
THE SAXONS

A DRAMA OF CHRISTIANITY IN THE NORTH

BY EDWIN DAVIES SCHOONMAKER

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TO MY MOTHER

PERSONS OF THE DRAMA.

THE SAXON UNIT.

CANZLER, chief of the Saxons.

FRITZ, a shepherd.

RUDOLPH,)
MAX,) foresters.
CONRAD,)

HARTZEL, an old man.

WIGLAF, a gleeman.

OSWALD, a shepherd, afterward a monk.

SELMA, daughter of Canzler.

THE ROMAN UNIT.

FATHER BENEDICT, the village priest.

FATHER PAUL, a friar.

JARDIN, the bailiff.

JACQUES SAR, an old crusader.

JULES BACQUEUR, the smith.

HUGH CAPET, the barber.

MADAM BACQUEUR, wife of Jules Bacqueur.

MADAM VALMY, a country woman.

RACHEL, aunt of Madam Valmy.

ROSA, granddaughter of Rachel.

A BOY.

THE GREEK UNIT.

THE ABBOT OF ST. GILES.

LOUIS, the prior of the abbey.

PIERRE, the sacristan.

ANDREW, an old acholyte.

ELY, the porter.

SIMON,

RENE,

BASIL,

SOLOMAN,

LEO,

GUIDO,

} monks.

MACIAS, a hunter attached to the abbey.

THE SUPERNATURAL.

SIGURD, apparently a dwarf, really something else.

HULGA, a witch.

ZIP,

GIMEL,

KILO,

SUK,

ZORY,

} gnomes.

FAIRIES.

Other foresters, monks and villagers, men and women.

As for me,

Let a man be a man. Outside of that
There is no power on earth that dares ask more;
No power in heaven that will.

THE SAXONS

ACT ONE.

SCENE ONE—A road through a forest. On either side trees stand thick and dark. Immediately in front the light sifts down upon a rude bridge spanning a narrow stream. At the roadside, to the right, a large crucifix, apparently new, stands upon a post some ten feet in height. It is elaborately carved and is set in a deep frame to protect it from the weather. At the foot of the post, cut into the mossy bank which slopes toward the road, is a kneeling place with a white sheep's pelt lying upon it.

A sound of voices is heard. Fritz and Rudolph enter from the left and pause where a path leads off through the wood. The latter has an ax upon his shoulder. Far in the forest a faint sound of chopping is heard.

TIME—Mid-day in summer, in the early part of the thirteenth century.

RUDOLPH—He's worth six.

FRITZ— I'll give you five, you pick them.

RUDOLPH—I'll pick six.

FRITZ— I'll keep my ewes, then.

RUDOLPH— And walk
To the mountains?

FRITZ— We have not gone yet.

RUDOLPH— But—

FRITZ—And if I had my way we would not go.

RUDOLPH—Nor would we go had I mine, Fritz. But we
Have not our way. The dragon has his way.

As far as Nifheim the North is red.

FRITZ—Are we their sheep that we must follow them
Or be hung up on trees?

THE SAXONS

RUDOLPH— He follows us.

FRITZ—Who do these woods belong to, anyhow?

RUDOLPH—Where a man puts his foot the dragon puts
His belly, and the man's track disappears.

Where is the tree that has not felt the storm?

Have they not disappeared? Like leaves the tribes
Are scattered.

FRITZ— It has blown down trunk and all.

RUDOLPH—Forests and rivers and ten thousand graves
Lie under that red paw.

FRITZ— It stains the world.

RUDOLPH—The Weser rolls down bodies to the sea;

Their yellow hair is matted in the Rhine;

The deer that drinks the Aller in the night

Starts back from bloody faces in the stream.

They are our fathers, Fritz, who cannot sleep

While this coiled Hunger tracks us toward the north.

FRITZ—And we must feed it, eh? We must grub roots,

Fatten ourselves on acorns in the wood,

As swine do, and then waddle to the swamp

And stuff its belly so that it will sleep

And trouble us no more, we must do that?

RUDOLPH—No; we must leave, and starve it.

FRITZ— It don't starve.

More hunger means more flesh. Let's feed it steel.

RUDOLPH—Steel draws the blood and brings the hunger on.

FRITZ—Then draw the life. We don't feed it enough.

RUDOLPH—It eats the blade—

FRITZ— Then feed it hilt and all.

RUDOLPH—It eats our swords and they come out in claws.

As Canzler says, a thousand spears have but

Peeled off its poisonous scales, and where they fall

A deadly fire burns and the elves die.

FRITZ—We will call Wittikind.

RUDOLPH— From out the grave?

THE SAXONS

FRITZ—His spirit will hear.

RUDOLPH— Wittikind was baptized.

FRITZ—His head was baptized, but his heart was not.

A few drops here could not put out a fire

That scarred and seamed the dragon till it lashed,

Maddened and bleeding, all the tribes away.

A spark of him is in this forest.

RUDOLPH— Oswald.

FRITZ— Yes.

RUDOLPH—Silent and shy.

FRITZ— Their fate whom Woden loves.

He homes the lightning in the silent cloud.

RUDOLPH—Weak.

FRITZ— In himself, but strong by prophesy.

RUDOLPH—Can you or I or chief hasten the day

Wherein Val-father's voice shall wake the North?

What man can say unto the lightning, "Leap"?

Of Woden's race, a million summer leaves,

We are, as it were, the winter mistletoe,

A lone green sprig with barren woods all round.

Can we shake off the snow and say, "Appear,"

To the young race asleep within the trees?

Cry out above the dragon winter, "Die"?

You cannot hurry in its growth one leaf.

Yet you would thrust a sword in Oswald's hands,

Thinking to hurry Prophesy along.

If naked strength can save us, why not chief's?

Why Oswald, if the battle is to be now?

Without the aid of Woden, he is naught.

FRITZ—Without it, naught, and with it, everything.

RUDOLPH—Val-father calls today then?

FRITZ— Wiglaf's ears

Are where the whispers of the dead go by.

RUDOLPH—Heard he the word, "today"?

FRITZ— And Wiglaf's eyes

THE SAXONS

Blazed glee-fire and his lips spake Woden's word:
"In him shall be the strength of all your dead."

RUDOLPH—In Oswald?

FRITZ— In the seed of Wittikind.

"The seed of Wittikind shall put forth a sprout
Shall make the whole North green."

RUDOLPH— The "seed" of.

FRITZ— Yes.

RUDOLPH—There, Fritz, is where the whole great purpose
turns.

FRITZ—Eh?

RUDOLPH— Prophecy, you see, walks in the air.
No man can say on whom it will lay its hand.

FRITZ—Why?

RUDOLPH— Would not Oswald's seed be Wittikind's?
Do you not see that some child still unborn,
The issue of Oswald's loins, may be the one
To take the sword that Woden will hand down?
Meanwhile, suppose the Christians hear of this.
Their spies are all about us.

(Dropping his voice and pointing to the bridge.)

Who knows?

FRITZ—*(After looking under it.)* No.

RUDOLPH—Suppose they once get rumor of it. Then
Suppose they torture Wiglaf for the rest.

Will not a thousand trumpets sound the chase?

Will they not beat the forest through and through,

Set fire to it, and when the stag appears

Shall breed the fawn shall grow the golden horns—

*(As though drawing back a bow-string and letting spring
the arrow.)*

Then what? What then?

FRITZ— We—

RUDOLPH— We—?

FRITZ— We have our swords.

THE SAXONS

RUDOLPH—We have them now.

FRITZ— And we can keep them.

RUDOLPH— We

Can neither keep our swords nor keep ourselves.

Who is it plants the white cross in our land?

The Frank? The Wend? The Saxon; we ourselves.

No; in that fire that burns up from the south

Thousands of our swords have melted and become

Scales on the dragon's back and teeth and claws

That now tear out our hearts. Today swords strike

For Woden, and tomorrow the strange god

With those same swords storms Valhal, and lays low

Its golden roof. Our ash Iggdrasil dies.

Its beautiful leaves fall far off on the sea.

FRITZ—Let's kill the worm that bites it, then.

RUDOLPH— That worm

Hath bit the Northman and the Northman bites

Val-father.

(A crash is heard in the forest.)

FRITZ— It was the tree fell.

RUDOLPH— So falls

Iggdrasil and the golden roof comes down.

When the North bites, Val-father dies. No, Fritz;

The South has thrown a snake upon the North,

And in its trail no fairy can be found.

They, too, have gone to the mountains.

FRITZ— Leave our homes?

RUDOLPH—For all of us it will be better there.

The slopes are thickly clothed with oak and pine.

There, too, your flock will find good grazing, Fritz.

Conrad and I saw ledges thick with grass.

FRITZ—It's thick here, too.

RUDOLPH— And torrents tumbling down

Fill to the brim the basins of the rocks.

There, in the driest season—

THE SAXONS

FRITZ— Look down here.
(*He points down in the stream.*)

And this mid-summer.

RUDOLPH— And game is plentiful.

FRITZ—It's plentiful here, too; deer and—

RUDOLPH— Chamois

And wild-goats browsing on the crags.

FRITZ— And here

Are wild-boars' lairs and—

RUDOLPH— The dragon's den.

FRITZ—His den is here, but he feeds everywhere.

RUDOLPH—Not on the mountains.

FRITZ— They are barren; but

He would feed there if we should go there.

RUDOLPH— No.

FRITZ—He ravages the whole wide—

RUDOLPH—(*Moving his hand horizontally.*)

This way, yes;

But that way?

(*Pointing up.*)

No. He dare not face the light

That father Woden pours upon the peaks.

Under Valhalla's eaves the dark elf died

When the dawn smote him; so the dragon there.

His paws would break off on the mountain sides.

FRITZ—We will stay here and cut them off.

RUDOLPH— Those paws?

Those huge, red, century-scarred paws? With what?

FRITZ—They want our woods and crofts, that's what they want.

RUDOLPH—The Saxon sword is broken. The great shield

That covered all the North lies in the loam

Rusting, and the wild-flowers eat its stains.

Where are our fathers, Fritz? Heimdall, who sees

All races, sees not anywhere that race

THE SAXONS

That stood at bay when Swabian went down,
Frank and Bavarian and the great North fell.
A paw was put upon its breast and lo,
It is scattered, blood and bones and heart and brain!
Its hand is here; its heart is in the north;
Its head far off an island in the sea;
Its blood is everywhere, in grass, in leaves;
Its flesh still fronts the dragon in these trees.

FRITZ—And we, we men—

RUDOLPH— Our time has not yet come.

FRITZ—Must be the feet and run, eh?

RUDOLPH— We must wait
Until the heart calls from the silent north.

FRITZ—Wait?

RUDOLPH— You would have us—?

FRITZ— If we are the hand,
For the hand strikes.

RUDOLPH— Without the head? No, Fritz;
We must delay our battle with the beast.

A new shield we will shape us on the heights;
Temper it in the flashes of the sky
And boss it with the terror of the grave.
Of mountain metal on the mountain tops,
New armor we will forge. Let the old shield
Lie here upon the plain, covering the dead.
Let the leaves cover it. And for the sword
That broken lies between the dragon's paws,
Val-father will reach down and put the hilt
Of some great Fafnir's-bane in Canzler's hand,
Canzler, in turn, in Oswald's when he weds,
And Oswald and the girl will pass it on
Down to the hand of that child—

FRITZ— Canzler go?

RUDOLPH—Whom Woden shall bid seek the dragon's den,
And Siegfried of the North shall slay the snake.

THE SAXONS

FRITZ—Canzler will not go. Canzler!

RUDOLPH— He will go.

FRITZ—Canzler will lay him in the grave first.

RUDOLPH— Fritz,

Who calls the fairies?

FRITZ— What of that?

RUDOLPH— Witchcraft.

FRITZ—You mean that they will burn her?

RUDOLPH— Do they not

Burn witches in the city? . . . We can die;

We on our swords can perish; but the girl . . . ?

(He goes off through the wood, leaving Fritz silent upon the bridge.)

FRITZ—*(To himself.)*

Canzler will lay his sword upon her throat.

(With bowed head he walks on across the bridge. As he passes into the deeper shadows the white sheep's pelt lying in the bank at the roadside catches his eye. He goes curiously toward it, when, seeing the post, he glances up and stops suddenly. For a time he stands as one appalled.)

Rudolph!

RUDOLPH—Ho!

FRITZ— Here!

(To himself.) This will break Canzler's heart.

(Rudolph reappears and joins Fritz, and the two stand in silence, Rudolph with his eyes fixed upon the crucifix, and Fritz with his eyes on Rudolph.)

FRITZ—What do you think?

RUDOLPH— It was put up last night.

FRITZ—You still think we should leave here?

RUDOLPH— Still think?

FRITZ— Yes.

RUDOLPH—Can there be any doubt of what this means?

Almost its eyeballs gleam between the trees.

THE SAXONS

FRITZ—And if we leave here, what?

RUDOLPH— We bear away
To some far mountain nest our eagle's egg.
We save our hope.

(Fritz points to the crucifix.)

Only proves what I say.
'Tis some poor burgher who refused to bow
And would not leave.

(Fritz goes toward the crucifix.)

And they have put it up
To mock us with the pains they will make us feel
If we don't bow.

FRITZ—*(Bending over the pelt.)*

Knee prints. He has knelt here;
Knelt here and prayed—

(Coming back to the road.)

to Woden, do you think?
You know the hand that carved that?

(Rudolph goes closer and scrutinizes the crucifix.)

Your great sword,
Where is it now, Rudolph? the Fafnir's-bane
Val-father should reach down to Canzler's hand;
To whose hand will the chief's hand pass it now?
Out of the dragon's belly will he come,
Our Siegfried, with the great heart of the beast?
Our hope, our eagle's egg, where is it now?

RUDOLPH—It can't be.

FRITZ— Can't be?

RUDOLPH— Can't be.

FRITZ— But it is.

At dusk last night I saw him in the wood
And he was wending this way carrying that.
And there are knee-prints on it.

(A pause.)

And that thing;

THE SAXONS

What other hand could have carved out that brow
And laid that sorrow there? Look at those knees.

RUDOLPH—This is why he has shunned us.

FRITZ—Say no word

To Canzler about this or to the girl.

Never will she be happy any more.

He will leave now.

RUDOLPH—(*Contemplating the knee-prints.*)

Under Val-father's trees!

FRITZ—Canzler has been a father to the boy.

(*Rudolph comes toward the road, then turns and looks back
at the Christ.*)

So Balder looked lying on Valhal floor.

If the men hear this, they will vote to die.

RUDOLPH—He must go quietly and no word be said.

(*They walk together along the road.*)

FRITZ—The way he goes, the Saxon race has gone.

RUDOLPH—We must go to the mountains, not the grave.

FRITZ—Canzler has been a father to the boy.

RUDOLPH—He may return and bring the Saxon race.

FRITZ—Who will deliver him?

RUDOLPH—Val-father lives.

FRITZ—(*Bitterly.*) Lives with the dead.

(*He goes out.*)

RUDOLPH—He may yet be reclaimed.

The paths of Prophecy lead far away

But still the Powers of the air are bent

To guide it and their eyes are on its feet.

Let us not doubt Val-father's hand in this.

That eye in Mimer's fountain sees through all

The dark, gnome-haunted caverns of the earth;

The other under his calm brow watches heaven.

(*He goes off through the forest.*)

THE SAXONS

SCENE TWO—Under an old beech in the edge of the forest. A knoll, like the toe of a large boot shoved in from the rear, butts squarely against the trunk. Up under the boughs, left, lies a decaying log with here and there a tuft of rank grass growing from the cores of old knots. Beside it is a small basket filled with berries. At the foot of the beech, bubbles a spring partly walled in with dark mossy rocks, on top of which lies a brown gourd dipper. Two worn foot-paths, one winding up the slope into the forest, the other entering from the left, meet at the spring. The ground is checkered with flakes of sunlight that fall through the leaves, and over all is the silence of the summer noon.

A crackle is heard as of a dry twig breaking under foot. The branches on the left swing apart and Selma pushes through backwards. She is a fairy-like creature dressed in green. Her hair falls loose about her shoulders and upon her head she wears a coronet of wild-flowers. Holding the boughs slightly apart, she stands peering intently to the left, then, turning quickly, she snatches up the basket and hides it behind the log, and after picking a few green burrs from the branches above her, darts to the right and conceals herself behind the trunk. For a time she stands motionless. Then, as if upon second thought, she stoops and removes the dipper from the rocks.

Along the foot-path, leading in from the left, Oswald enters. He stops and looks back and for a time stands thus, as one undecided, a forlorn expression upon his face. He then turns and proceeds to the spring. Not finding the dipper, he lays aside his staff and hat, and stretches himself out upon the flat stone at the entrance of the spring. While he is drinking, Selma leans cautiously from behind the trunk and raises her arm as if to drop something. Having evidently seen her shadow in the water, Oswald glances up, but seeing no one, lies down again and drinks.

THE SAXONS

From behind the bole Selma tosses a burr into the spring. Oswald continues to drink. Finally he rises, and, taking up his hat and staff, goes up the slope and sits down upon the log. The girl moves stealthily around the trunk.

OSWALD—Selma. (*After a pause.*)

Selma. I saw you in the spring.

SELMA—I'm there yet, then; you didn't take me out.

(*She comes round the side of the trunk opposite the log and, stooping over, looks down into the spring.*)

O you should see the fishes! two, three, four,
A troop of them! O Oswald, come and see!
They're round a splash of sunlight in the spring.
See how they twinkle and in the current stir
Their little crimson fins. Ah, I've scared them.
I really did; I scared them with my hair.
See how it fell.

(*She points to a mass of hair that has fallen past her cheek.*)

It would not hurt them, though.

We must be still; we must not say a word.

They never will play if they see us looking.

(*Oswald points down into the spring.*)

That little green thing? That's a beech-nut burr.
I threw it in to scare the water-sprite
That looked up at you when you stooped to drink.
You did not see her? Oh, I did. I peeped
Like this, softly, over, over the edge,
And saw her peeping from the mossy stones
Down in the spring. Her hair was loose like mine
And brown as buckeyes, and her lips were stained
With juice of berries. Then I raised my hand.
Thinks I: "I'll drop a beech-nut on his head."
Then she raised hers as if to say: "Be still!
I'll make the bubbles break against his nose."
Was that what made you jump? You scared her so.
I saw her hair fly up about her face

THE SAXONS

As I leaped back. She lives down in the spring.
This morning as I passed I stooped and said:
"I'm going after berries; won't you come?"
She beckoned to me, too, and seemed to say:
"I can't leave home; my little fish will stray.
You come down here; I have some pretty shells."
Oh, look! Be still! She's let them come again.
See them flash.

OSWALD— It's the green shell they're after.

SELMA—Why, there's no kernel in it. If there were
They could not eat it; it would break their gills,
They are so very thin.

OSWALD— We all do that;
We follow shells sometimes.

SELMA— O Oswald, look!
See how the little silver bubbles rise.

OSWALD—And we are like the fishes—

SELMA— Oh, do look!
You are not thinking of the fishes. See!
They follow it through the dimples round and round,
Paddling the current with their little fins,
And poising. They're afraid. They're drawing back.
There, by the green stone.

OSWALD— They are safer there
Than in the current.

SELMA— See, there's one that still
Nips at it in the eddies. See its scales.

You cannot carve like that. Look out! Oh, oh!

(She runs down to the outlet of the spring by which the minnow has passed out, and walks up and down, stooping occasionally to feel among the stones of the rill. Oswald goes back and sits down upon the log. After a while Selma rises and looks toward the spring. The trunk is between her and Oswald.)

'Twill grieve her so.

THE SAXONS

(In a low chant, abstractedly.)

She's sleeping in the spring
Under the dark rock where the white sand pours.
The moss is softer in the forest there,
And there the wood-doves coo.
He's going away; they told me yesterday.
The forest heard them moan: He will not come.
The chestnut burr shall break;
The wild bird, feeding, shake
Unpicked the purple hartcrops to the ground,
And the hushed forest only hear the sound
Of antlers knocking where the wild deer rubs.
He's going away—away—away.

(Staring vacantly into the forest, her back to Oswald, she unconsciously picks the green burrs from the branches above her.)

OSWALD—Selma. *(After a pause.)*
Come here; will you?

SELMA— I'm gathering mast.
My fawns, they like it so. It makes them sleek.

OSWALD—I want to tell you something.

SELMA— Tell me here.

If I had listened to the forest birds,
I'd have no berries. And my fawns must eat.

OSWALD—'Tis something serious.

SELMA— Ah, you've been to town.

(As she saunters toward the log she reaches up in the air.)

Gossamers, where do they come from, Oswald?

You never are gay when you've heard the bells.

We are going to the mountains, *may be*. Then

You will not hear them. Are there berries there?

Rudolph said he saw flowers in the ice.

Think of that. Blue-bells.—You are like my crow.

(She takes a berry from her basket and holds it up between her fingers.)

THE SAXONS

If you will talk, you may.—I must go home.

(She pulls down a bough and begins to pick the leaves off, one by one.)

OSWALD—I want you to go with me to the bridge.

SELMA—I can't. I must go home. Father will think I have been captured by the villagers.

(She removes her basket from the sun and lays the leaves upon her berries.)

He said: "You will not find them." But I did.

OSWALD—Sit down.

SELMA— I can't.—It makes my berries red.

Father will say: "You see? They are not ripe."

(She goes about under the boughs selecting the largest of the leaves.)

It makes them black, then makes them red again.

(After a pause.)

I heard bells ring last night. I dreamed I did.

I called and they called and you would not come.

I thought you could not hear me where you were.

OSWALD—In a great forest once two children lived.

They used to wander about the wood. One day,

Playing among the trees, suddenly they heard

Small voices calling: "Ho, children!" At that—

SELMA—Fairies. *(She comes to the log.)*

OSWALD— The children rose wide-eyed and let

Fall the wild-flowers they had gathered and stood

Listening. Again the cry: "Ho, children!"

(Selma sits down.)

Then

They, hand in hand, slowly, and half afraid,

Moved forward, and the voices, as they moved,

Moved onward, sometimes above them in the air

Singing, and sometimes in the fernshaws: "Ho,

Here we are!" And then a wisp of sun-bright hair

Flashed in the deeper shadows of the wood.

THE SAXONS

The children, shouting, "Catch her! There she goes!"
Darted in glee from trunk to trunk. At last
The voices died away. The children saw
The great trees glooming round them—

SELMA— Oh, I know!
They cried themselves to sleep, for they were lost,
And then the birds brought leaves and—Didn't they?

No.

OSWALD—As night came on, the elder of them, a boy,
Remembering to have heard a holy man
Speak of a house—a holy house—where men
Live as the angels live—

SELMA— Went there?

OSWALD— To pray.
To pray for help.

SELMA— For the other child?

OSWALD— For her.

SELMA—What did the fairies do?

OSWALD— But ere he went,
Carved with his knife upon a tree a sign
A good man in the wood had taught him, a charm
Against the spirit of the forest. Then he
Told her strange words to say and leaving her
Kneeling upon the moss, her little hands
Folded, he went away. (*A pause.*)

Not for himself.

SELMA—And did he not come back? Tell me the rest.

OSWALD—Come with me to the bridge.

SELMA— Did he come back?

OSWALD—I have carved a charm.

SELMA— A charm?

OSWALD— For you.

SELMA— For me?

(*A pause.*)

Where are you going, Oswald?—(*A pause.*) See my hair.

THE SAXONS

Why should it scare the fishes? You are wise;
Why should it, Oswald? It is soft as hers
Down in the spring, and if you'll come and look
You'll see the smallest minnows twinkle there;
They do not fear.

OSWALD— It is a snare.

SELMA—(*Naively.*)

Is it?

I would not harm them, Oswald.

OSWALD— Father Paul says

It is the snare of Satan.

SELMA— I know him.

'Tis not my hair he uses.

OSWALD—(*With horror.*) Know Satan! (*He turns away.*)

SELMA—I did not know his name was—Ah, you run!

You are just like the fishes. Come and play.

I will not let it fall. (*Throwing back her hair.*)

I will just peep

Over the edge.

(*Going up the slope to where the boughs hang low, she begins to gather the green burrs. While she gathers them, she sings:*)

*Hark, shepherd, hark; the forest calls
Away to the greenwood still.
We'll leave the dewy wether-bell
To tinkle on the hill.*

*Our ewes shall nibble gowan;
We'll gipsy in the wood;
Our bed shall be the wild plush moss;
Our cruse shall be the flood.*

*The lush blue whortle-berries
We'll gather eve and morn
And we'll wander where the brocket
Rubs the velvet from his horn.*

THE SAXONS

Come, shepherd, come—

I will not sing; the shepherd will not come.

I'll go and call the forest children.

(She takes up her basket.)

OSWALD—

Selma.

SELMA—Night-bird hooting at noon!

OSWALD—

Listen to me.

SELMA—I'll listen to the jay; he's merrier.

OSWALD—You are not of the witches that at night

Fly through the air to that far windy crag

That beetles o'er the foam of the wild sea

And there, with orgies lewd to the black goat,

Whirl in the revel with dark Barrabam?

SELMA—There is no fairy with a name like that.

OSWALD—He is the prince of fairies and of fiends.

Father Paul says that oft on stormy nights,

When stars scarce venture to the brink of heaven,

Witches go down the sky scattering fogs,

Diseases, blights, and death, and with them go

Those whom their cursed arts have wrought upon

To taste the air of Hell. Far in the West,

From every quarter of the earth and sky

And from those awful rivers, they assemble

And hold their sabbaths on a windy cliff,

A headland hanging over the edge of the world,

About whose base an ocean bellows so

That nothing dares approach save frenzied things.

There, while the moon protrudes an awful horn

Far off at sea and rocks among the waves,

They curse God's watchful planets from the sky

And lead their converts, dizzy with the brew,

To trample on the blood of Christ and swear

To serve the arch-demon who is known to them

As Barrabam. A while ago you said

You did not know his name as Satan. Selma,—

THE SAXONS

SELMA—You said he used my hair, but 'tis not mine.
The other day I saw him in the stream
Snaring the silver chubs. Said he: "My lass,
I'll give two shiners for a lock of hair."
"To snare the fishes with! You horrid man.
I will not give it." And I ran away.
'Tis not my hair he uses.

OSWALD—(*Aside.*) What a child!
Walking in darkness to the Tempter's snare.
Oh, I would die for you!

SELMA— You run away. (*He looks at her.*)
You cannot guess what I found in the wood.

OSWALD—You do not know what danger you are in.

SELMA—I know the ground-bird lays five speckled eggs;
That filberts wear green hoods.

OSWALD— Oh, what of that?
What will that profit in the Judgment Day?
You have not been baptized. You do not hear
The terrible, terrible, groanings of the lost.
O God, you do not know, you do not know!

SELMA—I know the wood-pink is the first to wake
Of all the flowers. I know where king-cups grow
And wink-a-peeps that sleep when days are dark.
I know when shadows lie beneath the boughs
As they do now, I know you'll never find
A squirrel or chipmunk out in all the wood,
For then the forest sleeps. And I know where—

OSWALD—O Selma, listen to me just this once,
And then forever listen to the years
Give back the echo of this golden hour.
Do you remember that day in the wood
When we were gathering may-apples? You ran
Shouting: "Here is a large one," and you stooped
To pick it, when a snake coiled round the stalk,
Hissed at you and you started back in fear.

THE SAXONS

Had it not hissed you never would have known
That it was there, so green it was, so like
The stalk it coiled about. You saw that one
Because it hissed. But one that hisses not
Is coiled about the world, as like the world
As was the green one to the may-flower stalk.

SELMA—I have heard father speak of it. He says
That it is full of bones.

OSWALD— And souls of men.
Only in holy houses are we safe.

SELMA—He said that I should not go near the village
In gathering berries.

OSWALD— 'Tis the serpent Sin.
Oh, how its sting has marred the perfect world!
Ready to spring, the fiends couch for us. We
Are hunted, Father Paul says, through the world
As was the deer the good saint saved, Saint Giles.
And men are fleeing from the wrath to come.

SELMA—It cannot come up on the mountain tops.

OSWALD—(*Fervently.*) Call on the Virgin. Yield to Lord
Jesus.

Do not reject him. Be baptized. Be saved.

Do you not see that I would die for you?

O Selma, playmate, loved one, promise me—

SELMA—I will not eat May-apples any more.

OSWALD—Oh, not to understand and yet be lost!

(He walks away.)

SELMA—I will not eat them, Oswald. I will not

Go near them if you do not wish me to.

OSWALD—Some day you will know why.

(He takes up his staff.) Then you will know

It was not for myself. You will know why.

(He stops near the spring.)

You will remember this—this day—these leaves—

The golden sunlight on the waters there—

THE SAXONS

(Thoughtfully, looking down into the spring.)

And never will come back forevermore.

SELMA—Oh, yes it will. They will not let her grieve.

The fairies, when they trip the wood tonight,

Will miss her, for she dances with them there.

Oh, you should see them, Oswald. When they dance

She is no bigger than the fairies are.

To see them swing—

Oh, 'tis a sight to make the wood-dove gay.

(Circling round in a dance.)

Lightly whirling round and round

Through the forest, scarcely shaking

Flower stalk upon the ground.

In the leaves the violets waking

Scatter perfume. Fairies, bow;

Lift their purple hoods and kiss them.

Join the dance and leave them now.

(Ecstatically.)

One night up in the wood, when silver flakes

Were dancing with the fairies on the moss,

An owl whooped. The fairies scampered off

Into the ferns. The little water elf

I found up close against a gnarled oak trunk,

Hid in a moss-pink in a drop of dew.

Oh, she was tiny as a fairykin!

Her hair was scattered, she was frightened so.

You should have seen her how she looked at me,

As if to say: "You here!" I nod, and then

We laugh together, thinking of the trick

The surly owl played. *(Again she circles round in a dance.)*

OSWALD—*(With horror.)* This is enchantment!

This is the cursed spells of forest devils,

Withcraft and Barrabam, the broth of Hell

And the wild mountain and the swirling sea!

(Advancing toward her, he reaches into his bosom and

THE SAXONS

fetches forth a large silver crucifix fastened to a black string that encircles his neck.)

Selma, touch this, touch this and say with me:

"*Pater noster*—" come—"qui es in coelis—"

SELMA—(*Still dancing.*)

I don't know what it means.

OSWALD— "*Pater*—" . Repeat.

SELMA—I say I do not know—

OSWALD— It does not matter.

SELMA—Then tell me what it means.

OSWALD— You must not ask.

You show more faith not knowing. "*Pater*—" Come.

"*Pater noster*—" (*Reaching toward her.*)

Will you?

SELMA—(*Snatching up her basket.*) What does it mean?

OSWALD—(*Bowing his head.*)

I do not know.

SELMA— You are just teasing me.

OSWALD—Selma, listen to me. If our dear Lord,

Who died upon the tree that we might live,

Had meant that we should know what this thing means,

He would have told us. Let us show our faith.

Oh, let us say it as He taught us. Come,

Repeat it with me. "*Pater*—" (*Advancing toward her.*)

Will you say it?

SELMA—(*Skiping up the slope and disappearing through the boughs.*)

I will not till you tell me what it means.

(*Oswald stands as one who knows not what to do. Along the path leading in from the left, Father Paul, the friar, enters. For a time he stands contemplating the scene before him.*)

FATHER PAUL—My son. Come now. Come now. The Lord Christ calls.

Delay is death. Give up this heathen world.

THE SAXONS

You cannot save her here. But there, who knows?
Prayer can do much. Go now and get the cross.
I shall wait for you in the grotto here. (*They go out, right.*)

SCENE THREE—In the depths of the forest. Back through the trees, to the right, is seen the home of Canzler, a small cottage built of logs, with antlers over the doorway. It sits in a space partially cleared, and the light falls golden about it. Among the trees in the foreground, where the shadows are thicker, is the stump of a large oak and a newly fallen trunk extending out left. Over to the right, at the foot of one of the trees, lies a small bundle fastened to the end of a stick. At intervals a bird is heard singing in the forest.

Near the stump several men are gathered. Canzler, facing right, stands beside the log with his hand resting upon his ax. He is bareheaded. His sleeves are rolled up above his elbows and his shirt, open in front, discloses his broad, hairy breast. Near the stump stands Hartzel, a man apparently seventy years of age. He wears a long, white beard and his hands are folded on top of a tall rustic staff. The others are Fritz and Rudolph and Wiglaf, the gleeman, in a fantastic garb faded and tattered. On the other side of the log, to the right of Canzler, is Max, another woodman, also in his shirt sleeves.

WIGLAF—Why did they burn my harp, then? I'm a man.

FRITZ—(*Leaning forward and speaking in a loud voice in Hartzel's ear.*)

You hear what Wiglaf says? Says he's a man;

Why did they burn his harp, then?

CANZLER— No, Hartzel;

'Tis not enough with them that we are men;

We must be Christians.

THE SAXONS

WIGLAF— That's it.

CANZLER— We must pray
The prayers the priests pray. We must go to church,
Chant when they chant and what they chant and be
Clay, as it were, upon their potter's-wheel.
'Tis not enough the great All-father wrought
Us in his image; not enough to live
The honest life of man. We must submit
To be remolded to whatever shape
The potter-priest may give us. So we bear
His stamp and pray his prayers and wear the name
Christian—

FRITZ— Then you can steal or—

CANZLER— No, Hartzel;
Mass counts with them much more than manhood does.

WIGLAF—Canzler's just right. Who ever heard of them
Injuring a man because his life was bad,
If his Faith was good?

(Hartzel puts his hand to his ear and looks at Fritz.)

FRITZ— Who ever heard of them
Injuring a man because his life was bad,
If his Faith was good? *(Wiglaf listens to the bird.)*

HARTZEL— I don't doubt that some would.
(Canzler touches him.)

WIGLAF—The birds are free to sing Val-father's songs.
Wiglaf must sing the songs men bid him sing
Or have his tongue pulled out.

CANZLER— Speaking of Faith,
How can a good man have a bad Faith? Isn't
His life his Faith?

HARTZEL— Life his faith? Just so; but—
But circumstances, Canzler. If we knew—

WIGLAF—He thinks I've been a scoundrel.

HARTZEL— I don't say.
I don't say that, for I don't know.

