physicking
 With superstitious drugs and quackeries
 That work you harm, not good. The fact being so,
 I have looked it squarely down—against my heart!
 Solicitations voiced repeatedly
 At length have shown the soundness of their shape,
 And left me no denial. You, at times,
 My dear one, have been used to handle it.
 My brother Joseph, years back, frankly gave
 His honest view that something should be done;
 And he, you well know, shows no ill tinct
 In his regard of you.
 JOSEPHINE
 And what princess?
 NAPOLEON
 For wiving with? No thought was given to that,
 She shapes as vaguely as the Veiled—
 JOSEPHINE
 No, no;
 It's Alexander's sister, I'm full sure!—
 But why this craze for home-made manikins
 And lineage mere of flesh? You have said yourself
 It mattered not. Great Caesar, you declared,
 Sank sonless to his rest; was greater deemed
 Even for the isolation. Frederick
 Saw, too, no heir. It is the fate of such,
 Often, to be denied the common hope
 As fine for fulness in the rarer gifts
 That Nature yields them. O my husband long,
 Will you not purge your soul to value best
 That high heredity from brain to brain
 Which supersedes mere sequence of blood,
 That often vary more from sire to son
 Than between furthest strangers!...
 Napoleon's offspring in his like must lie;
 The second of his line be he who shows
 Napoleon's soul in later bodiment,

The household father happening as he may!
 NAPOLEON [smilingly wiping her eyes]
 Little guessed I my dear would prove her rammed
 With such a charge of apt philosophy
 When tutoring me gay arts in earlier times!
 She who at home coquetted through the years
 In which I vainly penned her wishful words
 To come and comfort me in Italy,
 Might, faith, have urged it then effectually!
 But never would you stir from Paris joys, [With some bitterness.]
 And so, when arguments like this could move me,
 I heard them not; and get them only now
 When their weight dully falls. But I have said
 Tis not for me, but France—Good-bye an hour. [Kissing her.]
 I must dictate some letters. This new move
 Of England on Madrid may mean some trouble.
 Come, dwell not gloomily on this cold need
 Of waiving private joy for policy.
 We are but thistle-globes on Heaven's high gales,
 And whither blown, or when, or how, or why,
 Can choose us not at all!...
 I'll come to you anon, dear: staunch Roustan
 Will light me in.
 [Exit NAPOLEON. The scene shuts in shadow.]
 [image not archived]

SCENE VII

VIMIERO

[A village among the hills of Portugal, about fifty miles north of Lisbon. Around it are disclosed, as ten on Sunday morning strikes, a blue army of fourteen thousand men in isolated columns, and red army of eighteen thousand in line formation, drawn up in order of battle. The blue army is a French one under JUNOT; the other an English one under SIR ARTHUR WELLESLEY—portion of that recently landed.

The August sun glares on the shaven faces, white gaiters, and white cross-belts of the English, who are to fight for their lives while sweating under a quarter-hundredweight in knapsack and pouches, and with firelocks heavy as putlogs. They occupy a group of heights, but their position is one of great danger, the land abruptly terminating two miles behind their backs in

lofty cliffs overhanging the Atlantic. The French occupy the valleys in the English front, and this distinction between the two forces strikes the eye—the red army is accompanied by scarce any cavalry, while the blue is strong in that area.]

DUMB SHOW

The battle is begun with alternate moves that match each other like those of a chess opening. JUNOT makes an oblique attack by moving a division to his right; WELLESLEY moves several brigades to his left to balance it.

A column of six thousand French then climbs the hill against the English centre, and drives in those who are planted there. The English artillery checks its adversaries, and the infantry recover and charge the baffled French down the slopes. Meanwhile the latter's cavalry and artillery are attacking the village itself, and, rushing on a few squadrons of English dragoons stationed there, cut them to pieces. A dust is raised by this ado, and moans of men and shrieks of horses are heard. Close by the carnage the little Maceira stream continues to trickle unconcernedly to the sea. On the English left five thousand French infantry, having ascended to the ridge and maintained a stinging musket-fire as sharply returned, are driven down by the bayonets of six English regiments. Thereafter a brigade of the French, the northernmost, finding that the others have pursued to the bottom and are resting after the effort, surprise them and bayonet them back to their original summit. The see-saw is continued by the recovery of the English, who again drive their assailants down.

The French army pauses stultified, till, the columns uniting, they fall back toward the opposite hills. The English, seeing that their chance has come, are about to pursue and settle the fortunes of the day. But a messenger dispatched from a distant group is marked riding up to the large-nosed man with a telescope and an Indian sword who, his staff around him, has been directing the English movements. He seems astonished at the message, appears to resent it, and pauses with a gloomy look. But he sends countermands to his generals, and the pursuit ends abortively.

The French retreat without further molestation by a circuitous march into the great road to Torres Vedras by which they came, leaving nearly two thousand dead and wounded on the slopes they have quitted. Dumb Show ends and the curtain draws.

[image not archived]

ACT THIRD

[image not archived]

SCENE I

SPAIN. A ROAD NEAR ASTORGA

[The eye of the spectator rakes the road from the interior of a cellar which opens upon it, and forms the basement of a deserted house, the roof doors, and shutters of which have been pulled down and burnt for bivouac fires. The season is the beginning of January, and the country is covered with a sticky snow. The road itself is intermittently encumbered with heavy traffic, the surface being churned to a yellow mud that lies half knee-deep, and at the numerous holes in the track forming still deeper quagmires. In the gloom of the cellar are heaps of damp straw, in which ragged figures are lying half-buried, many of the men in the uniform of English regiments, and the women and children in clouts of all descriptions, some being nearly naked. At the back of the cellar is revealed, through a burst door, an inner vault, where are discernible some wooden-hooped wine-casks; in one sticks a gimlet, and the breaching-cork of another has been driven in. The wine runs into pitchers, washing-basins, shards, chamber-vessels, and other extemporized receptacles. Most of the inmates are drunk; some to insensibility.

So far as the characters are doing anything they are contemplating almost incessant traffic outside, passing in one direction. It includes a medley of stragglers from the Marquis of ROMANA'S Spanish forces and the retreating English army under SIR JOHN MOORE—to which the concealed deserters belong.]

FIRST DESERTER

Now he's one of the Eighty-first, and I'd gladly let that poor blade know that we've all that man can wish for here—good wine and buxom women. But if I do, we shan't have room for ourselves—hey?

[He signifies a man limping past with neither fire-lock nor knapsack. Where the discarded knapsack has rubbed for weeks against his shoulder-blades the jacket and shirt are fretted away, leaving his skin exposed.]

SECOND DESERTER

He may be the Eighty-first, or th' Eighty-second; but what I say is, without fear of contradiction, I wish to the Lord I was back in old Bristol again. I'd sooner have a nipperkin of our own real "Bristol

milk" than a mash-tub full of this barbarian wine!

THIRD DESERTER

Tis like thee to be ungrateful, after putting away such a skinful on't. I am as much Bristol as thee, but would as soon be here as there. There ain't near such willing women, that are strict respectable too, there as hereabout, and no open cellars.— As there's many a slip in this country I'll have the rest of my allowance now.

[He crawls on his elbows to one of the barrels, and turning on his back lets the wine run down his throat.]

FORTH DESERTER [to a fifth, who is snoring]

Don't treat us to such a snoaching there, mate. Here's some more coming, and they'll sight us if we don't mind!

[Enter without a straggling flock of military objects, some with fragments of shoes on, others bare-footed, many of the latter's feet bleeding. The arms and waists of some are clutched by women as tattered and bare-footed as themselves. They pass on.

The Retreat continues. More of ROMANA'S Spanish limp along in disorder; then enters a miscellaneous group of English cavalry soldiers, some on foot, some mounted, the rearmost of the latter bestriding a shoeless foundered creature whose neck is vertebrae and mane only. While passing it falls from exhaustion; the trooper extricates himself and pistols the animal through the head. He and the rest pass on.]

FIRST DESERTER [a new plashing of feet being heard]

Here's something more in order, or I am much mistaken. He cranes out.] Yes, a sergeant of the Forty-third, and what's left of their second battalion. And, by God, not far behind I see shining helmets. Tis a whole squadron of French dragoons!

[Enter the sergeant. He has a racking cough, but endeavours, by stiffening himself up, to hide how it is wasting away his life.

He halts, and looks back, till the remains of the Forty-third are abreast, to the number of some three hundred, about half of whom are crippled invalids, the other half being presentable and armed soldiery.]

SERGEANT

Now show yer nerve, and be men. If you die to-day you won't have to die to-morrow. Fall in! [The miscellany falls in.] All invalids and men without arms march ahead as well as they can. Quick—maw-w-w-ch! [Exeunt invalids, etc.] Now! Tention! Shoulder-r-r—fawlocks! [Order obeyed.]

[The sergeant hastily forms these into platoons, who prime and load,

and seem preternaturally changed from what they were into alert soldiers.

Enter French dragoons at the left-back of the scene. The rear platoon of the Forty-third turns, fires, and proceeds. The next platoon covering them does the same. This is repeated several times, staggering the pursuers. Exeunt French dragoons, giving up the pursuit. The coughing sergeant and the remnant of the Forty-third march on.]

FOURTH DESERTER [to a woman lying beside him]

What d'ye think o' that, my honey? It fairly makes me a man again. Come, wake up! We must be getting along somehow. [He regards the woman more closely.] Why—my little chick? Look here, friends. [They look, and the woman is found to be dead.] If I didn't think that her poor knees felt cold!... And only an hour ago I swore to marry her!

[They remain silent. The Retreat continues in the snow without, now in the form of a file of ox-carts, followed by a mixed rabble of English and Spanish, and mules and muleteers hired by English officers to carry their baggage. The muleteers, looking about and seeing that the French dragoons gave been there, cut the bands which hold on the heavy packs, and scamper off with their mules.]

A VOICE [behind]

The Commander-in-Chief is determined to maintain discipline, and they must suffer. No more pillaging here. It is the worst case of brutality and plunder that we have had in this wretched time!

[Enter an English captain of hussars, a lieutenant, a guard of about a dozen, and three men as prisoner.]

CAPTAIN

If they choose to draw lots, only one need be made an example of. But they must be quick about it. The advance-guard of the enemy is not far behind.

[The three prisoners appear to draw lots, and the one on whom the lot falls is blindfolded. Exeunt the hussars behind a wall, with carbines. A volley is heard and something falls. The wretched in the cellar shudder.]

FOURTH DESERTER

Tis the same for us but for this heap of straw. Ah—my doxy is the only one of us who is safe and sound! [He kisses the dead woman.]

[Retreat continues. A train of six-horse baggage-waggon lumbars past, a mounted sergeant alongside. Among the baggage lie wounded soldiers and sick women.]

SERGEANT OF THE WAGGON-TRAIN

If so be they are dead, ye may as well drop 'em over the tail-board.
Tis no use straining the horses unnecessary.

[Waggons halt. Two of the wounded who have just died are taken out, laid down by the roadside, and some muddy snow scraped over them. Exeunt waggons and sergeant.

An interval. More English troops pass on horses, mostly shoeless and foundered.

Enter SIR JOHN MOORE and officers. MOORE appears on the pale evening light as a handsome man, far on in the forties, the orbits of his dark eyes showing marks of deep anxiety. He is talking to some of his staff with vehement emphasis and gesture. They cross the scene and go on out of sight, and the squashing of their horses' hoofs in the snowy mud dies away.]

FIFTH DESERTER [incoherently in his sleep]

Poise fawlocks—open pans—right hands to pouch—handle ca'tridge—bring it—quick motion-bite top well off—prime—shut pans—cast about—load—

FIRST DESERTER [throwing a shoe at the sleeper]

Shut up that! D'ye think you are a 'cruity in the awkward squad still?

SECOND DESERTER

I don't know what he thinks, but I know what I feel! Would that I were at home in England again, where there's old-fashioned tippie, and a proper God A'mighty instead of this eternal 'Ooman and baby;—ay, at home a-leaning against old Bristol Bridge, and no questions asked, and the winter sun slanting friendly over Baldwin Street as a used to do! 'Tis my very belief, though I have lost all sure reckoning, that if I were there, and in good health, 'twould be New Year's day about now. What it is over here I don't know. Ay, to-night we should be a-setting in the tap of the "Adam and Eve"—lifting up the tune of "The Light o' the Moon." 'Twer a romantical thing enough. 'A used to go som'at like this [he sings in a nasal tone]:—

"O I thought it had been day,

And I stole from here away;

But it proved to be the light o' the moon!"

[Retreat continues, with infantry in good order. Hearing the singing, one of the officers looks around, and detaching a patrol enters the ruined house with the file of men, the body of soldiers marching on. The inmates of the cellar bury themselves in the straw. The officer peers about, and seeing no one prods the straw with his sword.

VOICES [under the straw]

Oh! Hell! Stop it! We'll come out! Mercy! Quarter!

[The lurkers are uncovered.]

OFFICER

If you are well enough to sing bawdy songs, you are well enough to march. So out of it—or you'll be shot, here and now!

SEVERAL

You may shoot us, captain, or the French may shoot us, or the devil may take us; we don't care which! Only we can't stir. Pity the women, captain, but do what you will with us!

[The searchers pass over the wounded, and stir out those capable of marching, both men and women, so far as they discover them. They are pricked on by the patrol. Exeunt patrol and deserters in its charge.]

Those who remain look stolidly at the highway. The English Rear-guard of cavalry crosses the scene and passes out. An interval.

It grows dusk.]

SPIRIT IRONIC

Quaint poesy, and real romance of war!

SPIRIT OF THE PITIES

Mock on, Shade, if thou wilt! But others find

Poesy ever lurk where pit-pats poor mankind!

[The scene is cloaked in darkness.]

[image not archived]

SCENE II

THE SAME

[It is nearly midnight. The fugitives who remain in the cellar having slept off the effects of the wine, are awakened by a new tramping of cavalry, which becomes more and more persistent. It is the French, who now fill the road. The advance-guard having passed by, DELABORDE'S division, LORGE'S division, MERLE'S division, and others, successively cross the gloom.]

Presently come the outlines of the Imperial Guard, and then, with a start, those in hiding realize their situation, and are wide awake. NAPOLEON enters with his staff. He has just been overtaken by a courier, and orders those round him to halt.]

NAPOLEON

Let there a fire be lit: Ay, here and now.

The lines within these letters brook no pause

In mastering their purport.

[Some of the French approach the ruined house and, appropriating what wood is still left there, heap it by the roadside and set it alight. A mixed rain and snow falls, and the sputtering flames throw a glare all round.]

SECOND DESERTER [under his voice]

We be shot corpses! Ay, faith, we be! Why didn't I stick to England, and true doxology, and leave foreign doxies and their wine alone!... Mate, can ye squeeze another shardful from the cask there, for I feel my time is come!... O that I had but the barrel of that firelock I throwed away, and that wasted powder to prime and load! This bullet I chaw to squench my hunger would do the rest!... Yes, I could pick him off now!

FIRST DESERTER

You lie low with your picking off, or he may pick off you! Thank God the babies are gone. Maybe we shan't be noticed, if we've but the courage to do nothing, and keep hid.

[NAPOLEON dismounts, approaches the fire, and looks around.]

NAPOLEON

Another of their dead horses here, I see.

OFFICER

Yes, sire. We have counted eighteen hundred odd
From Benavente hither, pistoled thus.
Some we'd to finish for them: headlong haste
Spared them no time for mercy to their brutes.
One-half their cavalry now tramps afoot.

NAPOLEON

And what's the tale of waggons we've picked up?

OFFICER

Spanish and all abandoned, some four hundred;
Of magazines and firelocks, full ten load;
And stragglers and their girls a numerous crew.

NAPOLEON

Ay, devil—plenty those! Licentious ones
These English, as all canting peoples are.—
And prisoners?

OFFICER

Seven hundred English, sire;
Spaniards five thousand more.

NAPOLEON

Tis not amiss.

To keep the new year up they run away!

[He soliloquizes as he begins tearing open the dispatches.]

Nor Pitt nor Fox displayed such blundering
 As glares in this campaign! It is, indeed,
 Enlarging Folly to Foolhardiness
 To combat France by land! But how expect
 Aught that can claim the name of government
 From Canning, Castlereagh, and Perceval,
 Caballers all—poor sorry politicians—
 To whom has fallen the luck of reaping in
 The harvestings of Pitt's bold husbandry.
 [He unfolds a dispatch, and looks for something to sit on. A cloak
 is thrown over a log, and he settles to reading by the firelight.
 The others stand round. The light, crossed by the snow-flakes,
 flickers on his unhealthy face and stoutening figure. He sinks
 into the rigidity of profound thought, till his features lour.]
 So this is their reply! They have done with me!
 Britain declines negotiating further—
 Flouts France and Russia indiscriminately.
 "Since one dethrones and keeps as prisoners
 The most legitimate kings—that means myself—"
 "The other suffers their unworthy treatment
 For sordid interests—that's for Alexander!..."
 And what is Georgy made to say besides?—
 "Pacific overtures to us are wiles
 Woven to unnerve the generous nations round
 Lately escaped the galling yoke of France,
 Or waiting so to do. Such, then, being seen,
 These tentatives must be regarded now
 As finally forgone; and crimson war
 Be faced to its fell worst, unflinchingly."
 —The devil take their lecture! What am I,
 That England should return such insolence?
 [He jumps up, furious, and walks to and fro beside the fire.
 By and by cooling he sits down again.]
 Now as to hostile signs in Austria...
 [He breaks another seal and reads.]
 Ah,—swords to cross with her some day in spring!
 Thinking me cornered over here in Spain
 She speaks without disguise, the covert pact
 Twixt her and England owning now quite frankly,
 Careless how works its knowledge upon me.
 She, England, Germany: well—I can front them!
 That there is no sufficient force of French

Between the Elbe and Rhine to prostrate her,
Let new and terrible experience
Soon disillude her of! Yea; she may arm:
The opportunity she late let slip
Will not subserve her now!

SPIRIT OF THE PITIES

Has he no heart-hints that this Austrian court,
Whereon his mood takes mould so masterful,
Is rearing naively in its nursery-room
A future wife for him?

SPIRIT OF THE YEARS

Thou dost but guess it,
And how should his heart know?
NAPOLEON [opening and reading another dispatch]
Now eastward. Ohe!—
The Orient likewise looms full somberly...
The Turk declines pacifically to yield
What I have promised Alexander. Ah!...
As for Constantinople being his prize
I'll see him frozen first. His flight's too high!
And showing that I think so makes him cool. [Rises.]
Is Soult the Duke Dalmatia yet at hand?

OFFICER

He has arrived along the Leon road
Just now, your Majesty; and only waits
The close of your perusals.
[Enter SOULT, who is greeted by NAPOLEON.]

FIRST DESERTER

Good Lord deliver us from all great men, and take me back again to
humble life! That's Marshal Soult the Duke of Dalmatia!

SECOND DESERTER

The Duke of Damnation for our poor rear, by the look on't!

FIRST DESERTER

Yes—he'll make 'em rub their poor rears before he has done with
em! But we must overtake 'em to-morrow by a cross-cut, please God!

NAPOLEON [pointing to the dispatches]

Here's matter enough for me, Duke, and to spare.

The ominous contents are like the threats

The ancient prophets dealt rebellious Judah!

Austria we soon shall have upon our hands,

And England still is fierce for fighting on,—

Strange humour in a concord-loving land!

So now I must to Paris straight away—
At least, to Valladolid; so as to stand
More apt for couriers than I do out here
In this far western corner, and to mark
The veerings of these new developments,
And blow a counter-breeze...
Then, too, there's Lannes, still sweating at the siege
Of sullen Zaragoza as 'twere hell.
Him I must further counsel how to close
His twice too tedious battery.—You, then, Soult—
Ney is not yet, I gather, quite come up?

SOULT

He's near, sire, on the Benavente road;
But some hours to the rear I reckon, still.
NAPOLEON [pointing to the dispatches]
Him I'll direct to come to your support
In this pursuit and harassment of Moore
Wherein you take my place. You'll follow up
And chase the flying English to the sea.
Bear hard on them, the bayonet at their loins.
With Merle's and Mermet's corps just gone ahead,
And Delaborde's, and Heudelet's here at hand.
While Lorge's and Lahoussaye's picked dragoons
Will follow, and Franceschi's cavalry.
To Ney I am writing, in case of need,
He will support with Marchand and Mathieu.—
Your total thus of seventy thousand odd,
Ten thousand horse, and cannon to five score,
Should near annihilate this British force,
And carve a triumph large in history.
[He bends over the fire and makes some notes rapidly.]
I move into Astorga; then turn back,
[Though only in my person do I turn]
And leave to you the destinies of Spain.

SPIRIT OF THE YEARS

More turning may be here than he design.
In this small, sudden, swift turn backward, he
Suggests one turning from his apogee!
[The characters disperse, the fire sinks, and snowflakes and
darkness blot out all.]
[image not archived]

SCENE III

BEFORE CORUNA

[The town, harbour, and hills at the back are viewed from an aerial point to the north, over the lighthouse known as the Tower of Hercules, rising at the extremity of the tongue of land on which La Coruna stands, the open ocean being in the spectator's rear.

In the foreground the most prominent feature is the walled old town, with its white towers and houses, shaping itself aloft over the harbour. The new town, and its painted fronts, show bright below, even on this cloudy winter afternoon. Further off, behind the harbour—now crowded with British transports of all sizes—is a series of low broken hills, intersected by hedges and stone walls.

A mile behind these low inner hills is beheld a rocky chain of outer and loftier heights that completely command the former. Nothing behind them is seen but grey sky.

DUMB SHOW

On the inner hills aforesaid the little English army—a pathetic fourteen thousand of foot only—is just deploying into line: HOPE'S division is on the left, BAIRD'S to the right. PAGET with the reserve is in the hollow to the left behind them; and FRASER'S division still further back shapes out on a slight rise to the right. This harassed force now appears as if composed of quite other than the men observed in the Retreat insubordinately straggling along like vagabonds. Yet they are the same men, suddenly stiffened and grown amenable to discipline by the satisfaction of standing to the enemy at last. They resemble a double palisade of red stakes, the only gaps being those that the melancholy necessity of scant numbers entails here and there.

Over the heads of these red men is beheld on the outer hills the twenty thousand French that have been pushed along the road at the heels of the English by SOULT. They have an ominous superiority, both in position and in their abundance of cavalry and artillery, over the slender lines of English foot. The left of this background, facing HOPE, is made up of DELABORDE'S and MERLE'S divisions, while in a deadly arc round BAIRD, from whom they are divided only by the village of Elvina, are placed MERMET'S division, LAHOUSSAYE'S and LORGE'S dragoons, FRANCESCHI'S cavalry, and, highest up of all, a formidable battery of eleven great guns that rake the whole British line.

It is now getting on for two o'clock, and a stir of activity has lately been noticed along the French front. Three columns are discerned descending from their position, the first towards the division of SIR DAVID BAIRD, the weakest point in the English line, the next towards the centre, the third towards the left. A heavy cannonade from the battery supports this advance.

The clash ensues, the English being swept down in swathes by the enemy's artillery. The opponents meet face to face at the village in the valley between them, and the fight there grows furious.

SIR JOHN MOORE is seen galloping to the front under the gloomy sky.

SPIRIT OF THE PITIES

I seem to vision in San Carlos' garden,
That rises salient in the upper town,
His name, and date, and doing, set within
A filmy outline like a monument,
Which yet is but the insubstantial air.

SPIRIT OF THE YEARS

Read visions as conjectures; not as more.

When MOORE arrives at the front, FRASER and PAGET move to the right, where the English are most sorely pressed. A grape-shot strikes off BAIRD'S arm. There is a little confusion, and he is borne to the rear; while MAJOR NAPIER disappears, a prisoner.

Intelligence of these misfortunes is brought to SIR JOHN MOORE.

He goes further forward, and precedes in person the Forty-second regiment and a battalion of the Guards who, with fixed bayonets, bear the enemy back, MOORE'S gestures in cheering them being notably energetic. Pursuers, pursued, and SIR JOHN himself pass out of sight behind the hill. Dumb Show ends.

[The point of vision descends to the immediate rear of the English position. The early January evening has begun to spread its shades, and shouts of dismay are heard from behind the hill over which MOORE and the advancing lines have vanished.

Straggling soldiers cross in the gloom.]

FIRST STRAGGLER

He's struck by a cannon-ball, that I know; but he's not killed,
that I pray God A'mighty.

SECOND STRAGGLER

Better he were. His shoulder is knocked to a bag of splinters.

As Sir David was wounded, Sir John was anxious that the right should not give way, and went forward to keep it firm.

FIRST STRAGGLER

He didn't keep YOU firm, howsomever.

SECOND STRAGGLER

Nor you, for that matter.

FIRST STRAGGLER

Well, 'twas a serious place for a man with no priming-horn, and a character to lose, so I judged it best to fall to the rear by lying down. A man can't fight by the regulations without his priming-horn, and I am none of your slovenly anyhow fighters.

SECOND STRAGGLER

Nation, having dropped my flit-pouch, I was the same. If you'd had your priming-horn, and I my flints, mind ye, we should have been there now? Then, forty-whory, that we are not is the fault o' Government for not supplying new ones from the reserve!

FIRST STRAGGLER

What did he say as he led us on?

SECOND STRAGGLER

Forty-second, remember Egypt! I heard it with my own ears. Yes, that was his strict testament.

FIRST STRAGGLER

Remember Egypt. Ay, and I do, for I was there!... Upon my salvation, here's for back again, whether or no!

SECOND STRAGGLER

But here. "Forty-second, remember Egypt," he said in the very eye of that French battery playing through us. And the next omen was that he was struck off his horse, and fell on his back to the ground. I remembered Egypt, and what had just happened too, so thorough well that I remembered the way over this wall!—Captain Hardinge, who was close to him, jumped off his horse, and he and one in the ranks lifted him, and are now bringing him along.

FIRST STRAGGLER

Nevertheless, here's for back again, come what will. Remember Egypt! Hurrah!

[Exit First straggler. Second straggler ponders, then suddenly follows First. Enter COLONEL ANDERSON and others hastily.]

AN OFFICER

Now fetch a blanker. He must be carried in.

[Shouts heard.]

COLONEL ANDERSON

That means we are gaining ground! Had fate but left

This last blow undecreed, the hour had shone

A star amid these girdling days of gloom!

[Exit. Enter in the obscurity six soldiers of the Forty-second bearing MOORE on their joined hands. CAPTAIN HARDINGE walks

beside and steadies him. He is temporarily laid down in the shelter of a wall, his left shoulder being pounded away, the arm dangling by a shred of flesh.

Enter COLONEL GRAHAM and CAPTAIN WOODFORD.]

GRAHAM

The wound is more than serious, Woodford, far.

Ride for a surgeon—one of those, perhaps,

Who tend Sir David Baird? [Exit Captain Woodford.]

His blood throbs forth so fast, that I have dark fears

He'll drain to death ere anything can be done!

HARDINGE

I'll try to staunch it—since no skill's in call.

[He takes off his sash and endeavours to bind the wound with it.

MOORE smiles and shakes his head.]

There's not much checking it! Then rent's too gross.

A dozen lives could pass that thoroughfare!

[Enter a soldier with a blanket. They lift MOORE into it. During the operation the pommel of his sword, which he still wears, is accidentally thrust into the wound.]

I'll loose the sword—it bruises you, Sir John.

[He begins to unbuckle it.]

MOORE

No. Let it be! One hurt more matters not.

I wish it to go off the field with me.

HARDINGE

I like the sound of that. It augurs well

For your much-hoped recovery.

MOORE [looking sadly at his wound]

Hardinge, no:

Nature is nonplussed there! My shoulder's gone,

And this left side laid open to my lungs.

There's but a brief breath now for me, at most...

Could you—move me along—that I may glimpse

Still how the battle's going?

HARDINGE

Ay, Sir John—

A few yard higher up, where we can see.

[He is borne in the blanket a little way onward, and lifted so that he can view the valley and the action.]

MOORE [brightly]

They seem to be advancing. Yes, it is so!

[Enter SIR JOHN HOPE.]

Ah, Hope!—I am doing badly here enough;
But they are doing rarely well out there. [Presses HOPE'S hand.]
Don't leave! my speech may flag with this fierce pain,
But you can talk to me.—Are the French checked?

HOPE

My dear friend, they are borne back steadily.

MOORE [his voice weakening]

I hope England—will be satisfied—

I hope my native land—will do me justice!...

I shall be blamed for sending Craufurd off

Along the Orense road. But had I not,

Bonaparte would have headed us that way...

HOPE

O would that Soult had but accepted battle

By Lugo town! We should have crushed him there.

MOORE

Yes... yes.—But it has never been my lot

To owe much to good luck; nor was it then.

Good fortune has been mine, but [bitterly] mostly so

By the exhaustion of all shapes of bad!...

Well, this does not become a dying man;

And others have been chastened more than I

By Him who holds us in His hollowed hand!...

I grieve for Zaragoza, if, as said,

The siege goes sorely with her, which it must.

I heard when at Dahagun that late day

That she was holding out heroically.

But I must leave such now.—You'll see my friends

As early as you can? Tell them the whole;

Say to my mother... [His voice fails.]

Hope, Hope, I have so much to charge you with,

But weakness clams my tongue!... If I must die

Without a word with Stanhope, ask him, Hope,

To—name me to his sister. You may know

Of what there was between us?...

Is Colonel Graham well, and all my aides?

My will I have made—it is in Colborne's charge

With other papers.

HOPE

He's now coming up.

[Enter MAJOR COLBORNE, principal aide-de-camp.]

MOORE

Are the French beaten, Colborne, or repulsed?

Alas! you see what they have done too me!

COLBORNE

I do, Sir John: I am more than sad thereat!

In brief time now the surgeon will be here.

The French retreat—pushed from Elvina far.

MOORE

That's good! Is Paget anywhere about?

COLBORNE

He's at the front, Sir John.

MOORE

Remembrance to him!

[Enter two surgeons.]

Ah, doctors,—you can scarcely mend up me.—

And yet I feel so tough—I have feverish fears

My dying will waste a long and tedious while;

But not too long, I hope!

SURGEONS [after a hasty examination]

You must be borne

In to your lodgings instantly, Sir John.

Please strive to stand the motion—if you can;

They will keep step, and bear you steadily.

MOORE

Anything... Surely fainter ebbs that fire?

COLBORNE

Yes: we must be advancing everywhere:

Colbert their General, too, they have lost, I learn.

[They lift him by stretching their sashes under the blanket, and begin moving off. A light waggon enters.]

MOORE

Who's in that waggon?

HARDINGE

Colonel Wynch, Sir John.

He's wounded, but he urges you to take it.