THE SAXONS

WIGLAF— Don't know!
(*Back through the trees to the left, Selma is seen going toward the cottage.*)

FRITZ—(*Shouting in Hartzel's ear.*)

He says you think he's been a scoundrel? Think
That's why they tried to kill him?

HARTZEL—(*In amazement.*) Why—why—no:
I did not hear, Wiglaf; your back was turned.

SELMA—(*Holding up her basket.*)

I found them, Father. See? I said I would.

WIGLAF—That island, Canzler, where they say our race
Rebuilt its kingdom, who knows aught of it?

CANZLER—No word has reached us from that far off land.

WIGLAF—It used to live in gleemen's songs, but now—

CANZLER—Old men recall it as a forgotten thing.

(*Selma enters the cottage.*)

WIGLAF—In what sea lies it?

CANZLER— Where the Frankish land
Looks toward the setting Balder, I have heard.

WIGLAF—And does this river off here empty near it?

CANZLER—First flowing through wide forests and high
rocks.

(*Wiglaf walks to and fro thoughtfully.*)

HARTZEL—I don't doubt you've been wronged, Wiglaf. I
don't

Doubt that they're arming. What I do say is
Who knows it is against us?

WIGLAF— Wait and see.

HARTZEL—It may be they are mustering a host
To take the East again. Nigh forty years
Ago now, Frederic Red-beard—Canzler here
Remembers; he was young then—mustered
Nigh on to four score thousand, Canzler?

CANZLER— About.

HARTZEL—And they were not against us.

THE SAXONS

WIGLAF—(*Taking up the bundle and starting right.*)

Farewell, all.

CANZLER—Where are you going, Wiglaf?

WIGLAF— There's no place

In all this land for Wiglaf.

CANZLER— Don't say that

While that roof stands.

WIGLAF— It won't stand long, Canzler.

FRITZ—(*Clenching his hands.*)

'Twill stand till he won't need it any more.

WIGLAF—Wild deer shall listen and no foot be heard.

CANZLER—Have you forgotten your inspired word?

(*Fritz and Rudolph exchange glances.*)

WIGLAF—But centuries may pass ere that child comes.

(*Selma comes from the cottage and begins to gather dry leaves and chips about the doorway. She is singing to herself and her voice comes faintly through the trees.*)

CANZLER—Or in these hard days have you, too, lost faith
In Woden?

WIGLAF—Wiglaf lose faith in Woden!

O chief!

(*Looking down.*)

What shall Wiglaf say? Shall the skald,
Whose eye sees through the darkness, see no light?

Beyond the winter see no spring, beyond

The storm, no calm? (*He starts away.*)

CANZLER— Stay here with us, Wiglaf.

(*Selma enters the cottage.*)

WIGLAF—Lose faith in Woden when the north wind blows?

Think the trunk dead because the boughs are bare?

Shall the bloom live forever, and the seed

Not swell and break its pod and find the earth?

Val-father sows and reaps and sows again.

Our race has come to harvest, and the hands

Of southern reapers have laid low the tribes,

THE SAXONS

Bound them in sheaves and stacked them far away
And threshed them out on many a bloody field.

CANZLER—And the war-maidens have gleaned heroes there.

WIGLAF—Gleaned them and sown them in the earth again.

The years fall white upon the silent tribes.

Val-father's winter locks them in the ground.

(Looking up at the trees.)

But O, O chief, these, too, were once down there.

CANZLER—The seed of Wittikind shall put forth a sprout.

(Fritz bows his head and walks back among the trees.)

RUDOLPH—*(From a pent-up heart.)*

Shall it, Wiglaf?

CANZLER— The bare North shall be green.

WIGLAF—Be red.

CANZLER— Wiglaf!

WIGLAF— The young leaves come out red.

As one who puts his ear against a door

(He gets down and puts his ear to the earth.)

And hears within a noise of armed men,

I hear the washing of Val-father's waves

Rushing from Naastrand where their bodies lie

Piled on the dark shore where the ships come not.

CANZLER—Bringing them back.

WIGLAF—*(Rising.)* With shock of arms, O chief,

The breaking of the bark.

CANZLER— Then comes the leaf.

WIGLAF—Red from the breaking of—

CANZLER— It shall be green.

WIGLAF—Bragi is singing the white years away.

(He goes out right.)

CANZLER—We may be few, Wiglaf, but—

MAX— Stay with us.

WIGLAF—He beckons from that island in the sea.

Wiglaf must go where Bragi calls.

CANZLER— Oh, say

THE SAXONS

"Hail," to that kindred land!

(He drops his ax against the log.)

From us say "Hail!"

(Stepping past the stump.)

Oh, if you find them holding up the North,

Oh, tell them, Wiglaf, to keep iron hearts!

Say that the ancient trunk of Wittikind

Shows a green sprout! Say all the North is green!

RUDOLPH—Go with us to the mountains!

FRITZ—

Stay and die!

CANZLER—Or say—say, Wiglaf, say—it shall be green!

(Smoke is seen curling above the roof of the cottage.)

HARTZEL—I did not say he was a scoundrel. Eh? *(To*

Rudolph.)

Did I? Did I, Max? *(Calling to Canzler.)*

Where is he going?

I don't doubt he's been wronged; I don't doubt that.

Where's he—

(Fritz comes forward.)

RUDOLPH *(To Max)*—We must leave here.

FRITZ—

We must stay here.

(In Hartzel's ear.)

He says we, too, must leave here.

HARTZEL—

Leave? What for?

What have we done?

FRITZ—

But I say stay and die.

Let them thresh us out, too. *(To Max.)* What do you say?

RUDOLPH—What do you say, Max?

MAX—

I say stay and live.

They cannot kill us.

RUDOLPH—

How so?

MAX—

If they do,

They must kill Oswald, too. Then where's the child?

(Fritz and Rudolph exchange glances.)

Where then's Val-father's promised child?

THE SAXONS

FRITZ—

Max—

RUDOLPH—

No.

CANZLER—(*Returning to the stump.*)

The question, Hartzel, is not what they've done;
It's what they think they have a right to do.
They own, they think, our bodies and our brains.
There is no thing or thought or word or deed
Can take its way, but must report to them
And square itself and do a bondman's work.
They have a right, they think, to chop the North,
Lop off her great green boughs and graft instead
The South's pale branches.

FRITZ—

To bear bastard fruit.

CANZLER—The oak's red blood must nourish olive leaves.
They would remake the world Val-father made
And take the seasons from his great right hand.
We must be like them or be not at all.
Like them in manhood, Hartzel?

FRITZ

No; in Faith.

And even their gods know not the Saxon tongue.

RUDOLPH—If a man speak Val-father's name, he dies.

MAX—And we must die if we be not baptized.

FRITZ—Must even ask of them what we may eat!

CANZLER—Why is it not enough to be a man?

To do a man's work and to live a life

Free like the wild deer, and to grow like these?

(*He looks about upon the trees.*)

You, Hartzel, have lived longer than we have
And you have seen more seasons, and you know
In father Woden's forests how the trees
Grow as they will, acknowledging no lord
But him who made them to be lordless, and
Obeying no law save that law that bids
Each be itself and bring forth its own fruit.
In all the populous forests of this world

THE SAXONS

There is no tyrant tree that lifts its head
Above the rest and says, "Obey my law."
For each tree hath its own law in itself,
And no tree hears another, but each hears
The voice of father Woden in the loam
Laying the law of selfhood on each seed.
The seed bursts and the law starts toward the sky.
The acorn lays it softly on the oak,
The chestnut on the chestnut, and the pine
Upon the loftiest mountain hears its cone
Whispering with father Woden in the air,
Learning the law it taketh to the ground.
Thus by that law that each tree be itself,
This forest hath become a stalwart state,
A nation governed by one law, a vast
Green kingdom of ten thousand happy trees
With father Woden monarch in the boughs.
The law of selfhood is the law of trees ;
Who says the law of sameness governs man ?
Because the South has not the girth of trunk
To bear Val-father's weight upon its boughs,
Must he climb down from ours and let the South
Climb up and with its law bind leaf and limb ?
Did he, who made these oaks to grow and spread
Their branches, make our branching minds to be
Pinched to a point and put inside a ring ?
HARTZEL—But they say that they got that ring from some
God that once came down—
CANZLER— From their southern skies ?
Who gave the southern cypress mouth to speak
Val-father's law unto the northern pine ?
God, do you say, come down to bind men ? *God ?*
A God that binds ? (Looking up at the trees.)
I see no ring on these.
FRITZ—Loki is a smith. He made their ring.

THE SAXONS

CANZLER—Where in our northern sagas will you find
A track of any shackle-bearing god?
In all the past has any such a god
Come down the northern sky? All round the walls
Of Midgard stand the Asas *guarding* man
Against whatever brings bonds.

(*Selma comes from the cottage with a bucket.*)

FRITZ— Sons of Lok.

CANZLER—The southern gods may bring down shackles, but
The northern hammer breaks the shackles off.

SELMA—(*From back among the trees.*)

I'm going after water, Father.

CANZLER—And one shall come to take that hammer up.

MAX—The Asas walk the walls of Midgard still.

(*Selma goes out left.*)

RUDOLPH—Val-father made the mountain rocks to be
The bastions of the oppressed.

FRITZ— He made the grave.

(*He sits down on the log and takes his head between his hands.*)

CANZLER—"In him shall be the strength of all your dead."

No, Hartzel; as Fritz says, their ring was wrought

Far in the south at that old fire that burns

Eternal mid the hills. Of old they forged

Law for our fathers, and, with iron hands,

Welded it on them. For five hundred years

The noise of that old furnace filled the world,

And from her red mouth link on link her hands

Drew one continuous shackle, and the North

Walked heavily, until Val-father's spear

Flashed southward. Then the noise stopped. The great
beast,

That wore for head and neck those seven hills,

Roused her and saw her whelps come bleeding back

And heard wild Tyr holloing the tribes for dogs

THE SAXONS

Round her on every side, and rose at bay
And clawed through bloody foam and ceased and saw
Her hills go round and round and with a crash
Stretched her vast skeleton over all the south.

HARTZEL—Then she is dead.

CANZLER— Rome dead?

HARTZEL— If she is bones.

CANZLER—Bones, Hartzel, are not dead. The life returns.

The ghastly thing moves in the silent night
When swords are sleeping and the ear hears not.
Old hands scratch round old battle-fields and there
The skulls that wore the helmet don the hood,
And when the morning breaks no man will say,
“The thing that stands there is the thing that fell.”

Our father found it so. For after that
Great hunt down in the south, the tribes lay down
And slept and woke and saw—they knew not what.
It wore a sword, but had no hauberk on.

'Twas robed in black and on each shoulder sat
What seemed an eagle in a vulture's plumes.
They, too, thought bones were dead, and seeing no
Mark of their swords upon it nor anywhere
The indenture of those old hills in the south,
They showed it all the paths among the tribes.

FRITZ—Welcomed it to their homes.

MAX— And took its ring.

RUDOLPH—And then lay down and slept and never woke.

CANZLER—If Rome is dead, whence all these harried lands,
Wigmodia and the Phalias, East and West?

RUDOLPH—There, even to this day, the clay is red.

CANZLER—If Rome is dead, what is this thing that now
On hands and knees creeps on us toward the north
Gathering flesh for its bones as it comes?

HARTZEL—Most of them have gone over to their Faith.

CANZLER—Most of them? Most of them lie, as Wiglaf says,

THE SAXONS

Piled on the dark shore where the ships come not.

FRITZ—Between the ring and sword they chose the sword.

CANZLER—What is this thing that says, "Accept this Faith,"

But the same thing that to our fathers said,

"Accept this Law"? It is the same old Rome.

The snake hath cast her skin but not her fangs.

Witness the rivers red. Witness the charred

Track of the dragon and these silent lands.

Has she not gathered flesh? Has she not clothed

Her limbs and filled her bowels with the North?

Climb to the clouds and call the Saxon race

And who will answer? Silence.

RUDOLPH—

And the streams

Moaning and hurrying red waves to the sea.

CANZLER—There is a day that would but cannot die.

That day—

MAX AND RUDOLPH—At Verden.

CANZLER—

When our fathers died

Unarmed, defenceless, butchered, Hartzel.

Ah, that day hides her face among the years

But cannot hide her hand. Val-father has—

(Closing his fingers.)

Her wrist in his grasp and holds that hand aloft

To drip and rouse the North, and it shall drip

Till Ragnarok shall swallow it up at last

And vomit it out to bleed forevermore.

Four thousand and five hundred in one day!

Till set of sun, all day the axes swang,

And when night fell the Aller's waters slipped

Thick through the headless bodies in her bed.

Oh, for once more a day like Dachtelfeld!

(He turns away.)

RUDOLPH—Val-father's spear shall flash again, Canzler.

There shall a horn wind that shall rouse the tribes

And strew those bones again.

THE SAXONS

FRITZ—Let's wind it now.
HARTZEL (*To Canzler*)—Do you think we should leave here?
RUDOLPH—Yes.
FRITZ—No.
MAX—No.
Our Wittikind shall come and—
CANZLER—They shall hear
The North's great hammer ringing round the world.
Max, you tell Conrad that we meet to-night.
Have Herman come. (*Max goes out left.*)
And, Rudolph, you go down—
HARTZEL—(*Touching him with his staff.*)
Canzler, you said just now the point was not
What they have done.
CANZLER—Nor is it.
HARTZEL—Then why this
Summoning of the men? Are we to have war? (*Fritz and*
Rudolph, talking together, walk back among the trees.)
CANZLER—Hartzel, the past and present are two limbs
On one tree. Though the one bears withered leaves
And these on this around us here are green,
The trunk is the same; the sap is the same;
The new fruit is the old fruit. What to-day
Is Wiglaf fleeing to the ocean isles
But the whole Saxon race? What is his harp
In ashes but our homes and all this land?
Are those graves yonder old? Were these, our scars,
(*Opening his bosom.*)
Handed down from our fathers? When we start
Alarmed in the night, is it the past we fear?
There is no past to things that have been dead.
It is a scabbard empty of its sword.
What shall we do? Accept their Faith?
HARTZEL—No, no.
CANZLER—Without it, we must steal the air we breath

THE SAXONS

And thank Val-father if we get it then.
Their blades are out ; shall we not lift our shields ?
Wolves are we ? Wolves are not hunted so.
Bears have the caves ; must our cave be the grave ?
There is no room there. How then can we die ?
After his great meal, Death hath lain him down.
Famine, the gleaner, has the field. There is
No plot unreaped, no sheaf unflailed. The barns
Are stuffed to breaking with the dead. And we,
In this great carnage, in this harvest-home,
The last few straws whisked from the threshing-floor,
Hunted by that old Hunger of the south
From field to wood, from wood to darker wood,
Far up strange rivers and—down under them—
Hartzel, remember ; when we fall, there goes
Down the whole North. We alone stand. Of all
Val-father's oaks, there's but one acorn left
That can re-forest and make green the North.
Rudolph and you and I and the rest, save one,
Are, as it were, its protecting shell. Off there,
A sword is coming toward us, and shall we
With hands down take the point and hear the unborn
Wail of that child that should have filled the north
With shouts and wound his horn upon its hills ?
Behind him, in array, the dead tribes come
On fire for the south ; their umbered shields
Upon the gunwales lour ; and shall the snake
Swallow the haven where that host must land ?
See the North die ? Never. (*He turns as if to call Ru-*
dolph.)

HARTZEL— Accept their Faith,
We need not.

CANZLER— Die ?

HARTZEL— We need not. (*A pause.*) We might flee.

CANZLER— (*Emphatically.*)

THE SAXONS

Canzler will never vote to flee.

FRITZ—

Hear that?

Canzler will never vote to flee. (*Coming forward.*)

Nor Fritz, chief.

CANZLER—Where could we flee?

FRITZ—

We have already fled.

CANZLER—No.

(*Hartzel turns and, with his face to the ground, walks slowly left.*)

RUDOLPH—Canzler, listen to me.

(*Unnoticed, Conrad appears coming through the trees on the right. Several young squirrels hang from the belt about his waist and in his right hand is a cross-bow. Upon his left shoulder he carries the crucifix which he has pulled up, post and all.*)

CANZLER—

The red ax

They swung at Verden swings clear round the North

And her great head falls.

(*With a jolt Conrad sets the crucifix down and leans it against one of the large trees.*)

Where did that come from?

CONRAD—Over on the road; by the bridge.

(*Canzler goes toward it. Fritz quickly says something to Rudolph. The latter walks back in the rear.*)

RUDOLPH—(*As if to draw him away.*)

Canzler, here.

CONRAD—There was a sheep's pelt lying in the bank—

(*With a motion.*)

Down here where we could kneel to it.

HARTZEL—(*Coming back.*)

What is it?

CONRAD—It is the Christians' Irminsul. They chop

Ours down to put theirs up.

RUDOLPH—

Canzler.

FRITZ—

The men

THE SAXONS

That followed Wiglaf must have put it up.

CONRAD—They're closing round us, Canzler, every day.

If you say stay and fight through, for my part—

(Suddenly Canzler turns and looks Conrad full in the face.)

I know I did, but if the rest say stay—

(After looking up at the crucifix again, Canzler turns slowly and walks away left.)

What is the matter?

(When near the stump, Canzler again glances back; then drops his head and walks on among the trees.. Conrad turns to Fritz.)

What is the matter?

HARTZEL—*(Apologetically, following him.)*

Canzler, I hope I have said nothing. I—

I did not mean flee—in that sense. *(Canzler goes out.)*

I meant

Leave.

(He goes out. The men stand looking after them. Rudolph comes forward.)

FRITZ—This will break Canzler's heart.

CONRAD—

What?

RUDOLPH—*(Pointing to the crucifix.)*

Oswald.

FRITZ—We tried to keep it from him.

RUDOLPH—

Selma, too.

FRITZ—Canzler must never tell her.

CONRAD—

Where is he?

RUDOLPH—No one has seen him since last night when

Fritz—

FRITZ—I saw him with the pelt—

RUDOLPH—*(Quickly.)*

Here comes Canzler.

(The men assume an expression of unconcern.)

CONRAD—*(Aloud.)*

Whatever Canzler says. If he says stay—

THE SAXONS

(Canzler appears among the trees. He stops and looks off through the forest to the right, and his brow darkens.)

FRITZ—And brought it out from town and put it up.

(Rudolph lifts up the squirrels at Conrad's belt.)

CONRAD—There were not many in the woods to-day.

CANZLER—*(Coming forward and giving his orders hastily.)*

Rudolph, you and Fritz go summon the men.

Go with them, Conrad.

(Fritz glances off through the forest, right.)

RUDOLPH— That we meet to-night?

CANZLER—This afternoon. Be quick. *(The men start back left.)*

FRITZ—*(Huskily.)*

Oswald. *(Conrad*

glances right.)

Oswald.

(Rudolph glances right, and the three go out in silence. Canzler, who has stepped left, stands in the shadow of one of the trees. A little later Oswald appears coming through the trees to the right. He is looking about as if in search of something.)

CANZLER—*(Firmly, but without passion.)*

There, there it is. Take it, take it and go.

OSWALD—*(Downcast, stammering.)* I—

CANZLER—*(Lifting his hand.)* No word.

(Oswald moves slowly to the tree, takes the crucifix upon his shoulder, and, with bowed head, goes off right.)

SELMA—*(Calling from the left.)* Oswald!

(The girl enters with her water. She stops, looks after Oswald until he has disappeared, then turns with a questioning look to her father.) O father!

CANZLER—

As for me,

Let a man be a man. Outside of that,

There is no power on earth that dares ask more;

No power in heaven that will.

(He turns and goes back toward the cottage.)

SELMA—*(With a sigh, looking right.)* Oswald, Oswald.

THE SAXONS

ACT TWO.

SCENE ONE—A forest on the mountain tops, the great trees glooming with the shadows of nightfall. In the distance, between the dark boles, patches of sky with the fading light of evening. The scene slopes down into a clump of tangle-wood on the left. Up the slope, upon a stump that stands out from among the trees, Selma is sitting with her head bowed, her face almost hidden by her hair which has fallen forward across her shoulders. She is dressed in dappled fawn-skin. In her hand she has a spray of dog-wood blossoms from which she is thoughtlessly tearing the leaves. From the thicket below, three fairies steal in one after another, having in their hands wild-flowers and ferns.

TIME—Early spring, three years later.

FIRST FAIRY—(Running a little way up the slope and stopping.)

Sister, see! *(Holding forth her flowers.)* Kingcups!

SECOND FAIRY—(Running closer.) Sister, see, I bring
The laced fern.

THIRD FAIRY—(Running still closer.) See, see! Violets,
sister!

I found them waking in an open place

Where the dew falls. *(Together they approach the stump.)*

SECOND FAIRY—(Softly.) Sister!

THIRD FAIRY—

Flowers, sister.

(The first stoops down and looks up into Selma's face. The others whisper together. From the thicket below, two other fairies enter.)

FOURTH FAIRY—(Stopping.) Hark, how it tinkles!

THE SAXONS

FIFTH FAIRY—It's the dew falling. (*They hurry up the slope.*)

FIRST FAIRY—(*Rising quickly.*) Her eyes are wet!

SECOND AND THIRD—(*To fourth and fifth.*) Her eyes are wet!

FOURTH FAIRY—Sister,
Anemones are opening in the wind.

FIFTH FAIRY—And every pink is jeweled in the fells.

FIRST FAIRY—And here are buttercups.

THIRD FAIRY—And violets.

SECOND FAIRY—(*Stooping.*)

See, sister, here I bring the first frilled fern.

I found it where the dashing water-fall

Sprayed it. It was uncurling near a rock.

SELMA—(*Without looking up.*)

I do not like you, for you will not tell.

(*The fairies start and exchange glances.*)

FIRST FAIRY—Oh, see the dew-globes break upon the moss!
(*She runs back a little way among the trees. The others follow her and they talk among themselves.*)

SECOND FAIRY—Where is he now?

THIRD FAIRY—He is making his way
To his cold dark cell in the cold dark house
Where the lizards dart and the crickets call.

FIRST FAIRY—I heard the grind of his wooden shoe
On the mountain road; but she must not know.

FOURTH FAIRY—We stood in the pines and we saw him pass,
A thin white shadow she would not know.

FIFTH FAIRY—And, sisters, he turned his face to the stars
And we heard him sigh.

FOURTH FAIRY—And we heard him sigh.

THIRD FAIRY—It must be, it must be, for he cannot see.

FIRST FAIRY—He cannot see till he sees no more.

SELMA—(*As before.*)

You said he would come when the dog-wood bloomed.

THE SAXONS

SECOND FAIRY—Oh, see them!

THIRD FAIRY—

See the fairies!

(They all look up the slope.)

FIRST FAIRY—

Round they go,

In their ringlets whirling, whirling.

FOURTH FAIRY—At every sparkle racing through the wood,
From crottle, kingcup, and green maiden-hair

In dainty gowpens fetch the dewy globes

And slide them down the sagging gossamers

To light them in the dance.

(They glance toward the stump. Seeing that they have not succeeded in attracting Selma's attention, they take hands and circle toward her singing.)

Hark the bracken rustle, sister.

Other elves are waking, peeping,

While the cowslip buds are weeping

On the downs and in the dells.

Trip it softly, softly, sister,

Lest the stock-dove, lightly sleeping,

Wake and hear our fairy bells.

(After circling round the stump and seeking in every way to induce her to join them, one of them tries gently to take the spray of dog-wood blossoms from her hand.)

SELMA—*(Calling aloud.)* Father!

FIRST FAIRY—Oh, smell the wood pinks! They are waking
now.

SECOND FAIRY—The bees are stirring in the gum.

THIRD FAIRY—

O sisters,

I know a brake where the brown quails sleep.

Let's tip the leaves and let the star-light on them.

(Four of them run up the slope one after another and each in turn as she disappears among the trees glances back and calls to Selma.)

FIRST FAIRY—Sister!

SECOND FAIRY—

Sister!

THE SAXONS

THIRD FAIRY—

Sister!

FOURTH FAIRY—

Sister!

(The fifth fairy stands for a time looking after the others, then comes to the stump and sits down at Selma's feet.)

FIFTH FAIRY—

Sister,

If you will come and play, I'll show you slim
Young heath-bells in the dingle. Won't you, if
We take you where may-apples grow and pinks
Bend with their fairy mirrors on the moss?

VOICE—*(From the thicket below.)* O sister! *(The fairy starts up and skips down the slope.)*

SELMA—*(Without looking up.)*

Three times it has bloomed and he does not come.

SIXTH FAIRY—*(Entering hurriedly from the thicket.)*

We were floating along on the river mist
And saw them creep up the mountain side—

SEVENTH FAIRY—*(Entering.)*

And heard them plotting and heard them say:

"We will throw him down, we will throw him down."

SIXTH FAIRY—We called in his ear, but he did not hear.

(The seventh starts up the slope toward Selma.)

FIFTH FAIRY—Oh, do not tell her! Oh, do not tell!

SEVENTH FAIRY—They will throw him down! They will
throw him down!

FIFTH FAIRY—Oh, catch him with delicate hands as he falls
Into the mist and—

SIXTH FAIRY— Save him!

SEVENTH FAIRY—

Save him!

FIFTH FAIRY—And I will run to the mountain cave.

(The two fairies hasten out through the thicket, the fifth disappears back among the trees, left. Singing is heard up the slope. A moment later, a number of fairies circle in with green boughs in their hands.)

On the downs and in the dells.

THE SAXONS

*Trip it softly, softly, sister,
Lest the stock-dove, lightly sleeping,
Wake and hear our fairy bells.*

FIRST FAIRY—Oh, something black tumbled into the mist!

SECOND FAIRY—And something bright—what was it, sister?

FIRST FAIRY—A star, I think; it glanced and fell.

THIRD FAIRY—Sister, it flashed like a silver cross.

FOURTH FAIRY—And plopped into the brook. Did you see
the ripples

Glitter in the moon?

SECOND FAIRY— O sisters, see!

The will-o'-the-wisps rush down the valley fogs,
Their white veils trailing round the tall dark crags.

*(They hurry down the mountain. Selma, startled, gets off
the stump and runs a little way back in the wood and,
stopping, looks after them.)*

VOICE OF CANZLER—*(Up the slope.)*

Where are you, child? *(He enters.)*

Why do you stand out here

In darkness?

SELMA—They have gone away again.

CANZLER—*(Who waits till she comes near him.)*

Do not ask anything to stay, my child.

Where the leaf goes the tree goes, and the rocks
Flow away with the waters to the sea.

(They go up the slope together.)

SELMA—He does not come and they will not tell.

(She stops and looks back.)

CANZLER—Let us go home and watch the stars come out
Above the mountains where Val-father lives.

Perhaps the Norns will spin us a white thread.

(They go out, Selma looking back.)

THE SAXONS

SCENE TWO—A mountain cavern with jutting ledges of rock. From the bones that lie about, one would imagine it to be a den to which wild beasts drag and devour their prey. To the right, a vine, growing out of the crevice in the rear wall, shows by its leaves becoming a darker green as it spreads to the right that the entrance is in that direction and near by. Boulders, evidently used for seats, lie here and there, and in the rear, center, a smouldering fire throws their shadows about the floor and walls. Several willow baskets freshly woven hang on pegs driven into seams in the rocks. To the left, an old spinning wheel with a thread trailing from it, and near it, upon the floor, a quantity of black wool. Farther over in the corner, a couch of rushes and forest grass. From the ledge that projects out over it hang bunches of dry herbs. In the left wall, extending to the ceiling and barely wide enough to admit of one's passing through, is a cleft whence are heard at intervals the muffled sound of hammers far down in the earth.

To the right of the fire, Sigurd, the dwarf, is peeling osiers. He is barefooted. About his neck he wears a string of buckeyes. Beside him, upon the floor, lies a pile of white osiers newly peeled. Occasionally he takes the withes in his mouth and tears the bark off with his teeth. On the other side of the fire, reclining upon his elbow, the gnome Kilo is poking the coals with a stick.

Despite the red glow of the fire, the cave is quite dark.

KILO—Love the monks, eh?

VOICE—(To the left.) Kilo!

KILO—Granny says you do.

VOICE—Kilo!

KILO—Hush! I'm tired.

VOICE—Loki wants you. (After a pause.) Kilo!

KILO—(To himself.)

Call on; Kilo don't care. It's sweat and drudge

THE SAXONS

And puff and hammer the livelong day
At the blazing forge, and then all night
The big black sledges swing and fall.
I'm tired. You love the bells?

VOICE— Kilo! You hear?

KILO—
Dumb, are you, elf-brat? You squealed loud enough
The night that Granny found you on the moss
White as a hail-stone, thunder-whelped, and cold.
"Tweakle! tweakle!" Elf-cub, are you?

VOICE— Kilo!

KILO—(*Out of temper.*)

Tell him I've gone with Granny. (*From the left Zip enters.
Under his arm he carries a great sword, the blade of
which he is burnishing with a piece of sand-stone.*)

ZIP— Where is she?

KILO—Darkening the moon.

ZIP— Is to-night the time?

KILO—(*With a look warning him of the presence of the
dwarf.*)

Got the runes cut on it? (*Zip hands the sword to Kilo and
goes over and stands near the vine. Kilo examines the
curiously wrought haft.*)

ZIP— Listen!

KILO—(*Sitting up.*) What is it? (*They
listen.*)

ZIP—The geese are out.

KILO—(*To the dwarf.*) Hear that, gozzard? Do you?

ZIP—Hark! Hissing, they go down the mountain side
With flip-flap of their big grey wings.

(*He returns toward the fire.*) Last night
The monks' new hunter wrung two ganders' necks.
I found their heads in the grotto.

KILO—(*Poking the dwarf with the sword.*) Hear that, lob?
You herd the goslets for the holy men?

THE SAXONS

Next thing you'll grind the scauper for the monk,
And help him carve the cross. Granny'll get you.

ZIP—Where's Suk and Gimel?

KILO— Digging water-herbs
Down in the marsh. (*He rises and the two walk left.*)
'Twas said to throw him off.

The young imp shoots his ears out like a snail
To feel about for danger to the monks.
If he should hear the gnomes are out for blood,
You'd see him, he'd be footed like a hare
To put the monk on guard.

(*From the right, Zory enters. He crooks his back, screens his eyes with his hand, and walks feebly.*)

ZORY— "O dear! my eyes!
Rosa, is the moon up, dear?" Ha, ha! Zory! Zory!
(*He takes up the sword from the floor, and using it as a cane, walks unsteadily.*)

ZIP—Steal into the abbey, will they?

KILO— No, no.
He's down in the village. At break of day
I saw the blur of his big black gown
In the mountain mists as he made his way.
To-night he will come from the little town.
Then Suk and Gimel—the road runs by
Where some wild vines dangle.

(*As though jerking them.*) And far below,
The waters gurgle.

ZORY— They will? Ho, ho!

KILO—(*Huskily, nodding toward the dwarf.*)
The spy of Woden.

ZORY—(*Dropping his voice.*) If that's the plan,
Then the old dame with her gimlet eye
Sees farther than Woden's ravens can.
At dusk I crept over behind the town.
Some boys were up on the mountain side

THE SAXONS

Running a cow they were driving down,
With puff-balls pelting her brindled hide.
On a slope of heather I knew a sink
Where a brown backed bunny was wont to squat.
To warm his fur in the sun and wink
At the shadows darkening a cabbage plot.
Says I: "Now Zory will have some fun.
He'll start the hare for the village boys
And hear them hollo and see them run.
With barking of dogs and a hue and a cry
They will soon be off, and, flying the noise,
Wat will go bobbing across the down.
I'm off for the heather when lo, I hear,
Behind the shallows that fringe the foss,
A sneeze and a sigh and then, "O dear!"
Some women are trying to get across.
I hide in the dock. The dames pass by
With baskets of bennet. I hear one say:
"With our dear Lord hanging upon the tree,
And oh, such a beautiful, beautiful cross
No one ever saw, so the people say
Who have peered in the window. And think, la me!
In another day and another day
My every prayer will have been fulfilled.
May the Virgin spare us." The other sighs
And, scanning the shadowy mountain side:
"I fear he will never complete it, Clotilde.
He climbs that dreadful mountain at night.
Can you see him now? Oh, I fear, I fear
Those awful rocks where the devils hide!
It seems so dark. Rosa, is the moon up, dear?"
To see the old dame as she—

(*Mimicing with the sword for a cane.*) daddled on
With her skirt in her hand, through the dewy grass,
Her little whisket of herbs on her arm

THE SAXONS

To keep off the devils, and mumbling a mass
And snuffling and moaning and sighing, "O dear!
It's a wicked world." (*He laughs till he falls to the floor
where he continues to laugh. Kilo steals to the fire and
is about to snap a coal toward Zory when Suk rushes in
right.*)

SUK—Granny! O Granny!

ZIP AND KILO—What?

SUK—Where's Granny?

KILO— On the peaks.

SUK—(*Rushing left.*) Loki!

KILO—Stop him!

SUK—(*Dodging past Zip.*) Loki!

KILO—Stop him, Zory! (*As he darts by, Zory, still upon
the floor, catches the gnome about the legs.*) What is it?

ZIP—Over the cliff?

SUK—(*Panting.*) Over and over. His black gown—

The wind puffs it—like a big bat

Swoops after him.

ZORY—Whew!

VOICE—(*Right.*) Cock-a-doodle-doo!

SUK—(*Breaking away.*) Loki!

(*He rushes out left, followed by the three other gnomes.
From the right Gimel enters.*)

GIMEL—Cock-a-doodle-doo!

The sun's up, Granny! Hear the cock!

His morning trumpet wakes the village up.

Cock-a-doodle-doo!

See the good people in their Sunday clothes.

A long procession up the mountain goes

With boughs of cypress and boughs of yew.

And now the big bell in the abbey tower

T-o-l-l-s and it t-o-l-l-s and it t-o-l-l-s.

Cock-a-doodle-doo!

What makes the big bell

THE SAXONS

Sob in its tower? Can any one tell?
Why, the monk that pulls at the rope, I ween.
Cock-a-doodle-doo!

(He follows the others through the narrow passage, left. A moment later, from the opposite side, a fairy appears and beckons to the dwarf. The latter, after a quick glance to the left, stealthily takes up the sword from the floor and follows the fairy from the cave.)