MOORE

No. I will not. This suits... Don't come with me;

There's more for you to do out here as yet. [Cheerful shouts.]

A-ha! 'Tis THIS way I have wished to die!

[Exeunt slowly in the twilight MOORE, bearers, surgeons, etc., towards Coruna. The scene darkens.]

[image not archived]

SCENE IV

CORUNA. NEAR THE RAMPARTS

[It is just before dawn on the following morning, objects being still indistinct. The features of the elevated enclosure of San Carlos can be recognized in dim outline, and also those of the Old Town of Coruna around, though scarcely a lamp is shining. The numerous transports in the harbour beneath have still their riding-lights burning.]

In a nook of the town walls a lantern glimmers. Some English soldiers of the Ninth regiment are hastily digging a grave there with extemporized tools.]

A VOICE [from the gloom some distance off]

"I am the resurrection and the life, saith the Lord: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live."

[The soldiers look up, and see entering at the further end of the patch of ground a slow procession. It advances by the light of lanterns in the hands of some members of it. At moments the fitful rays fall upon bearers carrying a coffinless body rolled in a blanket, with a military cloak roughly thrown over by way of pall.]

It is brought towards the incomplete grave, and followed by HOPE, GRAHAM, ANDERSON, COLBORNE, HARDINGE, and several aides-de-camp, a chaplain preceding.]

FIRST SOLDIER

They are here, almost as quickly as ourselves.

There is no time to dig much deeper now:

Level a bottom just as far's we've got.

He'll couch as calmly in this scrabbled hole

As in a royal vault!

SECOND SOLDIER

Would it had been a foot deeper, here among foreigners, with strange manures manufactured out of no one knows what! Surely we can give him another six inches?

FIRST SOLDIER

There is no time. Just make the bottom true.

[The meagre procession approaches the spot, and waits while the half-dug grave is roughly finished by the men of the Ninth.]

They step out of it, and another of them holds a lantern to the chaplain's book. The winter day slowly dawns.]

CHAPLAIN

"Man that is born of a woman hath but a short time to live, and is full of misery. He cometh up, and is cut down, like a flower; he

fleeth as it were a shadow, and never continueth in one stay.”
[A gun is fired from the French battery not far off; then another.
The ships in the harbour take in their riding lights.]

COLBORNE [in a low voice]

I knew that dawn would see them open fire.

HOPE

We must perforce make swift use of out time.

Would we had closed our too sad office sooner!

[As the body is lowered another discharge echoes. They glance
gloomily at the heights where the French are ranged, and then
into the grave.]

CHAPLAIN

”We therefore commit his body to the ground. Earth to earth, ashes
to ashes, dust to dust. [Another gun.]”

[A spent ball falls not far off. They put out their lanterns.

Continued firing, some shot splashing into the harbour below
them.]

HOPE

In mercy to the living, who are thrust
Upon our care for their deliverance,
And run much hazard till they are embarked,
We must abridge these duties to the dead,
Who will not mind be they abridged or no.

HARDINGE

And could he mind, would be the man to bid it...

HOPE

We shall do well, then, curtly to conclude
These mutilated prayers—our hurried best!—
And what’s left unsaid, feel.

CHAPLAIN [his words broken by the cannonade]

”... We give Thee hearty thanks for that it hath pleased
Thee to deliver this our brother out of the miseries of this
sinful world... Who also hath taught us not to be sorry, as
men without hope, for them that sleep in Him... Grant this,
through Jesus Christ our Mediator and Redeemer.”

OFFICERS AND SOLDIERS

Amen!

[The diggers of the Ninth hastily fill in the grave, and the scene
shuts as the mournful figures retire.]

[image not archived]

SCENE V

VIENNA. A CAFE IN THE STEPHANS-PLATZ

[An evening between light and dark is disclosed, some lamps being lit. The huge body and tower of St. Stephen's rise into the sky some way off, the western gleam still touching the upper stonework. Groups of people are seated at the tables, drinking and reading the newspapers. One very animated group, which includes an Englishman, is talking loudly. A citizen near looks up from his newspaper.]

CITIZEN [to the Englishman]

I read, sir, here, the troubles you discuss
Of your so gallant army under Moore.
His was a spirit baffled but not quelled,
And in his death there shone a stoicism
That lent retreat the rays of victory.

ENGLISHMAN

It was so. While men chide they will admire him,
And frowning, praise. I could nigh prophesy
That the unwonted crosses he has borne
In his career of sharp vicissitude
Will tinct his story with a tender charm,
And grant the memory of his strenuous feats
As long a lease within the minds of men
As conquerors hold there.—Does the sheet give news
Of how the troops reached home?

CITIZEN [looking up again at the paper]

Yes; from your press
It quotes that they arrived at Plymouth Sound
Mid dreadful weather and much suffering.
It states they looked the very ghosts of men,
So heavily had hunger told on them,
And the fatigues and toils of the retreat.
Several were landed dead, and many died
As they were borne along. At Portsmouth, too,
Sir David Baird, still helpless from his wound,
Was carried in a cot, sheet-pale and thin,
And Sir John Hope, lank as a skeleton.—
Thereto is added, with authority,
That a new expedition soon will fit,
And start again for Spain.

ENGLISHMAN

I have heard as much.

CITIZEN

You'll do it next time, sir. And so shall we!

SECOND CITIZEN [regarding the church tower opposite]

You witnessed the High Service over there

They held this morning? [To the Englishman.]

ENGLISHMAN

Ay; I did get in;

Though not without hard striving, such the throng;

But travellers roam to waste who shyly roam

And I pushed like the rest.

SECOND CITIZEN

Our young Archduchess

Maria Louisa was, they tell me, present?

ENGLISHMAN

O yes: the whole Imperial family,

And when the Bishop called all blessings down

Upon the Landwehr colours there displayed,

Enthusiasm touched the sky—she sharing it.

SECOND CITIZEN

Commendable in her, and spirited,

After the graceless insults to the Court

The Paris journals flaunt—not voluntarily,

But by his ordering. Magician-like

He holds them in his fist, and at his squeeze

They bubble what he wills!... Yes, she's a girl

Of patriotic build, and hates the French.

Quite lately she was overheard to say

She had met with most convincing auguries

That this year Bonaparte was starred to die.

ENGLISHMAN

Your arms must render its fulfilment sure.

SECOND CITIZEN

Right! And we have the opportunity,

By upping to the war in suddenness,

And catching him unaware. The pink and flower

Of all his veteran troops are now in Spain

Fully engaged with yours; while those he holds

In Germany are scattered far and wide.

FIRST CITIZEN [looking up again from his newspaper]

I see here that he vows and guarantees

Inviolable bounds to all our territories

If we but pledge to carry out forthwith
 A prompt disarmament. Since that's his price
 Hell burn his guarantees! Too long he has fooled us.
 [To the Englishman] I drink, sir, to your land's consistency.
 While we and all the kindred Europe States
 Alternately have wooed and warred him,
 You have not bent to blowing hot and cold,
 But held you sturdily inimical!
 ENGLISHMAN [laughing]
 Less Christian-like forgiveness mellows us
 Than Continental souls! [They drink.]
 [A band is heard in a distant street, with shouting. Enter third
 and fourth citizens, followed by others.]
 FIRST CITIZEN
 More news afloat?
 THIRD AND FOURTH CITIZENS
 Yea; an announcement that the Archduke Charles
 Is given the chief command.
 FIRST, SECOND, ETC., CITIZENS
 Huzza! Right so!
 [A clinking of glasses, rising from seats, and general enthusiasm.]
 SECOND CITIZEN
 If war had not so patly been declared,
 Our howitzers and firelocks of themselves
 Would have gone off to shame us! This forenoon
 Some of the Landwehr met me; they are hot
 For setting out, though but few months enrolled.
 ENGLISHMAN
 That moves reflection somewhat. They are young
 For measuring with the veteran file of France!
 FIRST CITIZEN
 Napoleon's army swarms with tender youth,
 His last conscription besomed into it
 Thousands of merest boys. But he contrives
 To mix them in the field with seasoned frames.
 SECOND CITIZEN
 The sadly-seen mistake this country made
 Was that of grounding hostile arms at all.
 We should have fought irreconcilably—
 Have been consistent as the English are.
 The French are our hereditary foes,
 And this adventurer of the saucy sword,

This sacrilegious slighter of our shrines,
 Stands author of all our ills...
 Our harvest fields and fruits he trample on,
 Accumulating ruin in our land.
 Think of what mournings in the last sad war
 Twas his to instigate and answer for!
 Time never can efface the glint of tears
 In palaces, in shops, in fields, in cots,
 From women widowed, sonless, fatherless,
 That then oppressed our eyes. There is no salve
 For such deep harrowings but to fight again;
 The enfranchisement of Europe hangs thereon,
 And long she has lingered for the sign to crush him:
 That signal we have given; the time is come! [Thumping on the table.]
 FIFTH CITIZEN [at another table, looking up from his paper and
 speaking across]
 I see that Russia has declined to aid us,
 And says she knows that Prussia likewise must;
 So that the mission of Prince Schwarzenberg
 To Alexander's Court has closed in failure.
 THIRD CITIZEN
 Ay—through his being honest—fatal sin!—
 Probing too plainly for the Emperor's ears
 His ominous friendship with Napoleon.
 ENGLISHMAN
 Some say he was more than honest with the Tsar;
 Hinting that his becoming an ally
 Makes him accomplice of the Corsican
 In the unprincipled dark overthrow
 Of his poor trusting childish Spanish friends—
 Which gave the Tsar offence.
 THIRD CITIZEN
 And our best bid—
 The last, most delicate dish—a tastelessness.
 FIRST CITIZEN
 What was Prince Schwarzenberg's best bid, I pray?
 THIRD CITIZEN
 The offer of the heir of Austria's hand
 For Alexander's sister the Grand-Duchess.
 ENGLISHMAN
 He could not have accepted, if or no:
 She is inscribed as wife for Bonaparte.

FIRST CITIZEN

I doubt that text!

ENGLISHMAN

Time's context soon will show.

SECOND CITIZEN

The Russian Cabinet can not for long

Resist the ardour of the Russian ranks

To march with us the moment we achieve

Our first loud victory!

[A band is heard playing afar, and shouting. People are seen hurrying past in the direction of the sounds. Enter sixth citizen.]

SIXTH CITIZEN

The Archduke Charles

Is passing the Ringstrasse just by now,

His regiment at his heels!

[The younger sitters jump up with animation, and go out, the elder mostly remaining.]

SECOND CITIZEN

Realm never faced

The grin of a more fierce necessity

For horrid war, than ours at this tense time!

[The sounds of band-playing and huzzaing wane away. Citizens return.]

FIRST CITIZEN

More news, my friends, of swiftly swelling zeal?

RE-ENTERED CITIZENS

Ere passing down the Ring, the Archduke paused

And gave the soldiers speech, enkindling them

As sunrise a confronting throng of panes

That glaze a many-windowed east facade:

Hot volunteers vamp in from vill and plain—

More than we need in the furthest sacrifice!

FIRST, SECOND, ETC., CITIZENS

Huzza! Right so! Good! Forwards! God be praised!

[They stand up, and a clinking of glasses follows, till they subside to quietude and a reperusal of newspapers. Nightfall succeeds. Dancing-rooms are lit up in an opposite street, and dancing begins. The figures are seen gracefully moving round to the throbbing strains of a string-band, which plays a new waltzing movement with a warlike name, soon to spread over Europe. The dancers sing patriotic words as they whirl. The

night closes over.]
[image not archived]

ACT FOURTH

[image not archived]

SCENE I

A ROAD OUT OF VIENNA

[It is morning in early May. Rain descends in torrents, accompanied by peals of thunder. The tepid downpour has caused the trees to assume as by magic a clothing of limp green leafage, and has turned the ruts of the uneven highway into little canals.

A drenched travelling-chariot is passing, with a meagre escort. In the interior are seated four women: the ARCHDUCHESS MARIA LOUISA, in age about eighteen; her stepmother the EMPRESS OF AUSTRIA, third wife of FRANCIS, only four years older than the ARCHDUCHESS; and two ladies of the Austrian Court. Behind come attendant carriages bearing servants and luggage.

The inmates remain for the most part silent, and appear to be in a gloomy frame of mind. From time to time they glance at the moist spring scenes which pass without in a perspective distorted by the rain-drops that slide down the panes, and by the blurring effect of the travellers' breathings. Of the four the one who keeps in the best spirits is the ARCHDUCHESS, a fair, blue-eyed, full-figured, round-lipped maiden.]

MARIA LOUISA

Whether the rain comes in or not I must open the window. Please allow me. [She straightway opens it.]

EMPRESS [groaning]

Yes—open or shut it—I don't care. I am too ill to care for anything! [The carriage jolts into a hole.] O woe! To think that I am driven away from my husband's home in such a miserable conveyance, along such a road, and in such weather as this. [Peal of thunder.] There are his guns!

MARIA LOUISA

No, my dear one. It cannot be his guns. They told us when we started that he was only half-way from Ratisbon hither, so that he must be nearly a hundred miles off as yet; and a large army cannot move fast.

EMPRESS

He should never have been let come nearer than Ratisbon! The victory at Echmuhl was fatal for us. O Echmuhl, Echmuhl! I believe he will overtake us before we get to Buda.

FIRST LADY-IN-WAITING

If so, your Majesty, shall we be claimed as prisoners and marched to Paris?

EMPRESS

Undoubtedly. But I shouldn't much care. It would not be worse than this... I feel sodden all through me, and frowzy, and broken!

[She closes her eyes as if to doze.]

MARIA LOUISA

It is dreadful to see her suffer so! [Shutting the window.] If the roads were not so bad I should not mind. I almost wish we had stayed; though when he arrives the cannonade will be terrible.

FIRST LADY-IN-WAITING

I wonder if he will get into Vienna. Will his men knock down all the houses, madam?

MARIA LOUISA

If he do get in, I am sure his triumph will not be for long. My uncle the Archduke Charles is at his heels! I have been told many important prophecies about Bonaparte's end, which is fast nearing, it is asserted. It is he, they say, who is referred to in the Apocalypse. He is doomed to die this year at Cologne, in an inn called "The Red Crab." I don't attach too much importance to all these predictions, but O, how glad I should be to see them come true!

SECOND LADY-IN-WAITING

So should we all, madam. What would become of his divorce-scheme then?

MARIA LOUISA

Perhaps there is nothing in that report. One can hardly believe such gossip.

SECOND LADY-IN-WAITING

But they say, your Imperial Highness, that he certainly has decided to sacrifice the Empress Josephine, and that at the meeting last October with the Emperor Alexander at Erfurt, it was even settled that he should marry as his second wife the Grand-Duchess Anne.

MARIA LOUISA

I am sure that the Empress her mother will never allow one of the house of Romanoff to marry with a bourgeois Corsican. I wouldn't if I were she!

FIRST LADY-IN-WAITING

Perhaps, your Highness, they are not so particular in Russia, where

they are rather new themselves, as we in Austria, with your ancient dynasty, are in such matters.

MARIA LOUISA

Perhaps not. Though the Empress-mother is a pompous old thing, as I have been told by Prince Schwarzenberg, who was negotiating there last winter. My father says it would be a dreadful misfortune for our country if they were to marry. Though if we are to be exiled I don't see how anything of that sort can matter much... I hope my father is safe!

[An officer of the escort rides up to the carriage window, which is opened.]

EMPRESS [unclosing her eyes]

Any more misfortunes?

OFFICER

A rumour is a-wind, your Majesty,
That the French host, the Emperor in its midst,
Lannes, Massena, and Bessieres in its van,
Advancing hither along the Ratisbon road,
Has seized the castle and town of Ebersberg,
And burnt all down, with frightful massacre,
Vast heaps of dead and wounded being consumed,
So that the streets stink strong with frizzled flesh.—
The enemy, ere this, has crossed the Traun,
Hurling brave Hiller's army back on us,
And marches on Amstetten—thirty miles
Less distant from Vienna from before!

EMPRESS

The Lord show mercy to us! But O why
Did not the Archdukes intercept the foe?

OFFICER

His Highness Archduke Charles, your Majesty,
After his sore repulse Bohemia-wards,
Could not proceed with strength and speed enough
To close in junction with the Archduke John
And Archduke Louis, as was their intent.
So Marshall Lannes swings swiftly on Vienna,
With Oudinot's and Demont's might of foot;
Then Massena and all his mounted men,
And then Napoleon, Guards, Cuirassiers,
And the main body of the Imperial Force.

EMPRESS

Alas for poor Vienna!

OFFICER

Even so!

Your Majesty has fled it none too soon.

[The window is shut, and the procession disappears behind the sheets of rain.]

[image not archived]

SCENE II

THE ISLAND OF LOBAU, WITH WAGRAM BEYOND

[The northern horizon at the back of the bird's-eye prospect is the high ground stretching from the Bisamberg on the left to the plateau of Wagram on the right. In front of these elevations spreads the wide plain of the Marchfeld, open, treeless, and with scarcely a house upon it.

In the foreground the Danube crosses the scene with a graceful slowness, looping itself round the numerous wooded islands therein. The largest of these, immediately under the eye, is the Lobau, which stands like a knot in the gnarled grain represented by the running river.

On this island can be discerned, closely packed, an enormous dark multitude of foot, horse, and artillery in French uniforms, the numbers reaching to a hundred and seventy thousand.

Lifting our eyes to discover what may be opposed to them we perceive on the Wagram plateau aforesaid, and right and left in front of it, extended lines of Austrians, whitish and glittering, to the number of a hundred and forty thousand.

The July afternoon turns to evening, the evening to twilight.

A species of simmer which pervades the living spectacle raises expectation till the very air itself seems strained with suspense.

A huge event of some kind is awaiting birth.]

DUMB SHOW

The first change under the cloak of night is that the tightly packed regiments on the island are got under arms. The soldiery are like a thicket of reeds in which every reed should be a man.

A large bridge connects the island with the further shore, as well as some smaller bridges. Opposite are high redoubts and ravelins that the Austrians have constructed for opposing the passage across, which the French ostentatiously set themselves to attempt by the large bridge, amid heavy cannonading.

But the movement is a feint, though this is not perceived by the Austrians as yet. The real movement is on the right hand of the

foreground, behind a spur of the isle, and out of sight of the enemy; where several large rafts and flat boats, each capable of carrying three hundred men, are floated out from a screened creek. Chosen battalions enter upon these, which immediately begin to cross with their burden. Simultaneously from other screened nooks secretly prepared floating bridges, in sections, are moved forth, joined together, and defended by those who crossed on the rafts. At two o'clock in the morning the thousands of cooped soldiers begin to cross the bridges, producing a scene which, on such a scale, was never before witnessed in the history of war. A great discharge from the batteries accompanies this manoeuvre, arousing the Austrians to a like cannonade.

The night has been obscure for summer-time, and there is no moon. The storm now breaks in a tempestuous downpour, with lightning and thunder. The tumult of nature mingles so fantastically with the tumult of projectiles that flaming bombs and forked flashes cut the air in company, and the noise from the mortars alternates with the noise from the clouds.

From bridge to bridge and back again a gloomy-eyed figure stalks, as it has stalked the whole night long, with the restlessness of a wild animal. Plastered with mud, and dribbling with rain-water, it bears no resemblance to anything dignified or official. The figure is that of NAPOLEON, urging his multitudes over.

By daylight the great mass of the men is across the water. At six the rain ceases, the mist uncovers the face of the sun, which bristles on the helmets and bayonets of the French. A hum of amazement rises from the Austrian hosts, who turn staring faces southward and perceive what has happened, and the columns of their enemies standing to arms on the same side of the stream with themselves, and preparing to turn their left wing.

NAPOLEON rides along the front of his forces, which now spread out upon the plain, and are ranged in order of battle.

Dumb Show ends, and the point of view changes.

[image not archived]

SCENE III

THE FIELD OF WAGRAM

[The battlefield is now viewed reversely, from the windows of a mansion at Wolkersdorf, to the rear of the Austrian position.

The aspect of the windows is nearly south, and the prospect includes the plain of the Marchfeld, with the isled Danube and Lobau in the

extreme distance. Ten miles to the south-west, rightwards, the faint summit of the tower of St. Stephen's, Vienna, appears. On the middle-left stands the compact plateau of Wagram, so regularly shaped as to seem as if constructed by art. On the extreme left the July sun has lately risen.

Inside the room are discovered the EMPEROR FRANCIS and some household officers in attendance; with the War-Minister and Secretaries at a table at the back. Through open doors can be seen in an outer apartment adjutants, equerries, aides, and other military men. An officer in waiting enters.]

OFFICER

During the night the French have shifted, sire,
And much revised their stations of the eve
By thwart and wheeling moves upon our left,
And on our centre—projects unforeseen
Till near accomplished.

FRANCIS

But I am advised
By oral message that the Archduke Charles,
Since the sharp strife last night, has mended, too,
His earlier dispositions, and has sped
Strong orders to the Archduke John, to bring
In swiftest marches all the force he holds,
And fall with heavy impact on the French
From nigh their rear?

OFFICER

Tis good, sire; such a swoop
Will raise an obstacle to their retreat
And refuge in the fastness of the isle;
And show this victory-gorged adventurer
That striking with a river in his rear
Is not the safest tactic to be played
Against an Austrian front equipt like ours!

[The EMPEROR FRANCIS and others scrutinize through their glasses the positions and movements of the Austrian divisions, which appear on the plain as pale masses, emitting flashes from arms and helmets under the July rays, and reaching from the Tower of Neusiedel on the left, past Wagram, into the village of Stammersdorf on the right. Beyond their lines are spread out the darker-hued French, almost parallel to the Austrians.]

FRANCIS

Those moving masses toward the right I deem

The forces of Klenau and Kollowrath,
Sent to support Prince John of Lichtenstein
I his attack that way?

[An interval.]

Now that they've gained
The right there, why is not the attack begun?

OFFICER

They are beginning on the left wing, sire.

[The EMPEROR resumes his glass and beholds bodies of men descending from the hills by Neusiedel, and crossing the Russbach river towards the French—a movement which has been going on for some time.]

FRANCIS [turning thither]

Where we are weakest! It surpasses me
To understand why was our centre thinned
To pillar up our right already strong,
Where nought is doing, while our left assault
Stands ill-supported?

[Time passes in silence.]

Yes, it is so. See,

The enemy strikes Rossenberg in flank,
Compelling him to fall behind the Russbach!

[The EMPEROR gets excited, and his face perspires. At length he cannot watch through his glass, and walks up and down.]

Penned useless here my nerves annoy my sight!

Inform me what you note.—I should opine

The Wagram height behind impregnable?

[Another silence, broken by the distant roar of the guns.]

OFFICER

Klenau and Kollowrath are pounding on!

To turn the enemy's left with our strong right

Is, after all, a plan that works out well.

Hiller and Lichtenstein conjoin therein.

FRANCIS

I hear from thence appalling cannonades.

OFFICER

Tis their, your Majesty. Now we shall see

If the French read that there the danger lies.

FRANCIS

I only pray that Bonaparte refrain

From spying danger there till all too late!

OFFICER [involuntarily, after a pause]

Ah, Heaven!

FRANCIS [turning sharply]

Well, well? What changes figure now?

OFFICER

They pierce our centre, sire! We are, despite,
Not centrally so weak as I supposed.

Well done, Bellegarde!

FRANCIS [glancing to the centre]

And what has he well done?

OFFICER

The French in fierce fume broke through Aderklaa;
But Bellegarde, pricking along the plain behind,
Has charged and driven them back disorderly.
The Archduke Charles bounds thither, as I shape,
In person to support him!

[The EMPEROR returns to his spyglass; and they and others watch in
silence, sometimes the right of their front, sometimes the centre.]

FRANCIS

It is so!

That the right attack of ours spells victory,
And Austria's grand salvation!... [Times passes.] Turn your glass,
And closely scan Napoleon and his aides
Hand-galloping towards his centre-left
To strengthen it against the brave Bellegarde.
Does your eye reach him?—That white horse, alone
In front of those that move so rapidly.

OFFICER

It does, sire; though my glass can conjure not
So cunningly as yours... that horse must be
The famed Euphrates—him the Persian king
Sent Bonaparte as gift.

[A silence. NAPOLEON reaches a carriage that is moving across.
It bears MASSENA, who, having received a recent wound, is unable
to ride.]

FRANCIS

See, the white horse and horseman pause beside
A coach for some strange reason rolling there...
That white-horsed rider—yes!—is Bonaparte,
By the aides hovering round...
New war-wiles have been worded; we shall spell
Their purport soon enough! [An interval.]
The French take heart
To stand to our battalions steadfastly,

And hold their ground, having the Emperor near!
[Time passes. An aide-de-camp enters.]

AIDE

The Archduke Charles is pierced in the shoulder, sire;
He strove too far in beating back the French
At Aderklaa, and was nearly ta'en.
The wound's not serious.—On our right we win,
And deem the battle ours.
[Enter another aide-de-camp.]

SECOND AIDE

Your Majesty,
We have borne them back through Aspern village-street
And Essling is recovered. What counts more,
Their bridges to the rear we have nearly grasped,
And panic-struck they crowd the few left free,
Choking the track, with cries of "All is lost!"

FRANCIS

Then is the land delivered. God be praised!
[Exeunt aides. An interval, during which the EMPEROR and his
companions again remain anxiously at their glasses.]
There is a curious feature I discern
To have come upon the battle. On our right
We gain ground rapidly; towards the left
We lose it; and the unjudged consequence
Is that the armies; whole commingling mass
Moves like a monstrous wheel. I like it not!
[Enter another aide-de-camp.]

THIRD AIDE

Our left wing, sire, recedes before Davout,
Whom nothing can withstand! Two corps he threw
Across the Russbach up to Neusiedel,
While he himself assailed the place in front.
Of the divisions one pressed on and on,
Till lodged atop. They would have been hurled back—

FRANCIS

But how goes it with us in sum? pray say!

THIRD AIDE

We have been battered off the eastern side
Of Wagram plateau.

FRANCIS

Where's the Archduke John?
Why comes he not? One man of his here now

Were worth a host anon. And yet he tarries!

[Exit third aide. Time passes, while they reconnoitre the field with strained eyes.]

Our centre-right, it seems, round Neusiedel,
Is being repulsed! May the kind Heaven forbid
That Hesse Homberg should be yielding there!

[The Minister in attendance comes forward, and the EMPEROR consults him; then walking up and down in silence. Another aide-de-camp enters.]

FOURTH AIDE

Sire, Neusiedel has just been wrenched from us,
And the French right is on the Wagram crest;
Nordmann has fallen, and Veczay: Hesse Homberg,
Warteachben, Muger—almost all our best—
Bleed more or less profusely!

[A gloomy silence. Exit fourth aide. Ten minutes pass. Enter an officer in waiting.]

FRANCIS

What guns are those that groan from Wagram height?

OFFICER

Alas, Davout's! I have climbed the roof-top, sire,
And there discerned the truth.

[Cannonade continues. A long interval of suspense. The EMPEROR returns to his glass.]

FRANCIS

A part of it!

There seems to be a grim, concerted lunge
By the whole strength of France upon our right,
Centre, and left wing simultaneously!

OFFICER

Most viciously upon the centre, sire,
If I mistook not, hard by Sussenbrunn;
The assault is led by Bonaparte in person,
Who shows himself with marvellous recklessness,
Yet like a phantom-fiend receives no hurt.

FRANCIS [still gazing]

Ha! Now the Archduke Charles has seen the intent,
And taken steps against it. Sussenbrunn
Must be the threatened thing. [Silence.] What an advance!—
Straight hitherward. Our centre girdles them.—
Surely they'll not persist? Who heads that charge?
OFFICER

They say Macdonald, sire.

FRANCIS

Meagrest remains

Will there be soon of those in that advance!

We are burning them to bones by our hot fire.

They are almost circumscribed: if fully so

The battle's ours! What's that behind them, eh?

OFFICER

Their last reserves, that they may feed the front,

And sterilize our hope!

FRANCIS

Yes, their reserve—

Dragoons and cuirassiers—charge in support.

You see their metal gleaming as they come.

Well, it is neck or nothing for them now!

OFFICER

It's nothing, sire. Their charge of cavalry

Has desperately failed.

FRANCIS

Their foot press on,

However, with a battery in front

Which deals the foulest damage done us yet. [Time passes.]

They ARE effecting lodgment, after all.

Who would have reckoned on't—our men so firm!

[Re-enter first aide-de-camp.]

FIRST AIDE

The Archduke Charles retreats, your majesty;

And the issue wears a dirty look just now.

FRANCIS [gloomily]

Yes: I have seen the signs for some good while.

But he retreats with blows, and orderly.

[Time passes, till the sun has rounded far towards the west. The features of the battle now materially change. The French have regained Aspern and Essling; the Austrian army is doubled back from the Danube and from the heights of Wagram, which, as viewed from Wolkersdorf, face the afternoon shine, the French established thereon glittering in the rays.]

FRANCIS [choking a sigh]

The turn has passed. We are worsted, but not overwhelmed!...

The French advance is laboured, and but slow.

—This might have been another-coloured day

If but the Archduke John had joined up promptly;

Yet still he lags!
 ANOTHER OFFICER [lately entered]
 He's just now coming, sire.
 His columns glimmer in the Frenchmen's rear.
 Past Siebenbrunn's and Loebensdorf's smoked hills.
 FRANCIS [impatiently]
 Ay—coming NOW! Why could he not be COME!
 [They watch intently.]
 We can see nothing of that side from here.
 [Enter a general officer, who speaks to the Minister at the back
 of the room.]
 MINISTER [coming forward]
 Your Majesty, I now have to suggest,
 Pursuant to conclusions reached this morn,
 That since the front and flower of all our force
 Is seen receding to the Bisamberg,
 These walls no longer yield safe shade for you,
 Or facile outlook. Scouts returning say
 Either Davout, or Bonaparte himself,
 With the mid-columns of his forward corps,
 Will bear up hitherward in fierce pursuit,
 And may intrude beneath this very roof.
 Not yet, I think; it may not be to-night;
 But we should stand prepared.
 FRANCIS
 If we must go
 We'll go with a good grace, unfeignedly!
 Who knows to-morrow may not see regained
 What we have lost to-day?
 [Re-enter fourth aide-de-camp.]
 FOURTH AIDE [breathlessly]
 The Archduke John,
 Discerning our main musters in retreat,
 Abandons an advance that throws on him
 The enemy's whole brunt if he bear on.
 FRANCIS
 Alas for his devotion! Let us go.
 Such weight of sadness as we shoulder now
 Will wring us down to sleep in stall or sty,
 If even that be found!... Think! Bonaparte,
 By reckless riskings of his life and limb,
 Has turned the steelyard of our strength to-day

Whilst I have idled here!... May brighter times
Attend the cause of Europe far in Spain,
And British blood flow not, as ours, in vain!
[Exeunt the EMPEROR FRANCIS, minister, officers, and attendants.
The night comes, and the scene is obscured.]
[image not archived]

SCENE IV

THE FIELD OF TALAVERA

[It is the same month and weather as in the preceding scene.
Talavera town, on the river Tagus, is at the extreme right of the
foreground; a mountain range on the extreme left.
The allied army under SIR ARTHUR WELLESLEY stretches between—the
English on the left, the Spanish on the right—part holding a hill
to the left-centre of the scene, divided from the mountains by a
valley, and part holding a redoubt to the right-centre. This army
of more than fifty thousand all told, of which twenty-two thousand
only are English, has its back to the spectator.
Beyond, in a wood of olive, oak, and cork, are the fifty to sixty
thousand French, facing the spectator and the allies. Their right
includes a strong battery upon a hill which fronts the one on the
English left.
Behind all, the heights of Salinas close the prospect, the small
river Alberche flowing at their foot from left to right into the
Tagus, which advances in foreshortened perspective to the town at
the right front corner of the scene as aforesaid.]