SCENE THREE—The monastery of St. Giles, in the mountains. An open court, with buildings dimly seen in the darkness. To the right, the dormitory, a large structure built of stone, with high, deep-set windows protected by heavy shutters which are closed. Across the court a high wall, starting in front, extends back some fifteen feet and abuts the side of the chapel before which in outline long stone steps may be discerned. In the center of the wall is an archway with a pair of ponderous iron gates. The night is dark and windy.

Along the side of the dormitory comes old Andrew with a staff and lighted taper. He is singing in a low voice.
ANDREW—*The barque o' the moon, like the Ithican's ship,
Heigho, she's swamped on the sea,
With her big bags of wind— (Turning the corner
and meeting the wind.) Hey!*

Up, lads! Swell your bellies, sails! Now we're for't!
(His candle threatening to go out, he draws back. For a while he stands as if perplexed. Then, rounding the corner, he again turns his shoulder to the wind and, shielding his taper thus, moves sidewise across the court toward the chapel.)

Puff, devils, puff, puff! Howl and snap! howl and snap!
You'll scare old Andrew, will you? By the saints,

THE SAXONS

I'll have this taper in the chapel sconce
In spite of all your snarling. (*He throws down his staff and
shields his taper with his gown.*) Blow! blow! blow!
Here's a monk's soul borne to the Virgin's arms
Across a strip of Hell. D'you want to leap
Out of this greasy world? Out with you, then!
Here's a fine night to jump in, wind and moon,
Roar and the scud of swollen water-bags.
Jump, jump, soul! Swounds, here's a coward for you;
Here's a tallow-swad that loves swine's belly
Better'n the big deep. Shrift, eh? shrift and housel?
Primum confessum, foul monk. Gluttony.

(*The taper flickers.*)

Yip! See the devils pluck at him! Quick, priest;
St. Giles will lose a lamb. If I damn one,
I damn them all; damn the Abbot; damn Andrew.
Flesh is flesh. *Absolvo te. Secundum.*
Bibbing, eh? Vap or burgundy? Vap?
That's a vile sin; but vap is hell enough.
Quid tertio? (*He puts his ear to the taper.*)

St! lower; the Devil's listening. (*Starting.*)

Whee! Bless the saints! God must have gold for that.
No gold? No gold, no shrift. And here's old Claw-foot
Coming through the dark, that needs a furnace tender,
A skimmer for his bullion pots. Gramercy, monk.
No wench-craft there nor bibbing, soft bells and venison.
Limbs hot, hot lungs, hot belly, everything—

(*The taper goes out.*) Puff!

Down over the big, windy world. Good jump;
Clean to the pit. (*Thunder.*)

Ay, night, smack your black chaps.

Rumble! rumble! (*He feels about the ground for his staff,
and, having found it, walks back and stands under one
of the windows of the dormitory.*) Soloman! Soloman!
The Devil wants you. D'you hear? His pipe's gone out.

THE SAXONS

Give him a coal. (*He waits a while, then beats upon the shutter with his staff. A low voice is heard within.*)

What's that? Eh?

VOICE—

Who is it?

Lucifer?

ANDREW—Ay, with his light out.

(*After a pause.*) Come, come!

I'll have to cut a reed and suck the stars

Like the big fool you told of. (*The shutter opens and the head of Soloman appears.*)

Light, light, man! (*Soloman whispers.*)

Pipe out, cricket. Here's the big noisy winds

Roarin' in my ears. (*Soloman whispers and points to the corner.*) Prowling? A night like this!

Turned wolf, eh? There's a fine porker gone.

Louis and he were at their wassail cups,

Nuzzling a stoup o' hipo' a while ago.

(*He comes toward the corner.*)

God bless you, senechal, another stoup.

Swine-herd, all-hail! Fill up the Abbot's trough.

An he breaks sty, look out! God bless us then!

Water and bread, water and bread. Zooks, zooks!

The devil's up with Andrew if he finds

The oratory dark. (*He listens.*) Otho! Spot! Hya! Hya!

There's something snooping here.

(*He crosses himself.*) I'll get a light

And bustle from this place. It's the Devil

Walking on wool. (*He turns back toward the window.*)

Water and bread. Sfoot, sfoot!

The sheep will find thin food on Andrew's grave.

Light, man, light! It's the bats hurtling.

(*Soloman disappears.*) There's a chinch

That burrows in the vellum like a mole,

A parchment moth what can spin yarn or yarn

Like the old dame i' the tale. He reads and reads.

THE SAXONS

He's got a wit strung like a rosary thread
With tales and names and things and things and things.
Tell me a tale, says I, something valorous,
Something to lighten life for an old man.
Tales for tapers, says he. A go, says I.
And so I pilfers from the chapel sconce
The snuffed stubbs. To lighten life, says I.

(Soloman reappears with a lighted candle.)

The lad that rode the dolphin, did he get
To land?

SOLOMAN—He stayed upon the sea.

ANDREW— And drowned?

SOLOMAN—Turned buccaneer and sacked the christian ships
And sold the spoil in Jewry. *(Andrew walks away.)*

Don't you wish

To hear it? The tale goes on to tell
How Hugh de Bouillon, cruising in the East,
Found him upon a cliff and took him down
From off a gibbet where the sea-gulls flew,
And with his harp upon the deck at night
He made the sea-lads merry with his songs.
Let's have them now, here at the gates of heaven,
Far off from dead men crying in the sea.

ANDREW—What makes the lightning go that way, zigzag?

SOLOMAN—The Devil broke it on a gibbet—

ANDREW—

Tush!

SOLOMAN—And hung it upon a sea-cliff.

ANDREW—

Tush, tush, lad!

Don't make game o' the old man. If he's bent,
It's with prayer. *(He comes back to the window.)*

SOLOMAN— Sing me a sea-song.

ANDREW—

It's too raw

A night, lad.

*(He holds his taper up toward Soloman's, when suddenly
some one carrying a light appears at the farther corner*

THE SAXONS

of the dormitory. Soloman jerks back his candle.)

Eh? It's Bill-o'-the-wisp!

God save us, man! Moving! It's a torch.

(The light passes behind the chapel. Andrew walks back in the court.)

How the wind blows! There's blood in it. Caw, rooks, Chatter and caw. Villainy is abroad.

There's blood on the stones somewhere, fresh blood.

(He stands looking in the direction whence the light disappeared.)

It's the new deer-man fastening up the dogs.

He hunts in the night when the brockets o' the wood
Come to the stream to drink. And none to tell them
O' the foul spear. No abbot-stag to say—

Standing to his belly in the stream—

“Drink will be the death of you.” It's a foul world.

(Returning toward the window.)

The hunter's at the kennel wi' his pups.

What's his name? He's been here now a sennight.

SOLOMAN—Macias.

ANDREW— Macias; that's a good name.

SOLOMAN—*(Giving Andrew a light.)*

It's a lean name.

ANDREW— Lean name? Fat, man, fat.

An it was lean we'd have to cast our skins,
As the snakes do, and sleep at breakfast time.

I tell you, Soloman, there a hunter for you.

He's for a beast, he fronts it i' the dark,

Blazing its pretty orbs wi' his big torch.

His eye's a rook's eye and his spear as true

As the bolt o' the buskined hussy what you say

Drops from the moon i' the dead o' night and hunts

Naked i' the woods. She's a—I'm a monk, though.

An you could see him coming through the copse,

Shuffling the dewes away, zooks, you would say

THE SAXONS

The burnt faced fellows of Libya were for sure
Making a revel feast for the big god.
The game! the game! Sweet, tender prickets,
Stags and chamois calves, pheasants and geese,
Turtles and loaches and toper horse-fish
Wi' fins as red as blood. God bless us, though.
An the Abbot finds the oratory dark,
There'll be thin food for sheep on Andrew's grave.
Water and bread.

(He starts toward the chapel, humming to himself.)

SOLOMAN— What's the song, Andrew?

ANDREW—

Sh!

The Abbot hears me trill that heathen song,
I'll get no chick-weed. It's a foul song.

(He comes forward and looks round the corner of the dormitory, then returns to the window.)

A cricket chirped it from a chink i' the wall
As the old man dozed dreaming o' green fields,
Up there. *(He sings.)*

*The grass is food for the ewe
And the ewe is food for man
And man is food for the green, green grass
And the grass for the ewe again.*

The foul song makes goat's food of us all.
Old Andrew's shoots, gowan, and aigilops
For filthy goats to browse on. *(He starts away.)*

Sfoot, I'll fast

'Fore I'll be carried around in a goat's udder.

(Suddenly around the farther corner of the chapel the light reappears. Soloman snatches to the shutter. Old Andrew blows out his taper and gets down upon his knees by the wall. Macias, the hunter, carrying a pine torch, comes forward across the court.)

ANDREW—*(Telling his beads.)*

Adeste, sancti; villainy is abroad.

THE SAXONS

MACIAS—(*Holding down his torch.*)

Ay, monk, you're right. Are all the brothers in?

ANDREW—*Abi*, fiend! Out with the sooty torch!

Old Andrew's prayers can fly to heaven i' the dark.

MACIAS—I meant no harm, monk. I was passing by
And heard you say there's villainy abroad.

I thought perhaps you'd heard the blind bitch howl,
As I did, mournful. Did you? Did you hear her?

ANDREW—(*Looking up.*)

Who breaks old Andrew's mass? Zooks, it's the Devil
Thrusting his grimy face through censer smoke.

(*Turning to the wall.*)

Adeste, sancti; villainy is abroad.

MACIAS—(*Reflecting.*)

It may have been in my dream. (*He walks out in the court.*)

A few white stars

Still burned above the village. (*Looking up.*) Not a star

In all the heavens. (*He returns right. Andrew has risen.*)

Are all the brothers in?

ANDREW—Up there behind the clouds?

MACIAS—

Did you hear the howl?

ANDREW—Ay, heard it in the pines.

MACIAS—

The bitch, I mean.

ANDREW—Carnus is dog. Bitch is a carnal thought.

I've been at prayer.

MACIAS—

Within?

ANDREW—

The prayer was in;

Andrew was out.

MACIAS—

Here in the gale? How long?

ANDREW—Till a soul jumps from the big windy world.

MACIAS—Jumps from the world? Whose soul?

ANDREW—

The monk's.

MACIAS—(*Aside.*)

The monk's!

There, there it is, the howl of the hound!

Death has been here.

THE SAXONS

ANDREW— Shook and refused to jump
Till he was driven off.

MACIAS— What! Driven off?

ANDREW—Ay, by the winds.

MACIAS— He died not in his cell?

ANDREW—He died here by the wall.

(He walks back in the darkness.)

MACIAS— Monk, beat the brush;
I fear some crime is crouching in the dark.

ANDREW—Ay, that there is; there's villainy abroad.

(He stands listening.)

MACIAS—Why are you silent? Tell me how he died.

(Andrew returns gloomily and lights his taper at the hunter's torch.)

ANDREW—His soul was calm until it sniffed the gale
And saw the wild-fire grazing in the sky.
And then you should have seen him. When he heard
The roar of the wind and saw the lean moon
Rush through the clouds, tearing them with her horn,
Zooks, then he fluttered like a gull on a mast
When a big barque is poppling up and down
I' the foam. And all the while devils' grimy hands
Plucked at him through the dark. *(The hunter turns away
mumbling to himself.)* Eh? Mad? You're right.
An you'd a seen 'em you'd a said they're mad.

MACIAS—Where will I find the Abbot?

ANDREW— Legions of them.

They'd seen me sponge him twice with a good shrift.
As soon as ever the third foul sin appeared,
They pounced him and pitched him down over the world
To where the big deep dashes up the sky
Spraying the stars of heaven. Down, down, down!

(He walks back in the court and stands listening.)

Hear it? Blood on the stones, fresh blood. *(Calling.)*

Mother!

THE SAXONS

MACIAS—Chattering to himself. It must be he,
The ancient acholyte they told me of.
Gray hairs and staff—

ANDREW— Mother!

MACIAS— His ears are keen
From listening to the crickets in the stones,
Year after year. Jesu, that's a long time.
The eagles that were young upon the crags
When he came here are gray. God, fifty years!
For fifty years to watch the lizards spawn,
To feed them, name them, miss them then and see
In the green crevices of the old wall
Another brood come forth. Each rook that haunts
These musty gables here, he knows them all;
Knows every tomb-bat in the coffin'd crypt;
Can tell the spiders, where they cast their webs
In the dark corners, where and how and why;
The rere-mice, when they breed; the vermin—God!
Fifty long years, fifty! And all that time
To count the days like beads and feel them black!
I'd rather be a fox. I'd rather be—
Never to have chased the chamois up the cliffs!
Never to have felt the thrill of stag at bay,
Or heard the pheasant in the wild brown brake
Whir! (*Walking right.*) I'd rather be a chipmunk free to—
ANDREW—You got the dogs shut in?

MACIAS—(*At the corner of the dormitory.*)

They're shut in. Why?

ANDREW—Hear it.

MACIAS— I hear nothing.

ANDREW— Far down in the dark.

There, groaning in the wind. It tries to rise.
Some stag or something's fallen from the rocks.
Are the dogs in? Is Twinkle in, and Spot?

(*Macias walks back.*)

THE SAXONS

There's something moving round it.

MACIAS— Stag, you say?

ANDREW—It's not a stag. Its foot sounds like a paw.
Hear it? It's dragging off the carcass. Hear?

MACIAS—Old man, your ears are at the gates of death.
What is it that you hear in this wild night?

Awake you strike the trail I struck in sleep.

I have just had a dream in which I saw

A stag out on the mountain there dragged down.

ANDREW—(*Abstractedly.*)

Its foot sounds like a paw.

MACIAS— 'Twas in the dream.

I am just from a dream in which I saw

A snow-white talbot pull a stag down.

ANDREW— Dream?

MACIAS—And when the talbot had pulled down the buck
A pair of hands, small as a fairy's are,
Reached through the leaves and—

ANDREW— Mother Mary! Hold!

I will wake Daniel.

MACIAS— Are all the brothers in?

(*Andrew beats upon the shutter.*)

Do what?

ANDREW— You're right. He'll read it as easy

As the old fellow what ate pulse and got

Lean as the kine he saw. He knows them all.

Says he: "Dreams sleep under the dog-wood blooms

And love to hear the patter o' the rain."

Why, he knows the color o' their beards, man.

Says he, one day, telling me of a dream—

Onar was its name, gray-beard like a king—

Steals into a tent: "Now you can get the girl;

Wake up and fight; now you can get her."

(*A low voice within.*) Eh?

A dream, God bless us, fire-wing. (*The shutter opens.*)

THE SAXONS

He.

SOLOMAN—

Tell it.

(*Farther back, a second shutter opens.*)

MACIAS—First tell me this: Did either of you monks
Hear Fever howl?

SOLOMAN— I heard no howl.

MACIAS—(*Flashing back his torch.*) Did you?

LEO—(*In a thin voice.*)

What?

MACIAS—Hear Fever howl.

LEO— What's Fever?

MACIAS— The bitch.

LEO— Shame!

MACIAS—(*To Soloman.*)

A while ago I started up from sleep
And hurried to the kennel, thinking sure
I'd find old Fever sick again; but no;
The bitch was sleeping. And yet I heard a howl.
It may have been the white hound in my dream.
I seemed to be out on the mountain there.
'Twas early morning; a few stars still shone
Above the village. Soon, far down the road,
I heard a baying as of hounds. Thinks I:
"A deer has passed and waked the village dogs.
Now for a chase." There must have been a slot
Of fresh blood on the road that fired the pack,
For on they came like mad. Around the cliff
Long bodies swung like shadows through the mist,
And tore on up the mountain. Farther up
A stag plunged from a hazel copse, and then
A snow-white talbot, following close behind,
Shot smoking from the brake. "Abloy!" I cried,
And leaped upon a rock. The after-pack,
Nosing the vent along the mountain road,
Heard the loud challenge of the leading hound

THE SAXONS

And, breaking trail, came crashing through the brush
And spied the quarry, and with their heads in air
Sprang after up the scree, their steaming mouths
Ringing the mountains round. The pretty deer,
With nostrils flaming and with dappled flanks
Torn by the furze, came skirting round a rock
And turned to dash under some low-hung boughs
When over a near knoll the hot, sinewy hound,
Like to a cat-o'-mountain from a limb,
Shot through the air. Crash through the boughs he went,
Sprinkling the earth with leaves. Out jumped my knife,
And, leaping from the rock, I hurried down
To slit the poor brute's throat and save a steak
From the mad, hungry pack. The pretty buck
Staggered beneath the hound, while the beads of blood
Dripped from the quivering hocks. The head fell back,
The tender haunches sank on the soft turf,
And death was closing up the eyes, when lo,
Sancta Maria, what a miracle! (*He pauses a moment, then
proceeds with more and more animation.*)
A gale had risen and the clouds that hung
Gray in the heavens when the chase began,
Foamed, and, flying black before the winds,
Grappled the woods and threw his thick, green hair
Into the swirling rack of livid sky.
Lightnings and thunders, winds and tumbling rocks
Charged on the pack of dogs as though they were
Devils come up from Hell, and hurled them down
Into the pit again. Under the beech
Where the white talbot had pulled down the buck
Behold the miracle the Virgin wrought!
Out of a dallop of green boughs that hung
Close to the haunches of the hart appeared
A pair of small pink hands that with one wrench
Tore the hound's jaws apart. The deer rose up

THE SAXONS

As from a sleep, shook his brown coat and browsed
The succulent green twigs, then wandered off
Up the dark mountain side, whilst like a star
Between the dim, dissolving antlers shone
A crucifix of silver, dripping blood.

(Several shutters in the second story have opened and faces are seen white in the glare of the torch. Old Andrew, frightened, has drawn back in the shadow against the wall.)

Lo, then a sight such as I hope our Lord
Will visit to these dying eyes of mine
In their last hour. The louring mountain brows
Brightened beneath a drift of golden feet,
And wings waved in the air, and faces bloomed
In the edding sky, and the dark towering ridge,
Lifting its weight of crags above the storm,
Sloughed off its shadow, and the field of pines,
Like a green army climbing to the clouds
Out of the darkness of the dale below,
Shook their victorious plumes, and every rock,
Tree, bush, and vine, and weed, and flower sent up
Voices of joy till all the mountains rang.

LEO—"I say unto you that joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that returneth."

VOICE—*(From the second story.)*

Who is the sinner?

MACIAS—*(Calling up.)* Are all the brothers in?

VOICE—*(Calling.)* Oswald!

ANOTHER— Ask Pierre.

ANOTHER—*(Far within.)* He has not returned. *(A pause.)*

ANOTHER—He may have stayed with Father Benedict.
He finishes tomorrow.

SOLOMAN— Tell this dream

To the Abbot. *(The hunter disappears round the corner.)*

A VOICE— Let us hear what Father says.

THE SAXONS

ANOTHER—Oswald is girt about with prophesy.

ANOTHER—Fiends cannot harm him.

ANOTHER—

Jesus is with him.

(The shutters are closed hurriedly.)

ANDREW—*(Alone.)*

The Devil is a big, long-legged crane,

Wading the marsh of life, and we are frogs,

Tadpoles and water-bugs. I'll fast and pray.

(He shields his flickering taper with his gown and makes his way across the court toward the chapel.)

SCENE FOUR—*A desolate mountain road along the top of a cliff that plunges down from the edge of a pine-wood. Overhead the wind is heard moaning in the trees, and upon the ground patches of moonlight wave to and fro. From the left, past some bushes which almost hide the road from view, the dwarf, Sigurd, appears carrying the monk, Oswald, limp in his arms. The latter's face is so emaciated that one would never recognize him as the same person as was seen in the forest some three years ago. His feet, upon which are heavy wooden shoes, drag along the road. Suddenly from somewhere in his clothing the large silver crucifix falls to the ground. The dwarf stoops, and, resting the monk upon his knee, reaches down and secures the crucifix, which he puts between his teeth. Then, having gotten a new hold, he rises and, with difficulty, makes his way up the road.*

THE SAXONS

ACT THREE.

SCENE ONE—A grassy ledge far up on the mountain side. Tall pine trunks rise here and there. Down the slope, to the left, are russet tops of small oaks newly leaved. To the right, a rocky acclivity of about thirty degrees elevation with scattered bushes and a sheep path winding back and up. In the distance, a blue range of mountains with their bases buried in the white mists of early morning.

Some distance back from where the path comes down upon the ledge, Conrad is broiling woodcocks on coals. Brown feathers are sprinkled about upon the turf. Upon a rock near by lies a well-filled hunting bag. Fritz, with his face to the fire, is reclining upon the grass with a shepherd's staff in his hands. From down the slope, comes a tinkle of bells as of sheep browsing on the mountain side.

TIME—Two days later.

FRITZ—I was with Canzler when the boy climbed up
Among the rocks and handed it to him.

CONRAD—What does it look like?

FRITZ—

It's as long as that,
(*Indicating on his staff.*)

And blue as the waters of the tarn down there.

Upon the haft are wrought two eagles' heads

And, twisted round the blade in coil on coil,

A serpent in the talons of the birds

Forms the cross piece upon the lower haft.

On the blade between the coils what may be runes

Are cut in characters of some unknown tongue;

At least, no man has ever made them out.

THE SAXONS

CONRAD—Where could the boy have gotten it?

FRITZ— No one knows.

Turn the bird over.

CONRAD— It is not brown yet.

FRITZ—There is something magical about it all.
In the light, the blade bends like a willow wand,
But when the sky is overcast with clouds
Or in the shade of rock or tree no man
With all his might can bend it, and it slips
Through tree and rock as through a pawpaw leaf.

CONRAD—The boy himself, what did he say?

FRITZ— He vanished.

CONRAD— Eh?

FRITZ—When Canzler turned to ask him, he was gone.

CONRAD—And have you seen him since?

FRITZ— Where is your bread?

CONRAD—I have some here. (*He reaches up into the bag.*)

Has no one seen him since?

FRITZ—He was out on the mountains every day
Before, either by the abbey over there
Or climbing in the vines above the tarn,
But always in the shade of rock or tree.
When he crossed spaces where the sunlight fell
'Twas always in the shadow of a cloud.

No one has seen him since he disappeared.

CONRAD—(*Laying the bread upon the grass.*)

You know the song that Wiglaf used to sing,
Of how Val-father wanders over the earth
In human form—

FRITZ— That is what Rudolph says;

Val-father turns his dark side to the earth.

CONRAD—And leaves swords sticking in the rock and trees.

FRITZ—Rudolph insists that Oswald will return.

He says that Selma learned it from the trees.

She listens in the forest all day long

THE SAXONS

And when the wind is loud and the boughs sway—

CONRAD—How could he ever find us here?

FRITZ— I see

How that could be; Woden knows where we are,

And where he turns his face the way is clear.

CONRAD—Oswald has turned his back on Woden's face.

FRITZ—Blind Hoder wandered once as far as Hell,

And he came back, for Woden in his mind

Directed him and— Here comes Canzler now.

CONRAD—Is that the sword.

FRITZ— Yes.

CONRAD— What was that he said?

FRITZ—He must be going down to see the priest.

(With the sword at his side and wearing a cap made of a wild-cat's skin, its head upon his head and the rest of the skin hanging down his back, Canzler comes down the sheep path, followed by Rudolph.)

CANZLER—More than two years have passed and not a word
Was ever said to throw the claim in doubt;

But now that Hartzel is about to die

They think to get the whole tract for the Church,

Upon the ground that he who sold the land

To Hartzel was apostate to their Faith.

RUDOLPH—They don't deny that the man owned the land?

CANZLER—He owned the land till he disowned the Faith

And by that act he dispossessed himself,

And then, they say, the land reverted to God.

RUDOLPH—And Hartzel's money, to whom does it revert?

CANZLER—That is a matter between infidels,

And proves, when they rob one another so,

There is no honesty outside the Faith.

RUDOLPH—The man that sold the land robbed Hartzel, eh?

CANZLER—If knavery is all outside the Faith.

CONRAD—Will you men have some breakfast?

RUDOLPH— And did they

THE SAXONS

Tell Hartzel on what ground they had seized his land?

CANZLER—"All land is God's, and pagans have no right
To own it," was the answer that he got.

That was a month ago, though. When they found
That the wind passed and still the fruit hung on,
Thinking perhaps 'twould fall of its own weight.

They waited until yesterday and then

Unexpectedly they bumped the tree.

Hartzel should hold possession during life—

He is about to die—and at his death

The Church should take the burden of the estate

From his dead shoulders, and carry it without charge

And with it save his soul from Hell.

RUDOLPH—

And save

His children—?

CANZLER— From the path that leads to Hell.

RUDOLPH—Is that their proposition?

CANZLER—

That is it.

The old man in despair appealed to me.

RUDOLPH—What are you going to tell them, Canzler?

CANZLER—What am I going to tell them? Tell them what

Val-father tells the mountains, tells the rocks,

The trees, the beasts, the birds, all things that live.

Woden, who made all things, made each to be

Different from the rest. He made the oak

To bear its acorns and the pine its cones.

The mole to burrow and the fox to run,

The eagle to hatch her brood upon the crag

Under the sun, the bat, in the dark cave.

The ox to eat grass, and the lion flesh,

And each to go its own particular way

Upon a path as separate and clear

As are the curves and risings of the stars.

(Fritz and Conrad come forward.)

He made no bell to ring all things that live

THE SAXONS

To sameness in their lives or in their thought.
To keep them, as he made them, different,
He gave to each an individual taste
And matched the taste within with that without
Which, when the two meet, the result is joy.
Joy is the voice of each thing as it moves
Toward Woden on the path that he laid out.
The eagle finds its way without a guide
To Woden, and the stars without a guide,
Each in its own light, and all things that live,
From the blind worm to the all-seeing sun,
Follow their joy and come at last to him.
The eagle's right to go the eagle's way
Is not conditioned by another thing
Save by the fact alone that it is so:
That Woden gave to it an eagle's wings.
And so with man. To what man has a right,
He has a right because he is a man
And not because he is a kind of man.
Val-father's bells have each a different tone.
You cannot make the million aisles that lead
To him one aisle and drive all things through that,
Or make the right of each to be and to have
Rest on its answering a particular bell.
If we admit their principle that Faith,
Or anything outside the fact that one
Is a man, is the basis of the rights of man,
We shame our Saxon fathers who fought and died
For a lie, if this be true. For when the South
Pushed through the Frankish forest with her sword
Between her teeth, and stained with blood, and held
Her hands out, saying, "Here, take this or this,"
Our fathers chose the darkness of the grave
From the red hand, and left the black hand filled
With that which now to keep itself alive

THE SAXONS

Eats Hartzel's land and licks its fangs toward us.
 When the great night came on and they laid down
 Under their battered shields and broken swords,
 The trees have told us what their last word was:
 "The northern air will kill the southern lie;
 Then we will come again. Remember this."

FRITZ—And here we are.

CANZLER— It may not be dawn yet,
 But some are up before the light.

FRITZ— And all
 The dead will rise when Balder comes.

RUDOLPH— But now
 Val-father has his dark side to the earth,
 And works in his own shadow.

FRITZ— But the dawn
 Will reach down and lift Balder out of Hell.

CONRAD—(*Drawing the sword from Canzler's belt.*)
 If we concede to every man the right,
 As you say, Canzler, to his own belief,
 We must concede to the villagers the right
 To their belief that they own Hartzel's land.

CANZLER—We do concede it.

RUDOLPH— Their right to their belief.
 But not their right to Hartzel's land.

CANZLER— With them
 Men are God's vassals, and the land they hold,
 They hold in fief to him, on terms of faith.

RUDOLPH—And while they keep the Faith, they keep the
 land.

FRITZ—And when they lose the Faith, they lose the land.

CONRAD—(*Walking aside.*)

And when they have no Faith, they have no land.

(*He tries to pierce with the sword a pine tree in the sun-*
light.)

CANZLER—Try that one in the shade there.

THE SAXONS

(The sword passes deeply into the second trunk.)

FRITZ— Is it through?

CONRAD—*(Looking behind the trunk.)*

More than a hand's breadth.

FRITZ— If the village dogs

Snap at you as they are wont to—

CANZLER— I shall have

No trouble with them.

FRITZ— And yet you expect

To tell them what you said just—

CANZLER— I expect

Hartzel to have his rights. Fetch it here, Conrad.

RUDOLPH—The Bailiff, Canzler, is a rabid man.

CANZLER—I have no business with the Bailiff.

RUDOLPH— Still,

To reach the church, you must pass through the street.

CANZLER—Is it too narrow for two men to pass?

(He receives the sword and goes left.)

RUDOLPH—For two such men as you two are, it is.

FRITZ—With swords on thighs.

CONRAD—*(Walking back toward the fire.)*

The hilts might knock.

FRITZ—*(Following him.)* Or blades.

VOICE OF SELMA—*(Above.)*

I'm going with you, Father!

CANZLER— No, Selma;

You—

SELMA—*(Who comes running down the path.)*

Just to the dingle; the faries say

The heather-bells are out.

RUDOLPH— Let her go, Canzler.

CANZLER—Throw the white blooms away.

SELMA—*(Throwing away a sprig of dogwood.)*

Now may I go?

CANZLER—They make you sad. *(He starts down the slope.)*

THE SAXONS

- SELMA— I'll not cry any more.
I'll be gay, Father, if you let me go.
(She turns and looks questioningly at Rudolph, who nods to her. Then, skipping forward, she takes hold of the hilt of her father's sword and steadies herself with it as they go down the slope.)
- CONRAD—Come back and have a woodcock.
(Rudolph walks back.)
- FRITZ— There he goes. *(Shouting.)*
O Canzler!
- CONRAD— He don't hear you.
- RUDOLPH— Who?
- CONRAD— The Priest.
- RUDOLPH—Which way is he?
- FRITZ— Riding down toward town.
(Rudolph joins the others, and the three stand looking off left.)
- CONRAD—*(Directing Rudolph.)*
Up that way from the Abbey.
- FRITZ— I bet he's been
Back to see Hartzel. *(Shouting.)* Canzler!
- CONRAD— He can't hear.

SCENE TWO—*The courtyard of the abbey, as in Scene three of the second act. The large crucifix which was seen in the forest in the first Act is fixed above the door of the chapel. On either side of the door is a stained glass window, the farther one depicting the Transfiguration, the nearer one, the legend of St. Giles. The deer with blood dripping from a wound in its haunch stands behind the saint who holds in his hand an arrow with blood upon its tip. The emperor and his huntsmen are presenting the saint with golden cups. The deer is watching them.*

THE SAXONS

Several rude benches of stone are ranged alongside of the dormitory. In the rear, about ten feet back from the building, a low stone wall extends across, passing behind the dormitory on the one side and the chapel on the other. To the left, far back, is seen the side of the mountain on which the abbey stands. The upper part is thickly wooded, and below, where the timber is sparse, a road winds down the cliff to the village. Farther down, the slope becomes more precipitous and is covered with boulders and stunted evergreens, some of which have been broken off by rocks tumbling from the cliff above. Off to the right, a space of sky with the snow-peaks flashing in the sunlight. To the left in the last Scene, they are now far to the right.

From a door in the dormitory facing the court, Ely and Pierre enter. The former has a hunting horn suspended from his shoulder by a chain, and in his hand a small wooden crucifix. Pierre carries two large silver candelabra. They come out talking.

ELY—For he was old and he had come four miles.

PIERRE—A cripple too! When was this?

ELY—Yesterday.

And when I showed him this and said: "Good man,
Here is a rood he carved with his own hands,"
Light filled his eyes.

PIERRE—And had he come so far?

(Ely walks forward and looks around the corner of the dormitory.)

ELY—*(Turning back.)*

I must be at the gate when father comes—
Four miles on crutches. Suddenly he looked up.
He must have seen a wing flash in the sky,
For his face brightened with the light of faith,
And like a seed he seemed to scent a shower.

PIERRE—What did you do?

THE SAXONS

ELY— I asked him to kneel down.
Oh, what a power there is in holy things!
No sooner had I touched him with the rood
Than like a plant he rose up from the stones
And blossomed; cried: "Lord Jesus, I am cured!"
And down the mountain ran shouting for joy.

PIERRE—The Holy Virgin bless us!

ELY— Yes, he did;
Ran down. I watched him till he disappeared,
Then turned to stone. I could not stir, but stood
Frightened as though an angel hovered near
In the blue sky.

PIERRE— Oh, I have felt it too!
These two days have to me been like a dream
And I am dizzy as on some high place.
At night I feel the stars are not far off,
And when I wake, it seems to me the dawn
Is breaking far below us on the world.
So near we are to that which lights the sun,
(*He holds up the candelabra.*)

These candles, if I should dare to speak the word,
Would burst out into flame.

ELY— Pierre!
PIERRE—(*Still looking up.*) Oh, surely,

Surely the hands that lifted Oswald up,
Lifted our abbey too, and we are close
To heaven. Perhaps about us in the air
Are voices and the wings of those that hear
Our very whispers,—martyrs, saints, Saint Giles.

ELY—You make it terrible to live in flesh.

PIERRE—Oh, terrible! It is terrible to live
Where every word drops in an angel's ear.
I feel that every breath should be a prayer.

ELY—I feel so too, Pierre. These acts of grace—

PIERRE—Are but the sparks of power.

THE SAXONS

(He starts toward the chapel.)

ELY— Mere sparks, you think?
These healings and this rescue from the gulch,
Mere sparks?

PIERRE— Simply the scattered beams.

ELY— And yet,
The same great light hath kindled one and all.
Is it not so?

PIERRE— All these will vanish when—

ELY—Tell me. Go on.

PIERRE— When the full orb shall burst.

ELY—What do you mean?

PIERRE—*(Mounting the steps.)* I dare not speak it.

ELY— Brother!

PIERRE—Ely, we stand in darkness by the Tomb,
And little beams flash on us from the chinks,
But the full glory, flooding all the vault,
Awaits the angel.

ELY— Is it the dream you mean?

PIERRE—No one must ever tell him, Father says.

ELY—You think then that the dream will be fulfilled?

That it is Oswald whom the hounds of Hell
Will chase up some vast mountain of the soul?

PIERRE—Soon the stone will stir. *(He enters the chapel.)*

ELY— Pierre!

(While Ely stands hoping that Pierre will reappear, loud laughter breaks from the open door of the dormitory, and Simon and Basil come sprawling out. The former is pulling at a piece of flesh. Ely's face shows anger, and he starts left.)

BASIL— His crutches!

(He laughs aloud.)

SIMON—Here he is now. Ely!

BASIL—*(Calling through the door.)* Hear that, Rene?
The beggar left his crutches for his gift.

THE SAXONS

(*Laughter within.*)

SIMON—You ask him. Ely!

(*Ely unlocks the iron gates and passes out.*)

BASIL— Bring the crutches, man!

Simon's got the gout. (*Rene comes out and joins Basil in laughing at Simon. The latter, eating his meat, walks back in the court. Basil whispers to Rene.*)

RENE— When was it, Simon?

SIMON—Yesterday. I was sleeping on the bench
When the old codger's shouting waked me up.
And there he was. (*He points up to the road.*)

I thought the man was mad,
Or had been in the gables robbing nests,
For his white hair fluttering in the wind
Looked like a pair of pigeons on his poll.
He must have thought the Devil—

(*He sits down on a bench.*)

BASIL— Or else Ely.

RENE—Yes, chasing him for his pay.

BASIL—(*Indignantly.*) His crutches!

SIMON—(*Drolly.*)

He left his sole support.

(*They all laugh. Basil, who has come forward, peeps round the corner of the dormitory. Withdrawing quickly, he hurries back toward the door.*)

BASIL—(*Excitedly, in an underbreath.*) Rene!

(*He points back over his shoulder with his thumb.*)

RENE—(*Huskily.*) Simon!

(*Simon leaps up, jerks away his meat, and, wiping his mouth with his sleeve, hurries after the others into the dormitory. From the right, the Abbot enters followed by a train of monks. He wears a miter and a flowing cope of scarlet, richly apparelled. From the end of a rosary about his neck dangles an ivory crucifix. The monks are all in black and wear their hoods. Upon reaching*

THE SAXONS

the center of the court, the Abbot raises his staff and the procession stops.)

ABBOT—Saint Martin hath restored the golden dawn
And put the clouds to flight. The kingly sun
Looks on the world like our new-risen Lord
Driving the night before Him. And the fiends,
That fly with darkness from the pit of death
To conjure with the baleful midnight stars
And wreck God's holy chime of human souls,
Are scourged to Hell, and all the rebel orbs
Are thunder-stunned. Vapors and noxious fogs
That hatch contagion in rank, drizzling swamps,
Will soon beneath the lightning's flagellum
With breezes fan their fevers from the blood,
And with pure sea-dews from green ocean urns
Sprinkle the parched earth to cool the vines
Preparing clusters of our dear Lord's blood.
The serpent spawn of imps and evil dreams,
Fairies and witching wanderers of the night,
That kennel in the bowels of the earth
And taint its waters, blight the tender sprouts,
And sow infections through the flocks and herds.
Have flown like bats into the squalid caves,
And there are numb with fear. O'er Zion's towers
The virgin dawn brings forth the sun of God
And smiles upon the world. The blessed light
Spreads o'er the earth its bright, archangel wings,
Dripping with balmy dews and cassia smells.
The day will—(*High up on the mountain is heard the blast
of a trumpet.*) Hark!

A MONK— It was Ely's trumpet.

ANOTHER—Some one comes.

ABBOT— The asses from Italy,
Bringing the wine and frankincense, no doubt.

A MONK—And the golden chalices.

THE SAXONS

ANOTHER—

And Father's cope.

(Pierre comes from the chapel.)

ABBOT—Pierre!

PIERRE—What it is, Father?

ABBOT—

Is the ambry clean?

PIERRE—It is, Father.

ABBOT—

Go find Louis, and fetch—

Fetch the diotas and—let's see—three casks.

(He saunters toward the gate. Three monks follow Pierre, right. The rest disperse about the court, the greater part eventually finding their way into the chapel. A few walk back in the rear and stand looking up at the road. Three monks, who came in at the end of the procession and who all the while have stood perfectly still, slip back their hoods and discover Simon, Rene, and Basil. At the corner of the dormitory, Pierre and his companions meet Louis entering.)

ONE OF THE MONKS—The train has come.

PIERRE—

Father says bring the casks.

(Louis reaches under his gown and produces a large iron key which he hands to Pierre. He then passes into the court. The four go out.)

ABBOT—*(Calculating.)*

Thirty gallons and six—*(Turning.)* Four casks, Pierre.

SIMON—The chopin too, Pierre. You know the men, The mule-men will be dry.

BASIL—

Or Simon will.

RENE—Or Basil.

BASIL—

Or Rene.

SIMON—*(With his hand to his mouth.)* Or Father. *(They laugh.)*

ABBOT—

Louis!

(The shutter near the corner of the dormitory opens, and Solomon leans out. He has a parchment in his hand.)

SOLOMAN—*Quid est, Leo?*

THE SAXONS

LEO—(*Telling his beads, on one of the benches.*)

The wine train has arrived.

SOLOMAN—From Paradise.

LEO—

Don't be irreverant.

BASIL—(*To Soloman.*) Let no man look on wine when it is red.

SIMON—I shut my eyes.

(*Holding their sides for laughter, Rene and Basil stagger back toward the rear. Soloman withdraws from the window.*)

LEO—

Father will tend to you.

(*Simon makes faces at him and follows his companions.*)

ABBOT—(*Walking aside with Louis.*)

Say nothing to the strangers of the affair.

LOUIS—Of finding brother Oswald?

ABBOT—

No, not that.

His fall, his being found before the gate,

All that, no doubt, the villagers last night

Poured into their ears. The folk are deeply stirred.

From tongue to tongue the flame of rumor runs

That heavenly hands bore Oswald from the gulch.

They think the holy saints have blessed his palms

With power of healing and of miracles.

Alms have increased ten-fold. Cattle and sheep,

Jewels and coin, and corn and casks of wine

Pour in from every side. Within a year,

St. Giles will swell her roofs and shine in gold—

(*Confidentially.*)

Provided, Louis, provided. You understand?

LOUIS—You mean the abbey here will robe herself

In purple cloth-of-bodkin stiff with pearl,

Provided—

ABBOT— This new loom shall keep her hum.

LOUIS—That here red wines will flow to flush her face,

Provided—

THE SAXONS

ABBOT— Hand in hand upon the hills
This sudden sun that hath sprung up the sky
Shall lead the vine and pour his blood to swell—
LOUIS—That morning when it strikes her eastern gate
Will see her heaving heavenward dome on dome,
Provided—

ABBOT— Ay, that's it. You understand.
The quarry for our domes is in our brains.
Here, in our brains, your brain and mine, Louis,
We have the shuttle of that wonderous loom
That shall array her in her cloth-of-gold.
Here is the sun, the bridegroom of the grape,
And here, from hills of France and Italy,
The purple bride shall come and loose her zone
And lay her dower in the abbey's lap.
Lock up that jewel, Louis, in its case.

Let it not get abroad that you suspect—
Suspect, I say; you surely do not know—
LOUIS—I only know of what I heard and saw.
I heard his voice and—

ABBOT— You were fast asleep.
LOUIS—At first I was; then, wakened by the shout,
Three times I heard him cry out in the dark:
“Haro! help! help!”

ABBOT— A voice, of course; but whose?
The night so alters sound you cannot tell.
A cat-o'-mountain screaming in the dark
For all the world sounds like a wailing child.

LOUIS—But when I see the track, I'll tell you then.
The track up by the gate, and it's there now,
Is the dwarf's track, four toes on the left foot.

ABBOT—Preposterous, Louis, that this hunched devilock,
Brought up on witch's dugs, in the dead of night
Should be about the service of the Lord.
Asses can talk like men when angels bid.

THE SAXONS

Perhaps the angels, taking him in the act
Of throwing brother Oswald from the cliff,
Scourged him before them to the abbey gate
And made him in his pain cry out for help
And set his print to attest the power of God.
Who knows?

LOUIS— Brother Oswald, perhaps.

ABBOT— Only God.

But make no mention of the witch's son.
When truth is whist and doubt a favoring gale
Blowing toward golden islands in the sea,
Let the ship drive before it into port.
No one was with you when you found him.

LOUIS— No one.

ABBOT—And no one saw you.

LOUIS— No one. It was still dark ;
The brothers were asleep.

ABBOT— Say nothing of it.

Let rumor blow it as a miracle.
Sweet feet of saints have run down in the night
And with a touch enriched a holy house
Of no more worth than this of good St. Giles.
Rumor of saints can do as much as saints.
If thoughts of bright wings stirring in the sky
Can kindle hearts to deeds of charity,
And by those deeds the Virgin's chapels rise,
Let the flame run. We'll blow it through the land.
I've had the brothers circulate report
That wings were seen dissolving in the dawn
Above the mountains.

LOUIS—(*With a smile.*) So, perhaps, there were—
Of eagles wheeling airily in the clouds.

Is this not, Father, to build upon the sand?

ABBOT—To build on sand is to build on a lie.

LOUIS—What is a lie?

THE SAXONS

ABBOT—Anyway, Louis, I am justified.
For simple souls find joy in simple faith.
Go down into the village. Guido tells me
Their faces shine because of this bright thing.
It purifies and cheers them. Cyprian says
There is no power that does not come from God.
He might have said the same of light and joy.
And shall I, to whom what I know this thing is
Seems quite as strange as what they think it is—
That angels did it—, take their light away
Because I know it falls not from a star?
A thousand lamps burn in the House of Life.
Shall I walk through its chambers and say: "This,
Children, and this, now these were lit of Hell;
But that one there—see how the oil of God
Goes up the wick and throws a brighter flame"?
Unless they see it brighter, it is not.
They cannot see it so without my eye.
They cannot have my eye and keep their own,
And they must keep their own a little while;
At least until I get my abbey built,
Until I shout the sun from out the sea
And with its beams illumine the valley there.
And since its rising on their gifts depends,
And since their gifts depend on their belief,
I cannot tell them their belief is false;
'Twould bring the abbey down upon their heads;
And Benedict would shout forevermore,
Seeing their night come back without a star.
And so I cannot tell them what is true.
Nothing is sadder than to see a mind
Drifting between an old faith torn away
And a new rock not risen from the waves.
Their wisp must burn until the sun comes up.
Our Lord himself tempered his dazzling truth

THE SAXONS

To simple minds, and spake in parables,
Leaving the halo on the brow of things.
And shall we blow it away?

LOUIS— Is it there?

ABBOT— For them,
It is intensely there. And when they come
Bringing their little gifts, what can I say?
They ask me, "Is this light?" I say, "Does it
Shine?" They answer, "Yes." "Then it is light."

(*A pause.*)

Is it? (*A pause.*) Louis?

LOUIS— Suppose so; if it shines.

ABBOT—And if they say it shines?

LOUIS—(*After a pause.*) I suppose so.

ABBOT—Shall Plato take Saint Giles' faith away?

That, Louis, is the question of all time.

LOUIS—If he can give him Plato's.

ABBOT— *If he can.*

And if he cannot?

LOUIS— If he cannot—(*He stops.*)

ABBOT— What?

Ready to give to one who cannot take,
Who cannot see my light beyond her light.
Shall I step in upon my mother's prayer
With noise, and say: "But see, yours is no god."
And pick and pound and blow her hope away
And loose her tears upon my father's corpse?

(*A pause.*)

Louis? (*A pause.*) Shall I?

LOUIS—(*Walking about with his head down.*)

I have naught to say.

ABBOT—Do I still seem to be a hypocrite?

LOUIS—(*Turning quickly.*)

Father!

ABBOT—What should I say? "Your eye sees false"?

THE SAXONS

If they think rue will keep the devils off,
To kill their thought would bring the devils back
And leave them fleeing Hell, not seeking God;
A different thing though Benedict knows it not.
They are not ready for the larger life,
And in a day I cannot make them so.
They cannot take my light. Shall I take theirs,
Their little light, and leave them in the dark?
Take from their hearts the glory and the hope?
How do I know what God means by this thing?
If they should ask me I must drop my eyes
And say: "He hides to-morrow from to-day,"
Which is no answer, Louis, and I know it.
What can I do? No, I must seem to lie;
While I am serving God, seem to serve Hell;
Pray to the Giver of Light, "Thy will be done,"
And then give darkness! Oh, for some power,
Some angel, Louis, that should come from heaven
And free us from these bonds of policy!
That we must hide our light like secret parts
As though each shining ray were snake of Hell!
Oh, that some god would step down on the peaks
And make us throw our thought out on the dark,
As fields their seeds, leaving the god of growth
To separate and slay and bring to sheaf!
How I would lay this cope and this aside,
And with my face upon the mountains run,
Aye, run to meet the bright thing coming down,
And cry, "Hail, hail, hail, hail, thou blessed one!"

(Shaking with emotion, his voice husky.)

I cannot be a man!

LOUIS— But, Father, that—

ABBOT—Accursed bondage harder than the Nile!

LOUIS—That prophesy that Oswald brings, may it
Not mean this very thing, that by his fall

THE SAXONS

And this bright rumor that the angels saved him,
A summer cloud that seems to rain down gold,
May it not be that by this very gold
Your tower of light shall rise upon this rock
And save the North from darkness? May it not?
ABBOT—But who will save us from our policy,
From playing hide and seek with God's bright son,
From the necessity of withholding truth
From those to whom the vital thing belongs,
Who do not even hunger for it more,
Who live and die about a taper's flame,
Calling it star, and sun, salvation, God—
And here all round us—Louis, look, the dawn!
LOUIS—The quality of all light is the same.
ABBOT—Quality, Louis, is not quantity.
The myriad spheres of dew leave the fields dark.
The midnight luster on the swamp is light,
Enough to guide the wild thing paddling there.
The willow leaves give light unto the moth.
The stars that fill us with the life to come
Leave darkness in the prowling tiger's eye,
And rise and set upon its curve of ball.
God made the day for higher things than these.
Some light is not enough for something more
Than moth and water-rat and prowling maws
That find their food in flesh. With what design
Lit God the radiant pages? For what purpose
Hung he the planet Plato in the sky
With kindred constellations of pure thought,
If I, a mortal man, can lift my hand
And leave a shadow in the valley there?
It fills my life with meaning to know this,
That God hath ordered so our spiritual world
That every bright thing needs my will to shine,
As it needs His to reach the shining state.

THE SAXONS

Think of such confidence of God in man!
And I betray it.

(He walks about thoughtfully.)

LOUIS— You betray it? How?
By holding back the truth about the dwarf?

ABBOT—I hide the light.

LOUIS— You hide it as a seed
Which, if the people eat, the famine spreads,
But which, if planted, wide the harvest waves.
Your own heart tells you you are right in this.

ABBOT—But when, when is the feeding to begin?

If I to-day withhold the seed, who knows
That I will not to-morrow withhold the yield,
And so continue, building larger barns?
Meanwhile the people in the valley die.

LOUIS—But God, who sees your purpose in it all,
Sees the day coming when this rock shall be
A beacon, and this region full of light.

ABBOT—'Twill never be while Benedict is here.

LOUIS—Oh, but look yonder, Father! Three hours ago
Black clouds besieged the east, and lo, now Day
Stands on the mountain tops and sees them not.

Where Night has gone there's room for Benedict.

ABBOT—I know that, Louis; but the years go by.

And oh, to use the little breath I have
In doing what I never did before!

How is it I cannot tell them what is true?

LOUIS—'Twould crush in seed the abbey you would build.

ABBOT—How can an abbey rise upon a lie?

LOUIS—You said it was not a lie.

ABBOT— It is a lie
Until they *know* that it is not a lie.

As I do.

LOUIS— Will you tell them?

ABBOT—*(Walking about.)*

THE SAXONS

I am bound,
Bound hand and foot by cursed policy.
I cannot be a man.

LOUIS— Many a church
Has lies like this above the altar place.

ABBOT—My abbey was to be part of the one.

LOUIS—(*After a pause.*)

You said, "Until they know it," Father.

ABBOT— Yes.

LOUIS—"As I do." (*The Abbot turns.*)

Do you doubt it was the dwarf?

ABBOT—I do not doubt the fact in the case, but
I may not limit its significance.

LOUIS—(*With a smile.*)

An angel or a god, then?

ABBOT— Half so, yes.

LOUIS—To free us from our policy?

ABBOT— Pray God

It may be, Louis, pray God it may be.
That unknown god should have an altar here.
No, Louis: what I mean is simply this:
This thing that we call evil, may it not
Be the other side of this thing we call good,
The passing of bright planets of the mind,
Dreaming eclipse that is no thing at all,
Simply the passing of the two things, both bright?
God ever wrestles with his shadow, Louis,
And now the bright goes down and now the dark;
And man stands by and watches the great game
With heart divided and with swaying mind
And lifts whichever falls. The game goes on
Forever, and the nations rise and fall
Forever, and fall and rise. And so they strive,
Like light and shade over the mountain slopes,
Each wrestling not for victory but strength.

THE SAXONS

LOUIS—And you and Benedict?

ABBOT— I am not his foe.

I come from Florence and he comes from Rome.

LOUIS—And you love painted windows.

ABBOT— I love God;

He loves the Church. There is the difference.

He iterates with fire in his eyes

That Heathendom shall tumble down to Hell,

But not a word that Ignorance shall fall

Or Passion lose her lightning in the deep.

I wrestle with the bright against the dark.

LOUIS—For the world-soul.

ABBOT— Neither of us may win.

In fact, I pray God that we may not.

LOUIS— How?

ABBOT—I hope that some free, some *free* spirit may win,

Not one wrapped round with ignorance, nor one

Bound hand and foot by cursed policy.

But I am not his foe.

LOUIS— But he is yours.

ABBOT—Night does not understand.

LOUIS— I cannot see.

ABBOT—Louis, the greatest man in this great world

Is he who sees all things are going right,

Yet fights as though all things were going wrong.

(*Louis shakes his head.*)

I know you don't. But I can do no more

Than show my thought. To see it, must be yours.

LOUIS—Then Oswald's fall—

ABBOT— Not if it gives him strength

To do the work his spirit bids him do,

To wrestle with the dark and with the bright,

To wrestle better than he did before,

And shake the fruit down of that prophesy.

Who knows what God behind the horizon holds

THE SAXONS

For Oswald till the dawning of that day?
I somehow feel the dream is, as it were,
The warp to which the prophesy is woof,
And that beneath the hills unseen a loom
Rocks as it weaves in dogs and storm and deer
And underneath the meaning of it all.
But I was speaking of the witch's son.
This pebble here I take up in my hand.
I turn it, yet I always see one side.
The other side is toward the underworld,
And though I turned it till the Judgment Day,
That side would still be round there. Bid it grow,
Swell to a boulder's, now the chapel's size,
And now a globe's. And let us hold it thus.
Above us, on our palms. Like Atlas now
I stand supporting it.

(Pointing as though under the globe.)

Down here I see

A little night following a little day
About a water-drop, a grain of sand,
A point in which my spirit lives and moves.

(Reaching up and around.)

How do I know that up here are not worlds
Lit with Gods' providence and bathed with soul?
What is my thought that it should scale these zones
And take my law of good and evil there
And recreate that life to what I know?
Is my eye God's, that it should see all things?
From what far mountains come the grains of gold
That sparkle in the river of my soul?
Ranges of being and tall peaks of thought
May hold up here a brighter metal still,
Some burning thing would dry my river bed.
The dreams that vein the dark sky of our sleep,
As lightnings vein the night and then are gone,

THE SAXONS

Whence come they and whither go they, that they leave
Vast expectation and the vacant eye?
And out beyond the chalice of our sleep
That cases round my dew-drop soul, who knows
What oceans roar with life beyond our life,
And spray with stars the dark rocks of the void?
How do I know what creatures come and go
Beyond my little line of night and day,
Doing the will of the Eternal Mind?
I am not Benedict to say, "This is He,
And this is not."

LOUIS— Not even of the dwarf?

ABBOT—God is the author of the book we see
Whose pages are the mountains and the stars.
Though He may sit aloof, his soul pervades
Each word and letter. Prowling in the spring,
The mountain lion feels Him in her paws,
And the wild creatures of the caves are His.

LOUIS—Was He in Oswald's fall?

ABBOT— 'Tis past my thought
How He should not be;—in his rising, too.
If God is with me when I climb a hill,
When I descend do I leave God somewhere
Upon the top? If only he ascends,
How came he in the valley, then, at first?
Only the ignorant halve the universe
And thresh events and say, "The *wheat* is God's,"
Piecing their small minds out with nothingness.
The chaff too served its purpose in its time
And while it served its purpose it was good
And like the wheat it drew its strength from God.
Having served its end, is wheat itself not chaff?
If Oswald's fall is evil in our minds,
It is because we do not see its place.
But where my knowledge ends, does God end, too?

THE SAXONS

Our brother tumbling from the bluff that night
Into the gorge, but tumbled, as it were,
Off of God's fingers into his great palm.
Ascent and descent are in one straight line.
I see no angle in the universe,
A break in things, a point where God begins
And Satan ends. If, in this strange event,
The people see a movement of the sky
And stand amazed, I stand even more amazed
At what I see than they at seraphim.
For what I see is darkness giving light,
An earth-born thing showing capacity
For deeds divine, and busy in the dark
Not with its own low nature but with God.
I grapple with it and my light goes out.
I feel as though I walked in a strong wind
Along a reed, with only faith for eyes.
Reason calls it to me with a blind man's voice.
That helplessness should bring an angel down,
Is that as wonderful as that it should bring
A devil up to do an angel's work?
What *we* see, Louis, is the miracle.
What *they* see, while it jars our sense of things,
Falls nicely into the mental harmony.
LOUIS—Good becomes evil having served its end.
How Benedict would rage should he hear this.
ABBOT—Each mind takes of the light what it can hold.
LOUIS—You know that day in the scriptorium,
When you were reading the Symposium,
What he said, do you remember?
ABBOT— Yes, I do.
LOUIS—"If I had my way I would burn that thing."
ABBOT—A beam of the sunshine hurts the owl's eyes.
LOUIS—And he would peck the stars out if he could.
ABBOT—As though our faith were fungus!

THE SAXONS

LOUIS—

If it be,

If it must feed on darkness, let it die.

ABBOT—(*Walking about thoughtfully.*)

It need not feed on darkness, Louis.

LOUIS—

This

Miracle, Father, will bring back the day.

ABBOT—(*To himself.*)

The Age is torn and shaken. Passions swell
And range like winter rivers. I would have it

Lucid and calm as Arno flowing down

By sacred Florence. I am far away,

Far away and my hairs begin to fall.

LOUIS—This will bring back the day.

ABBOT—(*To himself.*) And nothing done. (*He stands with
his eyes upon the ground. Then, dreamily.*)

Young faces radiant with the golden air

That Plato breathed among the olive leaves.

LOUIS—(*Half aloud.*)

“If I had my way I would burn that thing.”

ABBOT—(*Half to himself, his back to Louis.*)

And if I had my way—(*He lifts his face*)—

Oh, I would build

An abbey! I would cut its trenches deep

Down into God, the God of all things. Then

I would lay the white stones of Philosophy,

The Sages who, as gifts to Delphi, brought

Small sheaves of wisdom, offering them to God

As better gifts than first born bulls and goats.

And I would slay the griffin, Policy,

And scatter its bright gold about the world

And lay its carcass for the corner stone.

Its telamons should be those giant men

Who propt the fabric of the ancient world.

The east and west and north and south should lay

Their four white corners on the four broad backs

THE SAXONS

Of Plato and his solid pupil's mind,
Then him who dove too deep for Rome to see,
Lucretius, maddening round the seeds of things,
And Cicero because he loved the truth.
And there should stand all round as peristyle
The Bards of Greece in cluster, speaking gold;
Young Sappho with the glory of the sea
All round her milk white throat and marble arms,
Proud Pindar fawning kings, and Sophocles,
And he, he, Aeschylus, wild son of fire,
Who never swerved for mincing Policy,
But spake his sea-thought out and shook the world.
Its roof should be the shields of golden song
Wherever burning on the hills of Time,
Wherever smouldering in Eternity.
And I would have all planets God hath hung
Since first His word went forth, "Let there be light,"
Within our spiritual heaven, shining here
Without eclipse forever. And up there,
In alto relievo on the frieze, should be
Apollo slaying python Ignorance,
And Darkness with the face of Benedict
Half hung down, heavy, livid, hands and teeth
Tugging and biting at the architrave
To tear these golden letters from the slab.
"THE SOUL IS IN THE BRAIN." And over all,
Towering with her calm eternal eyes,
Athene, soul of Athens, holy One.
Oh, I would build an abbey!
LOUIS—(*As in prayer.*) Father! Father!
GUIDO—(*Appearing at the door of the chapel.*)
The fifteenth chapter has that blue stain on it.
ABBOT—(*Pointing right.*)
In the scriptorium, the second shelf;
Get the Symposium; I will read that.

THE SAXONS

(Horrified, the monk stands for a moment, then goes slowly down the steps across the court, every now and then glancing back over his shoulder at the Abbot.)

LOUIS—*(In a low voice.)*

Remember, Father. Is this policy. *(A pause.)*

You know your abbey is not risen yet. *(The Abbot bows his head. Louis lifts his hand as a signal. Guido, crossing the court, stops and stands waiting.)*

One breath of this would bring the rafters down. *(A pause.)*

ABBOT—*(Turning, with his eyes closed.)*

The other Bible, Guido. *(The monk quickens his step and enters the dormitory.)*

LOUIS— And you know

Some of the brothers might tell Benedict,
And he would send it blazing down to Rome.

ABBOT—Lamp after lamp goes out for policy.

(He opens the gate through which Ely passed.)

LOUIS—Better one lamp than total darkness, though.

ABBOT—Say nothing to the carriers of the affair.

LOUIS—Have you cautioned Oswald?

ABBOT—*(Astounded.)* Cautioned Oswald?

LOUIS— Yes.

ABBOT—You said he was unconscious.

LOUIS— When I found him

He was unconscious. But from what he dropped

Yesterday in his cell, I am sure he knows

It was the dwarf that brought him up the rocks.

ABBOT—You should have told me that. *(He walks to and fro.)*

LOUIS— Where is he now?

ABBOT—He had four golden letters to put on.

LOUIS—Down in the village at his work again!

Why, Father!

ABBOT— He insisted.

THE SAXONS

LOUIS—(*Under his breath.*) Benedict! (*A silence.*)

ABBOT—Get ready and go down. A word from him,
And down the abbey falls.

LOUIS— Never to rise.

ABBOT— And yet—

I do not think he'll tell it. Rumor, you know,
Has stamped an image on the heated mind.
They never could efface it by a thought
So monstrous as that devils had turned saints
And tripped the air with angels, hand in hand,
Moving as musically as summer stars.
Having no coin that bears the face of truth
They never will suspect a counterfeit,
And so no one will put the question to him.
Unquestioned, certainly Oswald will not speak.
LOUIS—But if he should? (*A pause.*)

Awhile ago you prayed
Some god to free us from our policy. (*A pause.*)
What time did he go down?

ABBOT— Before day-break.
The town at that time would have been asleep.

LOUIS—And Benedict, who never sleeps?

ABBOT— Go down.

LOUIS—Whose dragon eyes are ever open?
(*He starts toward the dormitory.*)

ABBOT— Stay.

LOUIS—Supposing Oswald has already told?
If he has, Benedict will come up here
Raging as upon a den of wolves. Then,
If he should say: "Ha! So it was the dwarf
And not an angel saved your monk. And here
You pass the deed off as a miracle
To swell your abbey's revenues and rob
Me of the alms of my parishioners?"
He sees me coming down the mountain side

THE SAXONS

And shouts this at me, and I say to him—?

ABBOT—Surprised, amazed, you lift your hands: “Mon Dieu!

A son of Satan save St. Giles' child!
Do devils, then, wait upon men of God
Working salvation? Do they? If they do,
What means this storm of banners in the dawn,
This, ‘Dieu le volt!’ and these bright harnassed knights
Trampling the Orient into battle smoke?
Why this vast tumult in the dead sunrise?
If devils will take up arms and fight for God,
Why roll these human surges down the East
To smoke and break about the Sepulcher
In hard white foam from which the ravens fly?
Let Hell lead forth her legions from the pit
Impervious to drought and pain alike,
To take and guard the Tomb. No, Father, no.
'Tis blasphemy, the unforgiven sin,
To ascribe to Hell a deed that God hath done.”

LOUIS—Says Father Benedict: “But brother Oswald
Told me himself it was the witch's son.”

ABBOT—“Mon Dieu again! Could Father keep his wits
After a fall like that, and, rising, say:
'This is the hand that struck me, this that saved'?
It was the dwarf that threw the brother down.”
With words like these, chisels of policy,
Upon the shield of each returning knight
That hath spilt blood about the Sepulcher,
We carve an angel that shall plead our cause
Through all the fields and villages of France
And far on into the North and— Ah, this train!
This train shall be the trumpet that shall blow
Our miracle abroad through Italy,
And Italy is the trumpet of the world.
Talk to the strangers then of shooting stars,

THE SAXONS

Of sounds of heavenly music in the night,
But only when a question calls it forth.
Climbing the tree gives flavor to the fruit.
Be reticent; that will add majesty.
Appear subdued and point to yonder peaks
Where, in the gray dawn, gleams of vanishing wings
Shone on the mountain snows like molten gold.
You understand? About the witch's son,
Adeste cum silentio.

(After passing out through the gate, the Abbot turns and calls after Louis, who is crossing the court.)

Louis,

No word as yet to Oswald of the dream.
He would not see the glory of it now,
Only the horror. I should fear the result.
BASIL—*(Coming from behind the chapel.)*
Macias is coming with another sorel.

(Louis enters the dormitory.)

Bah, then! Go on. St. Christopher. Plum-head.
(Drawing himself up as Rene and Simon come from behind the chapel.)

I am the Prior. Down, St. Peter! John!

RENE—*(To Simon.)*

Matthew, thou publican!

SIMON—

Bacchus, thou saint!

(He points forward to the corner of the dormitory where Pierre and his companions enter with the wine vessels which they proceed to place beside the wall.)

BASIL—Simply the old clothes of My Lady Wine.

FIRST MONK—The blessed Virgin grant it be the train.

I had half yielded to old Adnrew's dream;

I feared the train was lost.

SECOND MONK—

Another dream?

FIRST MONK—Last night, between the glances of the moon,
While his soul grabbed in the fogs of sleep,

THE SAXONS

He beheld Father's new cope in a brook,
Swishing against a fallen sycamore.
The censer and the golden chalices
Lay gleaming on the gravel.

SIMON—(*Who has been tipping the casks.*)

And the wine?

FIRST MONK—While he was hunting for it in his dream,
Like a blind weasel for a nest of eggs,
And had his hand on what felt like a skin,
The matins rang. He's been gruff ever since.
There's not a holy bell can call to prayer
To smooth our spirits with the thought of God,
But brings him from his hole with ruffled quills,
Threatening the belfry with his palmer's staff.
He says he hopes the Devil has snared the train
And spurred the asses off the bluffs to Hell.

SIMON—Now God forbid, with all that precious wine!

LEO—(*To Basil.*)

I shall tell Father on you.

BASIL—(*Imitating Leo's small voice.*) Hear him roar!

RENE—If you roar, Lion, when the hunter comes—

SOLOMAN—(*Leaning out of the window.*)

Heus, heus, O fratres, favete linguis!

The train is safe. The tigers of the god
Are ramping down the mountain, yoked in vines
Whose dangling clusters sway their tawny backs
And purple all the sky above the peaks.

Limp in the car the noisy Bromios

Tips the full cup and stains his ivory breast.

Look, yonder his herald, plump Silenus, comes!

(*He points up the mountain over the gate through which
the Abbot passed.*)

RENE—Ho, that's the occasion of the trumpet blast!

FIRST MONK—No need of casks.

BASIL—

No need of empty casks.

THE SAXONS

This is keel that draws five fathoms full.

RENE—And where it anchors, there a reef appears.

BASIL—And where it founders, there the—sea goes down.

RENE—Its beak hath ta'en the color o' the wave.

SIMON—(*To FIRST MONK.*)

If Father Benedict had had the train

Or been among the muleteers, I'd say

No wonder Andrew couldn't find the wine.

RENE—Come on, Simon; let's go meet Macias.

BASIL—If we can't wine it we can dine it.

SIMON—(*As he passes Leo.*) Bah!

LOUIS—(*Dressed for travel, appearing at the corner of the dormitory.*)

Are they in sight yet?

PIERRE— It was not the train.

'Twas Father Benedict.

(*Louis stands as one stunned.*)

What can it mean?

(*Louis crosses the court and takes a position at the corner of the chapel near the gate.*)

FIRST MONK—He never came as early as this before.

SECOND MONK—And see how worried Father looks.

PIERRE— I fear

That some one has told Oswald of the dream,

And he has fainted.

FIRST MONK— I will loiter about.

(*With his eyes upon the ground the monk saunters over toward the chapel steps and, apparently absorbed in telling his beads, loiters about in order to overhear the conversation. The Abbot enters, followed by Father Benedict leading an ass. Green twigs are stuck about the bridle. The Abbot appears thoughtful.*)

ABBOT—What do you mean by wolves?

FATHER BENEDICT— Wild paws that prey

Upon the fold.

THE SAXONS

ABBOT— And by the fold, you mean—?

FATHER BENEDICT—The Church.

ABBOT— These wolves live on the mountains here?

FATHER BENEDICT—They do.

ABBOT— And are not far?

FATHER BENEDICT— Some are not far.

Within an eyeshot of the peaks.

ABBOT— And some

Have even made this abbey here their den?

FATHER BENEDICT—Would make it so.

ABBOT— And from these holy halls

Steal forth and prey—well, let us say, upon

Your flock?

FATHER BENEDICT—They have preyed there.

ABBOT— Since when?

FATHER BENEDICT—And with the fleeces wiped their

heathen mouths,

These wolves of Hell.

ABBOT— Benedict!

FATHER BENEDICT— Ay, wolves of Hell.

Hear what I say. Ah, Father, Father!

Sometimes we think our Lord is dead in heaven,

His enemies so thrive upon the earth.