DUMB SHOW

The hot and dusty July afternoon having turned to twilight, shady
masses of men start into motion from the French position, come towards
the foreground, silently ascend the hill on the left of the English,
and assail the latter in a violent outburst of fire and lead. They
nearly gain possession of the hill ascended.

CHORUS OF RUMOURS [aerial music]

Talavera tongues it as ten o' the night-time:
Now come Ruffin's slaughterers surging upward,
Backed by bold Vilatte's! From the vale Lapisse, too,
Darkly outswells there!
Down the vague veiled incline the English fling them,
Bended bayonets prodding opponents backward:
So the first fierce charge of the ardent Frenchmen
England repels there!

Having fallen back into the darkness the French presently reascend in yet larger masses. The high square knapsack which every English foot-soldier carries, and his shako, and its tuft, outline themselves against the dim light as the ranks stand awaiting the shock.

CHORUS OF RUMOURS

Pushing spread they!—shout as they reach the summit!—
Strength and stir new-primed in their plump battalions:
Puffs of barbed flame blown on the lines opposing
Higher and higher.

There those hold them mute, though at speaking distance—
Mute, while clicking flints, and the crash of volleys
Whelm the weighted gloom with immense distraction
Pending their fire.

Fronting heads, helmets, brows can each ranksman read there,
Epaulettes, hot cheeks, and the shining eyeball,
[Called a trice from gloom by the fleeting pan-flash]
Pressing them nigher!

The French again fall back in disorder into the hollow, and LAPISSE draws off on the right. As the sinking sound of the muskets tells what has happened the English raise a shout.

CHORUS OF PITIES

Thus the dim nocturnal embroil of conflict
Closes with the roar of receding gun-fire.
Harness loosened then, and their day-long strenuous
Temper unbending,
Worn-out lines lie down where they late stood staunchly—
Cloaks around them rolled—by the bivouac embers:
There at dawn to stake in the dynasts' death-game
All, till the ending!
[image not archived]

SCENE V

THE SAME

DUMB SHOW [continued]

The morning breaks. There is another murderous attempt to dislodge the English from the hill, the assault being pressed with a determination that excites the admiration of the English themselves.

The French are seen descending into the valley, crossing it, and climbing it on the English side under the fire of HILL'S whole division, all to no purpose. In their retreat they leave behind them on the slopes nearly two thousand lying.

The day advances to noon, and the air trembles in the intense heat.
The combat flags, and is suspended.

SPIRIT OF THE PITIES

What do I see but thirsty, throbbing bands
From these inimic hosts defiling down
In homely need towards the little stream
That parts their enmities, and drinking there!
They get to grasping hands across the rill,
Sealing their sameness as earth's sojourners.—
What more could plead the wryness of the time
Than such unstudied piteous pantomimes!

SPIRIT IRONIC

It is only that Life's queer mechanics chance to work out in this
grotesque shape just now. The groping tentativeness of an Immanent
Will [as grey old Years describes it] cannot be asked to learn logic
at this time of day! The spectacle of Its instruments, set to riddle
one another through, and then to drink together in peace and concord,
is where the humour comes in, and makes the play worth seeing!

SPIRIT SINISTER

Come, Sprite, don't carry your ironies too far, or you may wake up
the Unconscious Itself, and tempt It to let all the gory clock-work
of the show run down to spite me!

DUMB SHOW [continuing]

The drums roll, and the men of the two nations part from their
comradeship at the Alberche brook, the dark masses of the French
army assembling anew. SIR ARTHUR WELLESLEY has seated himself on
a mound that commands a full view of the contested hill, and
remains there motionless a long time. When the French form for
battle he is seen to have come to a conclusion. He mounts, gives
his orders, and the aides ride off.

The French advance steadily through the sultry atmosphere, the
skirmishers in front, and the columns after, moving, yet seemingly
motionless. Their eighty cannon peal out and their shots mow every
space in the line of them. Up the great valley and the terraces of
the hill whose fame is at that moment being woven, comes VILLATE,
boring his way with foot and horse, and RUFFIN'S men following
behind.

According to the order given, the Twenty-third Light Dragoons and
the German Hussars advance at a chosen moment against the head of
these columns. On the way they disappear.

SPIRIT OF THE PITIES

Why this bedevilment? What can have chanced?

SPIRIT OF RUMOUR

It so befalls that as their chargers near
The inimical wall of flesh with its iron frise,
A treacherous chasm uptrips them: zealous men
And docile horses roll to dismal death
And horrid mutilation.

SPIRIT OF THE PITIES

Those who live
Even now advance! I'll see no more. Relate.

SPIRIT OF RUMOUR

Yes, those pant on. Then further Frenchmen cross,
And Polish Lancers, and Westphalian Horse,
Who ring around these luckless Islanders,
And sweep them down like reeds by the river-bank
In scouring floods; till scarce a man remains.
Meanwhile on the British right SEBASTIANI'S corps has precipitated
itself in column against GENERAL CAMPBELL'S division, the division
of LAPISSE against the centre, and at the same time the hill on the
English left is again assaulted. The English and their allies are
pressed sorely here, the bellowing battery tearing lanes through
their masses.

SPIRIT OF RUMOUR [continuing]

The French reserves of foot and horse now on,
Smiting the Islanders in breast and brain
Till their mid-lines are shattered... Now there ticks
The moment of the crisis; now the next,
Which brings the turning stroke.

SIR ARTHUR WELLESLEY sends down the Forty-eighth regiment under
COLONEL DONELLAN to support the wasting troops. It advances amid
those retreating, opening to let them pass.

SPIRIT OF THE RUMOUR [continuing]

The pales, enerved,
The hitherto unflinching enemy!
Lapisse is pierced to death; the flagging French
Decline into the hollows whence they came.
The too exhausted English and reduced
Lack strength to follow.—Now the western sun,
Conning with unmoved visage quick and dead,
Gilds horsemen slackening, and footmen stilled,
Till all around breathes drowsed hostility.
Last, the swealed herbage lifts a leering light,
And flames traverse the field; and hurt and slain

Opposed, opposers, in a common plight
Are scorched together on the dusk champaign.
The fire dies down, and darkness enwraps the scene.
[image not archived]

SCENE VI

BRIGHTON. THE ROYAL PAVILION

[It is the birthday dinner-party of the PRINCE OF WALES. In the floridly decorated banqueting-room stretch tables spread with gold and silver plate, and having artificial fountains in their midst.

Seated at the tables are the PRINCE himself as host—rosy, well curled, and affable—the DUKES OF YORK, CLARENCE, KENT, SUSSEX, CUMBERLAND, and CAMBRIDGE, with many noblemen, including LORDS HEADFORT, BERKELEY, EGREMONT, CHICHESTER, DUDLEY, SAY AND SELE,

SOUTHAMPTON, HEATHFIELD, ERSKINE, KEITH, C. SOMERSET, G. CAVENDISH,

R. SEYMOUR, and others; SIR C. POLE, SIR E.G. DE CRESPIGNY, MR. SHERIDAN; Generals, Colonels, and Admirals, and the REV. MR. SCOTT.

The PRINCE'S band plays in the adjoining room. The banquet is drawing to its close, and a boisterous conversation is in progress.

Enter COLONEL BLOOMFIELD with a dispatch for the PRINCE, who looks it over amid great excitement in the company. In a few moments silence is called.]

PRINCE OF WALES

I have the joy, my lords and gentlemen,
To rouse you with the just imported tidings
From General Wellesley through Lord Castlereagh
Of a vast victory [noisy cheers] over the French in Spain.

The place—called Talavera de la Reyna

[If I pronounce it rightly]—long unknown,

Wears not the crest and blazonry of fame! [Cheers.]

The heads and chief contents of the dispatch

I read you as succinctly as I can. [Cheers.]

SHERIDAN [singing sotto voce]

"Now foreign foemen die and fly,

Dammy, we'll drink little England dry!"

[The PRINCE reads the parts of the dispatch that describe the battle, amid intermittent cheers.]

PRINCE OF WALES [continuing]

Such is the substance of the news received,

Which, after Wagram, strikes us genially
 As sudden sunrise through befogged night shades!
 SHERIDAN [privately]
 By God, that's good, sir! You are a poet born, while the rest of us
 are but made, and bad at that.
 [The health of the army in Spain is drunk with acclamations.]
 PRINCE OF WALES [continuing]
 In this achievement we, alas! have lost
 Too many! Yet suck blanks must ever be.—
 Mackenzie, Langworth, Beckett of the Guards,
 Have fallen of ours; while of the enemy
 Generals Lapisse and Morlot are laid low.—
 Drink to their memories!
 [They drink in silence.]
 Other news, my friends,
 Received to-day is of like hopeful kind.
 The Great War-Expedition to the Scheldt [Cheers.]
 Which lately sailed, has found a favouring wind,
 And by this hour has touched its destined shores.
 The enterprise will soon be hot aglow,
 The invaders making first the Cadsand coast,
 And then descending on Walcheren Isle.
 But items of the next step are withheld
 Till later days, from obvious policy. [Cheers.]
 [Faint throbbing sounds, like the notes of violincellos and
 contrabassos, reach the ear from some building without as the
 speaker pauses.
 In worthy emulation of us here
 The county holds to-night a birthday ball,
 Which flames with all the fashion of the town.
 I have been asked to patronize their revel,
 And sup with them, and likewise you, my guests.
 We have good reason, with such news to bear!
 Thither we haste and join our loyal friends,
 And stir them with this live intelligence
 Of our staunch regiments on the Spanish plains. [Applause.]
 With them we'll now knit hands and beat the ground,
 And bring in dawn as we whirl round and round!
 There are some fair ones in their set to-night,
 And such we need here in our bachelor-plight. [Applause.]
 [The PRINCE, his brothers, and a large proportion of the other
 Pavilion guests, swagger out in the direction of the Castle

assembly-rooms adjoining, and the deserted banqueting-hall grows dark. In a few moments the back of the scene opens, revealing the assembly-rooms behind.]
[image not archived]

SCENE VII

THE SAME. THE ASSEMBLY ROOMS

[The rooms are lighted with candles in brass chandeliers, and a dance is in full movement to the strains of a string-band. A signal is given, shortly after the clock has struck eleven, by MR. FORTH, Master of Ceremonies.]

FORTH

His Royal Highness comes, though somewhat late,
But never too late for welcome! [Applause.] Dancers, stand,
That we may do fit homage to the Prince
Who soon may shine our country's gracious king.
[After a brief stillness a commotion is heard at the door, the band strikes up the National air, and the PRINCE enters, accompanied by the rest of the visitors from the Pavilion. The guests who have been temporarily absent now crowd in, till there is hardly space to stand.]

PRINCE OF WALES [wiping his face and whispering to Sheridan]
What shall I say to fit their feeling here?

Damn me, that other speech has stumped me quite!

SHERIDAN [whispering]

If heat be evidence of loy—

PRINCE OF WALES

If what?

SHERIDAN

If heat be evidence of loyalty,
Et caetera—something quaint like that might please 'em.

PRINCE OF WALES [to the company]

If heat be evidence of loyalty,
This room affords it truly without question;
If heat be not, then its accompaniment
Most surely 'tis to-night. The news I bring,
Good ladies, friends, and gentlemen, perchance
You have divined already? That our arms—
Engaged to thwart Napoleon's tyranny
Over the jaunty, jocund land of Spain
Even to the highest apex of our strength—

Are rayed with victory! [Cheers.] Lengthy was the strife
And fierce, and hot; and sore the suffering;
But proudly we endured it; and shall hear,
No doubt, of its far consequence
Ere many days. I'll read the details sent. [Cheers.]
[He reads again from the dispatch amid more cheering, the ball-
room guests crowding round. When he has done he answers questions;
then continuing:

Meanwhile our interest is, if possible,
As keenly waked elsewhere. Into the Scheldt
Some forty thousand bayonets and swords,
And twoscore ships o' the line, with frigates, sloops,
And gunboats sixty more, make headway now,
Bleaching the waters with their bellying sails;
Or maybe they already anchor there,
And that level ooze of Walcheren shore
Ring with the voices of that landing host
In every twang of British dialect,
Clamorous to loosen fettered Europe's chain! [Cheers.]
A NOBLE LORD [aside to Sheridan]
Prinny's outpouring tastes suspiciously like your brew, Sheridan.
I'll be damned if it is his own concoction. How d'ye sell it a
gallon?

SHERIDAN

I don't deal that way nowadays. I give the recipe, and charge a
duty on the gauging. It is more artistic, and saves trouble.
[The company proceed to the supper-rooms, and the ball-room sinks
into solitude.]

SPIRIT OF THE PITIES

So they pass on. Let be!—But what is this—
A moan?—all frailly floating from the east
To usward, even from the forenamed isle?...
Would I had not broke nescience, to inspect
A world so ill-contrived!

SPIRIT OF THE YEARS

But since thou hast
We'll hasten to the isle; and thou'lt behold—
Such as it is—the scene its coasts enfold.
[image not archived]

SCENE VIII

WALCHEREN

[A marshy island at the mouth of the Scheldt, lit by the low sunshine of an evening in late summer. The horizontal rays from the west lie in yellow sheaves across the vapours that the day's heat has drawn from the sweating soil. Sour grasses grow in places, and strange fishy smells, now warm, now cold, pass along. Brass-hued and opalescent bubbles, compounded of many gases, rise where passing feet have trodden the damper spots. At night the place is the haunt of the Jack-lantern.]

DUMB SHOW

A vast army is encamped here, and in the open spaces are infantry on parade—skeletoned men, some flushed, some shivering, who are kept moving because it is dangerous to stay still. Every now and then one falls down, and is carried away to a hospital with no roof, where he is laid, bedless, on the ground.

In the distance soldiers are digging graves for the funerals which are to take place after dark, delayed till then that the sight of so many may not drive the living melancholy-mad. Faint noises are heard in the air.

SHADE OF THE EARTH

What storm is this of souls dissolved in sighs,
And what the dingy doom it signifies?

SPIRIT OF THE PITIES

We catch a lamentation shaped thuswise:

CHORUS OF THE PITIES [aerial music]

"We who withstood the blasting blaze of war
When marshalled by the gallant Moore awhile,
Beheld the grazing death-bolt with a smile,
Closed combat edge to edge and bore to bore,
Now rot upon this Isle!

The ever wan morass, the dune, the blear"
Sandweed, and tepid pool, and putrid smell,
Emaciate purpose to a fractious fear,
Beckon the body to its last low cell—
A chink no chart will tell.

"O ancient Delta, where the fen-lights flit!
Ignoble sediment of loftier lands,
Thy humour clings about our hearts and hands
And solves us to its softness, till we sit
As we were part of it.

Such force as fever leaves maddened now,"
 With tidings trickling in from day to day
 Of others' differing fortunes, wording how
 They yield their lives to baulk a tyrant's sway—
 Yield them not vainly, they!
 "In champaigns green and purple, far and near,
 In town and thorpe where quiet spire-cocks turn,
 Through vales, by rocks, beside the brooding burn
 Echoes the aggressor's arrogant career;
 And we pent pithless here!
 Here, where each creeping day the creeping file"
 Draws past with shouldered comrades score on score,
 Bearing them to their lightless last asile,
 Where weary wave-wails from the clammy shore
 Will reach their ears no more.
 "We might have fought, and had we died, died well,
 Even if in dynasts' discords not our own;
 Our death-spot some sad haunter might have shown,
 Some tongue have asked our sires or sons to tell
 The tale of how we fell;
 But such be chanced not. Like the mist we fade,"
 No lustrous lines engrave in story we,
 Our country's chiefs, for their own fames afraid,
 Will leave our names and fates by this pale sea,
 To perish silently!"

SPIRIT OF THE YEARS

Why must ye echo as mechanic mimes
 These mortal minion's bootless cadences,
 Played on the stops of their anatomy
 As is the mewling music on the strings
 Of yonder ship-masts by the unweeting wind,
 Or the frail tune upon this withering sedge
 That holds its papery blades against the gale?
 —Men pass to dark corruption, at the best,
 Ere I can count five score: these why not now?—
 The Immanent Shaper builds Its beings so
 Whether ye sigh their sighs with them or no!
 The night fog enwraps the isle and the dying English army.
 [image not archived]

ACT FIFTH

[image not archived]

SCENE I

PARIS. A BALLROOM IN THE HOUSE OF CAMBACERES

[The many-candled saloon at the ARCH-CHANCELLOR'S is visible through a draped opening, and a crowd of masked dancers in fantastic costumes revolve, sway, and intermingle to the music that proceeds from an alcove at the further end of the same apartment. The front of the scene is a withdrawing-room of smaller size, now vacant, save for the presence of one sombre figure, that of NAPOLEON, seated and apparently watching the moving masquerade.]

SPIRIT OF THE PITIES

Napoleon even now embraces not
From stress of state affairs, which hold him grave
Through revels that might win the King of Spleen
To toe a measure! I would speak with him.

SPIRIT OF THE YEARS

Speak if thou wilt whose speech nor mars nor mends!

SPIRIT OF THE PITIES [into Napoleon's ear]

Why thus and thus Napoleon? Can it be
That Wagram with its glories, shocks, and shames,
Still leaves athirst the palate of thy pride?

NAPOLEON [answering as in soliloquy]

The trustless, timorous lease of human life
Warns me to hedge in my diplomacy.
The sooner, then, the safer! Ay, this eve,
This very night, will I take steps to rid
My morrows of the weird contingencies
That vision round and make one hollow-eyed...
The unexpected, lurid death of Lannes—
Rigid as iron, reaped down like a straw—
Tiptoed Assassination haunting round
In unthought thoroughfares, the near success
Of Staps the madman, argue to forbid
The riskful blood of my previsioned line
And potency for dynastic empery
To linger vialled in my veins alone.
Perhaps within this very house and hour,

Under an innocent mask of Love or Hope,
 Some enemy queues my ways to coffin me...
 When at the first clash of the late campaign,
 A bold belief in Austria's star prevailed,
 There pulsed quick pants of expectation round
 Among the cowering kings, that too well told
 What would have fared had I been overthrown!
 So; I must send down shoots to future time
 Who'll plant my standard and my story there;
 And a way opens.—Better I had not
 Bespoke a wife from Alexander's house.
 Not there now lies my look. But done is done!
 [The dance ends and masks enter, BERTHIER among them. NAPOLEON
 beckons to him, and he comes forward.]
 God send you find amid this motley crew
 Frivolities enough, friend Berthier—eh?
 My thoughts have worn oppressive shades despite such!
 What scandals of me do they bandy here?
 These close disguises render women bold—
 Their shames being of the light, not of the thing—
 And your sagacity has garnered much,
 I make no doubt, of ill and good report,
 That marked our absence from the capital?
 BERTHIER
 Methinks, your Majesty, the enormous tale
 Of your campaign, like Aaron's serpent-rod,
 Has swallowed up the smaller of its kind.
 Some speak, 'tis true, in counterpoise thereto,
 Of English deeds by Talavera town,
 Though blurred by their exploit at Walcheren,
 And all its crazy, crass futilities.
 NAPOLEON
 Yet was the exploit well featured in design,
 Large in idea, and imaginative;
 I had not deemed the blinkered English folk
 So capable of view. Their fate contrived
 To place an idiot at the helm of it,
 Who marred its working, else it had been hard
 If things had not gone seriously for us.
 —But see, a lady saunters hitherward
 Whose gait proclaims her Madame Metternich,
 One that I fain would speak with.

[NAPOLEON rises and crosses the room toward a lady-masker who has just appeared in the opening. BERTHIER draws off, and the EMPEROR, unceremoniously taking the lady's arm, brings her forward to a chair, and sits down beside her as dancing is resumed.]

MADAME METTERNICH

In a flash

I recognized you, sire; as who would not
The bearer of such deep-delved character?

NAPOLEON

The devil, madame, take your piercing eyes!
It's hard I cannot prosper in a game
That every coxcomb plays successfully.
—So here you are still, though your loving lord
Disports him at Vienna?

MADAME METTERNICH

Paris, true,
Still holds me; though in quiet, save to-night,
When I have been expressly prayed come hither,
Or I had not left home.

NAPOLEON

I sped that Prayer!—
I have a wish to put a case to you,
Wherein a woman's judgment, such as yours,
May be of signal service. [He lapses into reverie.]

MADAME METTERNICH

Well? The case—

NAPOLEON

Is marriage—mine.

MADAME METTERNICH

It is beyond me, sire!

NAPOLEON

You glean that I have decided to dissolve
[Pursuant to monitions murmured long]
My union with the present Empress—formed
Without the Church's due authority?

MADAME METTERNICH

Vaguely. And that light tentatives have winged
Betwixt your Majesty and Russia's court,
To moot that one of their Grand Duchesses
Should be your Empress-wife. Nought else I know.

NAPOLEON

There have been such approachings; more, worse luck.

Last week Champagny wrote to Alexander
Asking him for his sister—yes or no.

MADAME METTERNICH

What "worse luck" lies in that, your Majesty,
If severance from the Empress Josephine
Be fixed unalterably?

NAPOLEON

This worse luck lies there:

If your Archduchess, Marie Louise the fair,
Would straight accept my hand, I'd offer it,
And throw the other over. Faith, the Tsar
Has shown such backwardness in answering me,
Time meanwhile trotting, that I have ample ground
For such withdrawal.—Madame, now, again,
Will your Archduchess marry me or no?

MADAME METTERNICH

Your sudden questions quite confound my sense!
It is impossible to answer them.

NAPOLEON

Well, madame, now I'll put it to you thus:
Were you in the Archduchess Marie's place
Would you accept my hand—and heart therewith?

MADAME METTERNICH

I should refuse you—most assuredly!

NAPOLEON [laughing roughly]

Ha-ha! That's frank. And devilish cruel too!
—Well, write to your husband. Ask him what he thinks,
And let me know.

MADAME METTERNICH

Indeed, sire, why should I?

There goes the Ambassador, Prince Schwarzenberg,
Successor to my spouse. He's now the groove
And proper conduit of diplomacy
Through whom to broach this matter to his Court.

NAPOLEON

Do you, then, broach it through him, madame, pray;
Now, here, to-night.

MADAME METTERNICH

I will, informally,
To humour you, on this recognizance,
That you leave not the business in my hands,
But clothe your project in official guise

Through him to-morrow; so safeguarding me
From foolish seeming, as the babbler forth
Of a fantastic and unheard of dream.

NAPOLEON

I'll send Eugene to him, as you suggest.
Meanwhile prepare him. Make your stand-point this:
Children are needful to my dynasty,
And if one woman cannot mould them for me,
Why, then, another must.

[Exit NAPOLEON abruptly. Dancing continues. MADAME METTERNICH
sits on, musing. Enter SCHWARZENBERG.]

MADAME METTERNICH

The Emperor has just left me. We have tapped
This theme and that; his empress and—his next.
Ay, so! Now, guess you anything?

SCHWARZENBERG

Of her?

No more than that the stock of Romanoff
Will not supply the spruce commodity.

MADAME METTERNICH

And that the would-be customer turns toe
To our shop in Vienna.

SCHWARZENBERG

Marvellous;

And comprehensible but as the dream
Of Delaborde, of which I have lately heard.
It will not work!—What think you, madame, on't?

MADAME METTERNICH

That it will work, and is as good as wrought!—
I break it to you thus, at his request.
In brief time Prince Eugene will wait on you,
And make the formal offer in his name.

SCHWARZENBERG

Which I can but receive ad referendum,
And shall initially make clear as much,
Disclosing not a glimpse of my own mind!
Meanwhile you make good Metternich aware?

MADAME METTERNICH

I write this midnight, that amaze may pitch
To coolness ere your messenger arrives.

SCHWARZENBERG

This radiant revelation flicks a gleam

On many circling things!—the courtesies
Which graced his bearing toward our officer
Amid the tumults of the late campaign,
His wish for peace with England, his affront
At Alexander's tedious-timed reply...
Well, it will thrust a thorn in Russia's side,
If I err not, whatever else betide!
[Exeunt. The maskers surge into the foreground of the scene, and
their motions become more and more fantastic. A strange gloom
begins and intensifies, until only the high lights of their
grinning figures are visible. These also, with the whole ball-
room, gradually darken, and the music softens to silence.]
[image not archived]

SCENE II

PARIS. THE TUILERIES

[The evening of the next day. A saloon of the Palace, with
folding-doors communicating with a dining-room. The doors are
flung open, revealing on the dining-table an untouched dinner,
NAPOLEON and JOSEPHINE rising from it, and DE BAUSSET, chamberlain-
in-waiting, pacing up and down. The EMPEROR and EMPRESS come
forward into the saloon, the latter pale and distressed, and
patting her eyes with her handkerchief.

The doors are closed behind them; a page brings in coffee; NAPOLEON
signals to him to leave. JOSEPHINE goes to pour out the coffee,
but NAPOLEON pushes her aside and pours it out himself, looking at
her in a way which causes her to sink cowering into a chair like a
frightened animal.]

JOSEPHINE

I see my doom, my friend, upon your face!

NAPOLEON

You see me bored by Cambaceres' ball.

JOSEPHINE

It means divorce!—a thing more terrible
Than carrying elsewhere the dalliances
That formerly were mine. I kicked at that;
But now agree, as I for long have done,
To any infidelities of act
May I be yours in name!
NAPOLEON
My mind must bend

To other things than our domestic petting:
The Empire orbs above our happiness,
And 'tis the Empire dictates this divorce.
I reckon on your courage and calm sense
To breast with me the law's formalities,
And get it through before the year has flown.

JOSEPHINE

But are you REALLY going to part from me?
O no, no, my dear husband; no, in truth,
It cannot be my Love will serve me so!

NAPOLEON

I mean but mere divorcement, as I said,
On simple grounds of sapient sovereignty.

JOSEPHINE

But nothing have I done save good to you:—
Since the fond day we wedded into one
I never even have THOUGHT you jot of harm!
Many the happy junctures when you have said
I stood as guardian-angel over you,
As your Dame Fortune, too, and endless things
Of such-like pretty tenour—yes, you have!
Then how can you so gird against me now?
You had not pricked upon it much of late,
And so I hoped and hoped the ugly spectre
Had been laid dead and still.

NAPOLEON [impatiently]

I tell you, dear,
The thing's decreed, and even the princess chosen.

JOSEPHINE

Ah—so—the princess chosen!... I surmise
It is none else than the Grand-Duchess Anne:
Gossip was right—though I would not believe.
She's young; but no great beauty!—Yes, I see
Her silly, soulless eyes and horrid hair;
In which new gauderies you'll forget sad me!

NAPOLEON

Upon my soul you are childish, Josephine:
A woman of your years to pout it so!—
I say it's not the Tsar's Grand-Duchess Anne.

JOSEPHINE

Some other Fair, then. You whose name can nod
The flower of all the world's virginity

Into your bed, will well take care of that!
[Spitefully.] She may not have a child, friend, after all.

NAPOLEON [drily]

You hope she won't, I know!—But don't forget
Madame Walewska did, and had she shown
Such cleverness as yours, poor little fool,
Her withered husband might have been displaced,
And her boy made my heir.—Well, let that be.
The severing parchments will be signed by us
Upon the fifteenth, prompt.

JOSEPHINE

What—I have to sign
My putting away upon the fifteenth next?

NAPOLEON

Ay—both of us.

JOSEPHINE [falling on her knees]

So far advanced—so far!
Fixed?—for the fifteenth? O I do implore you,
My very dear one, by our old, old love,
By my devotion, don't cast me off
Now, after these long years!

NAPOLEON

Heavens, how you jade me!
Must I repeat that I don't cast you off;
We merely formally arrange divorce—
We live and love, but call ourselves divided.
[A silence.]

JOSEPHINE [with sudden calm]

Very well. Let it be. I must submit! [Rises.]

NAPOLEON

And this much likewise you must promise me,
To act in the formalities thereof
As if you shaped them of your own free will.

JOSEPHINE

How can I—when no freewill's left in me?

NAPOLEON

You are a willing party—do you hear?

JOSEPHINE [quivering]

I hardly—can—bear this!—It is—too much
For a poor weak and broken woman's strength!
But—but I yield!—I am so helpless now:
I give up all—ay, kill me if you will,

I won't cry out!

NAPOLEON

And one thing further still,
You'll help me in my marriage overtures
To win the Duchess—Austrian Marie she,—
Concentrating all your force to forward them.

JOSEPHINE

It is the—last humiliating blow!—

I cannot—O, I will not!

NAPOLEON [fiercely]

But you SHALL!

And from your past experience you may know
That what I say I mean!

JOSEPHINE [breaking into sobs]

O my dear husband—do not make me—don't!

If you but cared for me—the hundredth part

Of how—I care for you, you could not be

So cruel as to lay this torture on me.

It hurts me so!—it cuts me like a sword.

Don't make me, dear! Don't, will you! O,O,O!

[She sinks down in a hysterical fit.]

NAPOLEON [calling]

Bausset!

[Enter DE BAUSSET, Chamberlain-in-waiting.]

Bausset, come in and shut the door.

Assist me here. The Empress has fallen ill.

Don't call for help. We two can carry her

By the small private staircase to her rooms.

Here—I will take her feet.

[They lift JOSEPHINE between them and carry her out. Her moans
die away as they recede towards the stairs. Enter two servants,
who remove coffee-service, readjust chairs, etc.]

FIRST SERVANT

So, poor old girl, she's wailed her Missere Mei, as Mother Church
says. I knew she was to get the sack ever since he came back.

SECOND SERVANT

Well, there will be a little civil huzzaing, a little crowing and
cackling among the Bonapartes at the downfall of the Beauharnais
family at last, mark me there will! They've had their little hour,
as the poets say, and now 'twill be somebody else's turn. O it is
droll! Well, Father Time is a great philosopher, if you take him
right. Who is to be the new woman?