We see the Devil's squatters on our lands

With deeds that seem to bear the seal of Heaven:

Yea, everything they do seems blest of Heaven.

They plow and sow; God gives them sun and rain.

Their fields wave green; the frosts are kept at bay.

They build their barns; Heaven holds her storms in leash

And seems to slumber while the singing foe

Silver their scythes beneath the harvest moon.

But when the season plumps the golden ears

And Satan brings his sacks to get the grain,

God puts his sickle in and takes the crop.

ABBOT—Or sends a reaper?

THE SAXONS

FATHER BENEDICT— Ay, sends Benedict.

When vines are bending and the song is heard
Of Bacchus revelling in the bubbling must,
The golden trumpets of the sun in heaven
Proclaim a festival and wake the skies.
Angels come tripping to the foaming vats
And, while the devils tread the vintage out,
Brim their bright casks with gushing purple meath
To crown the crystal goblets of the saints,
Leaving the pulp to slop the swine of Hell.

ABBOT—In you I see an angel?

FATHER BENEDICT— With a cask.

ABBOT—And in the abbey here I see the vat?

FATHER BENEDICT—A goblet.

ABBOT— And in myself a—

FATHER BENEDICT— Saint.

ABBOT— Ha!

(*Searching the Priest's face.*)

I do not understand you, Benedict.

FATHER BENEDICT—Then I will put it this way: See this
garb?

You know I am a shepherd.

ABBOT— Yes, I know.

FATHER BENEDICT—And tend a flock of sheep.

ABBOT— I know you do.

FATHER BENEDICT—And sheep have wool?

ABBOT— Yes.

FATHER BENEDICT— Now we go afield.

Do briers grow in pastures? (*The Abbot nods.*)

And have flukes?

ABBOT—I see. You mean to say that flukes tear wool.

FATHER BENEDICT—That's what I mean.

ABBOT— That, therefore, from the shears
The fleece comes lighter to the shepherd's hands.

FATHER BENEDICT—And to the Master's.

THE SAXONS

ABBOT— Ha! but in this case—

For your insinuation I perceive
Clearly, I think;—well, in this case, I say,
It does not follow that the Master gets
Less tribute from the flock; for, Benedict,
Remember this: When God's bright seraphim
Collect His revenues, it matters not
Whether it be your hand that pays, or mine.

FATHER BENEDICT—Provided your hand pays, it matters
not.

ABBOT—Ah, now you leave your figure.

FATHER BENEDICT— And take yours.

ABBOT—You climbed the mountain, then—?

FATHER BENEDICT— To get my wool.

ABBOT—And chop the brier?

FATHER BENEDICT— That belonged to God.

ABBOT—Then tell me this: If it belonged to God,
How then do you, His shepherd, claim the wool
That God's own flukes have pulled from his own sheep?

FATHER BENEDICT—You do not understand.

ABBOT— I think I do.

FATHER BENEDICT—I did not mean the brier was God's, but
this:

That it belonged to God to chop it down.

ABBOT—The brier, then, has fallen?

FATHER BENEDICT— Praise the saints.

ABBOT—You came to tell me how the blow was struck?

FATHER BENEDICT—I stopped to tell you how I got my wool.

ABBOT—You need not.

FATHER BENEDICT—Why?

ABBOT— I know.

FATHER BENEDICT— You know?

ABBOT— I do.

FATHER BENEDICT—I have not spoken since I left him.

ABBOT— Well.

THE SAXONS

FATHER BENEDICT—How did you learn it, then?

ABBOT— I had a seed.

Your coming was the sun, your words the shower;

It could not help but put forth leaves and bloom.

FATHER BENEDICT—Strange, very strange.

ABBOT— To see a stalk with flukes

Put forth a bloom? 'Tis not unnatural.

FATHER BENEDICT—I do not understand.

ABBOT— Nor I.

FATHER BENEDICT— What?

ABBOT— This:

How that a shepherd could believe a wolf

Had suckled a lost lamb.

FATHER BENEDICT— What do you mean?

ABBOT—That it is strange that you, a priest of God,

Could see an angel's track upon a slope

And say: "Here went a devil up the rocks."

FATHER BENEDICT—It is too dark.

ABBOT— 'Twill ever be too dark

To see aught but an angel in that gulch.

FATHER BENEDICT—'Tis midnight.

ABBOT— No; for yonder peaks are flushed,

And there bright wings are wasting in the dawn.

FATHER BENEDICT—Father, what do you mean?

ABBOT—(*Closing his eyes.*) Listen, Benedict.

In an old abbey down in Italy

There hangs an ancient chime of seven bells.

Oft when a child I heard them in the dawn

Singing like angels in the Apennines,

Their tones so blended, so harmoniously

Tuned to the planets that, when twilight fell,

They were the echoes of the Pleiades.

Those old, old bells! I hear them still sometimes.

We children called them by the golden names

Archangels wear. Well, in a storm one night

THE SAXONS

Raphael went down. Some say a huge black hand
Strangled him in his tower and hurled him down.

And others say—mark, Benedict—that God—

FATHER BENEDICT—Anathema!

ABBOT— God's hand that shaped the spheres

And hung them in the belfry of the night

To ring through heaven an universal mass,

And set the holy bells of earth in tune,

And set our hearts in tune with holy bells,

That, in the blue cathedral of the air,

One chant might rise from hearts and bells and spheres,

Some say that His, God's hand, threw down that bell.

FATHER BENEDICT—I say, anathema!

ABBOT— And so you think—?

FATHER BENEDICT—I think it was the foul hand of Hell.

ABBOT— Ah?

Since withered faces skim along the sky,

Might it have been some—witch?

FATHER BENEDICT— I said the hand

And that includes the fingers.

ABBOT— So it does.

Well, Benedict, there you and I are one.

We hold that that which jangles God's great chime,

Whether it strike a sphere or a bell or a heart,

Springs from the pit and hath its root in Hell.

FATHER BENEDICT—Ay, we agree.

ABBOT— Then follow the same path

And you shall see your seraph of the night

Bleed out his strength upon the spears of dawn.

'Twas thought that Raphael's tumbling down the rocks

Had wrecked his silver voice, and so he lay

Three years half-sunken in a slimy marsh,

His golden throat choked up with water-weeds

And fetid lilies breathing of the swamp.

'Twas said that oft when morning woke the bells

THE SAXONS

Upon the heights, a drowned voice was heard,
A strangled booming in the marsh-fogs. Well,
One Sabbath while the morning star still burned
A lone white taper, on a sudden from his couch
The ancient bellman started. The old chime
Was singing in its tower, and, like a thrush
That eyeless hath escaped a narrow cage,
The voice of Raphael on his bough again
Rang through the woods. The eagles on the crags
Shook out their wings and circled in the sky;
The mountain shepherds shouted from the rocks,
While down the ether, flaming out of the East,
Melodious angels in the sun-burst sang.

(With his eyes burning and fixed upon the Priest.)

Now, Benedict, who lifted up that bell?

FATHER BENEDICT—'Twas God reclaimed it and restored
His chime.

ABBOT—And if that bell had been a—soul, who then?

FATHER BENEDICT—Still God.

ABBOT— And if that soul had been—
(Vehemently.)
Oswald?

(For a moment they look into one another's eyes, the Abbot with a penetrating glance, the Priest with a look of blank amazement. The Abbot quickly drops his head and walks aside, his face almost white, the drawn mouth and furrowed brow showing a mind in desperation, casting about for an escape.)

FATHER BENEDICT—*(With rising resentment.)*

What does this mean?

(The monk, who a few yards back has been pacing to and fro in order to overhear the conversation, has stopped and stands observing them. He has the same bewildered expression as the Priest. The face of Louis near the

THE SAXONS

corner of the chapel reflects the palor and perturbation of the Abbot's.)

FATHER BENEDICT— You put my faith to test?
(*A pause.*)

A damned insult!

(*His brow darkens and he turns aside. Suddenly his face lights up as with a revelation.*)

Ah, I see what it means.

Out with it, Father. Speak what God commands. (*A pause*)

Before you speak I know what you will say. (*A pause.*)

Out of pure envy you are silent.

(*He turns away. While the Priest and the Abbot walk about, each occupied with his own thought, Pierre and his two companions approach and stand a few yards away, observing them.*)

ABBOT—(*With a glance toward the Priest.*) Out—?

FATHER BENEDICT—(*Without turning.*)

Of envy, or else fear that I would shrink.

You need not, though.

ABBOT—(*Stopping.*) I fear that you would shrink?

FATHER BENEDICT—To you, too, my great honor has been revealed. (*A pause.*)

ABBOT—I do not understand you, Benedict.

FATHER BENEDICT—(*Turning and facing the Abbot.*)

Why do you hide it from me?

ABBOT— What are you

Hiding from me?

FATHER BENEDICT— You feared that I would shrink

To tear those jaws upon the mountain side.

Your dropping of your eyes shows I am right.

ABBOT—(*Walking aside, composed.*)

I was not sure.

FATHER BENEDICT—Why did you think that God

Had revealed it only to you?

ABBOT— I was not sure

THE SAXONS

That what I had in mind you had in mind.

FATHER BENEDICT—And you thought you would feel about
and see

If I knew it. And if I did not, "Truth, retire.

Do not obtrude yourself on Benedict.

He knows the hunter's dream. If he cannot

Discover whose hands those were the hunter saw

Reach through the green boughs of the Tree of Life

And tear the hell-jaws from the holy deer,

It is not your fault. And *I* lose no glory.

It is his own crass mind. He comes from Rome.

Florence is Athens come to life again."

ABBOT—Envy, you think?

FATHER BENEDICT— I know it. When you asked

Whose hand it was that lifted up that bell,

I knew that you were feeling me about

To see if I knew that the hand was mine.

Had I not known it, do you suppose I think

You would have told me? Of your own accord:

"Benedict, God hath chosen you for this.

Be faithful to it. The glory is yours"? Not much.

You pride yourself on what you think is God,

Your erudition. But I know some things. (*He walks aside.*)

ABBOT—It is hard to know what another has in mind.

FATHER BENEDICT—It may be hard for the Athenians.

ABBOT—I am an old man, Benedict, and with

White hair the eyes blur and the mind dulls. You.

Vigorous in body and in intellect.

Scale heights I cannot climb. Bear with me, then.

If I just now, forgetting youth is past,

Ventured to tilt with you, is it not enough

That you stand there triumphant while I here

Lie prostrate with my gray hairs in the dust?

(*He bows his head and walks to the rear.*)

FATHER BENEDICT—(*With a superior air.*)

THE SAXONS

Rome is Jerusalem, the city of God.

(Biting down his smile, Louis advances, his face assuming a doleful expression.)

LOUIS—*(In a low voice, barely hiding his irony.)*

Don't treat the old man that way, Benedict.

You do not know how keenly Father feels

The issue of this bout. Amazed I stood

Just yonder by the chapel steps and watched

Your spears break into fire. O Benedict,

What skill, what skill, what admirable skill!

FATHER BENEDICT—In dialectics I do boast some skill.

LOUIS—Compared to Father's admirable skill!

FATHER BENEDICT—*(With a leer toward the Abbot.)*

For what I have I thank no heathen sage.

LOUIS—With that composure which the gods must feel

Your reached your spear and slipped his lady's glove—

FATHER BENEDICT—His lady's glove?

LOUIS— The secret from his heart

In spite of all his desperate guarding it.

(Guido comes from the dormitory with a large book under his arm. As he passes toward the chapel he turns his burden toward the Abbot, who gives it an unconcerned glance and walks right.)

FATHER BENEDICT—Why should he hide it from me?

LOUIS— I can't say.

Father is not a man to show his heart.

He no doubt had his reason for it.

FATHER BENEDICT— Humph!

LOUIS—I do know, though, that Father admires you.

FATHER BENEDICT—

Admires me?

LOUIS— Yes.

FATHER BENEDICT— Scorns me.

LOUIS— You are wrong.

FATHER BENEDICT—How do you know he does?

THE SAXONS

LOUIS— Before you came,
Father had just conceived of a great temple
With you in large space on the entablature.

FATHER BENEDICT—(*Opening his eyes.*)

That is another proof he knew that I
Was to have part in that great enterprise
And achieve glory. And he lied to me.

(*The Abbot speaks to Pierre, who turns and goes out, right.*)

LOUIS—You may mistake what Father had in mind.

He may have thought it would be policy
To keep you in the dark about this thing.

FATHER BENEDICT—What cause had he to fear that I would
shrink

To face the glory of the Lord that day?

'Tis only guilt that fears to face the Lord.

LOUIS—You may mistake what Father had in mind.

FATHER BENEDICT—Too subtle, I suppose, for my dull brain.

LOUIS—I do not think, though, that he envies you.

FATHER BENEDICT—You may have your opinion.

LOUIS— You may not.

I mean you may not know what Father means.

FATHER BENEDICT—

You two know everything.

LOUIS— I know one thing.

You would not have said, "You two know everything."

If you had been here half an hour ago.

(*Walking aside.*)

With you in large space on the entablature.

FATHER BENEDICT—He need not think that God revealed to
him

Alone my glory, for I knew it, too.

Blood appeared on my hands the other night,

And while the congregation sat amazed,

The altar cups took fire, and a white dove—

(*To the Abbot, who has drawn near.*)

THE SAXONS

The night the brother fell I saw some things
During service would have made my hair stand up
Had I been less courageous than I am,
Or less near God. You would have quaked with fear,
And sought the books of some old heathen sage
For explanation. I—I went to God,
With the result that I am ready now.
I have been shown the blood of that great hound.

(He looks at his hand.)

And I have got God's meaning. I am called.
Now, when the chase starts I will make my way
Up to the mountain tops and meet the Lord,
And Heathendom shall tumble down to Hell.

*(He espies the wine vessels over against the dormitory wall
and goes toward them, pulling the ass by the bridle.)*

ABBOT—What did you come up here to see me for?

FATHER BENEDICT—*(Stopping.)*

Come up to see you?

ABBOT— You are here.

FATHER BENEDICT— I am. *(A pause.)*

It seems you *don't* know how I got my wool.

*(He continues his way across the court. Louis and the
Abbot whisper together. In the rear, from behind the
chapel, Macias, the hunter, enters with a young deer
upon his back, and at his belt a brace of geese. Simon
is holding one of the fowls by the tip of its wing, Basil
and Rene following.)*

BASIL—What'll you have, Simon?

SIMON— Collops and sauce.

BASIL—Pluck-pudding or crupper?

SIMON— Both, God bless us.

BASIL— Both!

RENE—Goose, too?

SIMON— Ay, stuffed with plums.

BASIL— Why, you just had

THE SAXONS

A hunk of beef.

SIMON— Sh! (*He points to the Abbot.*)

RENE—(*Nudging him.*) Basil, see the twigs.

(*The jesters chuckle and come forward toward the Priest, while the hunter and Simon pass out behind the dormitory. The Abbot also approaches the Priest, followed a few feet back by Louis.*)

LOUIS—(*Huskily.*) Be wary, Father; it may be a snare.

ABBOT—A little wine will bring it to the light.

BASIL—Well, it is spring when asses put forth leaves.

FATHER BENEDICT—Ay, rue that devils flee from in the dark.
(*He looks into the casks.*)

ABBOT—But when you left the town the dawn was bright.

FATHER BENEDICT—The dawn was bright?

ABBOT— The day is two hours old.

FATHER BENEDICT—(*After a long look at the Abbot.*)

When I rode out of town the sun's red car
Stood hub-deep in the western ocean's sand.

I met the morning on the mountain tops
Fresh dropt from heaven, with one golden wing

Bright on the pines, the other softly sheathed
In valley shadows thinning round her plumes.

The night I spent far back among the hills.

For three hours in the darkness on the road

I staked my life upon the ass' step

And ass and life upon these slips of rue.

(*He thrusts his switch into the narrow necked diotas, and drawing it out, feels the end.*)

If any manna fell upon the heights

The Devil must have harvested the flakes;

I found none on the way.

ABBOT— I fear the fiend

Has washed it down with our good Tuscan wine

And dressed Hell's tables with the golden cups

The Abbot Boldi sent from Aosta.

THE SAXONS

The tide is out and the Italian moon
Has slipped her sphere that ruled the purple flood.
These are the empty shells that held the sea.
(*Pierre enters, carrying a flagon and a silver cup. Simon follows him.*)

Have something, Benedict.

FATHER BENEDICT— Ah, you are good.

ABBOT—What could have drawn you back among the hills
When every pass was choked with drizzling dag?

FATHER BENEDICT—I'm like a desert.

RENE—(*To Basil.*) And there flows the Nile.

FATHER BENEDICT—(*To the Abbot.*)

The service of our Lord that knows no flaw,
Mountains or darkness or the voice of storms.

Last night— Fill it up.—Last night God's— There.—

Last night God's dread apparitor— (*He drinks.*)

ABBOT— What's that?

FATHER BENEDICT—(*Tasting his lips.*)

Rumney, isn't it?

ABBOT— Not that—

FATHER BENEDICT—(*With mock seriousness.*)

Isn't it?

ABBOT— I mean—

FATHER BENEDICT—Pour me another, then; I'll taste again.

(*Pierre pours.*)

ABBOT—You said God's dreadful summoner—

FATHER BENEDICT— Appeared.

And clapped his irons on old—

(*He drinks and again holds the cup toward Pierre.*)

ABBOT— Benedict,—

FATHER BENEDICT—One more.

ABBOT— Don't think—

FATHER BENEDICT— The night is in my veins.

BASIL—(*To Rene.*) It's a dry night.

FATHER BENEDICT—(*Holding up the cup.*)

THE SAXONS

You think I came from town and so does he.

ABBOT—What of it?

FATHER BENEDICT— Simply this: that I did not.

ABBOT—We are glad to have learned that.

LOUIS—

Delighted.

FATHER BENEDICT—

Humph!

And you don't wish to know where I have been?

ABBOT—'Tis immaterial.

FATHER BENEDICT— That is another proof

You envy me. First, you conceal from me

That which you feared would blow my name abroad;

And now you fear to hear where I have been

Because from what you know of me you know

Whatever comes I meet events as friends,

And never sally out but I return

With spoil, and that stirs up the green in you.

Now I will tell it though the heavens fall.

Old Hartzel's dead.

ABBOT— I find no joy in that.

FATHER BENEDICT—Of course, you don't.

RENE—(*Calling across the court.*) Old Hartzel's dead!

BASIL—(*Under his breath.*)

Thank God!

(*The monks upon the chapel steps and others sitting about upon the benches start up and gather forward.*)

FATHER BENEDICT—You don't think I told that to give you joy?

ABBOT—It matters nothing to me in either case.

FATHER BENEDICT—But this will matter something. Listen now. (*Leaning over and speaking in the Abbot's ear.*)

I get his forty neat and all the land

Between the river and the raddle-hedge

South of the village, with the acreage

Of tilth and vines that fronts the rising sun

Near the White Torrent. Does *that* give you joy?

(*He strikes the ass with the switch and starts left.*)

THE SAXONS

BASIL—(*Aloud.*) Thank God!

ABBOT—(*Lifting his hand.*) This is the work of Benedict.

FATHER BENEDICT—(*Stopping.*) You mean that as reproach?

ABBOT—I simply mean

We had no hand in this; the glory is yours.

FATHER BENEDICT—Come with me.

(*He rides on toward the gate. The Abbot walks beside him. Louis, behind, where he cannot be seen, follows them. The bell rings and the monks move toward the chapel and enter, leaving the court bare.*)

FATHER BENEDICT— You remember, I suppose,
As we clashed spears a while ago I said
The abbey here was a goblet, and you a saint.
I might say that I spoke in irony,
But that would not be nice.

ABBOT— And you said, too,
Something about an angel with a cask.

FATHER BENEDICT—That is a cut at me. I recollect.
I said that I would fill your cup.

ABBOT— Proceed.

FATHER BENEDICT—(*Leaning over.*)

Of this estate you get one cow. You hear?

That's a fine liquor, eh, Father? (*To the ass.*) Come up.
(*Pierre comes from the dormitory and crosses the court toward the chapel.*)

You are an old man and your work is done.

You may retire now and live on milk.

'Twill nourish that great intellect of yours.

LOUIS—(*Under his breath.*)

As well as anything that you could give.

ABBOT—I welcome anything that can do that.

FATHER BENEDICT—If it be heathen.

ABBOT— Benedict, before you came
Louis and I were talking of the things

THE SAXONS

That late have happened.

FATHER BENEDICT— The dream.

ABBOT— Oswald's fall

And his unnatural rescue from the gulch.

FATHER BENEDICT—'Twas *supernatural*, not *unnatural*.

ABBOT—A nice discrimination, Benedict.

I do not see as you do. You were trained

By masters who, no doubt, had they heard this

Distinction, would have said: "*Benissime!*"

FATHER BENEDICT—(*Superciliously.*)

Well done is *optime*.

ABBOT—(*With mock humility.*) Just so—just so—

My master would have said—yes, *optime*.

A boon it is that words cannot change things.

(*Pierre, who has climbed the steps slowly, listening the while, enters the chapel.*)

FATHER BENEDICT—You feared that I would shrink to play my part?

ABBOT—We feared if you should learn what your part is—

FATHER BENEDICT—That I would shrink?

ABBOT— If you should learn your part.

FATHER BENEDICT—(*Getting angry.*)

You feared that I would shrink?

ABBOT—(*Hesitatingly.*) W-e-l-l—

FATHER BENEDICT— Say it.

ABBOT— Yes.

FATHER BENEDICT—(*Shaking his finger.*)

Deep in your heart you wish I would, old man.

'Twould fill your soul with joy. But mark you this:

To give you joy is not my destiny.

(*He rides out through the gate.*)

ABBOT—Your destiny, Benedict, is in God's hand.

FATHER BENEDICT—Thank God it's not in yours. (*A pause.*)

ABBOT— You must go down.

Oswald, by noon, will have finished up his work.

THE SAXONS

Stay with him till he does, then bring him back.

LOUIS—If I go now, though, Benedict will suspect
Something is up.

(The Abbot goes toward the steps, Louis half following him)

As it is, he does not know

That Oswald has returned to work. *(A pause.)* Besides,
After his long, hard ride he will want rest.

He will not go near the church. *(A pause.)*

What do you say?

(A pause.)

I will go after service.

ABBOT—*(After a pause.)* Very well.

(He enters the chapel, followed by Louis.)

SCENE THREE—*A street in the village showing a low thatched cottage with a door made accessible by steps. To the left of the door is a small square open window, on the sill of which are garden plants and pots of winter flowers put there to get the morning sun. In the corner of the yard, right, is a well with an old wooden wheel high up on posts. At the end of the chain hanging from it is a bucket from which water is leaking back into the well.*

Madam Valmy, the country-woman who has just come to town and who has a basket upon her arm, has stopped before the house and is looking intently left.

MADAM VALMY—Aunt Rachel!

A VOICE—*(Back in the house.)* Yes.

MADAM VALMY—*(After a pause.)* O auntie!

THE VOICE—

Yes, child, yes.

I get this dough off. Rosa!

(From the right, Madam Bacqueur enters. She is bare-headed and carries a child in her arms.)

MADAM BACQUEUR—

Every day

THE SAXONS

Some dark deed sends a shudder through all hearts.
Who is it this time?

MADAM VALMY— No one seems to know.
It happened on the mountain, Rosa said.

MADAM BACQUEUR—I wonder if Father Benedict has returned?

MADAM VALMY—Returned from where?

MADAM BACQUEUR— He rode away last night
Into the mountains. I do hope and pray—

(They stand looking left. From the right, Hugh Capet enters hurriedly. Reaching over the fence to the well he swings the bucket to his mouth.)

You know so many strange and evil things
Have happened lately. Just a week ago
Old mother Sar was palsied. Then young Foy,
In the dead of night, saw witch-fire on the heath.
Next day two cows, their udders drizzling blood,
Ran snorting down the road into the wood,
And all the village curs that ventured out
Came yelping to their kennels cramped with fear
As though the devils chased them.

MADAM VALMY— Did you ever!

MADAM BACQUEUR—*(To Hugh Capet who hurries out, left.)*

You will come back and tell us what it is?

HUGH CAPET—That all depends, Madam, that all depends.

MADAM BACQUEUR—Indeed they did. And that's not *all*.
Thursday

A black stone fell from heaven. Father said
It was a challenge. And that very night
Occurred a wonder during complines. Yes,
The golden chalices in the church took fire
And circled round the altar. Blood appeared
On Father's hands, and while all sat amazed,
Looking to see him caught away to heaven,

THE SAXONS

A snow-white dove flew through the transept wall,
The Holy Spirit, Father says. You know
The canvass that they keep covering the cross
That Oswald carves, round that it whisked and moaned,
And Rachel says she heard the voice of Christ
Under the canvass: "It will not be done."
Meaning the cross, I thought; but Father says:
"Maybe it means God's will will not be done."
And so it proved. Disaster came at dawn.
Pierre, the sacristan of good St. Giles,
Brought the news down to Father Benedict.
But you have heard of the great miracle? No?
And all the world has heard of it?

MADAM VALMY— You know
I have not been to town since Sunday week.

MADAM BACQUEUR—Oh, angels have fluttered down on us
since then!

And will again, so Father says. La me!
I tell you, Madam Valmy, if any grave
In the churchyard there had jumped a horrid ghost
To stalk the moonlight in a rotten shroud,
There'd be less stir among the village folk.
I know not how it was. It seems they found
The dear monk, Oswald, bruised and bathed with blood,
(*She clasps her child to her heart passionately.*)

Lying before the monastery gate.

MADAM VALMY—Why, Clotilde!

MADAM BACQUEUR— Yes, indeed. And *that's* not all.
To think we slept through all of it! To think
We did not wake and cry out, "God is here!"
And then run up and down and ring the bells.
Oh, expectation kindles every bush
For our Lord's coming.

MADAM VALMY— What?

MADAM BACQUEUR— Oh, everything!

THE SAXONS

How wonderful are mountains angels' feet
Have trodden on! How beautiful the air!
Oh, everything seems different to me now.
I half expect to see the stone put forth
A human face and speak to me of God.
Dear Madam Valmy, trees are not really trees.
As Father says, all things have passed away,
And with the miracle the other night
Our Lord begins his reign upon the earth.
For hours I sit and look in my child's face
And wonder if he sees.

MADAM VALMY— What?

MADAM BACQUEUR—(*Holding up her child.*)

Fire! fire!

O child, child, see the fields, the glory—

A VOICE—(*To the right.*)

Fire?

JULES BACQUEUR—(*Entering.*)

Where is the fire?

MADAM VALMY— The crowd, you see.

JULES BACQUEUR—

Whose house?

MADAM VALMY—Rosa ran in and said some one was hurt.

MADAM BACQUEUR—Don't you go with them, husband.

(*The smith goes out, left.*)

Jardin's been

Trying to get the men to storm the heights

And kill the heathen and the witch.

THE VOICE—(*Back in the house.*) Rosa!

MADAM VALMY—She is not here. And he is still alive?

MADAM BACQUEUR—There's not a night since the dear
brother fell

But what I've heard her on the roof.

MADAM VALMY—

Clotilde!

MADAM BACQUEUR—But oh, the Holy Ghost was with him.

Yes,

His staff they found next morning and his hood—

THE SAXONS

Thank God for that—they found his hood and staff
Down in the gorge, full forty feet below
The mountain road.

MADAM VALMY— Not over the steep gray bluff!

MADAM BACQUEUR—Think of a fall like that! At break of
day

They found him at the monastery gate
Unconscious, carried there by unseen hands—

MADAM VALMY—What!

MADAM BACQUEUR— Yes, indeed. And those who
found him saw

Archangels sitting on the mountain tops
With golden shields, and there were sounds of war
Far off as they were fighting in the clouds;
Driving the witches off to hell, no doubt.

MADAM VALMY—On *these* mountains?

MADAM BACQUEUR— And even *that's* not all.

MADAM VALMY—(*Putting her arms about her.*)

Dear Madam Bacqueur.

MADAM BACQUEUR— I get so dizzy.

You must have Rachel tell you. I won't fall.

(*She takes hold of the fence.*)

Such wonders and such cures and things to come.

I dare not think of much less speak of that.

Such brilliance, la! You should see Father's face

How it lightens when he speaks of it. His eyes

Look far away across the glory fields.

"Bretheren, this miracle is but the blossom

Whose fruit shall fall in fire upon the world.

Pray, all of you, that you may be perpared."

MADAM VALMY—For what?

MADAM BACQUEUR—(*Catching her breath.*)

I am afraid I—

MADAM VALMY— Don't try, then.

MADAM BACQUEUR—There is a glory far off in the air.

THE SAXONS

Father has seen it and his eyes are bright.
So bright. Rachel will tell you. Or it may be
He sees the pilgrims that shall gather here.
This morning Marie heard two brothers say
There's sure to be a shrine where Oswald fell.
Think of it, Madam Valmy, these streets thronged
With holy men that live beyond the sea.
I never even thought to pray for that.

God does all things so easily, though. And—
And all for his dear sake. But I don't know.

The Scriptures say Satan shall be let loose
MADAM VALMY—The shrine? Indeed I do.

In the last days; in these days, then. Do you?

MADAM BACQUEUR—

How good of you!

You always did have so much faith.

MADAM VALMY—

You know

The day your child was christened—

MADAM BACQUEUR—

Oh, how true!

How like a star his *name* will shine!

MADAM VALMY—

I now

Predict again. He'll be a saint.

MADAM BACQUEUR—(*In utter amazement.*)

A—

MADAM VALMY—

Saint.

MADAM BACQUEUR—You think he will? Oh, do you,
Madam Valmy?

Do you, indeed? Oh, think of what that means

To little Oswald here! To wear a name

A blessed saint hath worn and given him

With his own lips at the baptismal font;

To see a white hand beckon from the sky

And hear forever in each vesper chime

A saint's clear voice calling his soul to come

And flower out beneath the holy bells.

Oh, think, Fidele, some day when he is old

THE SAXONS

And in his cloister yonder on the mountain,
When the dear brothers gathered after prayer
Shall talk of holy things, and one shall say:
"My father fought with Montfort in the wars";
Another: "I have seen St. Bavon's tree";
And some old palmer who hath seen all shrines
Shall tell of Subiaco and the thorns
Of good St. Benedict, my boy can say:
"I grew to manhood in the little town
Down in the valley. I have never been
Beyond the mountains, but each day have heard,
Morning and night, St. Giles' dewy bells
Ring from these towers the twilight hour of prayer,
Yet was I favored. When they christened me"—
Oh, I can see them wonder at him then,
And press about him.—"When they christened me
St. Oswald stood god-father at the font
And blessed me with his hands upon my head,
Blessed me and said: 'The Virgin keep this child.'
A neighbor said his face shone like a star,
He was so full of glory. And the night,
The night the angels brought him from the gorge
And laid him here before the abbey gate,
He wore the holy hood my mother made.
They keep it yet inside the sacred chest,
There in the chapel." (*Faint shouts far to the left.*)

I am so afraid

Jules will go with them. Would you mind if I—

(*The cottage door opens.*)

Have Rachel tell you of that awful dream.

(*She goes out, left. With a staff in one hand and screening her eyes with the other, old Rachel comes sidling down the steps. Madam Valmy sets her basket over the fence.*)

RACHEL—Clotilde? Marie? Oh, it's Fidele! Why, child,

THE SAXONS

When did you come to town?

MADAM VALMY—(*Taking Rachel by the hand.*)

There's some one hurt.

RACHEL—*Fidele!* You frighten me. That horrid word!

Who is it?

MADAM VALMY—The crowd.

RACHEL—

Where?

MADAM VALMY—

Down by the church.

RACHEL—Those heathen dogs. Are they in town? I fear—

(*They go out, left.*)

SCENE FOUR—Before the church which stands about twenty feet back from the street. Low stone fences on either side project in to its corners and form with its front three sides of a hexagon. To the right, in a higher fence, also of stone, which runs parallel with the street, is an iron gate, overgrown with vines, leading into the churchyard. Between the palings can be seen white crosses marking the graves. In the corners, just where the fences start in toward the church, stand Lombardy poplars in full foliage, one on either side. The church is built of rough stone, with irregular seams of white mortar. In the center is an arched doorway and beside it two false windows almost covered with ivy. High up over the door is seen the lower part of a narrow louvre window with several long straws, which the birds have carried there, hanging down from between the slats.

In the open space before the church, a crowd is gathered. Upon the steps with his back to the door stands Jardin, the Bailiff. He wears a sleeveless hauberk wrought of chain, and upon his head a heavy open helmet. Some distance to the right, upon a step lower down, Jacques Sar, wearing a leather corselet and a cap of wolf skin, is lean-

THE SAXONS

ing with his right hand against the church. His right arm is off near the shoulder. The crowd is made up of men, for the most part in their working clothes. Some have no hats on. Among the latter is Hugh Capet, whose red head is seen far in near the steps. Jules Bacqueur, with his sleeves rolled up, stands on the edge of the crowd. Out in the street to the left, is a group of women. A boy is up in the poplar tree, right.

As the Scene progresses, other villagers enter, among them the women of the last Scene.

JARDIN—Was Jardin right last week when comrade's wife
(*With a motion toward old Jacques.*)

Fell palsied and he said: "Let's kill the witch;
Next thing she'll strike some brother." Was he right?
Was he? In here is a cross can tell you.
Is the cross done? Can any man say why?
The holy monk that carves it, where is he?
Up yonder on the mountain in his cell,
Nigh unto death. Only the Virgin's hands
That plucked him from the pit can save his life.
And who's to blame? Who is to blame, men? Eh?
You men that shout to sail out to the East
And swell about the neck as vipers do,
Blowing against the Moslems, what do you say
To the heathen on the mountain up there, eh?
Twenty moons and more have risen and set
Since they took up their station 'neath the stars
And, in collusion with the hag of hell,
Shook pestilence and death upon the air.
Planets have knocked and fire has fallen and blood
Has drizzled over all this region. Eh?
What do you think our Lord thinks of these things?
Rescue the mountains; they are His Sepulcher.
You want to see Golgotha? *There* it is.
A mountain with a heretic on its peak

THE SAXONS

Is like a spear thrusting a bitter sop
Up to our Lord's lips even in heaven. You men
Who see the sop and leave it there are Jews.