FIRST SERVANT

She that contains in her own corporation the necessary particular.

SECOND SERVANT

And what may they be?

FIRST SERVANT

She must be young.

SECOND SERVANT

Good. She must. The country must see to that.

FIRST SERVANT

And she must be strong.

SECOND SERVANT

Good again. She must be strong. The doctors will see to that.

FIRST SERVANT

And she must be fruitful as the vine.

SECOND SERVANT

Ay, by God. She must be fruitful as the vine. That, Heaven help him, he must see to himself, like the meanest multiplying man in Paris.

[Exeunt servant. Re-enter NAPOLEON with his stepdaughter, Queen Hortense.]

NAPOLEON

Your mother is too rash and reasonless—

Wailing and fainting over statesmanship

Which is no personal caprice of mine,

But policy most painful—forced on me

By the necessities of this country's charge.

Go to her; see if she be saner now;

Explain it to her once and once again,

And bring me word what impress you may make.

[HORTENSE goes out. CHAMPAGNY is shown in.]

Champagny, I have something clear to say

Now, on our process after the divorce.

The question of the Russian Duchess Anne

Was quite inept for further toying with.

The years rush on, and I grow nothing younger.

So I have made up my mind—committed me

To Austria and the Hapsburgs—good or ill!

It was the best, most practicable plunge,

And I have plunged it.

CHAMPAGNY

Austria say you, sire?

I reckoned that but a scurrying dream!

NAPOLEON

Well, so it was. But such a pretty dream
That its own charm transfixed it to a notion,
That showed itself in time a sanity,
Which hardened in its turn to a resolve
As firm as any built by mortal mind.—
The Emperor's consent must needs be won;
But I foresee no difficulty there.
The young Archduchess is a bright blond thing
By general story; and considering, too,
That her good mother childed seventeen times,
It will be hard if she can not produce
The modest one or two that I require.
[Enter DE BAUSSET with dispatches.]
DE BAUSSET

The courier, sire, from Petersburg is here,
And brings these letters for your Majesty.
[Exit DE BAUSSET.]
NAPOLEON [after silently reading]
Ha-ha! It never rains unless it pours:
Now I can have the other readily.
The proverb hits me aptly: "Well they do
Who doff the old love ere they don the new!"
[He glances again over the letter.]
Yes, Caulaincourt now writes he has every hope
Of quick success in settling the alliance!
The Tsar is willing—even anxious for it,
His sister's youth the single obstacle.
The Empress-mother, hitherto against me,
Ambition-fired, verges on suave consent,
Likewise the whole Imperial family.
What irony is all this to me now!
Time lately was when I had leapt thereat.

CHAMPAGNY

You might, of course, sire, give th' Archduchess up,
Seeing she looms uncertainly as yet,
While this does so no longer.

NAPOLEON

No—not I.
My sense of my own dignity forbids
My watching the slow clocks of Muscovy!
Why have they dallied with my tentatives

In pompous silence since the Erfurt day?
—And Austria, too, affords a safer hope.
The young Archduchess is much less a child
Than is the other, who, Caulaincourt says,
Will be incapable of motherhood
For six months yet or more—a grave delay.

CHAMPAGNY

Your Majesty appears to have trimmed your sail
For Austria; and no more is to be said!

NAPOLEON

Except that there's the house of Saxony
If Austria fail.—then, very well, Champagny,
Write you to Caulaincourt accordingly.

CHAMPAGNY

I will, your Majesty.

[Exit CHAMPAGNY. Re-enter QUEEN HORTENSE.]

NAPOLEON

Ah, dear Hortense,
How is your mother now?

HORTENSE

Calm; quite calm, sire.

I pledge me you need have no further fret
From her entreating tears. She bids me say
That now, as always, she submits herself
With chastened dignity to circumstance,
And will descend, at notice, from your throne—
As in days earlier she ascended it—

In questionless obedience to your will.

It was your hand that crowned her; let it be
Likewise your hand that takes her crown away.
As for her children, we shall be but glad
To follow and withdraw ourselves with her,
The tenderest mother children ever knew,
From grandeurs that have brought no happiness!

NAPOLEON [taking her hand]

But, Hortense, dear, it is not to be so!

You must stay with me, as I said before.

Your mother, too, must keep her royal state,
Since no repudiation stains this need.

Equal magnificence will orb her round

In aftertime as now. A palace here,

A palace in the country, wealth to match,

A rank in order next my future wife's,
And conference with me as my truest friend.
Now we will seek her—Eugene, you, and I—
And make the project clear.
[Exeunt NAPOLEON and HORTENSE. The scene darkens and shuts.]
[image not archived]

SCENE III

VIENNA. A PRIVATE APARTMENT IN THE IMPERIAL PALACE
[The EMPEROR FRANCIS discovered, paler than usual, and somewhat flurried. Enter METTERNICH the Prime Minister—a thin-lipped, long-nosed man with inquisitive eyes.]

FRANCIS

I have been expecting you some minutes here,
The thing that fronts us brooking brief delay.—
Well, what say you by now on this strange offer?

METTERNICH

My views remain the same, your Majesty:
The policy of peace that I have upheld,
Both while in Paris and of late time here,
Points to this step as heralding sweet balm
And bandaged veins for our late crimsoned realm.

FRANCIS

Agreed. As monarch I perceive therein
A happy doorway for my purposings.
It seems to guarantee the Hapsburg crown
A quittance of distractions such as those
That leave their shade on many a backward year!—
There is, forsooth, a suddenness about it,
And it would aid us had we clearly keyed
The cryptologues of which the world has heard
Between Napoleon and the Russian Court—
Begun there with the selfsame motiving.

METTERNICH

I would not, sire, one second ponder it.
It was an obvious first crude cast-about
In the important reckoning of means
For his great end, a strong monarchic line.
The more advanced the more it profits us;
For sharper, then, the quashing of such views,
And wreck of that conjunction in the aims

Of France and Russia, marked so much of late
As jeopardizing quiet neighbours' thrones.

FRANCIS

If that be so, on the domestic side
There seems no bar. Speaking as father solely,
I see secured to her the proudest fate
That woman can daydream. And I could hope
That private bliss would not be wanting her!

METTERNICH

A hope well seated, sire. The Emperor,
Imperious and determined in his rule,
Is easy-natured in domestic life,
As my long time in Paris amply proved.
Moreover, the accessories of his glory
Have been, and will be, admirably designed
To fire the fancy of a young princess.

FRANCIS

Thus far you satisfy me... So, to close,
Or not to close with him, is now the thing.

METTERNICH

Your Majesty commands the issue quite:
The father of his people can alone
In such a case give answer—yes or no.
Vagueness and doubt have ruined Russia's chance;
Let not, then, such be ours.

FRANCIS

You mean, if I,
You'd answer straight. What would that answer be?

METTERNICH

In state affairs, sire, as in private life,
Times will arise when even the faithfullest squire
Finds him unfit to jog his chieftain's choice,
On whom responsibility must lastly rest.
And such times are pre-eminently, sire,
Those wherein thought alone is not enough
To serve the head as guide. As Emperor,
As father, both, to you, to you in sole
Must appertain the privilege to pronounce
Which track stern duty bids you tread herein.

FRANCIS

Affection is my duty, heart my guide.—
Without constraint or prompting I shall leave

The big decision in my daughter's hands.
 Before my obligations to my people
 Must stand her wish. Go, find her, Metternich,
 Take her the tidings. She is free with you,
 And will speak out. [Looking forth from the terrace.]
 She's here at hand, I see:
 I'll call her in. Then tell me what's her mind.
 [He beckons from the window, and goes out in another direction.]
 METTERNICH
 So much for form's sake! Can the river-flower
 The current drags, direct its face up-stream?
 What she must do she will; nought else at all.
 [Enter through one of the windows MARIA LOUISA in garden-costume,
 fresh-coloured, girlish, and smiling. METTERNICH bends.]
 MARIA LOUISA
 O how, dear Chancellor, you startled me!
 Please pardon my so brusquely bursting in.
 I saw you not.—Those five poor little birds
 That haunt out there beneath the pediment,
 Snugly defended from the north-east wind,
 Have lately disappeared. I sought a trace
 Of scattered feathers, which I dread to find!
 METTERNICH
 They are gone, I ween, the way of tender flesh
 At the assaults of winter, want, and foes.
 MARIA LOUISA
 It is too melancholy thinking, that!
 Don't say it.—But I saw the Emperor here?
 Surely he beckoned me?
 METTERNICH
 Sure, he did,
 Your gracious Highness; and he has left me here
 To break vast news that will make good his call.
 MARIA LOUISA
 Then do. I'll listen. News from near or far?
 [She seats herself.]
 METTERNICH
 From far—though of such distance-dwarfing might
 That far may read as near eventually.
 But, dear Archduchess, with your kindly leave
 I'll speak straight out. The Emperor of the French
 Has sent to-day to make, through Schwarzenberg,

A formal offer of his heart and hand,
 His honours, dignities, imperial throne,
 To you, whom he admires above all those
 The world can show elsewhere.
 MARIA LOUISA [frightened]
 My husband—he?
 What, an old man like him!
 METTERNICH [cautiously]
 He's scarcely old,
 Dear lady. True, deeds densely crowd in him;
 Turn months to years calendaring his span;
 Yet by Time's common clockwork he's but young.
 MARIA LOUISA
 So wicked, too!
 METTERNICH [nettled]
 Well—that's a point of view.
 MARIA LOUISA
 But, Chancellor, think what things I have said to him!
 Can women marry where they have taunted so?
 METTERNICH
 Things? Nothing inexpungeable, I deem,
 By time and true good humour.
 MARIA LOUISA
 O I have!
 Horrible things. Why—ay, a hundred times—
 I have said I wished him dead! At that strained hour
 When the first voicings of the late war came,
 Thrilling out how the French were smitten sore
 And Bonaparte retreating, I clapped hands
 And answered that I hoped he'd lose his head
 As well as lose the battle!
 METTERNICH
 Words. But words!
 Born like the bubbles of a spring that come
 Of zest for springing—aimless in their shape.
 MARIA LOUISA
 It seems indecent, mean, to wed a man
 Whom one has held such fierce opinions of!
 METTERNICH
 My much beloved Archduchess, and revered,
 Such things have been! In Spain and Portugal
 Like enmities have led to intermarriage.

In England, after warring thirty years
The Red and White Rose wedded.

MARIA LOUISA [after a silence]

Tell me, now,

What does my father wish?

METTERNICH

His wish is yours.

Whatever your Imperial Highness feels
On this grave verdict of your destiny,
Home, title, future sphere, he bids you think
Not of himself, but of your own desire.

MARIA LOUISA [reflecting]

My wish is what my duty bids me wish.

Where a wide Empire's welfare is in poise,
That welfare must be pondered, not my will.

I ask of you, then, Chancellor Metternich,
Straightway to beg the Emperor my father
That he fulfil his duty to the realm,
And quite subordinate thereto all thought
Of how it personally impinge on me.

[A slight noise as of something falling is heard in the room. They
glance momentarily, and see that a small enamel portrait of MARIE
ANTOINETTE, which was standing on a console-table, has slipped down
on its face.]

SPIRIT OF THE YEARS

What mischief's this? The Will must have its way.

SPIRIT SINISTER

Perhaps Earth shivered at the lady's say?

SHADE OF THE EARTH

I own hereto. When France and Austria wed
My echoes are men's groans, my dews are red;
So I have reason for a passing dread!

METTERNICH

Right nobly phrased, Archduchess; wisely too.

I will acquaint your sire the Emperor

With these your views. He waits them anxiously. [Going.]

MARIA LOUISA

Let me go first. It much confuses me

To think—But I would fain let thinking be!

[She goes out trembling. Enter FRANCIS by another door.]

METTERNICH

I was about to seek your Majesty.

The good Archduchess luminously holds
That in this weighty question you regard
The Empire. Best for it is best for her.
FRANCIS [moved]
My daughter's views thereon do not surprise me.
She is too staunch to pit a private whim
Against the fortunes of a commonwealth.
During your speech with her I have taken thought
To shape decision sagely. An assent
Would yield the Empire many years of peace,
And leave me scope to heal those still green sores
Which linger from our late unhappy moils.
Therefore, my daughter not being disinclined,
I know no basis for a negative.
Send, then, a courier prompt to Paris: say
The offer made for the Archduchess' hand
I do accept—with this defined reserve,
That no condition, treaty, bond, attach
To such alliance save the tie itself.
There are some sacrifices whose grave rites
No bargain must contaminate. This is one—
This personal gift of a beloved child!
METTERNICH [leaving]
I'll see to it this hour, your Majesty,
And cant the words in keeping with your wish.
To himself as he goes.]
Decently done!... He slipped out "sacrifice,"
And scarce could hide his heartache for his girl.
Well ached it!—But when these things have to be
It is as well to breast them stoically.
[Exit METTERNICH. The clouds draw over.]
[image not archived]

SCENE IV

LONDON. A CLUB IN ST. JAMES'S STREET

[A winter midnight. Two members are conversing by the fire, and others are seen lolling in the background, some of them snoring.]

FIRST MEMBER

I learn from a private letter that it was carried out in the
Emperor's Cabinet at the Tuileries—just off the throne-room, where
they all assembled in the evening,—Boney and the wife of his bosom

[In pure white muslin from head to foot, they say], the Kings and Queens of Holland, Whestphalia, and Naples, the Princess Pauline, and one or two more; the officials present being Cambaceres the Chancellor, and Count Regnaud. Quite a small party. It was over in minutes—short and sweet, like a donkey’s gallop.

SECOND MEMBER

Anything but sweet for her. How did she stand it?

FIRST MEMBER

Serenely, I believe, while the Emperor was making his speech renouncing her; but when it came to her turn to say she renounced him she began sobbing mightily, and was so completely choked up that she couldn’t get out a word.

SECOND MEMBER

Poor old dame! I pity her, by God; though she had a rattling good spell while it lasted.

FIRST MEMBER

They say he was a bit upset, too, at sight of her tears But I dare vow that was put on. Fancy Boney caring a curse what a woman feels. She had learnt her speech by heart, but that did not help her: Regnaud had to finish it for her, the ditch that overturned her being where she was made to say that she no longer preserved any hope of having children, and that she was pleased to show her attachment by enabling him to obtain them by another woman. She was led off fainting. A turning of the tables, considering how madly jealous she used to make him by her flirtations!

[Enter a third member.]

SECOND MEMBER

How is the debate going? Still braying the Government in a mortar?

THIRD MEMBER

They are. Though one thing every body admits: young Peel has made a wonderful first speech in seconding the address. There has been nothing like it since Pitt. He spoke rousingly of Austria’s misfortunes—went on about Spain, of course, showing that we must still go on supporting her, winding up with a brilliant peroration about—what were the words—”the fiery eyes of the British soldier!”—Oh, well: it was all learnt before-hand, of course.

SECOND MEMBER

I wish I had gone down. But the wind soon blew the other way.

THIRD MEMBER

Then Gower rapped out his amendment. That was good, too, by God.

SECOND MEMBER

Well, the war must go on. And that being the general conviction this censure and that censure are only so many blank cartridges.

THIRD MEMBER

Blank? Damn me, were they! Gower's was a palpable hit when he said that Parliament had placed unheard-of resources in the hands of the Ministers last year, to make this year's results to the country worse than if they had been afforded no resources at all. Every single enterprise of theirs had been a beggarly failure.

SECOND MEMBER

Anybody could have said it, come to that.

THIRD MEMBER

Yes, because it is so true. However, when he began to lay on with such rhetoric as "the treasures of the nation lavished in wasteful thoughtlessness,"—"thousands of our troops sacrificed wantonly in pestilential swamps of Walcheren," and gave the details we know so well, Ministers wriggled a good one, though 'twas no news to 'em. Castlereagh kept on starting forward as if he were going to jump up and interrupt, taking the strictures entirely as a personal affront.

[Enter a fourth member.]

SEVERAL MEMBERS

Who's speaking now?

FOURTH MEMBER

I don't know. I have heard nobody later than Ward.

SECOND MEMBER

The fact is that, as Whitbread said to me to-day, the materials for condemnation are so prodigious that we can scarce marshal them into argument. We are just able to pour 'em out one upon t'other.

THIRD MEMBER

Ward said, with the blandest air in the world: "Censure? Do his Majesty's Ministers expect censure? Not a bit. They are going about asking in tremulous tones if anybody has heard when their impeachment is going to begin."

SEVERAL MEMBERS

Haw—haw—haw!

THIRD MEMBER

Then he made another point. After enumerating our frightful failures—Spain, Walcheren, and the rest—he said: "But Ministers have not failed in everything. No; in one thing they have been strikingly successful. They have been successful in their attack upon Copenhagen—because it was directed against an ally!" Mighty fine, wasn't it?

SECOND MEMBER

How did Castlereagh stomach that?

THIRD MEMBER

He replied then. Donning his air of injured innocence he proved the honesty of his intentions—no doubt truly enough. But when he came to Walcheren nothing could be done. The case was hopeless, and he knew it, and foundered. However, at the division, when he saw what a majority was going out on his side he was as frisky as a child.

Canning's speech was grave, with bits of shiny ornament stuck on—like the brass nails on a coffin, Sheridan says.

[Fifth and sixth members stagger in, arm-and-arm.]

FIFTH MEMBER

The 'vision is—'jority of ninety-six againsht—Gov'ment—I mean—againsht us. Which is it—hey? [To his companion.]

SIXTH MEMBER

Damn majority of—damn ninety-six—against damn amendment! [They sink down on a sofa.]

SECOND MEMBER

Gad, I didn't expect the figure would have been quite so high!

THIRD MEMBER

The one conviction is that the war in the Peninsula is to go on, and as we are all agreed upon that, what the hell does it matter what their majority was?

[Enter SHERIDAN. They all look inquiringly.]

SHERIDAN

Have ye heard the latest?

SECOND MEMBER

Ninety-six against us.

SHERIDAN

O no—that's ancient history. I'd forgot it.

THIRD MEMBER

A revolution, because Ministers are not impeached and hanged?

SHERIDAN

That's in contemplation, when we've got their confessions. But what I meant was from over the water—it is a deuced sight more serious to us than a debate and division that are only like the Liturgy on a Sunday—known beforehand to all the congregation. Why, Bonaparte is going to marry Austria forthwith—the Emperor's daughter Maria Louisa.

THIRD MEMBER

The Lord look down! Our late respected crony of Austria! Why, in this very night's debate they have been talking about the laudable principles we have been acting upon in affording assistance to the

Emperor Francis in his struggle against the violence and ambition of France!

SECOND MEMBER

Boney safe on that side, what may not befall!

THIRD MEMBER

We had better make it up with him, and shake hands all round.

SECOND MEMBER

Shake heads seems most natural in the case. O House of Hapsburg, how hast thou fallen!

[Enter WHITBREAD, LORD HUTCHINSON, LORD GEORGE CAVENDISH, GEORGE

PONSONBY, WINDHAM, LORD GREY, BARING, ELLIOT, and other members, some drunk. The conversation becomes animated and noisy; several move off to the card-room, and the scene closes.]

[image not archived]

SCENE V

THE OLD WEST HIGHWAY OUT OF VIENNA

[The spot is where the road passes under the slopes of the Wiener Wald, with its beautiful forest scenery.]

DUMB SHOW

A procession of enormous length, composed of eighty carriages—many of them drawn by six horses and one by eight—and escorted by detachments of cuirassiers, yeomanry, and other cavalry, is quickening its speed along the highway from the city.

The six-horse carriages contain a multitude of Court officials, ladies of the Court, and other Austrian nobility. The eight-horse coach contains a rosy, blue-eyed girl of eighteen, with full red lips, round figure, and pale auburn hair. She is MARIA LOUISA, and her eyes are red from recent weeping. The COUNTESS DE LAZANSKY, Grand Mistress of the Household, in the carriage with her, and the other ladies of the Palace behind, have a pale, proud, yet resigned look, as if conscious that upon their sex had been laid the burden of paying for the peace with France. They have been played out of Vienna with French marches, and the trifling incident has helped on their sadness.

The observer's vision being still bent on the train of vehicles and cavalry, the point of sight is withdrawn high into the air, till the huge procession on the brown road looks no more than a file of ants crawling along a strip of garden-matting. The spacious terrestrial outlook now gained shows this to be the great road across Europe from

Vienna to Munich, and from Munich westerly to France.

The puny concatenation of specks being exclusively watched, the surface of the earth seems to move along in an opposite direction, and in infinite variety of hill, dale, woodland, and champaign.

Bridges are crossed, ascents are climbed, plains are galloped over, and towns are reached, among them Saint Polten, where night falls.

Morning shines, and the royal crawl is resumed, and continued through Linz, where the Danube is reapproached, and the girl looks pleased to see her own dear Donau still. Presently the tower of Brannau appears, where the animated dots pause for formalities, this being the frontier; and MARIA LOUISA becomes MARIE LOUISE and a Frenchwoman, in the charge of French officials.

After many breaks and halts, during which heavy rains spread their gauzes over the scene, the roofs and houses of Munich disclose themselves, suggesting the tesserae of an irregular mosaic. A long stop is made here.

The tedious advance continues. Vine-circled Stuttgart, flat Carlsruhe, the winding Rhine, storky Strassburg, pass in panorama beneath us as the procession is followed. With Nancy and Bar-le-Duc sliding along, the scenes begin to assume a French character, and soon we perceive Chalons and ancient Rheims. The last day of the journey has dawned. Our vision flits ahead of the cortege to Courcelles, a little place which must be passed through before Soissons is reached. Here the point of sight descends to earth, and the Dumb Show ends.

[image not archived]

SCENE VI

COURCELLES

[It is now seen to be a quiet roadside village, with a humble church in its midst, opposite to which stands an inn, the highway passing between them. Rain is still falling heavily. Not a soul is visible anywhere.

Enter from the west a plain, lonely carriage, traveling in a direction to meet the file of coaches that we have watched. It stops near the inn, and two men muffled in cloaks alight by the door away from the hostel and towards the church, as if they wished to avoid observation. Their faces are those of NAPOLEON and MURAT, his brother-in-law. Crossing the road through the mud and rain they stand in the church porch, and watch the descending drifts.]

NAPOLEON [stamping an impatient tattoo]

One gets more chilly in a wet March than in a dry, however cold, the devil if he don't! What time do you make it now? That clock doesn't go.

MURAT [drily, looking at his watch]

Yes, it does; and it is right. If clocks were to go as fast as your wishes just now it would be awkward for the rest of the world.

NAPOLEON [chuckling good-humouredly]

How we have dished the Soissons folk, with their pavilions, and purple and gold hangings for bride and bridegroom to meet in, and stately ceremonial to match, and their thousands looking on! Here we are where there's nobody. Ha, ha!

MURAT

But why should they be dished, sire? The pavilions and ceremonies were by your own orders.

NAPOLEON

Well, as the time got nearer I couldn't stand the idea of dawdling about there.

MURAT

The Soissons people will be in a deuce of a taking at being made such fools of!

NAPOLEON

So let 'em. I'll make it up with them somehow.—She can't be far off now, if we have timed her rightly. [He peers out into the rain and listens.]

MURAT

I don't quite see how you are going to manage when she does come. Do we go before her toward Soissons when you have greeted her here, or follow in her rear? Or what do we do?

NAPOLEON

Heavens, I know no more than you! Trust to the moment and see what happens. [A silence.] Hark—here she comes! Good little girl; up to time!

[The distant squashing in the mud of a multitude of hoofs and wheels is succeeded by the appearance of outriders and carriages, horses and horsemen, splashed with sample clays of the districts traversed. The vehicles slow down to the inn. NAPOLEON'S face fires up, and, followed by MURAT, he rushes into the rain towards the coach that is drawn by eight horses, containing the blue-eyed girl. He holds off his hat at the carriage-window.]

MARIE LOUISE [shrinking back inside]

Ah, Heaven! Two highwaymen are upon us!

THE EQUERRY D'AUDENARDE [simultaneously]

The Emperor!

[The steps of the coach are hastily lowered, NAPOLEON, dripping, jumps in and embraces her. The startled ARCHDUCHESS, with much blushing and confusion recognizes him.]

MARIE LOUISE [tremulously, as she recovers herself]

You are so much—better looking than your portraits—that I hardly knew you! I expected you at Soissons. We are not at Soissons yet?

NAPOLEON

No, my dearest spouse, but we are together! [Calling out to the equerry.] Drive through Soissons—pass the pavilion of reception without stopping, and don't halt till we reach Compiègne.

[He sits down in the coach and is shut in, MURAT laughing silently at the scene. Exeunt carriages and riders toward Soissons.]

CHORUS OF THE IRONIC SPIRITS [aerial music]

First 'twas a finished coquette,

And now it's a raw ingenue.—

Blond instead of brunette,

An old wife doffed for a new.

She'll bring him a baby,

As quickly as maybe,

And that's what he wants her to do,

Hoo-hoo!

And that's what he wants her to do!

SPIRIT OF THE YEARS

What lewdness lip those wry-formed phantoms there!

IRONIC SPIRITS

Nay, Showman Years! With holy reverent air

We hymn the nuptials of the Imperial pair.

[The scene thickens to mist and obscures the scene.]

[image not archived]

SCENE VII

PETERSBURG. THE PALACE OF THE EMPRESS-MOTHER

[One of the private apartments is disclosed, in which the Empress-mother and Alexander are seated.]

EMPRESS-MOTHER

So one of Austrian blood his pomp selects

To be his bride and bulwark—not our own.

Thus are you coolly shelved!

ALEXANDER

Me, mother dear?

You, faith, if I may say it dutifully!

Had all been left to me, some time ere now

He would have wedded Kate.

EMPRESS-MOTHER

How so, my son?

Catharine was plighted, and it could not be.

ALEXANDER

Rather you swiftly pledged and married her,

To let Napoleon have no chance that way.

But Anne remained.

EMPRESS-MOTHER

How Anne?—so young a girl!

Sane Nature would have cried indecency

At such a troth.

ALEXANDER

Time would have tinkered that,

And he was well-disposed to wait awhile;

But the one test he had no temper for

Was the apparent slight of unresponse

Accorded his impatient overtures

By our suspensive poise of policy.

EMPRESS-MOTHER

A backward answer is our country's card—

The special style and mode of Muscovy.

We have grown great upon it, my dear son,

And may such practice rule our centuries through!

The necks of those who rate themselves our peers

Are cured of stiffness by its potency.

ALEXANDER

The principle in this case, anyhow,

Is shattered by the facts: since none can doubt

Your policy was counted an affront,

And drove my long ally to Austria's arms,

With what result to us must yet be seen!

EMPRESS-MOTHER

May Austria win much joy of the alliance!

Marrying Napoleon is a midnight leap

For any Court in Europe, credit me,

If ever such there were! What he may carve

Upon the coming years, what murderous bolt

Hurl at the rocking Constitutions round,

On what dark planet he may land himself
In his career through space, no sage can say.

ALEXANDER

Well—possibly!... And maybe all is best
That he engrafts his lineage not on us.—
But, honestly, Napoleon none the less
Has been my friend, and I regret the dream
And fleeting fancy of a closer tie!

EMPRESS-MOTHER

Ay; your regrets are sentimental ever.
That he'll be writ no son-in-law of mine
Is no regret to me! But an affront
There is, no less, in his evasion on't,
Wherein the bourgeois quality of him
Veraciously peeps out. I would be sworn
He set his minions parleying with the twain—
Yourself and Francis—simultaneously,
Else no betrothal could have speeded so!

ALEXANDER

Despite the hazard of offence to one?

EMPRESS-MOTHER

More than the hazard; the necessity.

ALEXANDER

There's no offence to me.

EMPRESS-MOTHER

There should be, then.
I am a Romanoff by marriage merely,
But I do feel a rare belittlement
And loud laconic brow-beating herein!

ALEXANDER

No, mother, no! I am the Tsar—not you,
And I am only piqued in moderateness.
Marriage with France was near my heart—I own it—
What then? It has been otherwise ordained.

[A silence.]

EMPRESS-MOTHER

Here comes dear Anne Speak not of it before her.
[Enter the GRAND-DUCHESS, a girl of sixteen.]

ANNE

Alas! the news is that poor Prussia's queen,
Spirited Queen Louisa, once so fair,
Is slowly dying, mother! Did you know?

ALEXANDER [betraying emotion]
Ah!—such I dreaded from the earlier hints.
Poor soul—her heart was slain some time ago.

ANNE

What do you mean by that, my brother dear?

EMPRESS-MOTHER

He means, my child, that he as usual spends
Much sentiment upon the foreign fair,
And hence leaves little for his folk at home.

ALEXANDER

I mean, Anne, that her country's overthrow
Let death into her heart. The Tilsit days
Taught me to know her well, and honour her.
She was a lovely woman even then!...
Strangely, the present English Prince of Wales
Was wished to husband her. Had wishes won,
They might have varied Europe's history.

ANNE

Napoleon, I have heard, admired her once;
How he must grieve that soon she'll be no more!

EMPRESS-MOTHER

Napoleon and your brother loved her both.

[Alexander shows embarrassment.]

But whatsoever grief be Alexander's,
His will be none who feels but for himself.

ANNE

O mother, how can you mistake him so!
He worships her who is to be his wife,
The fair Archduchess Marie.

EMPRESS-MOTHER

Simple child,

As yet he has never seen her, or but barely.
That is a tactic suit, with love to match!

ALEXANDER [with vainly veiled tenderness]

High-souled Louisa;—when shall I forget
Those Tilsit gatherings in the long-sunned June!
Napoleon's gallantries deceived her quite,
Who fondly felt her pleas for Magdeburg
Had won him to its cause; the while, alas!
His cynic sense but posed in cruel play!

EMPRESS-MOTHER

Bitterly mourned she her civilities

When time unlocked the truth, that she had choked
Her indignation at his former slights
And slanderous sayings for a baseless hope,
And wrought no tittle for her country's gain.

I marvel why you mourn a frustrate tie
With one whose wiles could wring a woman so!

ALEXANDER [uneasily]

I marvel also, when I think of it!

EMPRESS-MOTHER

Don't listen to us longer, dearest Anne.

[Exit Anne.]

—You will uphold my judging by and by,

That as a suitor we are quit of him,

And that blind Austria will rue the hour

Wherein she plucks for him her fairest flower!

[The scene shuts.]

[image not archived]

SCENE VIII

PARIS. THE GRAND GALLERY OF THE LOUVRE AND THE SALON-CARRE
ADJOINING

[The view is up the middle of the Gallery, which is now a spectacle of much magnificence. Backed by the large paintings on the walls are double rows on each side of brightly dressed ladies, the pick of Imperial society, to the number of four thousand, one thousand in each row; and behind these standing up are two rows on each side of men of privilege and fashion. Officers of the Imperial Guard are dotted about as marshals.

Temporary barriers form a wide passage up the midst, leading to the Salon-Carre, which is seen through the opening to be fitted up as a chapel, with a gorgeous altar, tall candles, and cross. In front of the altar is a platform with a canopy over it. On the platform are two gilt chairs and a prie-dieu.

The expectant assembly does not continuously remain in the seats, but promenades and talks, the voices at times rising to a din amid the strains of the orchestra, conducted by the EMPEROR'S Director of Music. Refreshments in profusion are handed round, and the extemporized cathedral resolves itself into a gigantic cafe of persons of distinction under the Empire.]

SPIRIT SINISTER

All day have they been waiting for their galanty-show, and now the

hour of performance is on the strike. It may be seasonable to muse on the sixteenth Louis and the bride's great-aunt, as the nearing procession is, I see, appositely crossing the track of the tumbril which was the last coach of that respected lady... It is now passing over the site of the scaffold on which she lost her head. ... Now it will soon be here.

[Suddenly the heralds enter the Gallery at the end towards the Tuileries, the spectators ranging themselves in their places. In a moment the wedding procession of the EMPEROR and EMPRESS becomes visible. The civil marriage having already been performed, Napoleon and Marie Louise advance together along the vacant pathway towards the Salon-Carre, followed by the long suite of illustrious personages, and acclamations burst from all parts of the Grand Gallery.

SPIRIT OF THE PITIES

Whose are those forms that pair in pompous train
Behind the hand-in-hand half-wedded ones,
With faces speaking sense of an adventure
Which may close well, or not so?

RECORDING ANGEL [reciting]

First there walks

The Emperor's brother Louis, Holland's King;
Then Jerome of Westphalia with his spouse;
The mother-queen, and Julie Queen of Spain,
The Prince Borghese and the Princess Pauline,
Beauharnais the Vice-King of Italy,
And Murat King of Naples, with their Queens;
Baden's Grand-Duke, Arch-Chancellor Cambaceres,
Berthier, Lebrun, and, not least, Talleyrand.
Then the Grand Marshal and the Chamberlain,
The Lords-in-Waiting, the Grand Equerry,
With waiting-ladies, women of the chamber,
An others called by office, rank, or fame.

SPIRIT OF RUMOUR

New, many, to Imperial dignities;
Which, won by character and quality
In those who now enjoy them, will become
The birthright of their sons in aftertime.

SPIRIT OF THE YEARS

It fits thee not to augur, quick-eared Shade.
Ephemeral at the best all honours be,
These even more ephemeral than their kind,

So random-fashioned, swift, perturbable!

SPIRIT OF THE PITIES

Napoleon looks content—nay, shines with joy.

SPIRIT OF THE YEARS

Yet see it pass, as by a conjuror's wand.

[Thereupon Napoleon's face blackens as if the shadow of a winter night had fallen upon it. Resentful and threatening, he stops the procession and looks up and down the benches.]

SPIRIT SINISTER

This is sound artistry of the Immanent Will: it relieves the monotony of so much good-humour.

NAPOLEON [to the Chapel-master]

Where are the Cardinals? And why not here? [He speaks so loud that he is heard throughout the Gallery.]

ABBE DE PRADT [trembling]

Many are present here, your Majesty;

But some are feeble by infirmities

Too common to their age, and cannot come.

NAPOLEON

Tell me no nonsense! Half absent themselves

Because they WILL not come. The factious fools!

Well, be it so. But they shall flinch for it!

[MARIE LOUISE looks frightened. The procession moves on.]

SPIRIT OF THE PITIES

I seem to see the thin and headless ghost

Of the yet earlier Austrian, here, too, queen,

Walking beside the bride, with frail attempts

To pluck her by the arm!

SPIRIT OF THE YEARS

Nay, think not so.

No trump unseals earth's sepulchre's to-day:

We are the only phantoms now abroad

On this mud-moulded ball! Through sixteen years

She has decayed in a back-garden yonder,

Dust all the showance time retains of her,

Senseless of hustlings in her former house,

Lost to all count of crowns and bridalry—

Even of her Austrian blood. No: what thou seest

Springs of the quavering fancy, stirred to dreams

By yon tart phantom's phrase.

MARIE LOUISE [sadly to Napoleon]

I know not why,

I love not this day's doings half so well
As our quaint meeting-time at Compiègne.
A clammy air creeps round me, as from vaults
Peopled with looming spectres, chilling me
And angering you withal!

NAPOLEON

O, it is nought
To trouble you: merely, my cherished one,
Those devils of Italian Cardinals!—
Now I'll be bright as ever—you must, too.

MARIE LOUISE

I'll try.

[Reaching the entrance to the Salon-Carre amid strains of music
the EMPEROR and EMPRESS are received and incensed by the CARDINAL
GRAND ALMONERS. They take their seats under the canopy, and the
train of notabilities seat themselves further back, the persons-
in-waiting stopping behind the Imperial chairs.

The ceremony of the religious marriage now begins. The choir
intones a hymn, the EMPEROR and EMPRESS go to the altar, remove
their gloves, and make their vows.]

SPIRIT IRONIC

The English Church should return thanks for this wedding, seeing
how it will purge of coarseness the picture-sheets of that artistic
nation, which will hardly be able to caricature the new wife as it
did poor plebeian Josephine. Such starched and ironed monarchists
cannot sneer at a woman of such a divinely dry and crusted line like
the Hapsburgs!

[Mass is next celebrated, after which the TE DEUM is chanted in
harmonies that whirl round the walls of the Salon-Carre and quiver
down the long Gallery. The procession then re-forms and returns,
amid the flutterings and applause of the dense assembly. But
Napoleon's face has not lost the sombre expression which settled
on it. The pair and their train pass out by the west door, and
the congregation disperses in the other direction, the cloud-
curtain closing over the scene as they disappear.

[image not archived]

ACT SIXTH

[image not archived]

SCENE I

THE LINES OF TORRES VEDRAS

[A bird's-eye perspective is revealed of the peninsular tract of Portuguese territory lying between the shining pool of the Tagus on the east, and the white-frilled Atlantic lifting rhythmically on the west. As thus beheld the tract features itself somewhat like a late-Gothic shield, the upper edge from the dexter to the sinister chief being the lines of Torres Vedras, stretching across from the mouth of the Zezambre on the left to Alhandra on the right, and the south or base point being Fort S. Julian. The roofs of Lisbon appear at the sinister base, and in a corresponding spot on the opposite side Cape Roca.

It is perceived in a moment that the northern verge of this nearly coast-hemmed region is the only one through which access can be gained to it by land, and a close scrutiny of the boundary there reveals that means are being adopted to effectually prevent such access.

From east to west along it runs a chain of defences, dotted at intervals by dozens of circular and square redoubts, either made or in the making, two of the latter being of enormous size.

Between these stretch unclimbable escarpments, stone walls, and other breastworks, and in front of all a double row of abatis, formed of the limbs of trees.

Within the outer line of defence is a second, constructed on the same shield-shaped tract of country; and is not more than a twelfth of the length of the others. It is a continuous entrenchment of ditches and ramparts, and its object—that of covering a forced embarkation—is rendered apparent by some rocking English transports off the shore hard by.]

DUMB SHOW

Innumerable human figures are busying themselves like cheese-mites all along the northernmost frontage, undercutting easy slopes into steep ones, digging ditches, piling stones, felling trees, dragging them, and interlacing them along the front as required.

On the second breastwork, which is completed, only a few figures move. On the third breastwork, which is fully matured and equipped, minute red sentinels creep backwards and forwards noiselessly.

As time passes three reddish-grey streams of marching men loom out to the north, advancing southward along three roads towards three diverse points in the first defence. These form the English army, entering the lines for shelter. Looked down upon, their motion

seems peristaltic and vermicular, like that of three caterpillars.
The division on the left is under Picton, in the centre under Leith
and Cole, and on the extreme right, by Alhandra, under Hill. Beside
one of the roads two or three of the soldiers are dangling from a
tree by the neck, probably for plundering.
The Dumb Show ends, and the point of view sinks to the earth.
[image not archived]

SCENE II

THE SAME. OUTSIDE THE LINES

[The winter day has gloomed to a stormful evening, and the road
outside the first line of defence forms the foreground of the stage.
Enter in the dusk from the hills to the north of the entrenchment,
near Calandrix, a group of horsemen, which includes MASSENA in
command of the French forces, FOY, LOISON, and other officers of
his staff.

They ride forward in the twilight and tempest, and reconnoitre,
till they see against the sky the ramparts blocking the road they
pursue. They halt silently. MASSENA, puzzled, endeavours with his
glass to make out the obstacle.]

MASSENA

Something stands here to peril our advance,
Or even prevent it!

FOY

These are the English lines—
Their outer horns and tusks—whereof I spoke,
Constructed by Lord Wellington of late
To keep his foothold firm in Portugal.

MASSENA

Thrusts he his burly, bossed disfigurements
So far to north as this? I had pictured me
The lay much nearer Lisbon. Little strange
Lord Wellington rode placid at Busaco
With this behind his back! Well, it is hard
But that we turn them somewhere, I assume?
They scarce can close up every southward gap
Between the Tagus and the Atlantic Sea.

FOY

I hold they can, and do; although, no doubt,
By searching we shall spy some raggedness
Which custom'd skill may force.

MASSENA

Plain 'tis, no less,
We may heap corpses vainly hereabout,
And crack good bones in waste. By human power
This passes mounting! What say you's behind?

LOISON

Another line exactly like the first,
But more matured. Behind its back a third.

MASSENA

How long have these prim ponderosities
Been rearing up their foreheads to the moon?

LOISON

Some months in all. I know not quite how long.
They are Lord Wellington's select device,
And, like him, heavy, slow, laborious, sure.

MASSENA

May he enjoy their sureness. He deserves to.
I had no inkling of such barriers here.
A good road runs along their front, it seems,
Which offers us advantage... What a night!
[The tempest cries dismally about the earthworks above them, as
the reconnoitrers linger in the slight shelter the lower ground
affords. They are about to turn back.
Enter from the cross-road to the right JUNOT and some more
officers. They come up at a signal that the others are those
they lately parted from.]

JUNOT

We have ridden along as far as Calandrix,
Favoured therein by this disordered night,
Which tongues its language to the disguise of ours;
And find amid the vale an open route
That, well manoeuvred, may be practicable.

MASSENA

I'll look now at it, while the weather aids.
If it may serve our end when all's prepared
So good. If not, some other to the west.
[Exeunt MASSENA, JUNOT, LOISON, FOY, and the rest by the paved
crossway to the right.
The wind continues to prevail as the spot is left desolate, the
darkness increases, rain descends more heavily, and the scene is
blotted out.]
[image not archived]

SCENE III

PARIS. THE TUILERIES

[The anteroom to the EMPRESS MARIE LOUISE'S bed-chamber, in which are discovered NAPOLEON in his dressing-gown, the DUCHESS OF MONTEBELLO, and other ladies-in-waiting. CORVISART the first physician, and the second physician BOURDIER.

The time is before dawn. The EMPEROR walks up and down, throws himself on a sofa, or stands at the window. A cry of anguish comes occasionally from within.

NAPOLEON opens the door and speaks into the bed-chamber.]

NAPOLEON

How now, Dubois?

VOICE OF DUBOIS THE ACCOUCHEUR [nervously]

Less well, sire, than I hoped;

I fear no skill can save them both.

NAPOLEON [agitated]

Good god!

[Exit CORVISART into the bed-room. Enter DUBOIS.]

DUBOIS [with hesitation]

Which life is to be saved? The Empress, sire,

Lies in great jeopardy. I have not known

In my long years of many-featured practice

An instance in a thousand fall out so.

NAPOLEON

Then save the mother, pray! Think but of her;

It is her privilege, and my command.—

Don't lose you head, Dubois, at this tight time:

Your furthest skill can work but what it may.

Fancy that you are merely standing by

A shop-wife's couch, say, in the Rue Saint Denis;

Show the aplomb and phlegm that you would show

Did such a bed receive your ministry.

[Exit DUBOIS.]

VOICE OF MARIE LOUISE [within]

O pray, pray don't! Those ugly things terrify me! Why should I be tortured even if I am but a means to an end! Let me die! It was cruel of him to bring this upon me!

[Exit NAPOLEON impatiently to the bed-room.]

VOICE OF MADAME DE MONTESQUIOU [within]

Keep up your spirits, madame! I have been through it myself and I assure you there is no danger to you. It is going on all right, and

I am holding you.

VOICE OF NAPOLEON [within]

Heaven above! Why did you not deep those cursed sugar-tongs out of her sight? How is she going to get through it if you frighten her like this?

VOICE OF DUBOIS [within]

If you will pardon me, your Majesty,

I must implore you not to interfere!

I'll not be scapegoat for the consequence

If, sire, you do! Better for her sake far

Would you withdraw. The sight of your concern

But agitates and weakens her endurance.

I will inform you all, and call you back

If things should worsen here.

[Re-enter NAPOLEON from the bed-chamber. He half shuts the door, and remains close to it listening, pale and nervous.]

BOURDIER

I ask you, sire,

To harass yourself less with this event,

Which may amend anon: I much regret

The honoured mother of your Majesty,

And sister too, should both have left ere now,

Whose solace would have bridged these anxious hours.

NAPOLEON [absently]

As we were not expecting it so soon

I begged they would sit up no longer here...

She ought to get along; she has help enough

With that half-dozen of them at hand within—

Skilled Madame Blaise the nurse, and two besides,

Madame de Montesquiou and Madame Ballant—

DUBOIS [speaking through the doorway]

Past is the question, sire, of which to save!

The child is dead; the while her Majesty

Is getting through it well.

NAPOLEON

Praise Heaven for that!

I'll not grieve overmuch about the child...

Never shall She go through this strain again

To lay down a dynastic line for me.

DUCHESS OF MONTEBELLO [aside to the second lady]

He only says that now. In cold blood it would be far otherwise.

That's how men are.

VOICE OF MADAME BLAISE [within]

Doctor, the child's alive! [The cry of an infant is heard.]

VOICE OF DUBOIS [calling from within]

Sire, both are saved.

[NAPOLEON rushes into the chamber, and is heard kissing MARIE LOUISE.]

VOICE OF MADAME BLAISE [within]

A vigorous boy, your Imperial Majesty. The brandy and hot napkins brought him to.

DUCHESS OF MONTEBELLO

It is as I expected. A healthy young woman of her build had every chance of doing well, despite the doctors.

[An interval.]

NAPOLEON [re-entering radiantly]

We have achieved a healthy heir, good dames,
And in the feat the Empress was most brave,
Although she suffered much—so much, indeed,
That I would sooner father no more sons
Than have so fair a fruit-tree undergo
Another wrenching of such magnitude.

[He walks to the window, pulls aside the curtains, and looks out.

It is a joyful spring morning. The Tuileries' gardens are thronged with an immense crowd, kept at a little distance off the Palace by a cord. The windows of the neighbouring houses are full of gazers, and the streets are thronged with halting carriages, their inmates awaiting the event.]

SPIRIT OF THE YEARS [whispering to Napoleon]

At this high hour there broods a woman nigh,
Ay, here in Paris, with her child and thine,
Who might have played this part with truer eye
To thee and to thy contemplated line!

NAPOLEON [soliloquizing]

Strange that just now there flashes on my soul
That little one I loved in Warsaw days,
Marie Walewska, and my boy by her!—
She was shown faithless by a foul intrigue
Till fate sealed up her opportunity...

But what's one woman's fortune more or less
Beside the schemes of kings!—Ah, there's the new!

[A gun is heard from the Invalides.]

CROWD [excitedly]

One!

[Another report of the gun, and another, succeed.]

Two! Three! Four!

[The firing and counting proceed to twenty-one, when there is great suspense. The gun fires again, and the excitement is doubled.]

Twenty-two! A boy!

[The remainder of the counting up to a hundred-and-one is drowned in the huzzas. Bells begin ringing, and from the Champ de Mars a balloon ascends, from which the tidings are scattered in hand-bills as it floats away from France.

Enter the PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE, CAMBACERES, BERTHIER, LEBRUN,

and other officers of state. NAPOLEON turns from the window.]

CAMBACERES

Unstinted gratulations and goodwill
We bring to your Imperial Majesty,
While still resounds the superflux of joy
With which your people welcome this live star
Upon the horizon of history!

PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE

All blessings at their goodliest will grace
The advent of this New Messiah, sire,
Of fairer prospects than the former one,
Whose coming at so apt an hour endues
The widening glory of your high exploits
With permanence, and flings the dimness far
That cloaked the future of our chronicle!

NAPOLEON

My thanks; though, gentlemen, upon my soul
You might have drawn the line at the Messiah.
But I excuse you.—Yes, the boy has come;
He took some coaxing, but he's here at last.—
And what news brings the morning from without?
I know of none but this the Empress now
Trumps to the world from the adjoining room.

PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE

Nothing in Europe, sire, that can compare
In magnitude therewith to more effect
Than with an eagle some frail finch or wren.
To wit: the ban on English trade prevailing,
Subjects our merchant-houses to such strain
That many of the best see bankruptcy
Like a grim ghost ahead. Next week, they say

In secret here, six of the largest close.

NAPOLEON

It shall not be! Our burst of natal joy
Must not be sullied by so mean a thing:
Aid shall be rendered. Much as we may suffer,
England must suffer more, and I am content.
What has come in from Spain and Portugal?

BERTHIER

Vaguely-voiced rumours, sire, but nothing more,
Which travel countries quick as earthquake thrills,
No mortal knowing how.

NAPOLEON

Of Massena?

BERTHIER

Yea. He retreats for prudence' sake, it seems,
Before Lord Wellington. Dispatches soon
Must reach your Majesty, explaining all.

NAPOLEON

Ever retreating! Why declines he so
From all his olden prowess? Why, again,
Did he give battle at Busaco lately,
When Lisbon could be marched on without strain?
Why has he dallied by the Tagus bank
And shunned the obvious course? I gave him Ney,
Soult, and Junot, and eighty thousand men,
And he does nothing. Really it might seem
As though we meant to let this Wellington
Be even with us there!

BERTHIER

His mighty forts
At Torres Vedras hamper Massena,
And quite preclude advance.

NAPOLEON

O well—no matter:

Why should I linger on these haps of war
Now that I have a son!

[Exeunt NAPOLEON by one door and by another the PRESIDENT OF THE
SENATE, CAMBACERES, LEBRUN, BERTHIER, and officials.]

CHORUS OF IRONIC SPIRITS [aerial music]

The Will Itself is slave to him,
And holds it blissful to obey!—
He said, "Go to; it is my whim

"To bed a bride without delay,
Who shall unite my dull new name
With one that shone in Caesar's day.
She must conceive—you hear my claim?—"

And bear a son—no daughter, mind—
Who shall hand on my form and fame
"To future times as I have designed;
And at the birth throughout the land
Must cannon roar and alp-horns wind!"

The Will grew conscious at command,
And ordered issue as he planned.
[The interior of the Palace is veiled.]
[image not archived]

SCENE IV

SPAIN. ALBUERA

[The dawn of a mid-May day in the same spring shows the village of Albuera with the country around it, as viewed from the summit of a line of hills on which the English and their allies are ranged under Beresford. The landscape swept by the eye includes to the right foreground a hill loftier than any, and somewhat detached from the range. The green slopes behind and around this hill are untrodden—though in a few hours to be the sanguinary scene of the most murderous struggle of the whole war.

The village itself lies to the left foreground, with its stream flowing behind it in the distance on the right. A creeping brook at the bottom of the heights held by the English joins the stream by the village. Behind the stream some of the French forces are visible. Away behind these stretches a great wood several miles in area, out of which the Albuera stream emerges, and behind the furthest verge of the wood the morning sky lightens momentarily. The birds in the wood, unaware that this day is to be different from every other day they have known there, are heard singing their overtures with their usual serenity.]

DUMB SHOW

As objects grow more distinct it can be perceived that some strategic dispositions of the night are being completed by the French forces, which the evening before lay in the woodland to the front of the English army. They have emerged during the darkness, and large sections of them—infantry, cuirassiers, and artillery—have crept round to BERESFORD'S right without his suspecting the movement, where

they lie hidden by the great hill aforesaid, though not more than half-a-mile from his right wing.

SPIRIT OF THE YEARS

A hot ado goes forward here to-day,
If I may read the Immanent Intent
From signs and tokens blent
With weird unrest along the firmament
Of causal coils in passionate display.
—Look narrowly, and what you witness say.

SPIRIT OF THE PITIES

I see red smears upon the sickly dawn,
And seeming drops of gore. On earth below
Are men—unnatural and mechanic-drawn—
Mixt nationalities in row and row,
Wheeling them to and fro
In moves dissociate from their souls' demand,
For dynasts' ends that few even understand!

SPIRIT OF THE YEARS

Speak more materially, and less in dream.

SPIRIT OF RUMOUR

I'll do it... The stir of strife grows well defined
Around the hamlet and the church thereby:
Till, from the wood, the ponderous columns wind,
Guided by Godinot, with Werle nigh.
They bear upon the vill. But the gruff guns
Of Dickson's Portuguese
Punch spectral vistas through the maze of these!...
More Frenchmen press, and roaring antiphons
Of cannonry contuse the roofs and walls and trees.

SPIRIT OF THE PITIES

Wrecked are the ancient bridge, the green spring plot,
the blooming fruit-tree, the fair flower-knot!

SPIRIT OF RUMOUR

Yet the true mischief to the English might
Is meant to fall not there. Look to the right,
And read the shaping scheme by yon hill-side,
Where cannon, foot, and brisk dragoons you see,
With Werle and Latour-Maubourg to guide,
Waiting to breast the hill-brow bloodily.

BERESFORD now becomes aware of this project on his flank, and sends orders to throw back his right to face the attack. The order is not obeyed. Almost at the same moment the French rush is made, the

Spanish and Portuguese allies of the English are beaten back, and the hill is won. But two English divisions bear from the centre of their front, and plod desperately up the hill to retake it.

SPIRIT SINISTER

Now he among us who may wish to be
A skilled practitioner in slaughtery,
Should watch this hour's fruition yonder there,
And he will know, if knowing ever were,
How mortals may be freed their fleshly cells,
And quaint red doors set ope in sweating fells,
By methods swift and slow and foul and fair!

The English, who have plunged up the hill, are caught in a heavy mist, that hides from them an advance in their rear of the lancers and hussars of the enemy. The lines of the Buffs, the Sixty-sixth, and those of the Forty-eighth, who were with them, in a chaos of smoke, steel, sweat, curses, and blood, are beheld melting down like wax from an erect position to confused heaps. Their forms lie rigid, or twitch and turn, as they are trampled over by the hoofs of the enemy's horse. Those that have not fallen are taken.

SPIRIT OF THE PITIES

It works as you, uncanny Phantom, wist!...
Whose is that towering form
That tears across the mist
To where the shocks are sorest?—his with arm
Outstretched, and grimy face, and bloodshot eye,
Like one who, having done his deeds, will die?

SPIRIT OF RUMOUR

He is one Beresford, who heads the fight
For England here to-day.

SPIRIT OF THE PITIES

He calls the sight
Despite itself!—parries yon lancer's thrust,
And with his own sword renders dust to dust!
The ghastly climax of the strife is reached; the combatants are seen to be firing grape and canister at speaking distance, and discharging musketry in each other's faces when so close that their complexions may be recognized. Hot corpses, their mouths blackened by cartridge-biting, and surrounded by cast-away knapsacks, firelocks, hats, stocks, flint-boxes, and priming horns, together with red and blue rags of clothing, gaiters, epaulettes, limbs and viscera accumulate on the slopes, increasing from twos and threes to half-dozens, and from half-dozens to heaps,

which steam with their own warmth as the spring rain falls gently upon them.

The critical instant has come, and the English break. But a comparatively fresh division, with fusileers, is brought into the turmoil by HARDINGE and COLE, and these make one last strain to save the day, and their names and lives. The fusileers mount the incline, and issuing from the smoke and mist startle the enemy by their arrival on a spot deemed won.

SEMICHORUS I OF THE PITIES [aerial music]

They come, beset by riddling hail;
They sway like sedges in a gale;
The fail, and win, and win, and fail. Albuera!

SEMICHORUS II

They gain the ground there, yard by yard,
Their brows and hair and lashes charred,
Their blackened teeth set firm and hard.

SEMICHORUS I

Their mad assailants rave and reel,
And face, as men who scorn to feel,
The close-lined, three-edged prongs of steel.

SEMICHORUS II

Till faintness follows closing-in,
When, faltering headlong down, they spin
Like leaves. But those pay well who win Albuera.

SEMICHORUS I

Out of six thousand souls that swear
To hold the mount, or pass elsewhere,
But eighteen hundred muster there.

SEMICHORUS II

Pale Colonels, Captains, ranksmen lie,
Facing the earth or facing sky;—
They strove to live, they stretch to die.

SEMICHORUS I

Friends, foemen, mingle; heap and heap.—
Hide their hacked bones, Earth!—deep, deep, deep,
Where harmless worms caress and creep.

CHORUS

Hide their hacked bones, Earth!—deep, deep, deep,
Where harmless worms caress and creep.—
What man can grieve? what woman weep?
Better than waking is to sleep! Albuera!
The night comes on, and darkness covers the battle-field.

[image not archived]

SCENE V

WINDSOR CASTLE. A ROOM IN THE KING'S APARTMENT

[The walls of the room are padded, and also the articles of furniture, the stuffing being overlaid with satin and velvet, on which are worked in gold thread monograms and crowns. The windows are guarded, and the floor covered with thick cork, carpeted. The time is shortly after the last scene.]

The KING is seated by a window, and two of Dr. WILLIS'S attendants are in the room. His MAJESTY is now seventy-two; his sight is very defective, but he does not look ill. He appears to be lost in melancholy thought, and talks to himself reproachfully, hurried manner on occasion being the only irregular symptom that he betrays.]

KING

In my lifetime I did not look after her enough—enough—enough! And now she is lost to me, and I shall never see her more. Had I but known, had I but thought of it! Gentlemen, when did I lose the Princess Amelia?

FIRST ATTENDANT

The second of last November, your Majesty.

KING

And what is it now?

FIRST ATTENDANT

Now, sir, it is the beginning of June.

KING

Ah, June, I remember!... The June flowers are not for me. I shall never see them; nor will she. So fond of them as she was. ... Even if I were living I would never go where there are flowers any more! No: I would go to the bleak, barren places that she never would walk in, and never knew, so that nothing might remind me of her, and make my heart ache more than I can bear!... Why, the beginning of June?—that's when they are coming to examine me! [He grows excited.]

FIRST ATTENDANT [to second attendant, aside]

Dr. Reynolds ought not have reminded him of their visit. It only disquiets him and makes him less fit to see them.

KING

How long have I been confined here?

FIRST ATTENDANT

Since November, sir; for your health's sake entirely, as your Majesty knows.

KING

What, what? So long? Ah, yes. I must bear it. This is the fourth great black gulf in my poor life, is it not? The fourth.

[A signal from the door. The second attendant opens it and whispers.

Enter softly SIR HENRY HALFORD, DR. WILLIAM HEBERDEN, DR. ROBERT WILLIS, DR. MATTHEW BAILLIE, the KING'S APOTHECARY, and one or two other gentlemen.]

KING [straining his eye to discern them]

What! Are they come? What will they do to me? How dare they! I am Elector of Hanover! [Finding Dr. Willis is among them he shrieks.]

O, they are going to bleed me—yes, to bleed me! [Piteously.] My friends, don't bleed me—pray don't! It makes me so weak to take my blood. And the leeches do, too, when you put so many. You will not be so unkind, I am sure!

WILLIS [to Baillie]

It is extraordinary what a vast aversion he has to bleeding—that most salutary remedy, fearlessly practised. He submits to leeches as yet but I won't say that he will for long without being strait-jacketed.

KING [catching some of the words]

You will strait-jacket me? O no, no!

WILLIS

Leeches are not effective, really. Dr. Home, when I mentioned it to him yesterday, said he would bleed him till he fainted if he had charge of him!

KING

O will you do it, sir, against my will,
And put me, once your king, in needless pain?
I do assure you truly, my good friends,
That I have done no harm! In sunnier years
Ere I was throneless, withered to a shade,
Deprived of my divine authority—
When I was hale, and ruled the English land—
I ever did my utmost to promote
The welfare of my people, body and soul!
Right many a morn and night I have prayed and mused
How I could bring them to a better way.
So much of me you surely know, my friends,
And will not hurt me in my weakness here! [He trembles.]
SPIRIT OF THE PITIES

The tears that lie about this plightful scene
Of heavy travail in a suffering soul,
Mocked with the forms and feints of royalty
While scarified by briery Circumstance,
Might drive Compassion past her patience
To hold that some mean, monstrous ironist
Had built this mistimed fabric of the Spheres
To watch the throbbings of its captive lives,
[The which may Truth forfend], and not thy said
Unmaliced, unimpassioned, nescient Will!

SPIRIT OF THE YEARS

Mild one, be not touched with human fate.
Such is the Drama: such the Mortal state:
No sigh of thine can null the Plan Predestinate!

HALFORD

We have come to do your Majesty no harm.
Here's Dr. Heberden, whom I am sure you like,
And this is Dr. Baillie. We arrive
But to inquire and gather how you are,
Thereon to let the Privy Council know,
And give assurances for you people's good.
[A brass band is heard playing in the distant part of Windsor.]

KING

Ah—what does that band play for here to-day?
She has been dead and I so short a time!...
Her little hands are hardly cold as yet;
But they can show such cruel indecency
As to let trumpets play!

HALFORD

They guess not, sir,
That you can hear them, or their chords would cease.
Their boisterous music fetches back to me
That, of our errands to your Majesty,
One was congratulation most sincere
Upon this glorious victory you have won.
The news is just in port; the band booms out
To celebrate it, and to honour you.

KING

A victory? I? Pray where?

HALFORD

Indeed so, sir:
Hard by Albuera—far in harried Spain—

Yes, sir; you have achieved a victory
Of dash unmatched and feats unparalleled!

KING

He says I have won a battle? But I thought
I was a poor afflicted captive here,
In darkness lingering out my lonely days,
Beset with terror of these myrmidons
That suck my blood like vampires! Ay, ay, ay!—
No aims left to me but to quicken death
To quicklier please my son!—And yet he says
That I have won a battle! O God, curse, damn!
When will the speech of the world accord with truth,
And men's tongues roll sincerely!

GENTLEMAN [aside]

Faith, 'twould seem

As if the madman were the sanest here!