HUGH CAPET—They're Maccabees.

JARDIN— As for Jacques Sar and me,
We'll wear these arms—

JACQUES SAR— Until the Judgment Day.

JARDIN—Till our old bodies rot, or see those peaks
Waved over with the banner of our Lord.

And you think you will live to see that chase.

You know what I would do if I were God?

(He draws his sword.)

Gabriel should pass over with his sword

And pierce some heart would bow all heads in tears.

Then you would go shouting up the mountains. And

If this keeps up, you mark me what I say,

Crosses will thicken out there on that grass.

*(He points toward the churchyard. A man reaches out of
the crowd and touches him on the leg.)*

But eat and sleep, though. Feed your coward hearts.

Then die. And then what? Then the Judgment Day.

And after that, what? Hell.

*(He stoops down and the man talks with him in an under-
tone.)*

BACQUEUR— Who is it's dead?

JACQUES SAR—Dead? All of us, he says, an the hag lives.

HUGH CAPET—He's right, too.

MADAM BACQUEUR—*(Entering, right, and hurrying to the
women.)*

Is it Father Benedict?

JARDIN—*(Straightening up.)*

It was for that that he rode back there. Eh?

Tell them? What for? What good would that do? What

Do they care if the heathen keeps his land?

I see some of you here that yesterday

THE SAXONS

Was down at Bacqueur's. Do I? Do I see you?
Somehow it seems to me I recollect
Hearing as how old Hulga'd never strike
No man no more since God had saved the monk
And maybe threw her off the cliff herself.
Did any of you hear that? Did you men?
Eh? No one, eh? So Jardin must have dreamed.
Well, in the dream then Jardin seemed to say:
"The hag will strike till we have dragged her down,
Her and her dwarf, Canzler, the big heathen,
And all his kith, and burnt them in the street."

A VOICE—You got him in the church, Jardin?

MADAM BACQUEUR—

La, now!

HUGH CAPET—

Down with him!

JARDIN—Was Jardin right again? Has Hulga struck?
You'd see the ass he rode you'd think she'd struck.

Awhile ago here some one shouted out:

"Who's in the church?" I've got the arrow strung
And now I'll tell you, now I'll let it fly.

The wine train's lost; three of the mules are dead;
Two men were crushed to death; our Lord's dear blood,
Witches have poured out on the mountain rocks.

Now, has she struck? You think she has, eh? Hugh,
What did we tell them? Jacques Sar? Bacqueur? Eh?
Didn't we?

BACQUEUR— How did it happen, Bailiff?

JARDIN—Some one here asked if Canzler was in here.
No. Yes. What if he were or what if he is?

You think I'd tell you and see you fall dead? (*Madam
Valmy enters, right, leading old Rachel by the hand.*)

One of the muleteers rode in for help.

He only spoke Italian. A friar, though,
Told me his tale. Last night when the train reached
The Devil's Pass—'twas dark; the moon had sunk—
Three withered hell-hags, with the skirring clouds

THE SAXONS

Flying toward Pampeluna to their sabbath,
Lit on a gray crag. Lightning splintered blue
About them, smells of sulphur rose, and thunder
Clapped the dark rock. The mountain shook. Straightway,
Cries of the men rang out. The leaders crashed,
Dumb-smitted with horror, mules and packs and all,
Down through the chaparral to the gowle below.
The witches vanished. All the Pass was still
Save through the night the golden chalices
Clinking far down the scaur. Then on a sudden
(*Rosa, excited, runs in, right, and hurries to the women.*)
The grisly hags, crooning a wild song, rose
Tossing the golden cups up in the air,
And like a strip of mist went down the wind
Toward Pampeluna. What is the matter, women?
A MAN—They say the hag's in town.
ROSA—(*In an underbreath.*) Sigurd.
MADAM BACQUEUR— The dwarf.
THE MAN—They say the dwarf's in town.
JARDIN—(*Deeply moved.*) Men, —!
THE BOY—(*Up in the tree craning his neck.*) I see him!
Yonder he is by the bridge. He's got something
Shining in his hand.
JARDIN—(*His face paling.*) What was it the hunter saw
In his dream, men? What was it that roused the dogs—
The heathen dogs to chase the brother?
HUGH CAPET— Blood.
JARDIN—(*Feeling the tip of his sword.*)
Today God stains the trail.
A SHOUT— Down with him!
JARDIN— Wait.
THE BOY—See it! See it flash! It's a dagger!
JARDIN— Men!
JACQUES SAR— Men!
A SHOUT—Come on, men!

THE SAXONS

JARDIN— Stop them, Bacqueur! Knock them down!
Bring those fools back.

(Hugh Capet, out in the street, waves with his arm. The men who rushed out, right, return sulky.)

ONE OF THEM— Who is the coward now?

ANOTHER—Hush, Noel.

ANOTHER— Let's have no trouble, men.

JARDIN— Silence!

FIRST MAN—'Cause we ain't seen the wars—

SEVERAL— Be quiet, Noel.

JARDIN—Is that the way you fowlers take your birds,
Rush out and throw the net before their eyes?
Is it? And when the wolves prowl for your lambs,
You raise a shout before you stretch the string,
Do you? Here's Jacques. You think he'd have this cap
If he had yelled to the brute, "Watch for your skin,"
And rushed on him waving a club? Do you?
Eh? If you do, I tell you Jardin don't;
'N I reckon Jardin's seen a wolf or two.
This dwarf of Hulga's, you don't think he's sly,
Do you? Eh? Well, he is, sly as a newt.
You touch the stones once and you'll see him gone.
What's to be done, then? Listen to Jardin:
Deploy. You don't know what that means, do you?
Some of you here are burning for the East
To fight the Moslems. Just cry: "Allah-ho!"
And then rush on them, will you? Turks, ain't they?

JACQUES SAR—Right.

JARDIN— Listen, men; I'll tell you what it means.

You've seen the falcon 'fore she strikes the hern
Open her talons, ain't you? That's deploy.
Well, then we'll open ours. Three of you fellows
Skirt the ford yonder and shut off retreat
To the cave. There's one claw open. Halt, men.
Then two detachments—Here, attention, men;

THE SAXONS

Wait for your orders.—Then two squads of three
March up that way— (*He points left.*)
and when you strike the hedge,
Right! left! one along the wold; the other
Down through the waddy; each to the river.
Then we've got him flanked. There's three claws open
And the bird is ours. Now listen. Listen men.
You men that mean to cut off his retreat,
Take spears. He'll squawk we pinch him, and the old hen,
Hearing her chick, will swoop down from the rocks.
Then's your chance; stick her.

JACQUES SAR— Mine!

HUGH CAPET— Let Jacques have her.

JACQUES SAR—I'll fetch her head back home to mother Sar.
(*He and the Bailiff come down into the crowd.*)

A VOICE—What if the heathen charge down on us?

HUGH CAPET— Bah!

JARDIN—You think he'd leave that peak for all the world?

HUGH CAPET—After what's happened?

JACQUES SAR— After this shower of blood?

BACQUEUR—From that black planet came the thunder stone
That tore the field back there.

HUGH CAPET— You think he would?

JARDIN—Now hear what Jardin says. If he could ask,
For what he suffered in the Holy Wars,
Two gifts of Heaven, and two strong saints should soar
Past the green steeples of these poplars here
And fold their white wings in that street and say:
"Soldier, what are they?" What would Jardin say?
First this: (*He steps back upon the steps.*)

Up yonder is a holy monk
Whom God has blessed above all living men.
Abaddon hurled him down to take his life.
He's bruised almost to death. Saints, bring him down.
We're going to kindle such a fire here

THE SAXONS

As friends of darkness, glowering from the caves,
Shall see and then scoot shuddering to Hell.

(The crowd shouts.)

Bring him down, then, and let him see the flames
Lick up the limbs that tripped him.

JACQUES SAR—

Right.

BACQUEUR—

You're right.

HUGH CAPET—Let's bring him down!

SHOUTS—

Right! Bring him! Bring him down!

JARDIN—Here, men, put on those caps. You think you're
saints?

If you can fly through air, why bring him down;

You can't, then hush and hear what Jardin says.

First then I'd say: "Bring down the monk." Then this:

There's a big fellow on the mountain tops

What calls Thor Father, spitting at our Lord.

And in the dawn when Christians gather here

To holy mass he stands upon the peaks

And scowls upon the bells. He and the witch

Are brain and bowels to some heathen god

Whose dark hand works at night beneath the hills

Sapping the towers of Christ. Saints, send him down.

Tell him to strap his big old martel on him.

He comes down here he'll feel a damaskin

That's sliced the Turks and choked the gates of hell

With ghosts of Allah, and another'll go

Bloody and hot to Thor. *(Shouts.)*

Send him down, saints.

Some one here says, "If Canzler comes, what then?"

He'll die. Who'll do it? Listen: Jardin will.

*(He comes down into the crowd that surges and clamors
about him.)*

Line up! *(He chooses nine men, whom he arranges in
squad of three.)*

A MAN—*(In the first squad.)*

THE SAXONS

About those spears.

JARDIN— Stop at the armory.
(*He produces a great key.*)

You know your orders, do you?

A CHORUS— We do.

JARDIN— Jacques.

Lead. (*He hands the key to the old man, who puts himself at the head of the first squad.*)

Bacqueur.

MADAM BACQUEUR—No, no.

JARDIN— Capet.
(*The two men put themselves at the head of the second and third squads.*)

JARDIN— March!

MADAM BACQUEUR—(*Holding out her child.*) Husband!
(*They pass out, left. Madam Bacqueur looks after them for a while, then lifts her skirt to her eyes and sobs aloud.*)

RACHEL—Where are they going, child?

JARDIN— Line up now, men.

We'll strike the front. Women, pray that the saints
May bring the monk to see this devil burn,
And send the old warlock down. He will breathe hard,
I slit his entrails once and put this foot
On his big chest. (*As he goes along lining up the men with his sword, the church door opens and, pale and emaciated, the monk Oswald appears.*)

FIDELE— Clotilde! Auntie! Rosa!

THE WOMEN—Look! Look! (*They fall upon their knees.*)

JARDIN— What is it, women!

A MAN— Look! Look!
(*The men cross themselves and fall prostrate. Old Rachel and the Bailiff alone remain standing.*)

RACHEL—(*Screening her eyes.*)

What is it, Rosa?

THE SAXONS

FIDELE— Auntie! auntie!

(She pulls old Rachel to her knees.)

A BREATH—*(Through the crowd.)* His ghost!

OSWALD—What is the matter? *(Upon hearing his voice, old Rachel, who has continued to stare toward the church, falls with her face to the ground.)*

A MAN—*(In a low voice.)* Jardin, speak.

JARDIN— Father.

OSWALD—What is it? *(A pause.)* What is the matter?

JARDIN— Is that you?

OSWALD—What was that shouting? *(A silence ensues. The monk puts his palm to his breast and coughs.)*

JARDIN—*(Completing his thought.)*—these men aghast here

Calls up to Jardin's mind a night in the wars

When we were storming Acre. The Infidel,

Sallying out, had laid the Lion Heart

Low in the dust. The waves of battle clapped

Over his head. Barred in with dripping spears

Of Turk and Christian, raged the bleeding whelp,

His paws red-clotted in his own hot blood.

Cleaving the gloom, a burst of crimson light

Streamed down the slanting spears and like a prow

Rolled back the waves of war. Between the crests

Of foam-white faces holy St. Augustine

Came walking down the bodies of the dead,

And lifting the Lion, fired him. At once

Rose on the night the planet of his shield

Burning a lane before his falchion fed,

And down the slope into the Turks he swept

Through dropping shields and sabers thrown in air,

A lurid streak of flame. So Jardin now,

Seeing this blessed monk the saints have brought,

Takes fire, and blown with hate of our Lord's foes,

Will lick the crags and leap from peak to peak,

Nor shall the flame go out until the wind

THE SAXONS

Rain heathen ashes on the pit of hell.

(Roused by the Bailiff's words, four or five of the men spring to their feet. The rest rise slowly and remain mute. Oswald comes down the steps.)

JARDIN—*(Knocking the men with his sword.)*

Line, line up! *(A man points down the street.)*

ANOTHER— We'll fix him, Father!

ANOTHER—He'll never strike no holy monk again!

ANOTHER—We'll burn the imp!

ANOTHER— Father shall see to it, too!

(The Bailiff strikes with his sword. The line marches right, double-quick.)

OSWALD—*(Excitedly.)*

Stay, men! Lay no rough hands upon the boy. *(The line halts. The monk puts his palm to his breast and coughs.)*

JARDIN—No rough hands on—?

OSWALD— The boy has done no harm.

The night I fell—

A MAN— Here's Father Benedict.

(They wait in silence.)

FATHER BENEDICT—Ah, brother Oswald! *(He comes riding in, left. The women bow reverently; the men bare their heads.)* Benedicite.

You see my children gathered here about,

How glad they are to see you.

OSWALD— And I, Father,

To be at work once more.

FATHER BENEDICT— Praise the Virgin. *(Dismounting)*

You show a Christian spirit coming thus,

Bruised as you are, to do the Master's work.

OSWALD—I promised it should be done tomorrow.

FATHER BENEDICT— And—?

OSWALD—I have two golden letters to put on.

FATHER BENEDICT—God hath his eye upon our altar cross;
And on you, too, my brother.

THE SAXONS

OSWALD— God has been
Good to me.

FATHER BENEDICT—The angels do His will.

OSWALD—And even human hands—

(He looks down the street.)

FATHER BENEDICT— 'Twas marvelous.

As I came down I passed the jagged cliff
You tumbled over, and there a while I paused
Entranced, as it were, by unseen Presences.

*(The boy, who climbed down from the tree upon the arrival
of the Priest, leads the ass out, left.)*

The mountains wore a new and hallowed look
In the morning light. I would give half my life
To have stood upon the peaks that night and seen
God's ministers drop shining down the sky
And blaze the gorge. But God works in the dark.
At night His golden ladders are let down
And deeds are done and no man knoweth how.
At dawn we see the severed hills, the seas
Huddled aghast at some vast mountain head
That yesterday lay fathoms in the deep.
So quietly He worketh in the night
That mountain ranges rise and no babe wakes.
Who can say: "Yonder God is"?

OSWALD— None, Father.

FATHER BENEDICT— None.

The hand that executes His purposes
Is hidden like the purposes themselves.
He dwelleth in the storm and in the calm,
Yet both look round and say: "Where dwelleth He?"
The sun that shines on all, shines not on Him.
He goeth forth at night and doth His will,
Yet the moon sees Him not. I rode along
Thinking upon your providential
Escape from death that night and of the work

THE SAXONS

God hath reserved for me in the great chase,
For half the glory is mine. I prayed our Lord
That if it be His will I might catch some
Glimpse of the dogs far off. I could not see
My hand before my eyes in spirit, but
With eyelids down, rode on, probing the dark,
Sounding deep in my soul the ocean of God,
And finding there bottomless waters.
The night of ebony and the golden dawn,
The deed the past holds and the future's deed,
Rose half way up the sky and called across
Fathomless spaces: "Who are you?" And I
Thought answer: "Thou art Fall; and thou, with hair
Bright with the morning and with frightened eyes
Fleeing the noise of dogs behind thee, thou
Art Resurrection and the Peace of God."
Connection I could find none. Stark and lone
They stood upon the twilight fields of air,
Strangers, each looking in the face of each,
When through the gloaming came a glittering link
Star-like with the image of our Lord
Bleeding in silver on a silver cross,
A marriage ring that married them, and I
Deep in my soul knew the Eternal and
Saw Prophecy grappling the North and heard
Heathendom hiss and coil and loose her folds;
And then a voice filling the heavens: "Well done."
Speaking to me, for the glory is mine.
Your crucifix has not been found yet?
OSWALD— No.
FATHER BENEDICT—And will not be.
OSWALD— It must be in the brook.
I had it in my hand just as I fell.
FATHER BENEDICT—'Tis in the hand of God where it shall be
Until the morning breaks of that great day

THE SAXONS

When Heathendom shall tumble down to hell.
Then it shall dangle bloody from the sky
While all the mountains shake.

OSWALD— What do you mean?

FATHER BENEDICT—The mountains trembled in the tempest.

OSWALD— When?

FATHER BENEDICT—

During the great chase. (*A pause.*) Is it possible
You start upon the chase with darkened eyes?

OSWALD—I do not understand you.

FATHER BENEDICT—(*Aside.*) Can it be
They have not told him of the dream? Mum, then.

OSWALD—Brother Andrew told me.

FATHER BENEDICT— And you understand
On whom this dark calamity shall fall?

OSWALD—It has already fallen.

FATHER BENEDICT— Already fallen!
You think the stag is down, then, do you?

OSWALD— Stag?

FATHER BENEDICT—You think the chase is run?

(*Oswald looks at him blankly.*) You seem to think
The dream has been fulfilled.

OSWALD— I do. How not?

This last calamity fulfilled the dream.

FATHER BENEDICT—Fulfilled? Nay, nay. The chase has not
begun.

The bruised stag is resting in the grove.
The hounds of Hell have yet to strike the trail,
And when they do, my feet are on the hills,
And the loud talbot's baying shall be still.

OSWALD—You speak as one whose joy is in the chase.

FATHER BENEDICT—(*Glaring at him.*)

You mean by that that I—

OSWALD— I mean, Father,

You speak as those that chase the deer with hounds—

THE SAXONS

FATHER BENEDICT—You mean to intimate that I lead the dogs?

OSWALD—As hunters do. (*The Priest searches the monk's face.*) You spoke of a stag and a trail.

FATHER BENEDICT—To show you that the dream is not fulfilled.

OSWALD—Have you not heard it, then? The train is lost.

FATHER BENEDICT—The—

OSWALD— Thrown from the cliffs.

A MAN— The witches did it.

ANOTHER—Blue devil-fire sputtered on the crags and sulphur—

ANOTHER—Two men were struck by the hags.

ANOTHER— The wine, too, Father,
They've poured it all out on the mountain rocks.

ANOTHER—Old Hulga did it.

SEVERAL— And the dwarf.

THE CROWD— The dwarf, too.

OSWALD—(*With a nod toward the church.*)

One of the men who rode in town for help

Is with the clerk. (*The Priest starts toward the church.*)

JARDIN—(*Stepping forward.*) Can Jardin say a word?

One night at Acre when the camps were sick,

And smells of corpses tainted every breath,

Jardin was pacing watch. Through the darkness,

Pierced by the burial torches of the Turks,

A smoke-thin shadow passed across the plain

Between the armies, blotting one by one

The drifting death-fires of old Saladin.

Nearer it came, and Jardin heard a moan,

And walking toward it found a Turkish lad

Half eaten by hunger, in a fever trance

Low-moaning piteously: "Dates, mother, dates."

Did Jardin say, Because the Turk's a boy

I'll spare him? Did Jardin give him dates? No.

THE SAXONS

He'd made a vow never to spare no foe
Of Mary's Son, so, like a starving hound,
This Christian blade, drinking his little blood,
Licked up the crumbs that Famine's jaws had left.
Did Jardin right?

FATHER BENEDICT—Our Paternoster says:
"Thy kingdom come." How could the kingdom come
If heathens were allowed to—

JARDIN— If the young Turk,
Instead of wobbling in a fever trance
As weak as smoke a breath could blow away,
Jardin had found astride a Christian corpse
Holding his red dirk up against the moon
For Allah's eyes and laughing at the blood,
Had Jardin spared him then—?

FATHER BENEDICT— Then the red dirk
Had hovered over your gray hairs like a hawk
Until your day of death, and when your soul,
Fresh from the holy lustral dews, had sprung
Singing toward Mary's bosom in the sky,
That red-plumed vulture swooping through the dark
Had chased it down to Hell.

JARDIN— Line up, men.

OSWALD— Stay!

You know not what you do.

FATHER BENEDICT— What does this mean?

JARDIN—It means that Jardin is a soldier still,
Still fighting as a servant of the Cross,
And never, while this arm can lift a sword,
Will this sword ever spare a scoffing imp
To invoke the devils of the air,
And pointing to the gouts of holy blood
Upon the mountain rocks, say: "Aha, see!
The Master's slave bleeds as the Master bled."

(Pointing with his sword down the street.)

THE SAXONS

The son of Satan.

A MAN— It's the dwarf, Father.

FATHER BENEDICT—(*Solemnly.*)

God lifts the curtain and the Play is on,
Whose last act shall unfold above the clouds
With Tempest and with Earthquake that shall shake
Hell to the very bottom. Seize him.

OSWALD—(*Excitedly.*) No!

No, no! The boy has done no— (*Coughing.*)

JARDIN— Come on, men!

Shall bloody daggers drip on our gray hairs,
And chase us through the deep? Shall they? Come on!
(*The line swings off.*)

Never will Jardin patch a truce with Hell
Until her towers, stormed by angels' wings,
Shall bow like Acre to the Son of God.

OSWALD—Stop them, Father! Until I tell you!

FATHER BENEDICT—(*Overcome with rage.*) This,
This is the worst I ever did hear. (*Looking about him while
Oswald coughs with great distress.*) Men.—

(*Seeing that all the men have gone, he shouts after them.*)

Pile your wood here, men! We shall have sacrifice!
(*He goes toward the church.*)

OSWALD—(*Frantically.*)

Father! Father! (*He falls upon his knees.*)

FATHER BENEDICT—A burnt offering. (*Oswald rises
quickly, his face full of horror, and flees in the direc-
tion of the Abbey, coughing violently.*)

FATHER BENEDICT—(*From the steps, calling after him bit-
terly.*)

If Benedict, whose "joy is in the chase,"
Shall "chase the deer with hounds as hunters do,"
Perhaps this devil that goes up in smoke
Will drop somewhere upon the mountain paths
And pluck your haunches from the talbot's teeth.

THE SAXONS

Pray God he may, when Benedict turns hound.

(He enters the church and closes the door.)

SCENE FIVE—The same street, projected to the outskirts of the village. On the right, is a wagon bridge built of logs. Some slabs, left over from the building of the bridge years ago, lie in a pile at the roadside. Farther back, across the river the course of which is marked by a line of sycamores, the mountain rises abrupt and green, with here and there patches of bare rocks and trees thickening as it extends back and up. Away to the center and left, a stretch of bottom land with cultivated fields. One gets a nearer view of the snow-capped peaks seen from the mountain side in the first Scene and from the courtyard of the abbey in the second. In the foreground at the roadside, is a large olive tree with its dark shadow lying directly beneath it, for over the landscape is a clear light as of a noonday sun shining from a cloudless sky.

Under the tree, with several willow baskets strung together lying upon the ground beside him, sits the dwarf, Sigurd, polishing Oswald's silver crucifix upon his knee. He holds it out in a bit of sunshine that falls through the leaves and, after flashing the light about, resumes rubbing it upon his trousers.

JARDIN—(Left, shouting as to men far off.)

Close in, men! Close in!

(The dwarf rises to his knees and looks in the direction of the town. Then, hiding the crucifix in his bosom, he comes out in the road and looks in the opposite direction as though trying to discover who it is they are after. Stones strike in the road and go clattering across the bridge. A moment later Jardin and his men come rushing in.)

THE SAXONS

ONE OF THE MEN—(*With his hands to his mouth, shouting across the river.*) We've got him!

ANOTHER—Fellows!
(*He makes for the pile of slabs. Several of the men follow him.*)

ANOTHER—We can get shavings up at Bacqueur's shop.
(*They load themselves with slabs. Jardin, who with the dwarf is in the center of the crowd, suddenly holds aloft the silver crucifix.*)

JARDIN—You know who threw him down now, don't you, eh?

A CRY OF RAGE—Devil!

JARDIN—Don't knock him, men. This is God's work.

CRIES—Down with him! Burn him!

JARDIN—Fetch your slabs, men.

CRIES—Come on!

(*They start toward the village.*)

SHOUTS—(*From over the river.*)

Look out! Look out!

(*The men carrying slabs glance back, then throw their loads down and go fleeing toward the village.*)

CRIES—Men! Men!

(*The crowd flees, leaving Jardin holding the dwarf by the collar standing in the road.*)

A VOICE—(*From across the bridge.*) Let go that boy.

JARDIN—This is a day of miracles. (*Canzler enters.*)

Heathen,

Between us is a grave.

(*He lays his hand upon his sword.*)

CANZLER—Let go that boy.

JARDIN—(*Advancing to meet him.*)

With Christ in one hand, and in the other this.

(*Canzler draws his sword, and a duel ensues. The Bailiff, protected by his armor which Canzler has twice struck and failed to pierce, lays his blows on as though he*

THE SAXONS

would end it all at once. Canzler deliberately draws back into the shade of the tree. Lunging madly, Jardin follows him. The villagers reappear with stones in their hands, and try to get where they will not hit Jardin when they throw.)

CRIES—Run him through, Bailiff! Run him through!

JARDIN—(With a lunge.) There!

A CRY— Ha!

(Canzler has parried the thrust, and his sword has passed through the chain hauberk deep into the Bailiff's breast. The latter staggers back, his astonishment that steel armor should be pierced by mortal sword giving way to a look of chagrin, and after endeavoring to steady himself with the blade of his sword, falls flat, his armor clanking on the road. The villagers drop their stones and flee terror-stricken. Canzler stands for a moment, wipes the perspiration from his brow, then reaches down and takes up the Bailiff's sword by the point.)

CANZLER—(Swinging it around his head and hurling it toward the village.)

You men in steel!

(He goes back under the tree and gets the baskets and comes out into the road. The dwarf stoops to pick up the crucifix that lies in the dirt about a yard from the Bailiff's hand.)

CANZLER— Nay, let it lie, my boy.

(He takes the boy by the hand and they return across the bridge. The Bailiff stirs, lifts himself to his elbow, and stretches his hand toward the crucifix. He cannot reach it and falls back and lies still.)

THE SAXONS

ACT FOUR.

SCENE ONE—In the cavern, as in Scene two of the second act. The spinning wheel stands against the wall and above it from a peg hangs a heavy skein of black wool. The baskets lie upon the floor. To the right of the low fire, a heap of chips, pine cones, and broken limbs. The cave is quite dark.

From the left the gnomes enter stealthily, one after another.

TIME—The same night.

KILO—(Huskily.) Gone.

ZIP—(Calling back.) Gone.

VOICE—(To the left.) She's gone.

(Gimel enters and, after him, Suk. Kilo crosses the cave and stands listening.)

ZIP—(Stopping.) What is it?

(Gimel puts out his hand, palm back, warningly. Suk stops. Suddenly, to the left, a sound of whistling is heard.)

SUK—(Huskily, to silence him.) Zory!

(The whistling stops.)

KILO—(Turning back.)

It's a frog booming on the river bank.

GIMEL—The villagers should hear it they would squeal:

"Ave! Ave!" and hurry to the church

And take their pennies to the Priest. Curse them!

(While the rest snoop about the cave in search of food, Kilo puts some kindling upon the fire, and getting down upon his knees, blows it into a flame. He then stretches himself out upon the floor, and propping his head upon his elbow, begins to poke in the ashes with a stick.)

KILO—Gimel, you're mad because your monk's alive.

(Zip goes out right on tiptoe.)

THE SAXONS

SUK—I wonder if Granny knows we killed the bat?

GIMEL—I haven't had a bite since.

SUK— Yesterday

I found a cricket down among the stones

Still numb with winter's cold.

GIMEL—(*Fearfully.*) What is it, Zip?

KILO—(*Nonchalantly.*)

Gimel, if the monk was sleeping there

On Granny's couch and you had Loki's sledge,

Think you could kill him?

SUK— Sh!

(*Kilo sits up.*)

GIMEL— Zip, what is it?

ZIP—(*Re-entering.*)

It's going to storm. The clouds are scudding fast

And thick and dark, brushing the mountain tops.

SUK—She gets the owl, she'll be here.

(*Kilo lies down. The other gnomes, as if fearing the entrance of the witch, walk, left.*)

SUK— Better get up.

ZIP—She'll flog you. Kilo, if she finds you there.

KILO—I'll play I'm Sigurd.

ZIP— Then she'll drub you sure.

You see these baskets here? To-night at dusk

The boy crept tiptoe to the entrance there

And threw them in. I holloed at him: "Hey!

You'd better run! Granny's been looking for you."

(*Kilo rakes a coal from the fire and blows the ashes from it.*)

KILO—You say the wind's up, Zip?

ZIP— It's going to storm.

SUK—(*Looking among the dry herbs.*)

There's not a leaf of Odin's helmet here.

KILO—Gimel! (*He blows the coal.*)

GIMEL—(*To Suk.*)

THE SAXONS

She's taken it with her. She knew
If we should get out in the air—

KILO—

Come here.

GIMEL—She'd never see us in this cave again.

VOICE—(*To the left, in a monotone.*)

A rat and a cat and a cat and a mouse.

SUK—I wonder when she's going to make us broth.

GIMEL—She said we'd be as thin as chestnut leaves
Before she put the cauldron on again.

SUK—How can we toil when fire won't burn,
When Loki's hammers are soft as lead,
When her charms all fail wherever we turn,
When blight won't gather and murrain won't spread?
How can we toil when there's not a Nix
But turns to stone at a crucifix?

(*From the left, Zory enters.*)

ZIP—What are you chewing, Zory?

ZORY—

Slippery elm.

GIMEL—She's scared herself at the pesky thing.

Often as here by the coals she's sat

Crunching her pignuts and stroking her cat,

Many a time I've heard her say

That Thor's arm shriveled that April day

When out of a cloud in a thunder shower

He threw his bolt at the tall gray tower.

It shivered a poplar tree near by.

The church stood sound with its cursed crest,

While the god went bellowing down the sky,

Clutching his shoulder in terrible pain.

Now he rides to the east and he rides to the west—

So Granny says—and he's never seen

Lashing his goats through the driving rain.

Dark and fireless the clouds drift round;

Their waters fall without any sound.

It's Hoder that drives them now, I ween.

THE SAXONS

ZORY—(*Leaving the herbs.*)

She'd left a slip of the Devil's herb,

(*Skipping to the right.*)

You'd see me sweeping along the sky ;

I'd straddle the moon and ride her down.

ZIP—Be quiet, Zory.—You'd better not. You hear?

(*Zory goes out.*)

SUK—The fairies too are bolder now.

Every hour you can hear them call

From forest and bracken and water-fall.

Even at midday, when I've been clearing

Ore from the mountains and stood a peering

Through cracks in the cliff, I have seen them at play

Catching the drops of silvery spray,

Running with emeralds and amethysts

To the stones where the purple iris rests.

With hands to their mouths, from the mossy ledge,

They boom to the bittern far down in the sedge

On the river bank. They are in the air.

Woodland and water—everywhere.

GIMEL—And there's not a place even down in the ground,

No matter how dark, but that elves are found

Whispering and prying, their little eyes

Darting and glancing like fireflies.

SUK—They say that's the cause of Loki's fright.

ZIP—And well it might be, if this tale is true.

Sleeping he lay on the ground one night—

He had guzzled his fill of Granny's brew—

When, thinking he heard his bellows blow,

He opened his eyes and spied the glow

Of flames on his forge, the sparks a leaping,

And a score of elves—they thought him sleeping—

On trough and anvil and on the ground

Clapping their hands as they fell around.

Then he stirred, when lo! there was not a spark ;

THE SAXONS

The bellows was still, the stithy was dark.
KILO—(*Rising quickly to a sitting posture.*)
The tale is as true as the master's steel.
Here on the stones I lay that night,
Curled like a cat in the fire-light,
While there by the wall with a whirring sound
Granny's old spinning wheel went round.
It whirred and it whirred so I could not sleep,
So I lay and yawned and began to peep
And nudge the fire, for the night was cool.
Around the big wheel the wether's wool
Ran black, the dame's foot under her skirt
Paddling the pedal for Sigurd's shirt.
The wheel stopped a moment, and during the hush
I had dropped to a doze, when there came a rush
Of the coldest air that ever warped skin,
And Loki, frightened, dashed up and in
From the rift in the rocks. (*He rises to one knee.*)
His face was white
And the smut upon it showed black as night
And his limbs were so weak that he almost fell.
When he got his breath he began to tell
How, roused from his sleep by a noise in his shop—
Then Granny spied me and nudged him to stop,
And the two went out. I leaped to the ledge
And peered through the crack. Far up on the edge
Of the cliff where the hazel bushes grow,
The pines were glossing; the gnomes, I trow,
Were choking the caves to get in the ground
And hide in the dark lest they should be found
When Balder should roll his bright wheel on high.
Already his lances waved in the sky
Bedabbled with blood. The heavens were pale
And the peaks were bright with his burning mail.
I lost not a trice. As quick as a wink

THE SAXONS

I rushed to the roots and out through the chink
With the Devil's herb I followed the pair.
Darting invisible through the air,
I squatted toad-like on the turf and heard
Them babble their plans, heard every word,
Heard Granny wheeze and the master say—
As they rose from the rock and turned away—
“We must nag on the gnomes or the cross will rise.
They must take the monk's life or put out his—

ZORY—(*Rushing in.*) Look out!

(He dashes out, left, followed by the other gnomes. From the right, the witch enters. In her right hand she holds a big black owl by the wing; in her left, a large club. She is tall, raw-boned, and weasened. Her hair is of a stringy gray, and a skein of it hangs upon her cheek. Her breath comes short, and there is a wheeze in her voice.)

WITCH—What's this? Burning my wood? (*Shouting.*)

Sigurd! Ay, ay!

You'd better hide, you lazy, crooked dwarf.

You'll pay for this.

(She throws the owl down, and taking the sticks from the fire, beats the flames out upon the floor.)

You'll pay for this, I say.

You'll gladly sleep upon the coldest stones,
But you'll not close an eye. You'll moan all night,
Dragging your red-puffed soles across the floor,
And beg the gnomes for snow. I'll teach you how
To burn my kindling up. Here I must trudge
Up to the blasted cliffs day after day,
Strip bark, drag brush, break limbs, and gather cones
Among the pines, the bait of all the winds,
And barely get enough to heat my brew,
And here you'll lie roasting your wretched bones.
I'll warm your cursed shanks. I'll put your feet

THE SAXONS

To blister on the red-hot coals again
And flog you limping up the rocks for wood.

(Hanging up the baskets.)