[The KING'S face has flushed, and he becomes violent. The attendants rush forward to him.]

SPIRIT OF THE PITIES

Something within me aches to pray
To some Great Heart, to take away
This evil day, this evil day!

CHORUS IRONIC

Ha-ha! That's good. Thou'lt pray to It:—
But where do Its compassions sit?
Yea, where abides the heart of it?
Is it where sky-fires flame and flit,
Or solar craters spew and spit,
Or ultra-stellar night-webs knit?
What is Its shape? Man's counterfeit?
That turns in some far sphere unlit
The Wheel which drives the Infinite?

SPIRIT OF THE PITIES

Mock on, mock on! Yet I'll go pray
To some Great Heart, who haply may
Charm mortal miseries away!

[The KING'S paroxysm continues. The attendants hold him.]

HALFORD

This is distressing. One can never tell
How he will take things now. I thought Albuera
A subject that would surely solace him.
These paroxysms—have they been bad this week? [To Attendants.]

FIRST ATTENDANT

Sir Henry, no. He has quite often named
The late Princess, as gently as a child
A little bird found starved.

WILLIS [aside to apothecary]

I must increase the opium to-night, and lower him by a double set of
leeches since he won't stand the lancet quietly.

APOTHECARY

You should take twenty ounces, doctor, if a drop—indeed, go on
bleeding till he's unconscious. He is too robust by half. And the
watering-pot would do good again—not less than six feet above his
head. See how heated he is.

WILLIS

Curse that town band. It will have to be stopped.

HEBERDEN

The same thing is going on all over England, no doubt, on account of
this victory.

HALFORD

When he is in a more domineering mood he likes such allusions to his
rank as king... If he could resume his walks on the terrace he
might improve slightly. But it is too soon yet. We must consider
what we shall report to the Council. There is little hope of his
being much better. What do you think, Willis?

WILLIS

None. He is done for this time!

HALFORD

Well, we must soften it down a little, so as not to upset the Queen
too much, poor woman, and distract the Council unnecessarily. Eldon
will go pumping up bucketfuls, and the Archbishops are so easily
shocked that a certain conventional reserve is almost forced upon us.

WILLIS [returning from the King]

He is already better. The paroxysm has nearly passed. Your opinion
will be far more favourable before you leave.

[The KING soon grows calm, and the expression of his face changes
to one of dejection. The attendants leave his side: he bends his
head, and covers his face with his hand, while his lips move as if
in prayer. He then turns to them.]

KING [meekly]

I am most truly sorry, gentlemen,
If I have used language that would seem to show
Discourtesy to you for your good help
In this unhappy malady of mine!

My nerves unstring, my friend; my flesh grows weak:

"The good that I do I leave undone,

The evil which I would not, that I do!"

Shame, shame on me!

WILLIS [aside to the others]

Now he will be as low as before he was in the other extreme.

KING

A king should bear him kingly; I of all,

One of so long a line. O shame on me!...

—This battle that you speak of?—Spain, of course?

Ah—Albuera! And many fall—eh? Yes?

HALFORD

Many hot hearts, sir, cold, I grieve to say.

There's Major-General Houghton, Captain Bourke,

And Herbert of the Third, Lieutenant Fox,

And Captains Erck and Montague, and more.

With Majors-General Cole and Stewart wounded,

And Quartermaster-General Wallace too:

A total of three generals, colonels five,

Five majors, fifty captains; and to these

Add ensigns and lieutenants sixscore odd,

Who went out, but returned not. Heavily tithed

Were the attenuate battalions there

Who stood and bearded Death by the hour that day!

KING

O fearful price for victory! Add thereto

All those I lost at Walchere.—A crime

Lay there!... I stood on Chatham's being sent:

It wears on me, till I am unfit to live!

WILLIS [aside to the others]

Don't let him get on that Walcheren business. There will be another outbreak. Heberden, please ye talk to him. He fancies you most.

HEBERDEN

I'll tell him some of the brilliant feats of the battle. [He goes and talks to the KING.]

WILLIS [to the rest]

Well, my inside begins to cry cupboard. I had breakfast early. We have enough particulars now to face the Queen's Council with, I should say, Sir Henry?

HALFORD

Yes.—I want to get back to town as soon as possible to-day. Mrs Siddons has a party at her house at Westbourne to-night, and all the

world is going to be there.

BAILLIE

Well, I am not. But I have promised to take some friends to Vauxhall, as it is a grand gala and fireworks night. Miss Farren is going to sing "The Canary Bird."—The Regent's fete, by the way, is postponed till the nineteenth, on account of this relapse. Pretty grumpy he was at having to do it. All the world will be THERE, sure!

WILLIS

And some from the Shades, too, of the fair, sex.—Well, here comes Heberden. He has pacified his Majesty nicely. Now we can get away.
[The physicians withdraw softly, and the scene is covered.]
[image not archived]

SCENE VI

LONDON. CARLTON HOUSE AND THE STREETS ADJOINING

[It is a cloudless midsummer evening, and as the west fades the stars beam down upon the city, the evening-star hanging like a jonquil blossom. They are dimmed by the unwonted radiance which spreads around and above Carlton House. As viewed from aloft the glare rises through the skylights, floods the forecourt towards Pall Mall, and kindles with a diaphanous glow the huge tents in the gardens that overlook the Mall. The hour has arrived of the Prince Regent's festivity.

A stream of carriages and sedan-chairs, moving slowly, stretches from the building along Pall Mall into Piccadilly and Bond Street, and crowds fill the pavements watching the bejewelled and feathered occupants. In addition to the grand entrance inside the Pall Mall colonnade there is a covert little "chair-door" in Warwick Street for sedans only, by which arrivals are perceived to be slipping in almost unobserved.]

SPIRIT IRONIC

What domiciles are those, of singular expression,
Whence no guest comes to join the gemmed procession;
That, west of Hyde, this, in the Park-side Lane,
Each front beclouded like a mask of pain?

SPIRIT OF RUMOUR

Therein the princely host's two spouses dwell;
A wife in each. Let me inspect and tell.
[The walls of the two houses—one in Park Lane, the other at Kensington—become transparent.]
I see within the first his latter wife—

That Caroline of Brunswick whose brave sire
 Yielded his breath on Jena's reeking plain,
 And of whose kindred other yet may fall
 Ere long, if character indeed be fate.—
 She idles feasting, and is full of jest
 As each gay chariot rumbles to the rout.
 I rank like your Archbishops' wives, laughs she;
 Denied my husband's honours. Funny me!
 [Suddenly a Beau on his way to the Carlton House festival halts at
 her house, calls, and is shown in.]
 He brings her news that a fresh favourite rules
 Her husband's ready heart; likewise of those
 Obscure and unmissed courtiers late deceased,
 Who have in name been bidden to the feast
 By blundering scribes.
 [The Princess is seen to jump up from table at some words from her
 visitor, and clap her hands.]
 These tidings, juxtaposed,
 Have fired her hot with curiosity,
 And lit her quick invention with a plan.

PRINCESS OF WALES

Mine God, I'll go disguised—in some dead name
 And enter by the leetle, sly, chair-door
 Designed for those not welcomed openly.
 There unobserved I'll note mine new supplanter!
 Tis indiscreet? Let indiscretion rule,
 Since caution pensions me so scurvily!

SPIRIT IRONIC

Good. Now for the other sweet and slighted spouse.

SPIRIT OF RUMOUR

The second roof shades the Fitzherbert Fair;
 Reserved, perverse. As coach and coach roll by
 She mopes within her lattice; lampless, lone,
 As if she grieved at her ungracious fate,
 And yet were loth to kill the sting of it
 By frankly forfeiting the Prince and town.
 Bidden, says she, "but as one low of rank,
 And go I will not so unworthily,
 To sit with common dames!"—A flippant friend
 Writes then that a new planet sways to-night
 The sense of her erratic lord; whereon
 The fair Fitzherbert muses hankeringly.

MRS. FITZHERBERT [soliloquizing]
The guest-card which I publicly refused
Might, as a fancy, privately be used!...
Yes—one last look—a wordless, wan farewell
To this false life which glooms me like a knell,
And him, the cause; from some hid nook survey
His new magnificence;—then go for aye!

SPIRIT OF RUMOUR

She cloaks and veils, and in her private chair
Passes the Princess also stealing there—
Two honest wives, and yet a differing pair!

SPIRIT IRONIC

With dames of strange repute, who bear a ticket
For screened admission by the private wicket.

CHORUS OF IRONIC SPIRITS [aerial music]

A wife of the body, a wife of the mind,
A wife somewhat frowsy, a wife too refined:
Could the twain but grow one, and no other dames be,
No husband in Europe more steadfast than he!

SPIRIT OF THE YEARS

Cease fooling on weak waifs who love and wed
But as the unweeting Urger may bestead!—
See them withinside, douce and diamonded.

[The walls of Carlton House open, and the spectator finds himself
confronting the revel.]

[image not archived]

SCENE VII

THE SAME. THE INTERIOR OF CARLTON HOUSE

[A central hall is disclosed, radiant with constellations of
candles, lamps, and lanterns, and decorated with flowering shrubs.
An opening on the left reveals the Grand Council-chamber prepared
for dancing, the floor being chalked with arabesques having in the
centre "G. III. R.," with a crown, arms, and supporters. Orange-
trees and rose-bushes in bloom stand against the walls. On the
right hand extends a glittering vista of the supper-rooms and
tables, now crowded with guests. This display reaches as far as
the conservatory westward, and branches into long tents on the
lawn.

On a dais at the chief table, laid with gold and silver plate, the
Prince Regent sits like a lay figure, in a state chair of crimson

and gold, with six servants at his back. He swelters in a gorgeous uniform of scarlet and gold lace which represents him as Field Marshal, and he is surrounded by a hundred-and-forty of his particular friends.

Down the middle of this state-table runs a purling brook crossed by quaint bridges, in which gold and silver fish frisk about between banks of moss and flowers. The whole scene is lit with wax candles in chandeliers, and in countless candelabra on the tables.

The people at the upper tables include the Duchess of York, looking tired from having just received as hostess most of the ladies present, except those who have come informally, Louis XVIII. of France, the Duchess of Angouleme, all the English Royal Dukes, nearly all the ordinary Dukes and Duchesses; also the Lord Chancellor of the Exchequer and other Ministers, the Lord Mayor and Lady Mayoress, all the more fashionable of the other Peers, Peeresses, and Members of Parliament, Generals, Admirals, and Mayors, with their wives. The ladies of position wear, almost to the extent of a uniform, a nodding head-dress of ostrich feathers with diamonds, and gowns of white satin embroidered in gold or silver, on which, owing to the heat, dribbles of wax from the chandeliers occasionally fall.

The Guards' bands play, and attendants rush about in blue and gold lace.]

SPIRIT OF THE PITIES

The Queen, the Regent's mother, sits not here;
Wanting, too, are his sisters, I perceive;
And it is well. With the distempered King
Immured at Windsor, sore distraught or dying,
It borders nigh on indecency
In their regard, that this loud feast is kept,
A thought not strange to many, as I read,
Even of those gathered here.

SPIRIT IRONIC

My dear phantom and crony, the gloom upon their faces is due rather to their having borrowed those diamonds at eleven per cent than to their loyalty to a suffering monarch! But let us test the feeling. I'll spread a report.

[He calls up the SPIRIT OF RUMOUR, who scatters whispers through the assemblage.]

A GUEST [to his neighbour]

Have you heard this report—that the King is dead?

ANOTHER GUEST

It has just reached me from the other side. Can it be true?

THIRD GUEST

I think it probable. He has been very ill all week.

PRINCE REGENT

Dead? Then my fete is spoilt, by God!

SHERIDAN

Long live the King! [He holds up his glass and bows to the Regent.]

MARCHIONESS OF HERTFORD [the new favourite, to the Regent]

The news is more natural than the moment of it! It is too cruel to you that it should happen now!

PRINCE REGENT

Damn me, though; can it be true? [He provisionally throws a regal air into his countenance.]

DUCHESS OF YORK [on the Regent's left]

I hardly can believe it. This forenoon

He was reported mending.

DUCHESS OF ANGOULEME [on the Regent's right]

On this side

They are asserting that the news is false—

That Buonaparte's child, the "King of Rome,"

Is dead, and not your royal father, sire.

PRINCE REGENT

That's mighty fortunate! Had it been true,

I should have been abused by all the world—

The Queen the keenest of the chorus, too—

Though I have been postponing this pledged feast

Through days and weeks, in hopes the King would mend,

Till expectation fusted with delay.

But give a dog a bad name—or a Prince!

So, then, it is new-come King of Rome

Who has passed or ever the world has welcomed him!...

Call him a king—that pompous upstart's son—

Beside us scions of the ancient lines!

DUKE OF BEDFORD

I think that rumour untrue also, sir. I heard it as I drove up from Woburn this evening, and it was contradicted then.

PRINCE REGENT

Drove up this evening, did ye, Duke. Why did you cut it so close?

DUKE OF BEDFORD

Well, it so happened that my sheep-sheering dinner was fixed for this very day, and I couldn't put it off. So I dined with them

there at one o'clock, discussed the sheep, rushed off, drove the two-and-forty miles, jumped into my clothes at my house here, and reached your Royal Highness's door in no very bad time.

PRINCE REGENT

Capital, capital. But, 'pon my soul, 'twas a close shave!

[Soon the babbling and glittering company rise from supper, and begin promenading through the rooms and tents, the REGENT setting the example, and mixing up and talking unceremoniously with his guests of every degree. He and the group round him disappear into the remoter chambers; but may concentrate in the Grecian Hall, which forms the foreground of the scene, whence a glance can be obtained into the ball-room, now filled with dancers.

The band is playing the tune of the season, "The Regency Hornpipe," which is danced as a country-dance by some thirty couples; so that by the time the top couple have danced down the figure they are quite breathless. Two young lords talk desultorily as they survey the scene.]

FIRST LORD

Are the rumours of the King of Rome's death confirmed?

SECOND LORD

No. But they are probably true. He was a feeble brat from the first. I believe they had to baptize him on the day he was born. What can one expect after such presumption—calling him the New Messiah, and God knows what all. Ours is the only country which did not write fulsome poems about him. "Wise English!" the Tsar Alexander said drily when he heard it.

FIRST LORD

Ay! The affection between that Pompey and Caesar has begun to cool. Alexander's soreness at having his sister thrown over so cavalierly is not salved yet.

SECOND LORD

There is much beside. I'd lay a guinea there will be war between Russia and France before another year has flown.

FIRST LORD

Prinny looks a little worried to-night.

SECOND LORD

Yes. The Queen don't like the fete being held, considering the King's condition. She and her friends say it should have been put off altogether. But the Princess of Wales is not troubled that way. Though she was not asked herself she went wildly off and bought her people new gowns to come in. Poor maladroit woman!...

[Another new dance of the year is started, and another long line

of couples begin to foot it.]

That's a pretty thing they are doing now. What d'ye call it?

FIRST LORD

Speed the Plough. It is just out. They are having it everywhere.

The next is to be one of those foreign things in three-eight time they call Waltzes. I question if anybody is up to dancing 'em here yet.

["Speed the Plough" is danced to its conclusion, and the band strikes up "The Copenhagen Waltz."]

SPIRIT IRONIC

Now for the wives. They both were tearing hither,

Unless reflection sped them back again;

But dignity that nothing else may bend

Succumbs to woman's curiosity,

So deem them here. Messengers, call them nigh!

[The PRINCE REGENT, having gone the round of the other rooms, now appears at the ball-room door, and stands looking at the dancers.

Suddenly he turns, and gazes about with a ruffled face. He sees a tall, red-faced man near him—LORD MOIRA, one of his friends.]

PRINCE REGENT

Damned hot here, Moira. Hottest of all for me!

MOIRA

Yes, it is warm, sir. Hence I do not dance.

PRINCE REGENT

H'm. What I meant was of another order;

I spoke figuratively.

MOIRA

O indeed, sir?

PRINCE REGENT

She's here. I heard her voice. I'll swear I did!

MOIRA

Who, sir?

PRINCE REGENT

Why, the Princess of Wales. Do you think I could mistake those beastly German Ps and Bs of hers?—She asked to come, and was denied; but she's got here, I'll wager ye, through the chair-door in Warwick Street, which I arranged for a few ladies whom I wished to come privately. [He looks about again, and moves till he is by a door which affords a peep up the grand staircase.] By God, Moira, I see TWO figures up there who shouldn't be here—leaning over the balustrade of the gallery!

MOIRA

Two figures, sir. Whose are they?

PRINCE REGENT

She is one. The Fitzherbert in t'other! O I am almost sure it is!
I would have welcomed her, but she bridled and said she wouldn't sit
down at my table as a plain "Mrs." to please anybody. As I had sworn
that on this occasion people should sit strictly according to their
rank, I wouldn't give way. Why the devil did she come like this?
Pon my soul, these women will be the death o' me!

MOIRA [looking cautiously up the stairs]

I can see nothing of her, sir, nor of the Princess either. There is
a crowd of idlers up there leaning over the bannisters, and you may
have mistaken some others for them.

PRINCE REGENT

O no. They have drawn back their heads. There have been such damned
mistakes made in sending out the cards that the biggest w--- in London
might be here. She's watching Lady Hertford, that's what she's doing.
For all their indifference, both of them are as jealous as two cats
over the tom.

[Somebody whispers that a lady has fainted up-stairs.]

That's Maria, I'll swear! She's always doing it. Whenever I hear
of some lady fainting about upon the furniture at my presence, and
sending for a glass of water, I say to myself, There's Maria at it
again, by God!

SPIRIT IRONIC

Now let him hear their voices once again.

[The REGENT starts as he seems to hear from the stairs the tongues
of the two ladies growing louder and nearer, the PRINCESS pouring
reproaches into one ear, and MRS. FITZHERBERT into the other.]

PRINCE REGENT

Od seize 'em, Moira; this will drive me mad!

If men of blood must mate with only one

Of those dear damned deluders called the Sex,

Why has Heaven teased us with the taste for change?—

God, I begin to loathe the whole curst show!

How hot it is! Get me a glass of brandy,

Or I shall swoon off too. Now let's go out,

And find some fresher air upon the lawn.

[Exit the PRINCE REGENT, with LORDS MOIRA and YARMOUTH. The band
strikes up "La Belle Catarina" and a new figure is formed.]

SPIRIT OF THE YEARS

Phantoms, ye strain your powers unduly here,

Making faint fancies as they were indeed

The Mighty Will's firm work.

SPIRIT IRONIC

Nay, Father, nay;

The wives prepared to hasten hitherward

Under the names of some gone down to death,

Who yet were bidden. Must they not be here?

SPIRIT OF THE YEARS

There lie long leagues between a woman's word—

She will, indeed she will!—and acting on't.

Whether those came or no, thy antics cease,

And let the revel wear it out in peace.

[Enter SPENCER PERCEVAL the Prime Minister, a small, pale, grave-looking man, and an Under-Secretary of State, meeting.]

UNDER-SECRETARY

Is the King of Rome really dead, and the gorgeous gold cradle wasted?

PERCEVAL

O no, he is alive and waxing strong:

That tale has been set travelling more than once.

But touching it, booms echo to our ear

Of graver import, unimpeachable.

UNDER-SECRETARY

Your speech is dark.

PERCEVAL

Well, a new war in Europe.

Before the year is out there may arise

A red campaign outscaling any seen.

Russia and France the parties to the strife—

Ay, to the death!

UNDER-SECRETARY

By Heaven, sir, do you say so?

[Enter CASTLEREAGH, a tall, handsome man with a Roman nose, who, seeing them, approaches.]

PERCEVAL

Ha, Castlereagh. Till now I have missed you here.

This news is startling for us all, I say!

CASTLEREAGH

My mind is blank on it! Since I left office

I know no more what villainy's afoot,

Or virtue either, than an anchorite

Who mortifies the flesh in some lone cave.

PERCEVAL

Well, happily that may not last for long.

But this grave pother that's just now agog
 May reach such radius in its consequence
 As to outspan our lives! Yes, Bonaparte
 And Alexander—late such bosom-friends—
 Are closing to a mutual murder-bout
 At which the lips of Europe will wax wan.
 Bonaparte says the fault is not with him,
 And so says Alexander. But we know
 The Austrian knot began their severance,
 And that the Polish question largens it.
 Nothing but time is needed for the clash.
 And if so be that Wellington but keep
 His foot in the Peninsula awhile,
 Between the pestle and the mortar-stone
 Of Russia and of Spain, Napoleon's brayed.
 SPIRIT OF RUMOUR [to the Spirit of the Years]
 Permit me now to join them and confirm,
 By what I bring from far, their forecasting?
 SPIRIT OF THE YEARS
 I'll go. Thou knowest not greatly more than they.
 [The SPIRIT OF THE YEARS enters the apartment in the shape of a
 pale, hollow-eye gentleman wearing an embroidered suit. At the
 same time re-enter the REGENT, LORDS MOIRA, YARMOUTH, KEITH, LADY
 HERTFORD, SHERIDAN, the DUKE OF BEDFORD, with many more notables.
 The band changes into the popular dance, "Down with the French,"
 and the characters aforesaid look on at the dancers.]
 SPIRIT OF THE YEARS [to Perceval]
 Yes, sir; your text is true. In closest touch
 With European courts and cabinets,
 The imminence of dire and deadly war
 Betwixt these east and western emperies
 Is lipped by special pathways to mine ear.
 You may not see the impact: ere it come
 The tomb-worm may caress thee [Perceval shrinks]; but believe
 Before five more have joined the shotten years
 Whose useless films infest the foggy Past,
 Traced thick with teachings glimpsed unheedingly,
 The rawest Dynast of the group concerned
 Will, for the good or ill of mute mankind,
 Down-topple to the dust like soldier Saul,
 And Europe's mouldy-minded oligarchs
 Be propped anew; while garments roll in blood

To confused noise, with burning, and fuel of fire.

Nations shall lose their noblest in the strife,

And tremble at the tidings of an hour!

[He passes into the crowd and vanishes.]

PRINCE REGENT [who has heard with parted lips]

Who the devil is he?

PERCEVAL

One in the suite of the French princes, perhaps, sir?—though his tone was not monarchical. He seems to be a foreigner.

CASTLEREAGH

His manner was that of an old prophet, and his features had a Jewish cast, which accounted for his Hebraic style.

PRINCE REGENT

He could not have known me, to speak so freely in my presence!

SHERIDAN

I expected to see him write on the wall, like the gentleman with the Hand at Belshazzar's Feast.

PRINCE REGENT [recovering]

He seemed to know a damn sight more about what's going on in Europe, sir [to Perceval], than your Government does, with all its secret information.

PERCEVAL

He is recently over, I conjecture, your royal Highness, and brings the latest impressions.

PRINCE REGENT

By Gad, sir, I shall have a comfortable time of it in my regency, or reign, if what he foresees be true! But I was born for war; it is my destiny!

[He draws himself up inside his uniform and stalks away. The group dissolves, the band continuing stridently, "Down with the French," as dawn glimmers in. Soon the REGENT'S guests begin severally and in groups to take leave.]

SPIRIT OF THE PITIES

Behold To-morrow riddles the curtains through,
And labouring life without shoulders its cross anew!

CHORUS OF THE YEARS [aerial music]

Why watch we here? Look all around

Where Europe spreads her crinkled ground,

From Osmanlee to Hekla's mound,

Look all around!

Hark at the cloud-combed Ural pines;

See how each, wailful-wise, inclines;

Mark the mist's labyrinthine lines;
Behold the tumbling Biscay Bay;
The Midland main in silent sway;
As urged to move them, so move they.
No less through regal puppet-shows
The rapt Determinator throes,
That neither good nor evil knows!
SPIRIT OF THE PITIES
Yet I may wake and understand
Ere Earth unshape, know all things, and
With knowledge use a painless hand,
A painless hand!
[Solitude reigns in the chambers, and the scene shuts up.]
[image not archived]

PART THIRD

CHARACTERS

I. PHANTOM INTELLIGENCES

THE ANCIENT SPIRIT OF THE YEARS/CHORUS OF THE YEARS.

THE SPIRIT OF THE PITIES/CHORUS OF THE PITIES.

SPIRITS SINISTER AND IRONIC/CHORUSES OF SINISTER AND IRONIC
SPIRITS.

THE SPIRIT OF RUMOUR/CHORUS OF RUMOURS.

THE SHADE OF THE EARTH.

SPIRIT MESSENGERS.

RECORDING ANGELS.

II. PERSONS

MEN [The names in lower case are mute figures.]

THE PRINCE REGENT.

The Royal Dukes.

THE DUKE OF RICHMOND.

The Duke of Beaufort.

CASTLEREAGH, Prime Minister.

Palmerston, War Secretary.

PONSONBY, of the Opposition.

BURDETT, of the Opposition.

WHITBREAD, of the Opposition.

Tierney, Romilly, of the Opposition

Other Members of Parliament.

TWO ATTACHES.

A DIPLOMATIST.

Ambassadors, Ministers, Peers, and other persons of Quality and Office.

.....

WELLINGTON.

UXBRIDGE.

PICTON.

HILL.

CLINTON.

Colville.

COLE.

BERESFORD.

Pack and Kempt.

Byng.

Vivian.

W. Ponsonby, Vandeleur, Colquhoun-Grant, Maitland, Adam, and C. Halkett.

Graham, Le Marchant, Pakenham, and Sir Stapleton Cotton.

SIR W. DE LANCEY.

FITZROY SOMERSET.

COLONELS FRASER, H. HALKETT, COLBORNE, Cameron, Hepburn, LORD SALTOUN, C. Campbell.

SIR NEIL CAMPBELL.

Sir Alexander Gordon, BRIGDEMAN, TYLER, and other AIDES.

CAPTAIN MERCER.

Other Generals, Colonels, and Military Officers.

Couriers.

A SERGEANT OF DRAGOONS.

Another SERGEANT.

A SERGEANT of the 15th HUSSARS.

A SENTINEL. Batmen.

AN OFFICER'S SERVANT.

Other non-Commissioned Officers and Privates of the British Army.

English Forces.

.....

SIR W. GELL, Chamberlain to the Princess of Wales.

MR. LEGH, a Wessex Gentleman.

Another GENTLEMAN.

THE VICAR OF DURNOVER.

Signor Tramezzini and other members of the Opera Company.

M. Rozier, a dancer.

LONDON CITIZENS.

A RUSTIC and a YEOMAN.

A MAIL-GUARD.

TOWNSPEOPLE, Musicians, Villagers, etc.

.....

THE DUKE OF BRUNSWICK.

THE PRINCE OF ORANGE.

Count Alten.

Von Ompteda, Baring, Duplat, and other Officers of the King's-German Legion.

Perponcher, Best, Kielmansegge, Wincke, and other Hanoverian Officers.

Bylandt and other Officers of the Dutch-Belgian troops.

SOME HUSSARS.

King's-German, Hanoverian, Brunswick, and Dutch-Belgian Forces.

.....

BARON VAN CAPELLEN, Belgian Secretary of State.

The Dukes of Arenberg and d'Ursel.

THE MAYOR OF BRUSSELS.

CITIZENS AND IDLERS of Brussels.

.....

NAPOLEON BONAPARTE.

JOSEPH BONAPARTE.

Jerome Bonaparte.

THE KING OF ROME.

Eugene de Beauharnais.

Cambaceres, Arch-Chancellor to Napoleon.

TALLEYRAND.

CAULAINCOURT.

DE BAUSSET.

.....

MURAT, King of Naples.

SOULT, Napoleon's Chief of Staff.

NEY.

DAVOUT.

MARMONT.

BERTHIER.

BERTRAND.

BESSIERES.

AUGEREAU, MACDONALD, LAURISTON, CAMBRONNE.

Oudinot, Friant, Reille, d'Erlon, Drouot, Victor, Poniatowski, Jourdan, and other Marshals, and General and Regimental

Officers of Napoleon's Army.
 RAPP, MORTIER, LARIBOISIERE.
 Kellermann and Milhaud.
 COLONELS FABVRIER, MARBOT, MALLET, HEYMES, and others.
 French AIDES and COURIERS.
 DE CANISY, Equerry to the King of Rome.
 COMMANDANT LESSARD.
 Another COMMANDANT.
 BUSSY, an Orderly Officer.
 SOLDIERS of the Imperial Guard and others.
 STRAGGLERS; A MAD SOLDIER.
 French Forces.

 HOUREAU, BOURDOIS, and Ivan, physicians.
 MENEVAL, Private Secretary to Napoleon.
 DE MONTROND, an emissary of Napoleon's.
 Other Secretaries to Napoleon.
 CONSTANT, Napoleon's Valet.
 ROUSTAN, Napoleon's Mameluke.
 TWO POSTILLIONS.
 A TRAVELLER.
 CHAMBERLAINS and Attendants.
 SERVANTS at the Tuileries.
 FRENCH CITIZENS and Townspeople.

 THE KING OF PRUSSIA.
 BLUCHER.
 MUFLING, Wellington's Prussian Attache.
 GNEISENAU.
 Zieten.
 Bulow.
 Kleist, Steinmetz, Thielemann, Falkenhausen.
 Other Prussian General and Regimental Officers.
 A PRUSSIAN PRISONER of the French.
 Prussian Forces.

 FRANCIS, Emperor of Austria.
 METTERNICH, Chancellor and Foreign Minister.
 Hardenberg.
 NEIPPERG
 Schwarzenberg, Kleinau, Hesse-Homburg, and other Austrian Generals.
 Viennese Personages of rank and fashion.

Austrian Forces.

.....

THE EMPEROR ALEXANDER of Russia.

Nesselrode.

KUTUZOF.

Bennigsen.

Barclay de Tolly, Dokhtorof, Bagration, Platoff, Tchichagoff,

Miloradovitch, and other Russian Generals.

Rostopchin, Governor of Moscow.

SCHUVALOFF, a Commissioner.

A RUSSIAN OFFICER under Kutuzof.

Russian Forces.

Moscow Citizens.

.....

Alava, Wellington's Spanish Attache.

Spanish and Portuguese Officers.

Spanish and Portuguese Forces.

Spanish Citizens.

.....

Minor Sovereigns and Princes of Europe.

LEIPZIG CITIZENS.

WOMEN

CAROLINE, PRINCESS OF WALES.

The Duchess of York.

THE DUCHESS OF RICHMOND.

The Duchess of Beaufort.

LADY H. DARYMPLE

Lady de Lancey.

LADY CHARLOTTE CAMPBELL.

Lady Anne Hamilton.

A YOUNG LADY AND HER MOTHER.

MRS. DALBIAC, a Colonel's wife.

MRS. PRESCOTT, a Captain's wife.

Other English ladies of note and rank.

Madame Grassini and other Ladies of the Opera.

Madame Angiolini, a dancer.

VILLAGE WOMEN.

SOLDIERS' WIVES AND SWEETHEARTS.

A SOLDIER'S DAUGHTER.

.....

THE EMPRESS MARIE LOUISE.

The Empress of Austria.

MARIA CAROLINA of Naples.
Queen Hortense.
Laetitia, Madame Bonaparte.
The Princess Pauline.
THE DUCHESS OF MONTEBELLO.
THE COUNTESS OF MONTESQUIOU.
THE COUNTESS OF BRIGNOLE.
Other Ladies-in-Waiting on Marie Louise.
THE EX-EMPRESS JOSEPHINE.
LADIES-IN-WAITING on Josephine.
Another French Lady.
FRENCH MARKET-WOMEN.
A SPANISH LADY.
French and Spanish Women of pleasure.
Continental Citizens' Wives.
Camp-followers.
[image not archived]

ACT FIRST

[image not archived]

SCENE I

THE BANKS OF THE NIEMEN, NEAR KOWNO
[The foreground is a hillock on a broken upland, seen in evening twilight. On the left, further back, are the dusky forests of Wilkowsky; on the right is the vague shine of a large river. Emerging from the wood below the eminence appears a shadowy amorphous thing in motion, the central or Imperial column of NAPOLEON'S Grand Army for the invasion of Russia, comprising the corps of OUDINOT, NEY, and DAVOUT, with the Imperial Guard. This, with the right and left columns, makes up the host of nearly half a million, all starting on their march to Moscow. While the rearmost regiments are arriving, NAPOLEON rides ahead with GENERAL HAXEL and one or two others to reconnoitre the river. NAPOLEON'S horse stumbles and throws him. He picks himself up before he can be helped.]
SPIRIT OF THE YEARS [to Napoleon]
The portent is an ill one, Emperor;
An ancient Roman would retire thereat!
NAPOLEON

Whose voice was that, jarring upon my thought
So insolently?

HAXEL AND OTHERS

Sire, we spoke no word.

NAPOLEON

Then, whoso spake, such portents I defy!

[He remounts. When the reconnoitrers again came back to the foreground of the scene the huge array of columns is standing quite still, in circles of companies, the captain of each in the middle with a paper in his hand. He reads from it a proclamation. They quiver emotionally, like leaves stirred by the wind. NAPOLEON and his staff reascend the hillock, and his own words as repeated to the ranks reach his ears, while he himself delivers the same address to those about him.]

NAPOLEON

Soldiers, wild war is on the board again;

The lifetime-long alliance Russia swore

At Tilsit, for the English realm's undoing,

Is violate beyond refurbishment,

And she intractable and unashamed.

Russia is forced on by fatality:

She cries her destiny must be outwrought,

Meaning at our expense. Does she then dream

We are no more the men of Austerlitz,

With nothing left of our old featfulness?

She offers us the choice of sword or shame;

We have made that choice unhesitatingly!

Then let us forthwith stride the Niemen flood,

Let us bear war into her great gaunt land,

And spread our glory there as elsewhere,

So that a stable peace shall stultify

The evil seed-bearing that Russian wiles

Have nourished upon Europe's choked affairs

These fifty years!

[The midsummer night darkens. They all make their bivouacs and sleep.]

SPIRIT OF THE PITIES

Something is tongued afar.

DISTANT VOICE IN THE WIND

The hostile hatchings of Napoleon's brain

Against our Empire, long have harassed us,

And mangled all our mild amenities.

So, since the hunger for embrangement
That gnaws this man, has left us optionless,
And haled us recklessly to horrid war,
We have promptly mustered our well-hardened hosts,
And, counting on our call to the most High,
Have forthwith set our puissance face to face
Against Napoleon's.—Ranksmen! officers!
You fend your lives, your land, your liberty.
I am with you. Heaven frowns on the aggressor.

SPIRIT IRONIC

Ha! "Liberty" is quaint, and pleases me,
Sounding from such a soil!

[Midsummer-day breaks, and the sun rises on the right, revealing the position clearly. The eminence overlooks for miles the river Niemen, now mirroring the morning rays. Across the river three temporary bridges have been thrown, and towards them the French masses streaming out of the forest descend in three columns. They sing, shout, fling their shakos in the air and repeat words from the proclamation, their steel and brass flashing in the sun. They narrow their columns as they gain the three bridges, and begin to cross—horse, foot, and artillery.

NAPOLEON has come from the tent in which he has passed the night to the high ground in front, where he stands watching through his glass the committal of his army to the enterprise. DAVOUT, NEY, MURAT, OUDINOT, Generals HAXEL and EBLE, NARBONNE, and others surround him.

It is a day of drowsing heat, and the Emperor draws a deep breath as he shifts his weight from one puffed calf to the other. The light cavalry, the foot, the artillery having passed, the heavy horse now crosses, their glitter outshining the ripples on the stream.

A messenger enters. NAPOLEON reads papers that are brought, and frowns.]

NAPOLEON

The English heads decline to recognize
The government of Joseph, King of Spain,
As that of "the now-ruling dynast";
But only Ferdinand's!—I'll get to Moscow,
And send thence my rejoinder. France shall wage
Another fifty years of wasting war
Before a Bourbon shall remount the throne
Of restless Spain!... [A flash lights his eyes.]

But this long journey now just set a-trip
 Is my choice way to India; and 'tis there
 That I shall next bombard the British rule.
 With Moscow taken, Russia prone and crushed,
 To attain the Ganges is simplicity—
 Auxiliaries from Tiflis backing me.
 Once ripped by a French sword, the scaffolding
 Of English merchant-mastership in Ind
 Will fall a wreck... Vast, it is true, must bulk
 An Eastern scheme so planned; but I could work it...
 Man has, worse fortune, but scant years for war;
 I am good for another five!

SPIRIT OF THE PITIES

Why doth he go?—
 I see returning in a chattering flock
 Bleached skeletons, instead of this array
 Invincibly equipped.

SPIRIT OF THE YEARS

I'll show you why.
 [The unnatural light before seen usurps that of the sun, bringing
 into view, like breezes made visible, the films or brain-tissues of
 the Immanent Will, that pervade all things, ramifying through the
 whole army, NAPOLEON included, and moving them to Its inexplicable
 artistries.]

NAPOLEON [with sudden despondency]
 That which has worked will work!—Since Lodi Bridge
 The force I then felt move me moves me on
 Whether I will or no; and oftentimes
 Against my better mind... Why am I here?
 —By laws imposed on me inexorably!
 History makes use of me to weave her web
 To her long while aforetime-figured mesh
 And contemplated character: no more.
 Well, war's my trade; and whencesoever springs
 This one in hand, they'll label it with my name!

[The natural light returns and the anatomy of the Will disappears.
 NAPOLEON mounts his horse and descends in the rear of his host to
 the banks of the Niemen. His face puts on a saturnine humour, and
 he hums an air.]

Malbrough s'en va-t-en guerre,
 Mironton, mironton, mirontaine;
 Malbrough s'en va-t-en guerre,

Ne sait quand reviendra!

[Exeunt NAPOLEON and his staff.]

SPIRIT SINISTER

It is kind of his Imperial Majesty to give me a lead. [Sings.]

Monsieur d'Malbrough est mort,

Mironton, mironton, mirontaine;

Monsieur d'Malbrough est mort,

Est mort et enterre!

[Anon the figure of NAPOLEON, diminished to the aspect of a doll, reappears in front of his suite on the plain below. He rides across the swaying bridge. Since the morning the sky has grown overcast, and its blackness seems now to envelope the retreating array on the other side of the stream. The storm bursts with thunder and lightning, the river turns leaden, and the scene is blotted out by the torrents of rain.]

[image not archived]

SCENE II

THE FORD OF SANTA MARTA, SALAMANCA

[We are in Spain, on a July night of the same summer, the air being hot and heavy. In the darkness the ripple of the river Tormes can be heard over the ford, which is near the foreground of the scene. Against the gloomy north sky to the left, lightnings flash revealing rugged heights in that quarter. From the heights comes to the ear the tramp of soldiery, broke and irregular, as by obstacles in their descent; as yet they are some distance off. On heights to the right hand, on the other side of the river, glimmer the bivouac fires of the French under MARMONT. The lightning quickens, with rolls of thunder, and a few large drops of rain fall.]

A sentinel stands close to the ford, and beyond him is the ford-house, a shed open towards the roadway and the spectator. It is lit by a single lantern, and occupied by some half-dozen English dragoons with a sergeant and corporal, who form part of a mounted patrol, their horses being picketed at the entrance. They are seated on a bench, and appear to be waiting with some deep intent, speaking in murmurs only.

The thunderstorm increases till it drowns the noise of the ford and of the descending battalions, making them seem further off than before. The sentinel is about to retreat to the shed when he discerns two female figures in the gloom. Enter MRS. DALBIAC

and MRS. PRESCOTT, English officers wives.]

SENTINEL

Where there's war there's women, and where there's women there's trouble! [Aloud] Who goes there?

MRS. DALBIAC

We must reveal who we are, I fear [to her companion]. Friends! [to sentinel].

SENTINEL

Advance and give the countersign.

MRS. DALBIAC

Oh, but we can't!

SENTINEL

Consequent which, you must retreat. By Lord Wellington's strict regulations, women of loose character are to be excluded from the lines for moral reasons, namely, that they are often employed by the enemy as spies.

MRS. PRESCOTT

Dear good soldier, we are English ladies benighted, having mistaken our way back to Salamanca, and we want shelter from the storm.

MRS. DALBIAC

If it is necessary I will say who we are.—I am Mrs. Dalbiac, wife of the Lieutenant-Colonel of the Fourth Light Dragoons, and this lady is the wife of Captain Prescott of the Seventh Fusileers. We went out to Christoval to look for our husbands, but found the army had moved.

SENTINEL [incredulously]

Wives! Oh, not to-day! I have heard such titles of courtesy afore; but they never shake me. "W" begins other female words than wives!—You'll have trouble, good dames, to get into Salamanca to-night. You'll be challenged all the way down, and shot without clergy if you can't give the countersign.

MRS. PRESCOTT

Then surely you'll tell us what it is, good kind man!

SENTINEL

Well—have ye earned enough to pay for knowing? Government wage is poor pickings for watching here in the rain. How much can ye stand?

MRS. DALBIAC

Half-a-dozen pesetas.

SENTINEL

Very well, my dear. I was always tender-hearted. Come along.

[They advance and hand the money.] The pass to-night is "Melchester Steeple." That will take you into the town when the weather clears.

You won't have to cross the ford. You can get temporary shelter in the shed there.

[As the ladies move towards the shed the tramp of the infantry draws near the ford, which the downfall has made to purl more boisterously. The twain enter the shed, and the dragoons look up inquiringly.]

MRS. DALBIAC [to dragoons]

The French are luckier than you are, men. You'll have a wet advance across this ford, but they have a dry retreat by the bridge at Alba.

SERGEANT OF PATROL [starting from a doze]

The moustachies a dry retreat? Not they, my dear. A Spanish garrison is in the castle that commands the bridge at Alba.

MRS. DALBIAC

A peasant told us, if we understood rightly, that he saw the Spanish withdraw, and the enemy place a garrison there themselves.

[The sergeant hastily calls up two troopers, who mount and ride off with the intelligence.]

SERGEANT

You've done us a good turn, it is true, darlin'. Not that Lord Wellington will believe it when he gets the news... Why, if my eyes don't deceive me, ma'am, that's Colonel Dalbiac's lady!

MRS. DALBIAC

Yes, sergeant. I am over here with him, as you have heard, no doubt, and lodging in Salamanca. We lost our way, and got caught in the storm, and want shelter awhile.

SERGEANT

Certainly, ma'am. I'll give you an escort back as soon as the division has crossed and the weather clears.

MRS. PRESCOTT [anxiously]

Have you heard, sergeant, if there's to be a battle to-morrow?

SERGEANT

Yes, ma'am. Everything shows it.

MRS. DALBIAC [to MRS. PRESCOTT]

Our news would have passed us in. We have wasted six pesetas.

MRS. PRESCOTT [mournfully]

I don't mind that so much as that I have brought the children from Ireland. This coming battle frightens me!

SPIRIT OF THE YEARS

This is her prescient pang of widowhood.

Ere Salamanca clang to-morrow's close

She'll find her consort stiff among the slain!

[The infantry regiments now reach the ford. The storm increases

in strength, the stream flows more furiously; yet the columns of foot enter it and begin crossing. The lightning is continuous; the faint lantern in the ford-house is paled by the sheets of fire without, which flap round the bayonets of the crossing men and reflect upon the foaming torrent.]

CHORUS OF THE PITIES [aerial music]

The skies fling flame on this ancient land!

And drenched and drowned is the burnt blown sand

That spreads its mantle of yellow-grey

Round old Salmantica to-day;

While marching men come, band on band,

Who read not as a reprimand

To mortal moils that, as 'twere planned

In mockery of their mimic fray,

The skies fling flame.

Since sad Coruna's desperate stand

Horrors unsummed, with heavy hand,

Have smitten such as these! But they

Still headily pursue their way,

Though flood and foe confront them, and

The skies fling flame.

[The whole of the English division gets across by degrees, and their invisible tramp is heard ascending the opposite heights as the lightnings dwindle and the spectacle disappears.]

[image not archived]

SCENE III

THE FIELD OF SALAMANCA

[The battlefield—an undulating and sandy expanse—is lying under the sultry sun of a July afternoon. In the immediate left foreground rises boldly a detached dome-like hill known as the Lesser Arapeile, now held by English troops. Further back, and more to the right, rises another and larger hill of the kind—the Greater Arapeile; this is crowned with French artillery in loud action, and the French marshal, MARMONT, Duke of RAGUSA, stands there. Further to the right, in the same plane, stretch the divisions of the French army. Still further to the right, in the distance, on the Ciudad Rodrigo highway, a cloud of dust denotes the English baggage-train seeking security in that direction. The city of Salamanca itself, and the river Tormes on which it stands, are behind the back of the spectator.]

On the summit of the lesser hill, close at hand, WELLINGTON, glass at eye, watches the French division under THOMIERE, which has become separated from the centre of the French army. Round and near him are aides and other officers, in animated conjecture on MARMONT'S intent, which appears to be a move on the Ciudad Rodrigo road aforesaid, under the impression that the English are about to retreat that way.

The English commander descends from where he was standing to a nook under a wall, where a meal is roughly laid out. Some of his staff are already eating there. WELLINGTON takes a few mouthfuls without sitting down, walks back again, and looks through his glass at the battle as before. Balls from the French artillery fall around.

Enter his aide-de-camp, FITZROY SOMERSET.]

FITZROY SOMERSET [hurriedly]

The French make movements of grave consequence—

Extending to the left in mass, my lord.

WELLINGTON

I have just perceived as much; but not the cause.

[He regards longer.]

Marmont's good genius is deserting him!

[Shutting up his glass with a snap, WELLINGTON calls several aides and despatches them down the hill. He goes back behind the wall and takes some more mouthfuls.]

By God, Fitzroy, if we shan't do it now!

[to SOMERSET].

Mon cher Alava, Marmont est perdu!

[to his SPANISH ATTACHE].

FITZROY SOMERSET

Thinking we mean to attack on him,

He schemes to swoop on our retreating-line.

WELLINGTON

Ay; and to cloak it by this cannonade.

With that in eye he has bundled leftwardly

Thomiere's division; mindless that thereby

His wing and centre's mutual maintenance

Has gone, and left a yawning vacancy.

So be it. Good. His laxness is our luck!

[As a result of the orders sent off by the aides, several British divisions advance across the French front on the Greater Arapeile and elsewhere. The French shower bullets into them; but an English brigade under PACK assails the nearer French on the Arapeile, now beginning to cannonade the English in the hollows beneath.]

Light breezes blow toward the French, and they get in their faces
the dust-clouds and smoke from the masses of English in motion, and
a powerful sun in their eyes.

MARMONT and his staff are sitting on the top of the Greater Arapeile
only half a cannon-shot from WELLINGTON on the Lesser; and, like
WELLINGTON, he is gazing through his glass.

SPIRIT OF RUMOUR

Appearing to behold the full-mapped mind
Of his opponent, Marmont arrows forth
Aide after aide towards the forest's rim,
To spirit on his troops emerging thence,
And prop the lone division Thomiere,
For whose recall his voice has rung in vain.
Wellington mounts and seeks out Pakenham,
Who pushes to the arena from the right,
And, spurting to the left of Marmont's line,
Shakes Thomiere with lunges leonine.
When the manoeuvre's meaning hits his sense,
Marmont hies hotly to the imperilled place,
Where see him fall, sore smitten.—Bonnet rides
And dons the burden of the chief command,
Marking dismayed the Thomiere column there
Shut up by Pakenham like bellows-folds
Against the English Fourth and Fifth hard by;
And while thus crushed, Dragoon-Guards and Dragoons,
Under Le Marchant's hands [of Guernsey he],
Are launched upon them by Sir Stapleton,
And their scathed files are double-scathed anon.
Cotton falls wounded. Pakenham's bayoneteers
Shape for the charge from column into rank;
And Thomiere finds death thereat point-blank!
SEMICHORUS I OF THE PITIES [aerial music]
In fogs of dust the cavalries hoof the ground;
Their prancing squadrons shake the hills around:
Le Marchant's heavies bear with ominous bound
Against their opposites!

SEMICHORUS II

A bullet crying along the cloven air
Gouges Le Marchant's groin and rankles there;
In Death's white sleep he soon joins Thomiere,
And all he has fought for, quits!
[In the meantime the battle has become concentrated in the middle

hollow, and WELLINGTON descends thither from the English Arapeile.
The fight grows fiercer. COLE and LEITH now fall wounded; then
BERESFORD, who directs the Portuguese, is struck down and borne
away. On the French side fall BONNET who succeeded MARMONT in
command, MANNE, CLAUSEL, and FERREY, the last hit mortally.
Their disordered main body retreats into the forest and disappears;
and just as darkness sets in, the English stand alone on the crest,
the distant plain being lighted only by musket-flashes from the
vanquishing enemy. In the close foreground vague figures on
horseback are audible in the gloom.

VOICE OF WELLINGTON

I thought they looked as they'd be scurrying soon!

VOICE OF AN AIDE

Foy bears into the wood in middling trim;
Maucune strikes out for Alba-Castle bridge.

VOICE OF WELLINGTON

Speed the pursuit, then, towards the Huerta ford;
Their only scantling of escape lies there;
The river coops them semicircle-wise,
And we shall have them like a swathe of grass
Within a sickle's curve!

VOICE OF AIDE

Too late, my lord.

They are crossing by the aforesaid bridge at Alba.

VOICE OF WELLINGTON

Impossible. The guns of Carlos rake it
Sheer from the castle walls.

VOICE OF AIDE

Tidings have sped
Just now therefrom, to this undreamed effect:
That Carlos has withdrawn the garrison:
The French command the Alba bridge themselves!

VOICE OF WELLINGTON

Blast him, he's disobeyed his orders, then!
How happened this? How long has it been known?

VOICE OF AIDE

Some ladies some few hours have rumoured it,
But unbelieved.

VOICE OF WELLINGTON

Well, what's done can't be undone...
By God, though, they've just saved themselves thereby
From capture to a man!

VOICE OF A GENERAL

We've not struck ill,
Despite this slip, my lord... And have you heard
That Colonel Dalbiac's wife rode in the charge
Behind her spouse to-day?

VOICE OF WELLINGTON

Did she though: did she!
Why that must be Susanna, whom I know—
A Wessex woman, blithe, and somewhat fair...
Not but great irregularities
Arise from such exploits.—And was it she
I noticed wandering to and fro below here,
Just as the French retired?

VOICE OF ANOTHER OFFICER

Ah no, my lord.
That was the wife of Prescott of the Seventh,
Hoping beneath the heel of hopelessness,
As these young women will!—Just about sunset
She found him lying dead and bloody there,
And in the dusk we bore them both away.

VOICE OF WELLINGTON

Well, I'm damned sorry for her. Though I wish
The women-folk would keep them to the rear:
Much awkwardness attends their pottering round!
[The talking shapes disappear, and as the features of the field
grow undistinguishable the comparative quiet is broken by gay
notes from guitars and castanets in the direction of the city,
and other sounds of popular rejoicing at Wellington's victory.
People come dancing out from the town, and the merry-making
continues till midnight, when it ceases, and darkness and silence
prevail everywhere.]

SEMICHORUS I OF THE YEARS [aerial music]

What are Space and Time? A fancy!—
Lo, by Vision's necromancy
Muscovy will now unroll;
Where for cork and olive-tree
Starveling firs and birches be.

SEMICHORUS II

Though such features lie afar
From events Peninsular,
These, amid their dust and thunder,
Form with those, as scarce asunder,

Parts of one compacted whole.

CHORUS

Marmont's aide, then, like a swallow

Let us follow, follow, follow,

Over hill and over hollow,

Past the plains of Teute and Pole!

[There is semblance of a sound in the darkness as of a rushing
through the air.]

[image not archived]

SCENE IV

THE FIELD OF BORODINO

[Borodino, seventy miles west of Moscow, is revealed in a bird's-eye view from a point above the position of the French Grand Army, advancing on the Russian capital.

We are looking east, towards Moscow and the army of Russia, which bars the way thither. The sun of latter summer, sinking behind our backs, floods the whole prospect, which is mostly wild, uncultivated land with patches of birch-trees. NAPOLEON'S army has just arrived on the scene, and is making its bivouac for the night, some of the later regiments not having yet come up. A dropping fire of musketry from skirmishers ahead keeps snapping through the air. The Emperor's tent stands in a ravine in the foreground amid the squares of the Old Guard. Aides and other officers are chatting outside.

Enter NAPOLEON, who dismounts, speaks to some of his suite, and disappears inside his tent. An interval follows, during which the sun dips.

Enter COLONEL FABVRIER, aide-de-camp of MARMONT, just arrived from Spain. An officer-in-waiting goes into NAPOLEON'S tent to announce FABVRIER, the Colonel meanwhile talking to those outside.]

AN AIDE

Important tidings thence, I make no doubt?

FABVRIER

Marmont repulsed on Salamanca field,

And well-nigh slain, is the best tale I bring!

[A silence. A coughing heard in NAPOLEON'S tent.]

Whose rheumy throat distracts the quiet so?

AIDE

The Emperor's. He is thus the livelong day.

[COLONEL FABVRIER is shown into the tent. An interval. Then the

husky accents of NAPOLEON within, growing louder and louder.]

VOICE OF NAPOLEON

If Marmont—so I gather from these lines—

Had let the English and the Spanish be,

They would have bent from Salamanca back,

Offering no battle, to our profiting!

We should have been delivered this disaster,

Whose bruit will harm us more than aught besides

That has befallen in Spain!

VOICE OF FABVRIER

I fear so, sire.

VOICE OF NAPOLEON

He forced a conflict, to cull laurel crowns

Before King Joseph should arrive to share them!

VOICE OF FABVRIER

The army's ardour for your Majesty,

Its courage, its devotion to your cause,

Cover a myriad of the Marshal's sins.

VOICE OF NAPOLEON

Why gave he battle without biddance, pray,

From the supreme commander? Here's the crime

Of insubordination, root of woes!...

The time well chosen, and the battle won,

The English succours there had sidled off,

And their annoy in the Peninsula

Embarrassed us no more. Behoves it me,

Some day, to face this Wellington myself!

Marmont too plainly is no match for him...

Thus he goes on: "To have preserved command

I would with joy have changed this early wound

For foulest mortal stroke at fall of day.

One baleful moment damnified the fruit

Of six weeks' wise strategics, whose result

Had loomed so certain!"—[Satirically] Well, we've but his word

As to their wisdom! To define them thus

Would not have struck me but for his good prompting!...

No matter: On Moskowa's banks to-morrow

I'll mend his faults upon the Arapeile.

I'll see how I can treat this Russian horde

Which English gold has brought together here

From the four corners of the universe...

Adieu. You'd best go now and take some rest.

[FABVRIER reappears from the tent and goes. Enter DE BAUSSET.]

DE BAUSSET

The box that came—has it been taken in?

AN OFFICER

Yes, General 'Tis laid behind a screen

In the outer tent. As yet his Majesty

Has not been told of it.

[DE BAUSSET goes into the tent. After an interval of murmured talk an exclamation bursts from the EMPEROR. In a few minutes he appears at the tent door, a valet following him bearing a picture. The EMPEROR'S face shows traces of emotion.]

NAPOLEON

Bring out a chair for me to poise it on.

[Re-enter DE BAUSSET from the tent with a chair.]

They all shall see it. Yes, my soldier-sons

Must gaze upon this son of mine own house

In art's presentment! It will cheer their hearts.

That's a good light—just so.

[He is assisted by DE BAUSSET to set up the picture in the chair.

It is a portrait of the young King of Rome playing at cup-and-ball being represented as the globe. The officers standing near are attracted round, and then the officers and soldiers further back begin running up, till there is a great crowd.]

Let them walk past,

So that they see him all. The Old Guard first.

[The Old Guard is summoned, and marches past surveying the picture; then other regiments.]

SOLDIERS

The Emperor and the King of Rome for ever!

[When they have marched past and withdrawn, and DE BAUSSET has taken away the picture, NAPOLEON prepares to re-enter his tent.

But his attention is attracted to the Russians. He regards them through his glass. Enter BESSIERES and RAPP.]

NAPOLEON

What slow, weird ambulation do I mark,

Rippling the Russian host?

BESSIERES

A progress, sire,

Of all their clergy, vestmented, who bear

An image, said to work strange miracles.

[NAPOLEON watches. The Russian ecclesiastics pass through the regiments, which are under arms, bearing the icon and other

religious insignia. The Russian soldiers kneel before it.]

NAPOLEON

Ay! Not content to stand on their own strength,
They try to hire the enginry of Heaven.

I am no theologian, but I laugh
That men can be so grossly logicless,
When war, defensive or aggressive either,
Is in its essence pagan, and opposed
To the whole gist of Christianity!

BESSIERES

Tis to fanaticize their courage, sire.

NAPOLEON

Better they'd wake up old Kutuzof.—Rapp,
What think you of to-morrow?

RAPP

Victory;
But, sire, a bloody one!

NAPOLEON

So I foresee.

[The scene darkens, and the fires of the bivouacs shine up ruddily, those of the French near at hand, those of the Russians in a long line across the mid-distance, and throwing a flapping glare into the heavens. As the night grows stiller the ballad-singing and laughter from the French mixes with a slow singing of psalms from their adversaries.

The two multitudes lie down to sleep, and all is quiet but for the sputtering of the green wood fires, which, now that the human tongues are still, seem to hold a conversation of their own.]

[image not archived]

SCENE V

THE SAME

[The prospect lightens with dawn, and the sun rises red. The spacious field of battle is now distinct, its ruggedness being bisected by the great road from Smolensk to Moscow, which runs centrally from beneath the spectator to the furthest horizon.

The field is also crossed by the stream Kalotcha, flowing from the right-centre foreground to the left-centre background, thus forming an "X" with the road aforesaid, intersecting it in mid-distance at the village of Borodino.

Behind this village the Russians have taken their stand in close

masses. So stand also the French, who have in their centre the Shevardino redoubt beyond the Kalotcha. Here NAPOLEON, in his usual glue-grey uniform, white waistcoat, and white leather breeches, chooses his position with BERTHIER and other officers of his suite.]

DUMB SHOW

It is six o'clock, and the firing of a single cannon on the French side proclaims that the battle is beginning. There is a roll of drums, and the right-centre masses, glittering in the level shine, advance under NEY and DAVOUT and throw themselves on the Russians, here defended by redoubts.

The French enter the redoubts, whereupon a slim, small man, GENERAL BAGRATION, brings across a division from the Russian right and expels them resolutely.

Semenovskoye is a commanding height opposite the right of the French, and held by the Russians. Cannon and columns, infantry and cavalry, assault it by tens of thousands, but cannot take it.

Aides gallop through the screeching shot and haze of smoke and dust between NAPOLEON and his various marshals. The Emperor walks about, looks through his glass, goes to a camp-stool, on which he sits down, and drinks glasses of spirits and hot water to relieve his still violent cold, as may be discovered from his red eyes, raw nose, rheumatic manner when he moves, and thick voice in giving orders.

SPIRIT OF THE PITIES

So he fulfils the inhuman antickings

He thinks imposed upon him... What says he?

SPIRIT OF RUMOUR

He says it is the sun of Austerlitz!

The Russians, so far from being driven out of their redoubts, issue from them towards the French. But they have to retreat, BAGRATION and his Chief of Staff being wounded. NAPOLEON sips his grog hopefully, and orders a still stronger attack on the great redoubt in the centre.

It is carried out. The redoubt becomes the scene of a huge massacre. In other parts of the field also the action almost ceases to be a battle, and takes the form of wholesale butchery by the thousand, now advantaging one side, now the other.

SPIRIT OF THE YEARS

Thus do the mindless minions of the spell

In mechanized enchantment sway and show

A Will that wills above the will of each,

Yet but the will of all conjunctively;

A fabric of excitement, web of rage,
That permeates as one stuff the weltering whole.

SPIRIT OF THE PITIES

The ugly horror grossly regnant here
Wakes even the drowsed half-drunken Dictator
To all its vain uncouthness!

SPIRIT OF RUMOUR

Murat cries

That on this much-anticipated day

Napoleon's genius flags inoperative.

The firing from the top of the redoubt has ceased. The French have
got inside. The Russians retreat upon their rear, and fortify
themselves on the heights there. PONIATOWSKI furiously attacks them.
But the French are worn out, and fall back to their station before
the battle. So the combat dies resultlessly away. The sun sets, and
the opposed and exhausted hosts sink to lethargic repose. NAPOLEON
enters his tent in the midst of his lieutenants, and night descends.

SHADE OF THE EARTH

The fumes of nitre and the reek of gore
Make my airs foul and fulsome unto me!

SPIRIT IRONIC

The natural nausea of a nurse, dear Dame.

SPIRIT OF RUMOUR

Strange: even within that tent no notes of joy
Throb as at Austerlitz! [signifying Napoleon's tent].

SPIRIT OF THE PITIES

But mark that roar—

A mash of men's crazed cries entreating mates
To run them through and end their agony;
Boys calling on their mothers, veterans
Blaspheming God and man. Those shady shapes
Are horses, maimed in myriads, tearing round
In maddening pangs, the harnessings they wear
Clanking discordant jingles as they tear!

SPIRIT OF THE YEARS

It is enough. Let now the scene be closed.

The night thickens.