Let the monks take the geese. They're out there now
Flapping their wings and gagging at the moon
To call the Christians down. You'll keep their necks!
You'll swear by father Thor you fetched them up
And penned them in the lot. I'll beat you, though;
I'll whale you with these rods until you're sore.

(She piles her wood against the wall.)

Let the monks steal the geese. You'll gather wood.
You'll find it scarce, I vow. There's not a day
You're by the stream. You're up among the crags,
Beating the eagles from the new-dropped kids.
You feed the woodman's ewes. You hunt the hills
For sorrel-grass to see the lambkins eat.
You never drain an udder for my sop,
Or bring me honey from the gum. Sneezeweed
You never dig or nightshade from the marsh.
You play among the logs. My nuts and corn
You steal to feed the striped chipmunks with.
All day you're in the wood or on the slope,
Listening to hear the noisy Christian bells.
You love the damned sound. You love the monks.
You fetch them pine knots from the big green ridge
To singe the gnomes and light their altar fires.
You've learned to fumble buckeyes on your breast.
I'll teach you how to pray. Ay, ay! You hear?
I'll weave my dwarf a cowl. Ha, ha! You hear?
Sigurd! I'll get you in the morning.

(A rumble of thunder.)

Eh?

(Thunder again.)

Ay, ay, Thor! I'll have them there!

(Shouting.)

THE SAXONS

Gnomes! Gnomes!

Zip! Gimel! Kilo! Lazy broth-suckers!

Here's work for you, you knaves!

Work and broth!

(*Louder.*) Broth, I said! You hear?

Zory, you scamp!

(*Feeling about her dress.*)

Hear what I say?

Kilo! Suk! Gimel! Here's broth for you!

(*In an underbreath.*)

If you'll work.

You don't, I'll lamn you, you toads.

(*Shouting.*)

You hear?

Ay, peak about! peak about!

Thor wants you.

(*The gnomes enter timidly, half-afraid.*)

SUK—(*Whimpering.*)

I'm hungry.

WITCH—Hungry!

Out in the air with you, then!

Suck the lightning's dugs! Guzzle in the rain!

(*Low muttering thunder.*)

Hear that? Can you? Can you bark?

Ay, ay, Thor!

(*As the thunder dies away, the gnomes rush wildly toward the witch.*)

Ay, here's your herb!

Out with you now, every last one of you!

ZIP—(*Giving him a leaf.*)

Up with you! (*Zip disappears.*)

Kilo! There you go!

(*Kilo disappears.*)

Now Suk! Now Gimel! Now you can get him!

(*The gnomes, taking the slips, disappear.*)

THE SAXONS

Ay, ay! Chase the monk! Crack the big bells!
Pluck up the pines and knock the steeples down!

ZORY—(*Rushing in.*)

Me too, Granny!

WITCH—Ay, you scamp! (*Giving him a leaf.*)

Bark now!

Skedaddle in the air!

ZORY—I'll straddle the moon and—

(*He disappears.*)

WITCH—

There you go!

Ay, straddle her! Ride her through the clouds!

There they are, Thor.

Now for my dwarf. (*Picking up her club.*)

I'll bruise him a little. (*Shouting.*)

Sigurd!

I'll get you. (*She goes out, left.*)

SCENE TWO—The scriptorium in the dormitory of the abbey. The walls are of stone. In the left wall, near the corner, a door opens into a hall that leads thence to the courtyard. Near it, forward, an enormous chest with metal trimmings and handles of embossed stags' heads, the antlers gradually disappearing into the panel. Upon the chest, as though thrown there carelessly, lies a heavy cloak. About ten feet from the door, against the rear wall, stands a small priedieu covered with a rich altar-cloth interwoven with the figure—seen in old arras—of St. Giles sitting upon a rock with the deer resting its head in his lap. Behind the deer is a clump of brambles. The kneeling piece, which projects from under the folds of the altar-cloth, is of dark wood highly polished. Upon it is a scarlet cushion. A little above the priedieu, in a semicircular niche in the wall, is set a bronze crucifix some

THE SAXONS

ten inches in height. Before it burns a small taper. Farther to the right, a second door leading into a corridor which connects with the sleeping apartments. Between this door and the priedieu are shelves filled with books and old manuscripts. Beyond the door, which swings in and is partly open, an old buckler hangs upon the wall, and beneath it, upon two iron spikes, a long spear. Between the spear and buckler is fixed a parchment cut mitriform and bearing in large illumined letters the inscriptions HUGH DE BUILLON CUM DEO ET CUM GODEFRIDO NICAÆIS ANTIOCHIIS HIEROSOLYMIS MIL NONAG SEPT OCT NOV. Farther to the right, in the corner, a Saracen coat-of-mail filled with spears which, converging center and spread out above and below, look like a sheaf of steel. Across the breast of the coat-of-mail is a strip of parchment with the inscription illumined as before: A MOHAMED FILIO SATAN CHRISTO FILIO DEI. In the right wall are apertures of two deep-set windows, near which are three carrels, each with an old manuscript spread out upon it and ink-pots and other copying and illuminating materials. Hanging beside them are finger rags smeared with various colored stains. On one of the carrels lies a sprig of flowering mountain laurel. Near the center of the room, a few feet to the right, stands a long table running parallel with the side walls. It is overstrewn with old manuscripts, some of them discolored and half unrolled; others, near the forward end, piled in the form of a miniature pyramid. Farther back, a small brass lamp, pitcher-shaped and with a wick protruding from its spout, burns with a yellow flame. The room is but dimly lighted, as a large room would be, with a single lamp burning upon the table and a little taper winking in the niche in the wall.

To the right of the table, in a square, high-backed chair with animal-feet, sits the Abbot in a black gown, bareheaded. His feet, which are under the table, are cased in slippers

THE SAXONS

of sheep-skin with the white fleece still upon it. From his right hand, which hangs beside his chair, a scroll of parchment trails upon the floor. Farther back, upon the opposite side of the table, stands the Priest, his left hand resting upon the back of a chair the front legs of which are raised a few inches from the floor. At the further end of the table Oswald is standing with his finger wiping away the tears that trinkle down his cheeks.

Thunder is heard intermittently, and from time to time the windows are shaken by the violence of the wind.

FATHER BENEDICT—(*White with wrath, turning to the Abbot.*)

Endorse this, Father?

OSWALD— Father, I did not say it.

ABBOT—*Ira, Benedict, altis urbibus*

Causa cur perirent. Let him explain.

FATHER BENEDICT—I say, do you endorse this?

OSWALD— I did not say it.

ABBOT—I endorse nothing till I hear both sides.

FATHER BENEDICT—I gave you both sides.

ABBOT— Sit down, Benedict.

FATHER BENEDICT—You think I'd sit down with these things spread here, (*With a wave toward the manuscripts.*)

And Christ thrust yonder in the little niche?

Not while I have in mind the first Psalm.

ABBOT— Yet

You seem to have forgotten what *ἀγαπάω* means,

As found in that third chapter of St. John.

(*He lays his parchment upon the table and reaches over and takes a book from the pile at his right.*)

FATHER BENEDICT—Not while I have in mind the first Psalm.

ABBOT—(*Turning over the leaves of the book.*)

If

You thought more of the Gospels—

THE SAXONS

FATHER BENEDICT—(*Sarcastically.*) As heathens do.

ABBOT—What is it to be a heathen? Is it not
To act unchristlike?

FATHER BENEDICT— What is it to be a dog?

OSWALD—I did not say that Father was a—

FATHER BENEDICT— What!

Just now you did confess—

OSWALD— I said you spoke—

Spoke as hunters—

FATHER BENEDICT—*That's a lie!*

ABBOT— Benedict!

Be circumspect, lest in your anger you

Bay at him and turn that which you do scorn.

FATHER BENEDICT—I scorn the imputation which his pride

Popped at me. As though all the saints in heaven

Bowed down to him because the other night—

(*Turning away.*)

Oh, but God hates the proud man!

ABBOT— And, therefore,

Wisdom doth bid you keep an open ear

And leave the scroll of judgment still unsealed.

For how shall Mercy find the iron leaf?

Will Heaven's book be open if we close

Ours? When men cry to us, if we shut our ears,

We shut out Heaven's whispers. Oh, nothing—

Of all the deeds men do that vex the sky—

Nothing so rankles in the heart of God

As to see lips, fresh come from prayer for grace,

Refusing justice.

(*The Priest has walked forward at an angle from the table and stands with his back to the Abbot. Reaching under his gown, he draws a dark string across his breast and begins, seemingly, to untie a knot. The Abbot regards him in silence.*)

Will you hear him?

THE SAXONS

FATHER BENEDICT—(*Gruffly.*) Go on.

ABBOT—No, Benedict; do it dispassionately.
You say God hates the proud. So he does. Yet
Wrath is more perilous to a man than pride.
For while pride turns a man's face to the sky,
'Tis wrath that shoves him where the thunders fall.

FATHER BENEDICT—(*Under his breath.*)

I'll drop some thunder on you.

ABBOT— Now, my son,
Speak as though angels heard you. 'Tis almost
Midnight, and the Sabbath draweth nigh.

OSWALD—(*To the Priest.*)

Father.

ABBOT—Do you hear?—He shuts his ears. Proceed.
Remembering that truth is God's own bread.
He hungers for it.

OSWALD— Oh, I have not lied!

I did not say that Father was a dog.

ABBOT—I know you have not, Oswald. The three years
That you have been here never have been stained
With pride and falsehood. Those that now malign,
God knows where they shall go when the end comes.

OSWALD—I will explain just how it came about.

Then, if you think I have done Father wrong,

Tell me and let me do penance for it. I—

I will not be here long.

ABBOT— My son!

OSWALD— I feel

The darkness gathering round me.

ABBOT— Don't say that.

You will be well again. You will be strong

Some day, my son, and many years shall pass

Ere the Lord calls you. Hath he not given proof?

A shepherd to you, surely God hath been.

Three nights ago at this time, where were you?

THE SAXONS

Lying down in the gorge, and the night wind
Passed and you knew it not. But God watched there,
And sent his servant—for all things serve Him—
And here you are safe in the fold again.
That deed unclasped a volume of bright days.
God doth not put his hand forth and lift up
As he hath lifted you, and then cast down
Ere the knees be straightened. Your tears should fall
For joy, my son, not sorrow. Think how near
Your foot was to the gates of darkness when
God turned your face around and there flashed out
A jeweled finger pointing toward a dawn—
Far off it may be or it may be near—
When the last shred of darkness shall vanish.
Let those that hound you, fear, for God shall cleave
A chasm in the earth for them; but you—
No, no, my son, not darkness, light. God's light
And glory from the new Jerusalem
Will shine upon you on the mountain tops,
If dreams are tapers lighting what is to be,
As some believe they are.

(The Priest reaches under his gown and takes something in his right hand, and with the other draws the string from around his neck and drops it into his right hand, after which he pulls the sleeve down over it till only the knuckles are visible.)

Therefore, my son,
Lift up your face and let white words go forth
And usher in the Sabbath. Truth in the heart
Is fire under water, but on the lips
It lighteth every man the Way of Life.

(The Priest goes toward the chest near the door.)

Benedict, will you do as Pilate did?

FATHER BENEDICT—Is he the Lord?

ABBOT—

He is—

THE SAXONS

FATHER BENEDICT— Then who are you?

ABBOT—He is a child of our Lord's.

FATHER BENEDICT— So am I.

ABBOT—So you are, Benedict, a full grown child.

FATHER BENEDICT—Even if I don't pray here

(With a disdainful motion toward the priedieu.)

ABBOT— A full grown child;

Large enough, one would think, to have slain the wolf

Of hate in you.

(The Priest takes up the cloak from the chest and begins to put it on.)

Is it the truth you fear? *(A pause.)*

You dare to go out under the open sky

With hatred in your heart, a night like this? *(A pause.)*

If you go now I know the reason why.

You fear to lay your heart down here and let

The light shine on it with Oswald's, side by side.

OSWALD—*(To the Abbot.)*

Father,—

FATHER BENEDICT—*(Over his shoulder.)*

Call a dog Father?

ABBOT— Benedict,

Exasperating beyond word in this

Conduct of yours. You come up here as one

Whose honor has been wounded, and you throw

Your charge down and when Oswald takes it up

To answer it, you will not hear him, but

You slink away. A travesty on man

Is he who has but one ear, and that filled

With his own voice. *(Rising.)*

But I will settle this.

(Lifting his hand.)

My son, I now absolve you from all—

FATHER BENEDICT—*(Turning quickly.)*

Hold!

THE SAXONS

(He pulls his cloak around so as to hide his right hand, then comes forward.)

Your haste to wash his heart is evidence—

ABBOT—You tacitly admit your charge is false

By the eagerness—

FATHER BENEDICT—What are you talking of?

ABBOT—Your eagerness to get out in the dark.

FATHER BENEDICT—Who said that I was going?

(To Oswald.)

Now then, you

Lay your heart down under the lamplight here,

And I will show a hunch-backed devil in it.

ABBOT—Tell us, my son, just how it came about.

Let truth spring out upon the table armed.

(He resumes his seat.)

OSWALD—When Father spoke this morning of a chase,

A stag pursued by hounds and things like that,

I simply said that—

FATHER BENEDICT—“Simply said!”

OSWALD—

I said—

FATHER BENEDICT—I was one of the hounds, the talbot
hound

That led the pack.

OSWALD— Why, Father!

FATHER BENEDICT—*(Advancing toward him.)*

You say that

A second time, and by the—

ABBOT— Benedict!

Sprinkled with eyes, a wheel of God's own car

Attends our brother. You would best beware.

You know God hath him circled round about

With that that shall uproot the steadfast hills.

(Through the door, rear, Louis enters, carrying a flagon and a silver cup, his face showing terror. Seeing the

THE SAXONS

Priest, he stops suddenly as though amazed, then enters slowly.)

FATHER BENEDICT—I care not were he nine times circled
round,

As Hell is, I would—

ABBOT—(*Lifting his hand.*)

Let me finish. Then,

If with eyes open you will venture on,

Do it. The night is wild. Heaven hath shaken down

Many a pine upon the mountain tops,

And steeples too, no doubt, and towns, who knows?

No man can tell what dawn shall look on. Even

This house of God—Hark how the thunders break!

The winds are playing havoc with the world

And Order frightened hath plunged into the sea.

LOUIS—The southern gable has been blown down.

ABBOT—(*After a look of surprise.*) And

Thrice in the mossed chapel tower the bell

Hath rung, and no hand touched it; as it were

A tocsin to alarm the world that Hell

Hath landed. Though the seas be blown away

And the everlasting hills be tumbled down,

In summer calmness still the soul of man

Stands like a fortress, sure against assault

And terrible as a gorgon's head to Hell,

And adamant to all her engines. But

Let wrath break out inside, and crash! the gates

Are down.

FATHER BENEDICT—(*Tapping himself upon his breast.*)

And Hell comes in.

ABBOT—

And Hell goes in

And ravins there.

FATHER BENEDICT—In me.

ABBOT—

The lightning hath

No power to strike a tree while the blue sky

THE SAXONS

Bends over it. But let the wrath of Hell
Build up a cloud and fire it, and the tree
Falls shattered. But God calls the cloud away
And His winds blow it into nothingness.

FATHER BENEDICT—The tree is—?

ABBOT— Oswald there. He stands secure.

FATHER BENEDICT—And the cloud—?

ABBOT— You. You blacken over him

And, charged with passion, make an atmosphere
Of sulphur and in it, as in native air,
Hell slips her flame and the trunk tumbles down
To darkness. But God calls the cloud away
To judgment, and its shadow is seen no more.

If you will venture further in your wrath,
Do it, for I have done. (*A pause.*) Very well, then.
You may resume, my—

OSWALD— I will undergo
Whatever ordeal Father may suggest;
Will walk hot irons or put my hand in fire
Or anything.

ABBOT— You hear that, Benedict?

FATHER BENEDICT—He knows the Pope has banned the
ordeal. (*To Oswald with scorn.*)

Brave!

OSWALD—I call the saints—

FATHER BENEDICT—(*To Louis.*)

Do I look like a hound?

OSWALD—I said you *spoke* as those that hunt—

FATHER BENEDICT—

By that

Meaning that I should tarre them on him.

OSWALD—(*With a puzzled look.*) On
Me?

ABBOT—How did you come to say it, Oswald?

OSWALD—I grew up, Father, in a forest where
Men used to hunt, and I have often sat

THE SAXONS

In winter round their fires and heard them tell
Tales of the chase. And so when Father spoke
Of a chase my mind went back—

ABBOT— Did you say this
After he told you of the hunter's dream?

OSWALD—Dream?

FATHER BENEDICT—I told? I did not tell him.

(Instantly the Abbot frowns silence at the Priest.)

Speak out.

ABBOT—*Non somnium venatoris—*

OSWALD— What dream?

PRIEST—*(Contemptuously.)*

As if he did not know it!

ABBOT—*(Agitated.)*

Ne—ne dic!

Non scit somnium.

PRIEST—*(Opening wide his eyes.)*

That's the trick, then!

I'm to believe that, am I?

OSWALD— Father, what—?

FATHER BENEDICT—I'll tell you what. The hunter—

ABBOT— Benedict!

FATHER BENEDICT—If he don't know the dream, I'll tell him.

Macias saw a pack of—

ABBOT—*(Striking the table.)* Will you stop?

Eum ad insaniam adiges.

FATHER BENEDICT—Let it drive him mad.

(As though provoked beyond expression, the Abbot passes his hand across his brow and casts a scornful glance toward the Priest.)

ABBOT— Oswald, you go back
Into your cloister.

OSWALD— Drive who mad, Father?

FATHER BENEDICT—You. The hunter saw the furious
hounds of Hell

THE SAXONS

Chasing you up a mountain, while a storm—

ABBOT—Benedict, God's curse—

FATHER BENEDICT— On his enemies?

ABBOT— On—

FATHER BENEDICT—(*Stretching out his right arm.*)

On those that aid them?

ABBOT— Yes, and on—

FATHER BENEDICT— Him, then.

(*From his right hand he drops the silver crucifix and, with the forefinger of his left, points at Oswald. The latter starts, shrinking in terror from the curse. The Abbot and Louis, dumbfounded, stare wide-eyed at the crucifix which dangles from its cord about the Priest's finger. The latter, after regarding with an expression of triumph the astonishment of the Abbot, lets the crucifix fall to the table and, reaching across to the other side, pulls the flagon over to himself and proceeds to pour out a cup of wine.*)

You're a smart set. You've wormed your way around

To let him out of calling me a dog;

Now let him out of that. You've made it seem—

(*He sips the wine.*)

ABBOT—Where did you find it?

FATHER BENEDICT— To yourselves, no doubt,

That he was ignorant of the dream when he

Insinuated that I led the pack

That chased him.

(*After a sip of wine.*)

Or would lead it.

ABBOT— Where did you

Find it?

FATHER BENEDICT—Where do you suppose?

LOUIS— In the brook?

FATHER BENEDICT—A cauldron of hell-broth would be nearer it. And you? (*The Abbot shakes his head.*)

THE SAXONS

On his best-beloved.

LOUIS— On Pierre?

FATHER BENEDICT— On the dwarf. (*He drinks.*)
Wages for his services, I suppose.

(*While the Priest drains the cup, the Abbot nods to Louis, who steps quickly toward Oswald as if to hurry him out*)

FATHER BENEDICT—Hold up! You let him stay.

OSWALD—(*Excitedly.*) You had no right—

FATHER BENEDICT—(*Lifting his hand.*)

It's my turn to explain. (*He begins to fill the cup.*)

ABBOT— Oswald, retire.

OSWALD—I want to clear myself.

FATHER BENEDICT— *Clear! Let him stay.*
(*Cup in hand, to the Abbot.*)

After your pretty speech this morning I,
Reaching the village, found your monk, here, and
Jardin at swords' points. Some one had espied
The dwarf, it seems, in town. And the people,
Remembering what he did the other night,
Shouted, and the Bailiff's voice rang loud
For vengeance.

OSWALD— But 'twas the boy—

LOUIS— You be still.

FATHER BENEDICT—Jardin proposed that they should burn
him. He

Opposed it, fought it, he did. Just then I
Rode in. Jardin appealed to me, and I
Urged them to seize the devil. Then it was
This upstart here let loose his venomous,
Vile, hell-suggested intimation that
I had turned hound.

OSWALD— I did not—

FATHER BENEDICT— Not a word.

The upshot of it all was— Ah, but God
Will pour his wrath out on your head for this!

THE SAXONS

In view of what then happened, I now call
This night, this midnight hour, and wake up God
To witness that these mountains shall be cleared
Of heathen; that the dews of heaven shall fall
Baptizing bodies of the unbaptized
Stiff among the wild-flowers. For this young week,
That in this storm hath stepped upon the world,
Shall see a storm more terrible than this
On mountain tops uprooting human trees
And choking Death and Hell and Darkness.
Or let the infant Sabbath, born this hour,
Put not a foot on earth, but like a bird
Wander upon the winds, and in the dark
Grove for the morning star and find it not.
Let the gates of the morning be shut and let no bell
Wake up the world, unless it wake to see
Death ravining on the mountains and white Faith
Painting her banners there in heathen blood.
But Mercy shall be shut up in the caves,
For this accursed deed shall be tracked down,
And Vengeance ranging like a wild beast—Thou,
Above these maddening winds that wreck this world,
Hear me, *hear me*, HEAR ME, Thou in heaven!
(Out of breath.)

And you—and you who caused all this, may God—
ABBOT—Benedict!

FATHER BENEDICT—But let God have his—

(He swallows the wine.) His will.

And he will have it, mark you that, young man.

(To the Abbot.)

Strange are the ways God hath of rousing up
The slothful to a work he long since laid
Upon the world and the world shirked it. But
It shall be done now, *it shall be done now*.
If for three years the heathen on the heights

THE SAXONS

Have served their idols, in less than three days
Their idols and themselves shall be in Hell.
Lead the chase yonder, Father, lead it there!
Beneath *them* shake the mountains. Let this hand
Strike for Thee there, and serve Thee, striking them,
That this accursed deed may smell no more,
A putrid carcass rotting under heaven.
This is how God hath roused us up at last.

(*He drains the cup and sets it down.*)

My people armed with vengeance had swung down
And reached the bridge, and Jardin, valiant man,
Soldier of God, Knight Templar of the Cross,
Who in the heathen land fought for ten years
To stamp out Satan, even in his old age
A furnace burning with the breath of God
And firing those about him to the work
Of ridding these mountains of the heathen, he—
May God reward him for it in the world
Without end, Amen—he had grabbed the dwarf
To drag him off and burn him—

OSWALD— It was wrong—

FATHER BENEDICT—His blood is on your hands.

OSWALD—(*Frantically.*) You murdered him!

You had no cause to kill him.

FATHER BENEDICT— *!!*. Hear that.

OSWALD—The boy had done no harm. The night I fell
'Twas he who—

LOUIS—(*Seizing him.*) Will you hush?

ABBOT—(*White with fear.*) Oswald, retire.

Your fever—you're excited. (*Rising.*) Benedict,
Don't press this matter further—now.

FATHER BENEDICT—(*Bewildered.*) The boy!

ABBOT—Louis, take him—

FATHER BENEDICT— No cause to kill the boy!

OSWALD—He—

THE SAXONS

LOUIS— Father has forbidden it.

FATHER BENEDICT—

Um-hm!

I think I see—I think—I think I see.

ABBOT—What?

FATHER BENEDICT—So he told you it was the dwarf, eh?

LOUIS—(*All the while shoving Oswald toward the rear door.*)

Just his imagination Father. I—

I was the one who found him at the gate.

He knew no more about it than a stone.

'Twas night; the stars were shooting in the—

FATHER BENEDICT—

When?

LOUIS—When he was brought up. Why he—

ABBOT—(*Quickly.*)

Louis!

(*Searching the Priest's face.*)

You asked

If he told us—?

FATHER BENEDICT—It was the dwarf was killed.

ABBOT—He told us that you had burned him.

FATHER BENEDICT—(*Fiercely to Oswald.*) God shall burn
You, griffon, son of Tophet, damned thing!

(*Terrified at the dark in the corridor and with a wild expression upon his face, Oswald clutches hysterically at the door jambs.*)

OSWALD—No, no, no, no! (*Piteously, as he is shoved along through the hall.*) Father, Father!

FATHER BENEDICT—

Call Hell!

I pray to God—

ABBOT— Breathe no curse, Benedict.

I will inquire into this affair.

If he hath done aught culpable—

FATHER BENEDICT—

If! If!

ABBOT—If he hath spoken unbecomingly—

FATHER BENEDICT—Is Jardin's life then nothing? I suppose

Not, to you. (*He turns and goes toward the door, left.*)

THE SAXONS

ABBOT— What?

FATHER BENEDICT— I suppose not, to you.

ABBOT— You mean to say—

FATHER BENEDICT— Go your way ; I go mine.

ABBOT— To say the dwarf killed—

FATHER BENEDICT— You have espoused the cause
of the guilty.

ABBOT— Of the guilty? *I espoused?*

(Following with the light.)

Don't tell me Oswald had a hand in this.

Benedict, this is pure malignity.

FATHER BENEDICT— And no mouth in it, either, I suppose.

ABBOT— You mean he instigated this attack?

FATHER BENEDICT— *(At the door, buckling his cloak about
him.)*

Go your way ; I go mine.

ABBOT— I don't believe it.

I don't believe it. It smacks too like the charge

That he called you a dog. If you can prove

That any word of his caused Jardin's death,

I will attend to him.

FATHER BENEDICT— By cursing me.

ABBOT— You know why I—

FATHER BENEDICT— You needn't apologize.

ABBOT— You, Benedict, not I, are needing grace.

You have assailed a child of God, and you

Know what our Lord said: " 'Twere better a mill-stone

Were hanged about his neck and he were flung

Into the sea, than offend one of these."

You even seemed to take delight, to relish

Harrowing his soul up with the hunter's dream

And breaching it for horror to peep through.

FATHER BENEDICT— You wait. *(He reaches down behind
the chest.)*

ABBOT— God will hold you responsible

THE SAXONS

If anything should happen to him.

FATHER BENEDICT— You

Take care he does not visit you.

ABBOT— Just now

You said yourself that it was you who urged
Jardin to seize the dwarf.

FATHER BENEDICT— And so I did.

ABBOT—Whose fault is it if the dwarf killed him, then?

FATHER BENEDICT—We will let God decide whose fault—
Move this.

ABBOT—(*Setting the lamp down upon the floor.*)

You even said Oswald opposed it, and

For that just now you blamed him.

FATHER BENEDICT— You think you

Understand everything. You think you do.

(*They pull the chest from the wall.*)

ABBOT—Then tell me.

FATHER BENEDICT—(*Reaching down and getting his staff.*)

The dwarf did not kill him.

ABBOT— How?

Is he not dead?

FATHER BENEDICT—By this time, he may be.

ABBOT—I still don't see where Oswald's fault comes in.

(*He takes up the lamp.*)

FATHER BENEDICT—We will let God decide whose fault it is.

(*He goes out.*)

ABBOT—How did it happen?

FATHER BENEDICT—God was there; ask him.

(*Louis reappears.*)

ABBOT—Stay, Benedict, tell me explicitly—

FATHER BENEDICT—

This is the last time you will see me here.

ABBOT—Eh? (*Holding the light above his head.*)

What do you propose to do?

FATHER BENEDICT—

You wait.

THE SAXONS

ABBOT—I fear for you, unless you quench your wrath.
(*A moment later, he turns back.*)

LOUIS—Again safe.

ABBOT—Barely.

LOUIS—What was that he said?
The last time he would come here?

ABBOT—I hope so. (*Thunder.*)

LOUIS—And don't let Oswald—

ABBOT—Close tight the shutters.

LOUIS—And don't let Oswald go down there again.

We would be risking all that we have gained.

The brothers, begging in the town to-day,

Brought in four hundred franks, a silver cup.

Three rings, a pair of bracelets, and a pearl

Big as a pea.

ABBOT—A very good day's work.

LOUIS—If this keeps up, the chest won't hold it all.

ABBOT—(*Suddenly, glancing about upon the table.*)

Benedict—did he take—the crucifix?

LOUIS—(*At the window.*)

Oswald took it.—Do you think Benedict

Found it where he said he—

ABBOT—(*Aghast.*) Oswald!

LOUIS—Why?

ABBOT—The hunter saw it blood-stained in his dream.

(*A gust of wind blows out the light in his hand.*)

LOUIS—Perhaps it got blood on it when he fell.

Benedict may have washed it off. I thought

It might help quiet him. Shall I get it?

ABBOT—No;

You may be right.

LOUIS—Still, if you think—

ABBOT—You fetch—

I'll take the lamp and cup; you fetch the wine.

I will have Pierre watch with him tonight.

THE SAXONS

(Louis turns back to the window. The Abbot relights his lamp at the little taper in the wall and then goes left.)

LOUIS—By the way, Father, old Andrew has gone mad.
The storm has blown his mind's last spark out. Yes;
He tried to take the bracelets from Luigi
And would have dragged the chest out.

ABBOT— And did he?

LOUIS— No;

But it was all that four of us could do
To hold him. He is on the seas again,
And peers abroad and swears he sees great ships—
(Out in the storm is heard the booming of a bell. They listen. Louis crosses himself and mutters.)

Sed libera nos a malo. Father— *(The Abbot lifts his hand)*
What

Do you think it means? *(A pause.)*

ABBOT— Come to my room.

(To himself, as he goes left.) If

The etherial gods, as the wise poet says,
Dwell afar off and in the affairs of men
Interfere not, our domes shall rise yet.

(Turning.) Louis,

Bring the scroll.

LOUIS— Which?

ABBOT— Lucretius. On the floor.

(In the doorway he stops and listens as for the bell. As he goes out.) If

(Louis takes up the parchment which lies upon the floor near the Abbot's chair and, going to the rear door, shuts it and slides the bolt. He then blows out the taper in the wall.)

LOUIS—*(Listening.)*

The witches have their way in heaven tonight.

(He comes to the table and, taking up the flagon, goes out, left.)

THE SAXONS

SCENE THREE—The court yard of the abbey, as in Scene Three of the Second Act. A storm is heard roaring through the mountains, with an occasional rumble of thunder and in the darkness sudden luster as of lightning far off. In these flashes, the scene gleams wet as after a hard rain.

From the right, comes a faint sound as of a stick tapping on stone, and soon along the side of the dormitory old Andrew appears, carrying a staff with which he is feeling his way through the darkness.

ANDREW—Here a black squall, sou'-wester, south-south-west. Star—star gone! Where's the pole?

(Shouting.) Furl the main, lads!

On she spins, whirling past world on world. Hip!

Feel her—feer her heave! *(Shouting.)* Take in the mizzen!

A thousand thousand fathoms down, the moon

Shines like a fish. *(He peers around the corner.)*

Black as— Hear the masts crack.

Watch Alvinach! Watch for the ninth wave, lads!

(Lightning.)

Put out that broom! You'll have the witches here.

Mother, they've burnt the baby!—Hya! Lie down.

(He walks out in the court.)

Here's a night, God bless us! Here's a gale

To make the sea-girls sing. Scylla! Carribee!

Shake your dead bones! Shake 'em and sing! Blow, then.

Growl, Scylla! Growl, ocean-bitch, bark and growl!

Now, Carribee, whirl! Shake the big gulf and slush!

Gulp down the worlds with stars and moons and moons!

(Lightning.)

Yip, there they go! Suck 'em down! suck 'em down!

Arcturus down! Down Cancer! down the Scales!

Whirled into the pit! Weigh the devils, Scales!

Weigh the big Serpent! Weigh Beelzebub!

Hands ahelm! Ahull, boys! Lash her to the lea!

THE SAXONS

Lash her to the lea! Splinters! Watch out, lads!
Saint Telme! Saint Telme! Hold the gunnel there!
(*The bell sounds in the chapel tower.*)

Who's dead? Who's dead, i' the Devil's name?
Fetch me those rings. Now throw him overboard.
Scrub these stains, Luigi. Keep the dog back there.
This gold will glitter on the Judgment Day.
I hear you whispering, scoundrels!—Hya! Lie down.
(*He walks back, singing.*)

*There's wind up in her pitch-black flag;
There's foam around her keel.*

Now we're scudding. Right through the Dipper—
(*Lightning.*) Ahoy!

Elmo! Elmo! Light up! light up, man!
Argo's to the larboard! Signal her! Ahoy!
Ship ahoy, Cap! Ship ahoy! Ship full of gold!
She's whirling south! Man the boats! Lay to! lay to!
Here's a squall winks at the pirates, lads!
Mount her, hardies! Break her hatches! Gold under 'em.
(*Singing.*)

*There's foam up in her pitch-black flag;
There's wind around her keel. . (Shouting.)*

Watch Alvinach, though! Keep the lantern dry!
(*He stops and listens.*)

I hear you whispering, scoundrels!—Hya! Lie down.
Who said so? Louis lied. Stand back, I say!
Four on an old man! Dogs! Let go my hair!
(*A loud clap of thunder.*)

The shrouds break now, God bless us! here's a wind
Will blow us far off to the Pleiades
And swamp us. (*Lightning.*)

That was the Bear went by. And
Virgo has sunk here jewels in the south.
Sink 'em deep, girl! Pirates abroad.—What's this?
(*Calling down.*)

THE SAXONS

Got it, boys? Got the gold? See it, see it shine!
Throw your cloak over it. Don't let God see this.
Ho, Prester John! sailing among the stars?
Here's your chest, John! Here's your sparklers! Where
is he?

Where is he, boys? Throw the king overboard?
Pitched him to Plato on his big fork, eh?
Odi Persicos. Like their gold, though. Up,
Up with it, lads. Heave, now. Chest broken open.
Leak, gold, leak, leak! Here's your spring, Crashus!
Here, Jew! here you can cool your tongue!
Traders, drink! Drink, worms! Pigs! Pastors! Devils!
Drink, drink! Everything drink!

(*Stooping down.*) Here's a dead man's ring.
Finger's in the coral. Bracelets and gems.
Topaz from Tartary. Emeralds from the East.
Garnets. Eh? Garter-buckles! (*Reproachfully.*)
Lads! lads!