[image not archived]

SCENE VI

MOSCOW

[The foreground is an open place amid the ancient irregular streets of the city, which disclose a jumble of architectural styles, the Asiatic prevailing over the European. A huge triangular white-walled fortress rises above the churches and coloured domes on a hill in the background, the central feature of which is a lofty tower with a gilded cupola, the Ivan Tower. Beneath the battlements of this fortress the Moskva River flows.

An unwonted rumbling of wheels proceeds from the cobble-stoned streets, accompanied by an incessant cracking of whips.]

DUMB SHOW

Travelling carriages, teams, and waggons, laden with pictures, carpets, glass, silver, china, and fashionable attire, are rolling out of the city, followed by foot-passengers in streams, who carry their most precious possessions on their shoulders. Others bear their sick relatives, caring nothing for their goods, and mothers go laden with their infants. Others drive their cows, sheep, and goats, causing much obstruction. Some of the populace, however, appear apathetic and bewildered, and stand in groups asking questions. A thin man with piercing eyes gallops about and gives stern orders.

SPIRIT OF THE PITIES

Whose is the form seen ramping restlessly,
Geared as a general, keen-eyed as a kite,
Mid this mad current of close-filed confusion;
High-ordering, smartening progress in the slow,
And goading those by their own thoughts o'er-goaded;
Whose emissaries knock at every door
In rhythmal rote, and groan the great events
The hour is pregnant with?

SPIRIT OF THE YEARS

Rostopchin he,
The city governor, whose name will ring
Far down the forward years uncannily!

SPIRIT OF RUMOUR

His arts are strange, and strangely do they move him:—
To store the stews with stuffs inflammable,
To bid that pumps be wrecked, captives enlarged
And primed with brands for burning, are the intents
His warnings to the citizens outshade!

When the bulk of the populace has passed out eastwardly the Russian army retreating from Borodino also passes through the city into the country beyond without a halt. They mostly move in solemn silence, though many soldiers rush from their ranks and load themselves with

spoil.

When they are got together again and have marched out, there goes by on his horse a strange scarred old man with a foxy look, a swollen neck and head and a hunched figure. He is KUTUZOF, surrounded by his lieutenants. Away in the distance by other streets and bridges with other divisions pass in like manner GENERALS BENNIGSEN, BARCLAY DE TOLLY, DOKHTOROF, the mortally wounded BAGRATION in a carriage, and

other generals, all in melancholy procession one way, like autumnal birds of passage. Then the rear-guard passes under MILORADOVITCH. Next comes a procession of another kind.

A long string of carts with wounded men is seen, which trails out of the city behind the army. Their clothing is soiled with dried blood, and the bandages that enwrap them are caked with it.

The greater part of this migrant multitude takes the high road to Vladimir.

[image not archived]

SCENE VII

THE SAME. OUTSIDE THE CITY

[A hill forms the foreground, called the Hill of Salutation, near the Smolensk road.

Herefrom the city appears as a splendid panorama, with its river, its gardens, and its curiously grotesque architecture of domes and spires. It is the peacock of cities to Western eyes, its roofs twinkling in the rays of the September sun, amid which the ancient citadel of the Tsars—the Kremlin—forms a centre-piece.

There enter on the hill at a gallop NAPOLEON, MURAT, EUGENE, NEY, DARU, and the rest of the Imperial staff. The French advance-guard is drawn up in order of battle at the foot of the hill, and the long columns of the Grand Army stretch far in the rear. The Emperor and his marshals halt, and gaze at Moscow.]

NAPOLEON

Ha! There she is at last. And it was time.

[He looks round upon his army, its numbers attenuated to one-fourth of those who crossed the Niemen so joyfully.]

Yes: it was time... NOW what says Alexander!

DARU

This is a foil to Salamanca, sire!

DAVOUT

What scores of bulbous church-tops gild the sky!

Souls must be rotten in this region, sire,
To need so much repairing!

NAPOLEON

Ay—no doubt...

Prithee march briskly on, to check disorder,
[to Murat].

Hold word with the authorities forthwith,
[to Durasnel].

Tell them that they may swiftly swage their fears,

Safe in the mercy I by rule extend

To vanquished ones. I wait the city keys,

And will receive the Governor's submission

With courtesy due. Eugene will guard the gate

To Petersburg there leftward. You, Davout,

The gate to Smolensk in the centre here

Which we shall enter by.

VOICES OF ADVANCE-GUARD

Moscow! Moscow!

This, this is Moscow city. Rest at last!

[The words are caught up in the rear by veterans who have entered every capital in Europe except London, and are echoed from rank to rank. There is a far-extended clapping of hands, like the babble of waves, and companies of foot run in disorder towards high ground to behold the spectacle, waving their shakos on their bayonets.

The army now marches on, and NAPOLEON and his suite disappear citywards from the Hill of Salutation.

The day wanes ere the host has passed and dusk begins to prevail, when tidings reach the rear-guard that cause dismay. They have been sent back lip by lip from the front.]

SPIRIT IRONIC

An anticlimax to Napoleon's dream!

SPIRIT OF RUMOUR

They say no governor attends with keys

To offer his submission gracefully.

The streets are solitudes, the houses sealed,

And stagnant silence reigns, save where intrudes

The rumbling of their own artillery wheels,

And their own soldiers' measured tramp along.

Moscow deserted? What a monstrous thing!—

He shrugs his shoulders soon, contemptuously;

This, then is how Muscovy fights! cries he.

Meanwhile Murat has reached the Kremlin gates,

And finds them closed against him. Battered these,
 The fort reverberates vacant as the streets
 But for some grinning wretches gaoled there.
 Enchantment seems to sway from quay to keep,
 And lock commotion in a century's sleep.
 [NAPOLEON, reappearing in front of the city, follows MURAT, and is
 again lost to view. He has entered the Kremlin. An interval.
 Something becomes visible on the summit of the Ivan Tower.]
 CHORUS OF RUMOURS [aerial music]
 Mark you thereon a small lone figure gazing
 Upon his hard-gained goal? It is He!
 The startled crows, their broad black pinions raising,
 Forsake their haunts, and wheel disquietedly.
 [The scene slowly darkens. Midnight hangs over the city. In
 blackness to the north of where the Kremlin stands appears what at
 first seems a lurid, malignant star. It waxes larger. Almost
 simultaneously a north-east wind rises, and the light glows and
 sinks with the gusts, proclaiming a fire, which soon grows large
 enough to irradiate the fronts of adjacent buildings, and to show
 that it is creeping on towards the Kremlin itself, the walls of
 that fortress which face the flames emerging from their previous
 shade.
 The fire can be seen breaking out also in numerous other quarters.
 All the conflagrations increase, and become, as those at first
 detached group themselves together, one huge furnace, whence
 streamers of flame reach up to the sky, brighten the landscape
 far around, and show the houses as if it were day. The blaze
 gains the Kremlin, and licks its walls, but does not kindle it.
 Explosions and hissings are constantly audible, amid which can be
 fancied cries and yells of people caught in the combustion. Large
 pieces of canvas aflame sail away on the gale like balloons.
 Cocks crow, thinking it sunrise, ere they are burnt to death.]
 [image not archived]

SCENE VIII

THE SAME. THE INTERIOR OF THE KREMLIN

[A chamber containing a bed on which NAPOLEON has been lying. It
 is not yet daybreak, and the flapping light of the conflagration
 without shines in at the narrow windows.
 NAPOLEON is discovered dressed, but in disorder and unshaven. He
 is walking up and down the room in agitation. There are present

CAULAINCOURT, BESSIERES, and many of the marshals of his guard,
 who stand in silent perplexity.]

NAPOLEON [sitting down on the bed]
 No: I'll not go! It is themselves who have done it.
 My God, they are Scythians and barbarians still!
 [Enter MORTIER [just made Governor].]

MORTIER
 Sire, there's no means of fencing with the flames.
 My creed is that these scurvy Muscovites
 Knowing our men's repute for recklessness,
 Have fired the town, as if 'twere we had done it,
 As by our own crazed act!

[GENERAL LARIBOISIERE, and aged man, enters and approaches
 NAPOLEON.]

LARIBOISIERE
 The wind swells higher!
 Will you permit one so high-summed in years,
 One so devoted, sire, to speak his mind?
 It is that your long lingering here entails
 Much risk for you, your army, and ourselves,
 In the embarrassment it throws on us
 While taking steps to seek security,
 By hindering venturous means.

[Enter MURAT, PRINCE EUGENE, and the PRINCE OF NEUFCHATEL.]

MURAT
 There is no choice
 But leaving, sire. Enormous bulks of powder
 Lie housed beneath us; and outside these panes
 A park of our artillery stands unscreened.

NAPOLEON [saturninely]
 What have I won I disincline to cede!

VOICE OF A GUARD [without]
 The Kremlin is aflame!

[The look at each other. Two officers of NAPOLEON'S guard and an
 interpreter enter, with one of the Russian military police as a
 prisoner.]

FIRST OFFICER
 We have caught this man
 Firing the Kremlin: yea, in the very act!
 It is extinguished temporarily,
 We know not for how long.

NAPOLEON

Inquire of him

What devil set him on. [They inquire.]

SECOND OFFICER

The governor,

He says; the Count Rostopchin, sire.

NAPOLEON

So! Even the ancient Kremlin is not sanct

From their infernal scheme! Go, take him out;

Make him a quick example to the rest.

[Exeunt guard with their prisoner to the court below, whence a musket-volley resounds in a few minutes. Meanwhile the flames pop and spit more loudly, and the window-panes of the room they stand in crack and fall in fragments.]

Incendiarism afoot, and we unware

Of what foul tricks may follow, I will go.

Outwitted here, we'll march on Petersburg,

The Devil if we won't!

[The marshals murmur and shake their heads.]

BESSIERES

Your pardon, sire,

But we are all convinced that weather, time,

Provisions, roads, equipment, mettle, mood,

Serve not for such a perilous enterprise.

[NAPOLEON remains in gloomy silence. Enter BERTHIER.]

NAPOLEON [apathetically]

Well, Berthier. More misfortunes?

BERTHIER

News is brought,

Sire, of the Russian army's whereabouts.

That fox Kutuzof, after marching east

As if he were conducting his whole force

To Vladimir, when at the Riazan Road

Down-doubled sharply south, and in a curve

Has wheeled round Moscow, making for Kalouga,

To strike into our base, and cut us off.

MURAT

Another reason against Petersburg!

Come what come may, we must defeat that army,

To keep a sure retreat through Smolensk on

To Lithuania.

NAPOLEON [jumping up]

I must act! We'll leave,

Or we shall let this Moscow be our tomb.
May Heaven curse the author of this war—
Ay, him, that Russian minister, self-sold
To England, who fomented it.—’Twas he
Dragged Alexander into it, and me!
[The marshals are silent with looks of incredulity, and Caulaincourt shrugs his shoulders.]
Now no more words; but hear. Eugene and Ney
With their divisions fall straight back upon
The Petersburg and Zwenigarod Roads;
Those of Davout upon the Smolensk route.
I will retire meanwhile to Petrowskoi.
Come, let us go.
[NAPOLEON and the marshals move to the door. In leaving, the Emperor pauses and looks back.]
I fear that this event
Marks the beginning of a train of ills...
Moscow was meant to be my rest,
My refuge, and—it vanishes away!
[Exeunt NAPOLEON, marshals, etc. The smoke grows denser and obscures the scene.]
[image not archived]

SCENE IX

THE ROAD FROM SMOLENSKO INTO LITHUANIA

[The season is far advanced towards winter. The point of observation is high amongst the clouds, which, opening and shutting fitfully to the wind, reveal the earth as a confused expanse merely.]

SPIRIT OF THE PITIES

Where are we? And why are we where we are?

SHADE OF THE EARTH

Above a wild waste garden-plot of mine
Nigh bare in this late age, and now grown chill,
Lithuania called by some. I gather not
Why we haunt here, where I can work no charm
Either upon the ground or over it.

SPIRIT OF THE YEARS

The wherefore will unfold. The rolling brume
That parts, and joins, and parts again below us
In ragged restlessness, unscreens by fits
The quality of the scene.

SPIRIT OF THE PITIES

I notice now

Primeval woods, pine, birch—the skinny growths
That can sustain life well where earth affords
But sustenance elsewhere yclept starvation.

SPIRIT OF THE YEARS

And what see you on the far land-verge there,
Labouring from eastward towards our longitude?

SPIRIT OF THE PITIES

An object like a dun-piled caterpillar,
Shuffling its length in painful heaves along,
Hitherward... Yea, what is this Thing we see
Which, moving as a single monster might,
Is yet not one but many?

SPIRIT OF THE YEARS

Even the Army
Which once was called the Grand; now in retreat
From Moscow's muteness, urged by That within it;
Together with its train of followers—
Men, matrons, babes, in brabbling multitudes.

SPIRIT OF THE PITIES

And why such flight?

SPIRIT OF THE YEARS

Recording Angels, say.
RECORDING ANGEL I [in minor plain-song]
The host has turned from Moscow where it lay,
And Israel-like, moved by some master-sway,
Is made to wander on and waste away!

ANGEL II

By track of Tarutino first it flits;
Thence swerving, strikes at old Jaroslawitz;
The which, accurst by slaughtering swords, it quits.

ANGEL I

Harassed, it treads the trail by which it came,
To Borodino, field of bloodshot fame,
Whence stare unburied horrors beyond name!

ANGEL II

And so and thus it nears Smolensko's walls,
And, stayed its hunger, starts anew its crawls,
Till floats down one white morsel, which appals.
[What has floated down from the sky upon the Army is a flake of
snow. Then come another and another, till natural features,

hitherto varied with the tints of autumn, are confounded, and all is phantasmal grey and white.

The caterpillar shape still creeps laboriously nearer, but instead, increasing in size by the rules of perspective, it gets more attenuated, and there are left upon the ground behind it minute parts of itself, which are speedily flaked over, and remain as white pimples by the wayside.]

SPIRIT OF THE YEARS

These atoms that drop off are snuffed-out souls

Who are enghosted by the caressing snow.

[Pines rise mournfully on each side of the nearing object; ravens in flocks advance with it overhead, waiting to pick out the eyes of strays who fall. The snowstorm increases, descending in tufts which can hardly be shaken off. The sky seems to join itself to the land. The marching figures drop rapidly, and almost immediately become white grave-mounds.

Endowed with enlarged powers of audition as of vision, we are struck by the mournful taciturnity that prevails. Nature is mute. Save for the incessant flogging of the wind-broken and lacerated horses there are no sounds.

With growing nearness more is revealed. In the glades of the forest, parallel to the French columns, columns of Russians are seen to be moving. And when the French presently reach Krasnoye they are surrounded by packs of cloaked Cossacks, bearing lances like huge needles a dozen feet long. The fore-part of the French army gets through the town; the rear is assaulted by infantry and artillery.]

SPIRIT OF THE PITIES

The strange, one-eyed, white-shakoed, scarred old man,

Ruthlessly heading every onset made,

I seem to recognize.

SPIRIT OF THE YEARS

Kutuzof he:

The ceaselessly-attacked one, Michael Ney;

A pair as stout as thou, Earth, ever hast twinned!

Kutuzof, ten years younger, would extirp

The invaders, and our drama finish here,

With Bonaparte a captive or a corpse.

But he is old; death even has beckoned him;

And thus the so near-seeming happens not.

[NAPOLEON himself can be discerned amid the rest, marching on foot through the snowflakes, in a fur coat and with a stout staff in his hand. Further back NEY is visible with the remains of the rear.

There is something behind the regular columns like an articulated tail, and as they draw on, it shows itself to be a disorderly rabble of followers of both sexes. So the whole miscellany arrives at the foreground, where it is checked by a large river across the track. The soldiers themselves, like the rabble, are in motley raiment, some wearing rugs for warmth, some quilts and curtains, some even petticoats and other women's clothing. Many are delirious from hunger and cold.

But they set about doing what is a necessity for the least hope of salvation, and throw a bridge across the stream.

The point of vision descends to earth, close to the scene of action.]
[image not archived]

SCENE X

THE BRIDGE OF THE BERESINA

[The bridge is over the Beresina at Studzianka. On each side of the river are swampy meadows, now hard with frost, while further back are dense forests. Ice floats down the deep black stream in large cakes.]

DUMB SHOW

The French sappers are working up to their shoulders in the water at the building of the bridge. Those so immersed work till, stiffened with ice to immobility, they die from the chill, when others succeed them.

Cavalry meanwhile attempt to swim their horses across, and some infantry try to wade through the stream.

Another bridge is begun hard by, the construction of which advances with greater speed; and it becomes fit for the passage of carriages and artillery.

NAPOLEON is seen to come across to the homeward bank, which is the foreground of the scene. A good portion of the army also, under DAVOUT, NEY, and OUDINOT, lands by degrees on this side. But VICTOR'S corps is yet on the left or Moscow side of the stream, moving toward the bridge, and PARTONNEAUX with the rear-guard, who has not yet crossed, is at Borissow, some way below, where there is an old permanent bridge partly broken.

Enter with speed from the distance the Russians under TCHAPLITZ. More under TCHICHAGOFF enter the scene down the river on the left or further bank, and cross by the old bridge of Borissow. But they are too far from the new crossing to intercept the French as yet. PLATOFF with his Cossacks next appears on the stage which is to be

such a tragic one. He comes from the forest and approaches the left bank likewise. So also does WITTGENSTEIN, who strikes in between the uncrossed VICTOR and PARTONNEAUX. PLATOFF thereupon descends on the latter, who surrenders with the rear-guard; and thus seven thousand more are cut off from the already emaciated Grand Army. TCHAPLITZ, of TCHICHAGOFF'S division, has meanwhile got round by the old bridge at Borissow to the French side of the new one, and attacks OUDINOT; but he is repulsed with the strength of despair. The French lose a further five thousand in this.

We now look across the river at VICTOR, and his division, not yet over, and still defending the new bridges. WITTGENSTEIN descends upon him; but he holds his ground.

The determined Russians set up a battery of twelve cannon, so as to command the two new bridges, with the confused crowd of soldiers, carriages, and baggage, pressing to cross. The battery discharges into the surging multitude. More Russians come up, and, forming a semicircle round the bridges and the mass of French, fire yet more hotly on them with round shot and canister. As it gets dark the flashes light up the strained faces of the fugitives. Under the discharge and the weight of traffic, the bridge for the artillery gives way, and the throngs upon it roll shrieking into the stream and are drowned.

SEMICHORUS I OF THE PITIES [aerial music]

So loudly swell their shrieks as to be heard above the roar of guns and the wailful wind,

Giving in one brief cry their last wild word on that mock life through which they have harlequined!

SEMICHORUS II

To the other bridge the living heap betakes itself, the weak pushed over by the strong;

They loop together by their clutch like snakes; in knots they are submerged and borne along.

CHORUS

Then women are seen in the waterflow—limply bearing their infants between wizened white arms stretching above;

Yea, motherhood, sheerly sublime in her last despairing, and lighting her darkest declension with limitless love.

Meanwhile, TCHICHAGOFF has come up with his twenty-seven thousand men, and falls on OUDINOT, NEY, and the "Sacred Squadron." Altogether we see forty or fifty thousand assailing eighteen thousand half-naked, badly armed wretches, emaciated with hunger and encumbered with several thousands of sick, wounded, and stragglers.

VICTOR and his rear-guard, who have protected the bridges all day, come over themselves at last. No sooner have they done so than the final bridge is set on fire. Those who are upon it burn or drown; those who are on the further side have lost their last chance, and perish either in attempting to wade the stream or at the hands of the Russians.

SEMICHORUS OF THE PITIES [aerial music]

What will be seen in the morning light?

What will be learnt when the spring breaks bright,

And the frost unlocks to the sun's soft sight?

SEMICHORUS II

Death in a thousand motley forms;

Charred corpses hooking each other's arms

In the sleep that defies all war's alarms!

CHORUS

Pale cysts of souls in every stage,

Still bent to embraces of love or rage,—

Souls passed to where History pens no page.

The flames of the burning bridge go out as it consumes to the water's edge, and darkness mantles all, nothing continuing but the purl of the river and the clickings of floating ice.

[image not archived]

SCENE XI

THE OPEN COUNTRY BETWEEN SMORGONI AND WILNA

[The winter is more merciless, and snow continues to fall upon a deserted expanse of unenclosed land in Lithuania. Some scattered birch bushes merge in a forest in the background.]

It is growing dark, though nothing distinguishes where the sun sets. There is no sound except that of a shuffling of feet in the direction of a bivouac. Here are gathered tattered men like skeletons. Their noses and ears are frost-bitten, and pus is oozing from their eyes.

These stricken shades in a limbo of gloom are among the last survivors of the French army. Few of them carry arms. One squad, ploughing through snow above their knees, and with icicles dangling from their hair that clink like glass-lustres as they walk, go into the birch wood, and are heard chopping. They bring back boughs, with which they make a screen on the windward side, and contrive to light a fire. With their swords they cut rashers from a dead horse, and grill them in the flames, using gunpowder for

salt to eat them with. Two others return from a search, with a dead rat and some candle-ends. Their meal shared, some try to repair their gaping shoes and to tie up their feet, that are chilblained to the bone.

A straggler enters, who whispers to one or two soldiers of the group. A shudder runs through them at his words.]

FIRST SOLDIER [dazed]

What—gone, do you say? Gone?

STRAGGLER

Yes, I say gone!

He left us at Smorgoni hours ago.

The Sacred Squadron even he has left behind.

By this time he's at Warsaw or beyond,

Full pace for Paris.

SECOND SOLDIER [jumping up wildly]

Gone? How did he go?

No, surely! He could not desert us so!

STRAGGLER

He started in a carriage, with Roustan

The Mameluke on the box: Caulaincourt, too,

Was inside with him. Monton and Duroc

Rode on a sledge behind.—The order bade

That we should not be told it for a while.

[Other soldiers spring up as they realize the news, and stamp hither and thither, impotent with rage, grief, and despair, many in their physical weakness sobbing like children.]

SPIRIT SINISTER

Good. It is the selfish and unconscionable characters who are so much regretted.

STRAGGLER

He felt, or feigned, he ought to leave no longer

A land like Prussia 'twixt himself and home.

There was great need for him to go, he said,

To quiet France, and raise another army

That shall replace our bones.

SEVERAL [distractedly]

Deserted us!

Deserted us!—O, after all our pangs

We shall see France no more!

[Some become insane, and go dancing round. One of them sings.]

MAD SOLDIER'S SONG

I

Ha, for the snow and hoar!
Ho, for our fortune's made!
We can shape our bed without sheets to spread,
And our graves without a spade.
So foolish Life adieu,
And ingrate Leader too.
—Ah, but we loved you true!
Yet—he-he-he! and ho-ho-ho!—
We'll never return to you.

II

What can we wish for more?
Thanks to the frost and flood
We are grinning crones—thin bags of bones
Who once were flesh and blood.
So foolish Life adieu,
And ingrate Leader too.
—Ah, but we loved you true!
Yet—he-he-he! and ho-ho-ho!—
We'll never return to you.
[Exhausted, they again crouch round the fire. Officers and
privates press together for warmth. Other stragglers arrive, and
sit at the backs of the first. With the progress of the night the
stars come out in unusual brilliancy, Sirius and those in Orion
flashing like stilettos; and the frost stiffens.
The fire sinks and goes out; but the Frenchmen do not move. The
day dawns, and still they sit on.
In the background enter some light horse of the Russian army,
followed by KUTUZOF himself and a few of his staff. He presents
a terrible appearance now—bravely serving though slowly dying,
his face puffed with the intense cold, his one eye staring out as
he sits in a heap in the saddle, his head sunk into his shoulders.
The whole detachment pauses at the sight of the French asleep.
They shout; but the bivouackers give no sign.
KUTUZOF
Go, stir them up! We slay not sleeping men.
[The Russians advance and prod the French with their lances.]
RUSSIAN OFFICER
Prince, here's a curious picture. They are dead.

KUTUZOF [with indifference]
Oh, naturally. After the snow was down
I marked a sharpening of the air last night.
We shall be stumbling on such frost-baked meat
Most of the way to Wilna.
OFFICER [examining the bodies]
They all sit
As they were living still, but stiff as horns;
And even the colour has not left their cheeks,
Whereon the tears remain in strings of ice.—
It was a marvel they were not consumed:
Their clothes are cindered by the fire in front,
While at their back the frost has caked them hard.
KUTUZOF
Tis well. So perish Russia's enemies!
[Exeunt KUTUZOF, his staff, and the detachment of horse in the
direction of Wilna; and with the advance of day the snow resumes
its fall, slowly burying the dead bivouackers.]
[image not archived]

SCENE XII

PARIS. THE TUILERIES

[An antechamber to the EMPRESS MARIE LOUISE'S bedroom, at half-past eleven on a December night. The DUCHESS OF MONTEBELLO and another lady-in-waiting are discovered talking to the Empress.]

MARIE LOUISE

I have felt unapt for anything to-night,
And I will now retire.
[She goes into her child's room adjoining.]

DUCHESS OF MONTEBELLO

For some long while
There has come no letter from the Emperor,
And Paris brims with ghastly rumourings
About the far campaign. Not being beloved,
The town is over dull for her alone.
[Re-enter MARIE LOUISE.]

MARIE LOUISE

The King of Rome is sleeping in his cot
Sweetly and safe. Now, ladies, I am going.
[She withdraws. Her tiring-women pass through into her chamber.
They presently return and go out. A manservant enters, and bars

the window-shutters with numerous bolts. Exit manservant. The Duchess retires. The other lady-in-waiting rises to go into her bedroom, which adjoins that of the Empress. Men's voices are suddenly heard in the corridor without. The lady-in-waiting pauses with parted lips. The voices grow louder. The lady-in-waiting screams.

MARIE LOUISE hastily re-enters in a dressing-gown thrown over her night-clothes.]

MARIE LOUISE

Great God, what altercation can that be?
I had just verged on sleep when it aroused me!
[A thumping is heard at the door.]

VOICE OF NAPOLEON [without]

Hola! Pray let me in! Unlock the door!

LADY-IN-WAITING

Heaven's mercy on us! What man may it be
At such and hour as this?

MARIE LOUISE

O it is he!

[The lady-in-waiting unlocks the door. NAPOLEON enters, scarcely recognizable, in a fur cloak and hood over his ears. He throws off the cloak and discloses himself to be in the shabbiest and muddiest attire. Marie Louise is agitated almost to fainting.]

SPIRIT IRONIC

Is it with fright or joy?

MARIE LOUISE

I scarce believe
What my sight tells me! Home, and in such garb!
[NAPOLEON embraces her.]

NAPOLEON

I have had great work in getting in, my dear!
They failed to recognize me at the gates,
Being sceptical at my poor hackney-coach
And poorer baggage. I had to show my face
In a fierce light ere they would let me pass,
And even then they doubted till I spoke.—
What think you, dear, of such a tramp-like spouse?
[He warms his hands at the fire.]

Ha—it is much more comfortable here
Than on the Russian plains!

MARIE LOUISE [timidly]

You have suffered there?—

Your face is thinner, and has line in it;
No marvel that they did not know you!

NAPOLEON

Yes:

Disasters many and swift have swooped on me!—
Since crossing—ugh!—the Beresina River
I have been compelled to come incognito;
Ay—as a fugitive and outlaw quite.

MARIE LOUISE

We'll thank Heaven, anyhow, that you are safe.
I had gone to bed, and everybody almost!
what, now, do require? Some food of course?
[The child in the adjoining chamber begins to cry, awakened by the
loud tones of NAPOLEON.]

NAPOLEON

Ah—that's his little voice! I'll in and see him.

MARIE LOUISE

I'll come with you.

[NAPOLEON and the EMPRESS pass into the other room. The lady-in-
waiting calls up yawning servants and gives orders. The servants
go to execute them. Re-enter NAPOLEON and MARIE LOUISE. The lady-
in-waiting goes out.]

NAPOLEON

I have said it, dear!
All the disasters summed in the bulletin
Shall be repaired.

MARIE LOUISE

And are they terrible?

NAPOLEON

Have you not read the last-sent bulletin,
Dear friend?

MARIE LOUISE

No recent bulletin has come.

NAPOLEON

Ah—I must have outstripped it on the way!

MARIE LOUISE

And where is the Grand Army?

NAPOLEON

Oh—that's gone.

MARIE LOUISE

Gone? But—gone where?

NAPOLEON

Gone all to nothing, dear.
 MARIE LOUISE [incredulously]
 But some six hundred thousand I saw pass
 Through Dresden Russia-wards?
 NAPOLEON [flinging himself into a chair]
 Well, those men lie—
 Or most of them—in layers of bleaching bones
 Twixt here and Moscow... I have been subdued;
 But by the elements; and them alone.
 Not Russia, but God's sky has conquered me!
 [With an appalled look she sits beside him.]
 From the sublime to the ridiculous
 There's but a step!—I have been saying it
 All through the leagues of my long journey home—
 And that step has been passed in this affair!...
 Yes, briefly, it is quite ridiculous,
 Whichever way you look at it.—Ha, ha!
 MARIE LOUISE [simply]
 But those six hundred thousand throbbing throats
 That cheered me deaf at Dresden, marching east
 So full of youth and spirits—all bleached bones—
 Ridiculous? Can it be so, dear, to—
 Their mothers say?
 NAPOLEON [with a twitch of displeasure]
 You scarcely understand.
 I meant the enterprise, and not its stuff...
 I had no wish to fight, nor Alexander,
 But circumstance impaled us each on each;
 The Genius who outshapes my destinies
 Did all the rest! Had I but hit success,
 Imperial splendour would have worn a crown
 Unmatched in long-scrolled Time!... Well, leave that now.—
 What do they know about all this in Paris?
 MARIE LOUISE
 I cannot say. Black rumours fly and croak
 Like ravens through the streets, but come to me
 Thinned to the vague!—Occurrences in Spain
 Breed much disquiet with these other things.
 Marmont's defeat at Salamanca field
 Ploughed deep into men's brows. The cafes say
 Your troops must clear from Spain.
 NAPOLEON

We'll see to that!
I'll find a way to do a better thing;
Though I must have another army first—
Three hundred thousand quite. Fishes as good
Swim in the sea as have come out of it.
But to begin, we must make sure of France,
Disclose ourselves to the good folk of Paris
In daily outing as a family group,
The type and model of domestic bliss
[Which, by the way, we are]. And I intend,
Also, to gild the dome of the Invalides
In best gold leaf, and on a novel pattern.
MARIE LOUISE
To gild the dome, dear? Why?
NAPOLEON
To give them something
To think about. They'll take to it like children,
And argue in the cafes right and left
On its artistic points.—So they'll forget
The woes of Moscow.
[A chamberlain-in-waiting announces supper. MARIE LOUISE and
NAPOLEON go out. The room darkens and the scene closes.]

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Thomas Hardy
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