(*A glare of lightning reveals him with his hand close to his eyes.*)

“From Carlos.”

Chloe's gone bathing, Carlos. Turned cold nymph.
Let go! Let go, I say! Androphanes!
Strike him, Juba! Slash him with the broad-sword!
You hand that back here, then. Hell-dog.
Here's a widow's mite: bought a monk's prayer.
Flip it into the sea.

Judas! here you are! (*Thunder.*)
Rumble on! Growl and growl! Who cares for Heaven now?
Rain or not rain. We can fight, too, old boy.
Wipe your lips, Scariot. Take the chamois bag.
There's thirty-two. Off with you.—Wallets! Old coin!
Rich man, miser, knave! Sick, eh? Quick, your gold!
Take it to the priest, then you can jump
Right through the needle's eye. (*He gets down upon his*

THE SAXONS

knees.) Well, God bless us!
Sacked the sea-king's coffers. See the pearls!
Crescents and ear-bobs. Here's a brooch fine as
Sparkles on Memnon's sister. What's this clammy thing?
Cold, bloody hand! Hand with a locket in it!
Unlock it. Ho! picture, eh? Say mamma, baby!
Mamma's in the sea-weed. That's a foul deed.
Throw your cloak over it. Don't let God see this.

(Calling up.)

Who's there? *(Rising.)* Who calls Andrew? Stand down
on the ground.

The lid *is* off. *(Stooping.)* Parchment deeds, eh? I. X.
If Andrew's Andrew, then I. X. is eleven.

What shines? Silver. *(A pause.)*

Monk's cross. *(A pause.)*

Wet. *(Flash of lightning.)*

Red! *(With horror.)*

Lads! lads!

We'll sink for this, God bless us! Pretty muss!
Who daubed it? *(Thunder.)* Hear that. Horror in the dark
Doffs his big plume at this. And up there— Here!
Wash it! wash it in the sea! In with the chest, lads!
Murder like a foam-bird dashed upon the prow
Shakes her red wings. And there— Look! *(Shouting.)*
Wash it clean!

Heaven's golden scales are rising from the deep!

Off! lay her—lay her off, lads! They'll weigh us!

*(A sharp flash of lightning. Andrew is seen with his left
hand up beside his head, which is drawn down, backing
fearfully through the door into the dormitory. The
thunder rumbling in the darkness sounds like the growl
of an enormous wild beast.)*

THE SAXONS

ACT FIVE.

SCENE ONE—A street in the village. Low thatched cottages, with deep, wide eaves overhanging the street, stand in a dark mass. To the left, a little way from the others and back a few paces from the street, is a small house, the home of Jardin. Through a window in the room on the right side comes a faint light as from a low-burning lamp. To the left of the window, one feels that there is a door, though, either on account of intervening bushes or perhaps because of a porch that makes it darker there, one does not see it. Out in the yard where the light from the window falls upon the bushes near the casement, the glistening of the leaves shows that it has been raining. The windows of the other houses, like vacant eyes under deep brows, are dark, and there are no signs of life anywhere. Over the roofs and through the great trees that rise up behind them flows a greyness that emphasizes the quiet of the hour. About the street lie several limbs that were broken off by the storm during the night.

TIME—Sunday morning. Day is just beginning to break.

A CRY—(Far to the left, full of terror and anguish.)

Haro! Haro! (Drawing nearer.)

Wake, people! Help, oh, help!

(After a pause.)

Will no one hear? Will no one hear? (Near by.)

O men of God! Dear men of God! (A pause.) Oh, run, Run to the mountains, men!

(Pierre enters half on a run, breathless. There is a wild light in his eyes and his thin frame is shaken with sobs.)

THE SAXONS

Oh! Oh! Oh! Oh! Oh!

(He glances toward the lighted window as though in doubt whether or not to rouse the inmates of the house. Then, as though to make up even for the moment he has lost, he hurries along the goes out, right.)

People! Christian people!

(The light in the window grows dimmer and suddenly disappears, leaving the house in total darkness.)

Will no one hear?

Will no one hear? Wake! Oh, wake! *(In the distance.)*

Haro!

VOICE—*(To the left.)*

Jules!

SECOND VOICE—*(Nearer.)* Ho?

FIRST VOICE— Who is it?

SECOND VOICE— Some brother.

(Jules Bacqueur enters.) Pierre.

FIRST VOICE— The abbey's

Blown down, perhaps.

HUGH CAPET—*(Entering.)* Where are all the people?

JULES BACQUEUR—At special mass for Jardin.

(He glances back toward the house where, at that moment, the door opens and the light appears.)

HUGH CAPET—*(Hurrying on after Pierre.)* Come on.

JULES BACQUEUR— Wait.

Let's hear how the Bailiff is.

(Hugh Capet returns to the corner of the cottages that are flush with the street and the men look back to where two figures, one after the other, appear in the lighted doorway of Jardin's house, a man who comes out and an old woman with a white cap on who carries a small lamp. A little later the door is closed.)

HUGH CAPET— Who is it, Jacques?

JULES BACQUEUR—He spent the night there.

HUGH CAPET— What a night it was!

THE SAXONS

Just see these limbs.

JULES BACQUEUR— And there's some fellow's hat.

HUGH CAPET—The roof's off Pirot's barn, and Lisette—

JULES BACQUEUR— Here.

(He comes forward to the edge of the street.)

HUGH CAPET—*(Following him.)*

And Lisette found a big bird in her yard

With a broken wing, blown in here miles and miles,

From the Holy Land or Joppa or some sea.

JULES BACQUEUR—*(Pointing right.)*

Look at those yew trees in the church yard there.

Bless God, they've pulled up dead mens' skulls. *(A pause.)*

HUGH CAPET—And those men there—?

BACQUEUR— Are filling up the graves.

And where's the cross? *(A pause.)*

HUGH CAPET— Not on the steeple? Say,

That monk— There's something up. When dead men's bones

Are thundered over in the night, and graves

Ungorge like that with wind, strange birds, and things—

VOICE—*(Left.)*

Who is that shouting?

HUGH CAPET— Don't know.

BACQUEUR— How's Jardin?

JACQUES—*(Entering.)* Eh?

HUGH CAPET—He didn't hear you.

JACQUES— What's he shouting for?

BACQUEUR—The storm tore up the dead last night.

HUGH CAPET— The abbey's

Blown down, perhaps, or— Come on. Hurry, men.

BACQUEUR—How is the Bailiff? *(Distant thunder.)*

HUGH CAPET—*(Hurrying out right.)*

Going to have another'n.

JACQUES—The soldier had a bad night. In his fever

He picks the sheets, mumbling: "Saints, send him down,"

And: "Listen, men!" and things like that. And once,

THE SAXONS

Jumps him clean out of bed and cries out: "There!"
As he had run the woodman through and through,
And wipes his sword like on his pants, and then,
As though he felt his wound, falls back and pop!
The wind or something blows the light out and
We hear the banshee singing in the storm,
Wild—wild. I fear the bell with toll 'fore night.
(*They go out.*)

SCENE TWO—The open space in front of the church. In the corner of the fence, left, the top of the poplar tree, broken off by the wind during the night, hangs out in the street almost brushing the ground. To the right of the steps is a large wooden cross which was blown from the steeple. It lies sidewise, having been split off at the bottom. The gate into the church yard is slightly ajar, as though some one had lately passed through, and against the dark grass the taller of the white grave markers lean as though the wind had been among them. Over the low fences where one looks back into the church yard on the one side and into an open space on the other, is seen yellow light from the side windows of the church, pouring out into the gloom. From within, comes the sound of the service.

CONGREGATION—His spear was lifted over Acre, Lord,
And his right arm hath made the heathen quail.

FATHER BENEDICT—And he hath spread thy glory through
the East.

CONGREGATION—And he hath spread thy glory through the
East.

FATHER BENEDICT—Let not the flags be draped that fluttered
high
Above the strongholds of the Infidel.

THE SAXONS

CONGREGATION—Let not the flags be draped that fluttered
high

Above the strongholds of the Infidel.

FATHER BENEDICT—Let not the scorers from the moun-
tain tops

Look down and see the dark procession go ;

But lift him up and lift up trembling, Lord.

CONGREGATION—Let not the scorers from the mountain
tops

Look down and see the dark procession go ;

But lift him up and lift up trembling, Lord.

FATHER BENEDICT—Keep death off, Lord, until the gates of
death

Receive the accursed hand that laid him low.

CONGREGATION—Keep death off, Lord, until the gates of
death

Receive the accursed hand that laid him low.

FATHER BENEDICT—Let not thine enemies triumph over thee.

Thunder it, brethren, so that God may hear.

CONGREGATION—Let not thine enemies triumph over thee.

FATHER BENEDICT—The mountains are afraid of thee, O
Lord.

Shake their wild tops and shake the heathen down.

CONGREGATION—The mountains are afraid of thee, O Lord.

Shake their wild tops and shake the heathen down.

FATHER BENEDICT—So shall thy Church with loud hosannas
ring.

CONGREGATION—So shall thy Church with loud hosannas
ring.

FATHER BENEDICT—World without end.

CONGREGATION— World without end.

FATHER BENEDICT— Amen.

PIERRE—(*Far to the left.*) Haro! haro!

FATHER BENEDICT—Accept, O eternal Father, the offering
that is here made to Thee by Thy minister, in the name

THE SAXONS

of us all here present. It is as yet only bread and wine, but by a miracle of Thy power and grace will shortly become the body and blood—

PIERRE—(*Drawing nearer.*) Help, help! Oh, help!

FATHER BENEDICT—(*After a pause, as though he had heard the cry.*)

—the body and blood of Thy beloved Son. He is our high priest and He is our victim. By Him and—

PIERRE—O men of God! Dear men of God!

(*There is a hush in the church.*)

Will you not help? Will you not—

(*He enters with his hands to his head, fearful lest he has disturbed the service.*)

FATHER BENEDICT—(*Resuming*)

He is our high priest and He is our victim.

(*Pierre throws himself down upon the steps, sobbing.*)

By Him and through Him, we desire to approach— Sit down, men! (*A pause.*) Women! Men! Sit down!

(*The noise in the church increases.*)

A VOICE— Sit down, brethren!

Don't desecrate the Lord's house!

FATHER BENEDICT—(*Shouting.*) You hear me?

A WOMAN'S VOICE—Husband!

FATHER BENEDICT—(*Enraged.*) Malediction!

(*The church door is jerked open, and the people come pouring out with anxious faces lest something terrible has happened. Back in the church, above the heads of the people, is seen the altar ablaze with lights, and high behind it a colossal cross with a beautiful carven Christ upon it. The wound in the side shows red and over the thorn-crowned brow is an arch bearing in golden letters the inscription: FORGIVE THEM FOR THEY KNOW NOT WHAT THEY— The DO has never been put on.*)

THE SAXONS

PIERRE—(*Staggering up from the steps.*)

Run, run to the mountains, men!

Quick! quick!

They're dragging him off! They're dragging him off!

O run, run, run, run, run!

CRIES—What—where—who is it?

PIERRE—Yonder! yonder!

Oh, get torches,

Get torches and run

And kindle fires on the mountain tops

So he may see his way!

No, that won't help! Oh, that won't help!

But he can hear, though!

Call, call to him!

Search all the places where the blind may be!

Run shouting "Oswald! Oswald!" through the woods!

Find him, oh, find him before Satan comes!

Before the storm breaks!

They'll track him by the blood drops!

They'll tear his body on the mountains!

O men, dear men— (*A clap of thunder. Pierre dodges.*)

What—what was that?

Oh, God said something! God said something!

(*Pointing up at the sky.*)

He knows! He knows!

Lord Jesus knows that it was not his fault!

And He will pay—oh, He will bless you, men!

Do, do, do run!

FATHER BENEDICT—Make way!

PIERRE—O Father! Father!

(*In his snow-white chasuble, the priest appears pushing his way through the throng about the door. In his hand he has a silver communion plate with the bread upon it.*)

FATHER BENEDICT—Why all this clamor?

This is the Sabbath and the hour of mass.

THE SAXONS

PIERRE—It's done! It's done!

FATHER BENEDICT—(*Descending the steps.*)

How dare you cry out on this holy morn?

PIERRE—Oh, last night, Father, last night in the dark

White angels, oh, white angels in the storm—

It tore their wings and blew them from the sky,

And then—and then—O father, then the fiends—

He saw them in the stones and—screamed and—Oh,

They did a deed of horror in the dark! (*He presses his hands into his eyes as if to shut out the sight of it.*)

Oh! Oh! Oh!

FATHER BENEDICT—What is this?

PIERRE—(*Bending up and down.*)

Oh! Oh! Oh!

FATHER BENEDICT—Pierre! (*A pause.*)

Pierre, if Hell hath done

Some wild deed in the night, be sure that God

Will right it.

PIERRE—Will He, oh, will He, Father, make him to see—

See the blue sky again?

FATHER BENEDICT—Who is it Hell hath blinded in the night?

PIERRE—(*With his hands to his eyes, sobbing.*)

Brother—brother—

FATHER BENEDICT—Pierre!

PIERRE—O, Oswald! Oswald!

(*With a cry, Madam Bacqueur falls fainting upon the steps.*

The women about her take her child from her arms and support her back into the church. The crowd stands silent.)

PIERRE—(*Bending up and down.*)

Say something! say something!

FATHER BENEDICT—(*Almost overcome.*)

Can this be true? Can this be true, Pierre?

PIERRE—Oh! Oh! Oh!

THE SAXONS

FATHER BENEDICT—Swift fly the avenging angels from the
Throne.

Guilt like a red cloud passes from the sky,
And day looks in and sees where eyes have been.

PIERRE—(*As though his heart would break.*)

Brother! brother! brother!

FATHER BENEDICT—*Praise be to God!*

The tempest shaketh showers upon the grass;
The storm wind cooleth the low violet;
But the proud pine I shatter, saith the Lord.
He shall go down and toss his boughs in hell.
The coffin-worm shall slime him. He shall not
Mock me upon the mountains, saith the Lord.

Praise be to God!

(*Pierre glances up at the priest and then, as from something
infernally, falls flat and hides his face against the
ground.*)

The lights are out in Babylon the Proud,
And the Lord God in blackness sitteth there
Among the ruins, dealing judgment.

(*The rising wind blows shut the door of the church and
leaves the scene enveloped in the half-light of early
morning.*)

My scales are hung in heaven, saith the Lord.

I weigh them in the darkness of the night.

They balance with the Dragon on one side.

Glory be to God in the highest!

(*Shouting off demoniacally in the direction of the abbey.*)

Lift up thy head, O Lucifer, in hell,

And see what God hath written on the sky

In letters that burn through thy broken panes.

(*With his finger as though tracing the letters.*)

“Weighed and found wanting!

I am the Lord God.

In Me the moon goes down; in Me the sun

THE SAXONS

Rises ; I am the night and day.
If over any man a light break forth
And make his brow bright, let him not think
It shines for him alone, and be puffed up
Because of it, and speak
Bitterly, saying: 'See what pure prayers can do.'
For when his lungs are empty, saith the Lord,
Then I will give him flesh unto the dogs.
I will put out the light that kindles pride,
Saith the Lord God, and with the light the eyes."

(In a wild chant.)

Praise be to God who doeth all things well.

Shinar hath seen the glory of the Lord.

Nimrod, who piled up Babel to the stars,

Lies sprawling under it, and the thunders laugh.

(Shouting in the direction of the abbey.)

Who lieth under Babel?—Up, Pierre ;

I have a message. Rise, for you

Must bear it to your sainted abbot.

(Pierre rises and, with his head thrown back and his hands covering his face, without waiting, goes straight out, left.)

"Benedict to his brother in Christ,

Greeting :

Who lieth under Babel? You were right

In saying that the storm would shake the world.

It hath indeed played havoc. Certain trees

In the churchyard tore the graves up, and the dead

Have shaken roofs and spires in the town.

We lost our cross.

I hear you, too, lost somewhat. Gables though

Can be repaired.

We should both thank our Lord he hath not let

A lamb he careth for be scathed.

Who lieth under Babel?"

THE SAXONS

(*Coming out in the street and shouting after Pierre.*)
And to the brother, the dear ward of God,
Convey felicitations!

Ask him to

Tell you the color of the abbot's hair

This morning.

Wake him!

Say:

"The stars are flying in and out the clouds;

The mountain tops are tinging;

Night passes;

Rouse up, and behold the Dawn

Pouring her beautiful gold upon the world!"

Tell him to

Run down and see the print the bishop John

Sent me from Rome.

Blind Samson's head, who pulled the pillars down,

Under a dog's paws in the Gaza streets.

And in his car, as a salutation for the Sabbath,

Bark this from Benedict, from Benedict, the dog:

"Pride is a wind that from the shores of light

Bloweth far off where neither sun nor moon

Nor stars shine nor shall shine forevermore."

God hath heard one prayer. Come in, men.

(*He enters the church. After a silence the men about the steps begin to talk among themselves in undertones.*)

ONE OF THEM—(*Calling through the door.*)

Father!

ANOTHER—If he don't let us go, let's go ourselves.

FATHER BENEDICT—(*Reappearing.*)

Who called? (*A pause.*)

What is it?

A MAN—Before you come out, Father, the monk spoke
Like as how the chase was on.

ANOTHER—"Run to the mountains, men!"

THE SAXONS

ANOTHER— "Quick! quick!"

ANOTHER—Said we should find him before Satan comes.

ANOTHER—That was before you came out.

FIRST MAN—Spoke like as how the dogs were on his trail.

FATHER BENEDICT—Run, some one, and fetch Pierre back.

(Two men dart out, left.)

He did not tell me this. *(A pause.)*

Arm yourselves, men.

(In a mass the men hurry out, left, a confused hum of voices rising for a moment, then dying away in the distance.

The scene has grown darker. A gust of wind blows to the door of the church.)

FATHER BENEDICT—*(Alone upon the steps.)*

This is the day. *(A pause.)*

Inscrutable are the ways of God. Dark, dark,

Unfathomable the sea in which He moves.

He changeth as the waters change, and yet

The mountains strike their roots in Him and stand.

(Thunder right. The priest comes down from the steps and out into the street, where he stands looking up at the sky.)

Thy ways are not our ways. Thy voice is heard

Abroad upon the firmament. The stars

That should have been put out an hour ago

Burn bright upon the edges of the storm.

Satan hath laid his hand upon the sun,

And the day gropes, feeling her way far off

As doth the blind. But yesterday the morn

Walked beautiful on the mountains, with her lamp

Kindled as for the Resurrection.

This is the Sabbath, yet Golgotha's gloom

Hangs o'er the Sepulcher, and like a torch

Thrown down upon the mountains burns the dawn

A scant blue flame far down behind the world.

(A pause.)

THE SAXONS

God shall not call in vain.

(Looking left.)

I will forgive

The bitter words. The lost shall be reclaimed.

(He walks briskly back and climbs the steps and enters the church. A man with a shovel on his shoulder appears coming from back in the churchyard. He stops by the fence and looks about.)

THE MAN—Don't see them.

A VOICE—*(From back in the churchyard.)*

Someone's moaning in the church.

(Another man appears with a shovel. They listen. Faint shouting, left.)

FIRST MAN—Let's leave our shovels here.

(They put down their shovels and get over the low fence into the open space before the church and start, left. Pierre is heard returning.)

PIERRE—But it was not his fault.

(Between the two men he enters wringing his hands.)

It was the fiends that did it.

'Twas his hand but—*(Starting back.)*

They're hiding—they're hiding back of there!

(He points to the broken top of the poplar tree that hangs out in the street. The men from the churchyard come from behind it.)

Oh, they've been by the graves!

(He covers his face with his hands and bends up and down, sobbing hysterically.)

ONE OF THE MEN—

What has he done?

(With a great shining crucifix upon a staff, the priest appears in the doorway and comes hurriedly down the steps.)

FATHER BENEDICT—Pierre, in the name of God, all-hail!

I greet you as one having holy lips,

Since God hath chosen you to set on fire

With one bright word all days to be. Pierre,

THE SAXONS

Which way hath he gone? God is waiting.
The seraphim—Nay, fear me not, for I
Have been baptized with fire that hath fallen
Suddenly from heaven. Which way hath he gone?
To the high places fly the seraphim
And banners flash and fade among the clouds.
The Lord of Life into my power hath given
The life of him who spoke—I will forgive
The bitter words. This is the day of days.
Within I shine, though round about the storm
Spreadeth her gloom. Even my hands are dark.
The thunder peals the muster of the dead.

(Faint shouts, left.)

PIERRE—*(Falling upon his knees.)*

They've bitten him! they've bitten him! Pray! pray! pray!
FATHER BENEDICT—Nay, Pierre, these are shouts of them
whose mouths

Shall sing upon the mountains when my hand
Shall rend the hound and pluck the blind from death.
His breath is in the hollow of my hand,
And though he taunted me and though I might—

(He blows in his palm.)

The dream shall be fulfilled. Throughout all time
All dreams shall hail this dream a hoy thing
That hath chosen from all days this holy day
To wake and run. While from the Sepulcher
God rolls the stone back, the dream opens hell
And slips the dogs while angels have the world.
Henceforth the Angel of the Resurrection,
Hand in hand with the hunter's dream, shall run
With fiery feet over the ages leaving
Luminous the eyes of holy men.
For me this is a great day. From the clouds
The purposes of God, in fold on fold,
Fall round and mantle me with light. Pierre,

THE SAXONS

In what dread shape came Blindness through the halls
Of the abbey, feeling for the brother's eyes
In the darkness? What did he say when God
With one blow blotted out the moon and sun
Forever, and the faces of his friends?
Forgiveness did he cry for, for the things—
But that is past. I have been and shall be,
Yesterday and to-morrow, Benedict.
To-day, as nameless as the stars of heaven,
Forgetful of all injuries like the winds,
I rush about the earth and, like the lightning,
Will strike where God shall throw me. Like the rain,
I shall fall mercifully on hot eyes that lit
But a few hours before with pride and scorn
But now are dark forever.

PIERRE—

Oh! Oh! Oh!

FATHER BENEDICT—I will not say that. God in his power
can make

The blind earth fill the sockets of the blind
With balls as bright as orbs of seraphim,
Or without eyes can fill the soul with light.
Your brother, Pierre, fell upon the dark—
My brother; I will say it and forgive—
Our brother fell on darkness not last night,
But long since turned his shining face away
From light, and gradually as the sun
Sinks, sank low down where sun and moon and stars
Say, "Vanity!" and the grave is over all.

(The sobbing of Pierre is heard.)

But he shall rise. I thank God for this power.
It shall be to my glory that for hate
I returned love. Vengeance is His, and I
Simply a wind to blow and do His will.
God shall have praise, but I shall have praise, too.
Names shall be written high and lamps shall burn

THE SAXONS

Under them, so that all the saints may see.

(He comes out in the street and stands looking in the direction in which the men went, talking to himself.)

Then some who with high heads walked this low earth—

'Tis not my prayer, but if God so decide—

What a day will bring forth no man can—

(Turning back.)

Pierre,

Did he speak of me when the blow fell? Did he say,

"I wronged that holy man"? Did he say that?

With what word bade he farewell to the stars?

Did not remorse—Why do you look at me

With eyes of horror?

PIERRE—*(Shuddering.)*

Out into the dark

As if to—

(He presses his hands into his eyes.)

FATHER BENEDICT—With no word?

PIERRE— "The dogs! the dogs!"

FATHER BENEDICT—And called, then, I suppose, upon the dwarf.

Did he appear and give him back his eyes?

I judge not, from these tears that trickle down.

And did no sinner's wail go up to God?

God, Pierre, will plant eyes in his blind soul.

With what cry hoisted he sail for the dark land?

PIERRE—*(Between sobs.)*

"Father—Woden!"

FATHER BENEDICT—Ha, and he saw him, then!

Cried to the Father that the heathen god

Was putting out his eyes! 'Tis well. In that

Last flash God showed him whence the darkness came.

(One of the men who came back with Pierre whispers to the Priest.)

PIERRE—Lord Jesus knows that it was not his fault.

THE SAXONS

FATHER BENEDICT—(*Amazed.*)

Did he do that, Pierre, did he do that?

PIERRE—'Twas not his fault.

FATHER BENEDICT— *Put out his eyes himself!*

PIERRE—Oh, in his fever—

FATHER BENEDICT— What will sin not do!

PIERRE—And someone—

FATHER BENEDICT— Rather than look upon my face!

By this deed he admits the charge I made.

PIERRE—And someone—someone told him of the dream,

How that the dogs should tear him—

FATHER BENEDICT— Stop right there!

You come down here to cast his blood on me?

I see the hand inside this hellish glove.

(He turns and comes straight out into the street.)

PIERRE—(*Timidly.*)

'Twas that that did it.

FATHER BENEDICT—(*Lifting his hand and shouting aloud.*)

Go back, men, go back!

We will stay here! This I will *not* forgive.

(He returns toward the church and climbs the steps. On top he stops, stands for a moment, then sets his crucifix in the doorway and comes back down. Pierre, fearing he is about to be attacked, draws back. The priest follows him.)

I know who sent you down here and I know

Why. (*Shaking his finger.*)

Pierre, had this word not been distilled
Under old fangs and put in your young mouth,
This sting should cost you something. As it is,
In you I overlook it.

(Hoarse with wrath.)

The old snake!

God shall pass judgment between me and him.

The seraphim shall burn his mouth with coals.

THE SAXONS

Accursed envy! He beneath the wreck
Of Babel lies and thence looks out and sees
Me in white garments on the mount of God
Going toward glory, and it rankles in him.

(Women appear in the doorway.)

And so he seeks to terrify my soul
With: "Hide from the lightning! God is in it!"
As though I went toward Ramoth-Gilead
With Ahab's hand smoking with prophets' blood.
That is why he told you to tell me this.
But I will not be terrified by him.

(Pierre backs out.)

Accursed envy! And you tell him so.
Much rather would he see the brother lost—
*(The women press too close and the crucifix tumbles down
the steps.)*

What is it you do? Go back in there! God's curse—
(Looking after Pierre.)

On any man who would much rather see
A dear son lost than see me glorified.
Tell *him* to hide. The wind that curls these clouds
Is the same wind that blew last night. Does he
With black mouth cry to me my hand is red?
If it be, if he think so, you tell him to stand
On his wrecked gable and watch Benedict
Walk right straight up to God with this red hand
And take the crown and leave no finger marks.
*(On tip-toe, Madam Valmy steals down the steps to recover
the crucifix.)*

As for his charge that I have done this deed,
Tell him it smells of Hell.—Go back in there!
*(Madam Valmy goes back up the steps and the women with-
draw from the door.)*

Daunted shall I be by lying lips?
Shall Belial reign? Shall God call twice and thrice?

THE SAXONS

I will not leave my cup of glory stand
Untouched because the old snake cannot drink ;
Because he, having wormwood on his lips,
Cries: "God boils in the wine upon the heights!"
I will drink it.

(Armed and with Jacques Sar at their head, the men enter silent, their faces showing disappointment. In the disorder in which they enter, there are traces of three lines into which they had been drawn up.)

FATHER BENEDICT— We will go, men.

(The men brighten up and become turbulent, and the three lines immediately reappear. The priest walks back toward the church.)

Pick up—

(A man goes toward the crucifix that lies on the ground. The Priest steps upon the steps and turns, facing the men. While he speaks, Jacques Sar marches the lines right and wheels them around so as to face left, the direction in which Pierre came and went. For others who keep coming in, he finds places in the lines and, examining weapons and moving the men about, goes up and down with the air of an old commander.)

FATHER BENEDICT— Men,

This is the grandest day that ever mixed
Her golden hair with banners. The hunter's dream,
That flashed and vanished in the night, after
Lying like out Lord three days in darkness,
Bursts like a shining angel upon the world

(He receives the crucifix.)

And dazzles. We see not clearly, for the light
Blinds as the darkness doth. All night the earth
Tumbled as a man in fever. Saints on fire
Walked grandly on the mountain combs and called,
And the graves opened, and the silent ones—
What can it mean that of the churchyard dead

THE SAXONS

Only the soldiers rose? And that, too, when
Hell's hand was heavy on the brother? Men,
At midnight riding down the mountain, I
Saw wonders and heard things I dare not tell.
What the hounds are I know not, but I know
One up there hath a snare laid for them. And I—
I see my name in fire on those clouds.

These winds shall blow it luminous, and all
The world shall see it, and all time. Then some
Who now accuse me will come round with smiles.
For I will not be terrified by him.

*(He says something under his breath and comes quickly
down the steps and out into the street where he shouts
after Pierre.)*

Tell the old man I go upon this chase
Out of no love for him or for his monk,
For I despise them both. You
Tell him just what I say and why I go.
Tell him the storm hath spoken to me. Say
I saw a hand of fire in the night
Beckon, and heard a trumpet peal in heaven.
He thinks I am a coward. So I am;
I fear to disobey the voice of God,
And therefore go. Listen to me, Pierre!
You tell him this: Had Heaven not delivered
Its orders to me, by the throne of God,
Not a spear—Hear me?—not a single spear
Should redden in the rescue of this monk.
As for his charge that I have done this deed,
Tell him it smells of Hell.

*(Thunder right. The priest turns and for a time contem-
plates the sky in silence.)*

One of you men
Run and ask Pierre which way hath he gone,
For there are trails and trails.

THE SAXONS

(A man darts out, left.)

JACQUES SAR—

Fly fast now, Noel.

FATHER BENEDICT—*(Rapt, looking off at the sky, right.)*

Why should the storm move that way, if the chase—

(Turning left.)

Lies yon way? We will wait.

(Aloud.)

God seems to call

Up yonder where the lightning cracks the sky.

(After a silence, with his eyes upon the heavens.)

Like golden links your names shall hang to mine

And dangle down the ages. Men shall say:

“This man and that man were with Benedict

Up in the glory of the Lord that day

When heathendom went tumbling down to hell.”

Oh, you shall live forever envied men!

(He walks about buried in his thought. Occasionally he stops for a moment in meditation, then resumes his pace. Old Jacques, hesitatingly and stopping whenever the priest stops, follows him about as though he wished to communicate something, but was uncertain whether to break his reverie. The men watch them in silence.)

FATHER BENEDICT—*(Approaching the lines, his chin still upon his breast.)*

Something I have to tell you, hitherto,

For his own good, religiously concealed.

For adulation maketh pride to swell

And man becomes an idol. *(Looking up.)*

Years ago

A prophesy went sounding down the south

That sent a thrill through Christendom. From Rome

The echo came to us. The rumor ran

That in the Saxon forest lived a boy

Through whom the North should come contrite to God:

A shepherd as was Moses and therefore

THE SAXONS

Prepared to lead his people. Friar Paul
Was sent to flash the light upon his way
And win him unto Christ, to make his staff
Put forth green christian buds. With what result
I need not tell you. Few, few men can bear
Honor and the favor of the Most High. He,
Moses himself could not. "Watch Moses now;"
And struck the rock. And then God: "Now watch Me;"
And gave his staff to Joshua. And here
I find a lesson, this: Glory shall pass
From the proud man to the humble man. To-day
I take that prophesy up in *my* hands
And with it seek the mountains of our God,
And Heathendom shall fall like Jerich—

THE MAN—(*Returning.*) Says
He don't know which way. Lost him in the dark.
(*The crowd stands silent, not knowing which way to go. A
woman appears in the doorway.*)

WOMAN—Madam Bacqueur in her swoon hath thrice cried
out:

"O keep from the mountains! Look! See there!
The fire of God falls on the hills. See! See!

FATHER BENEDICT—The voice of Hell that fears our com-
ing. Woman,

Baths her entranced brows with holy water.

(*The woman goes back in the church. Jacques speaks to the
Priest.*)

A MAN—(*After a pause, from the rear line.*)

Let's go toward the abbey.

ANOTHER—(*In the front line, pointing right.*)
This way.

ANOTHER—(*Shaking his head, as though fearing the storm.*)
No.

SECOND MAN—(*Shouting, left.*)

Jules!

THE SAXONS

(He walks on a few paces and, frowning with impatience, beckons in with his arm.)

FATHER BENEDICT—This is a sudden beam on the dark web.

JACQUES SAR—And his blood shed down yonder by the bridge.

FATHER BENEDICT—And the storm moving toward that mountain top.

(To the men.)

Jacques tells me that our honored bailiff lies
His martial limbs half hanging in the grave.

JACQUES SAR—I fear the bell will toll 'fore night.

FATHER BENEDICT—*(Deeply moved.)*

The dead

Soldiers are up to meet their sergeant.

(He walks quickly back and climbs the steps.)

Men,

Wing and wing this terrible morning, fly
Two avenging angels toward one mountain top.
One in his hand two bloody eyeballs bears;
The other, an old man's picture with a wound
Swollen and with Death's finger in it. Fixed
On two eyes are their four eyes. Toward one man
Four wings and two bright swords are on their way.
They light! They beckon me! I see it all!
From two wounds two red trails converge in one!
The hounds that have their noses on the track
Of the brother, had their tongues in Jardin's blood!
The big white talbot is Canzler!

(There is a moment's silence so intense that the wind is heard whistling among the white crosses in the churchyard. Then a terrible shout goes up.)

SHOUTS—Down with him!

To Hell with the hounds!

Lead us! Lead us!

(Jacques strikes with his sword and the lines move swiftly)

THE SAXONS

to the left, the direction of the abbey.)

FATHER BENEDICT—(*To himself.*)

God's purposes begin where man's prayers end.

JACQUES SAR—(*On fire.*)

Right about! Face the heathen and face God!

(The lines wheel and face right, the direction in which the storm is moving.)

FATHER BENEDICT—(*Transported.*)

This is most wonderful. Men, Hell hath here
Packed all her seeds in one infernal bloom.

And who knew till this beam fell where to turn?

Henceforth let no man say he knows the way
That God will move on the morrow, for in a flash
The hem of his great garment passeth by.

(Bacqueur enters with an armful of swords and spears. On his left shoulder hangs a great shield.)

JACQUES SAR—Here's two men have none.

CRIES—

Here, Jules!

Hand me one!

FATHER BENEDICT—(*Half to himself, his face upturned to the sky.*)

What have I done that Thou shouldst honor me
With glory such as no man ever—Nay,
'Tis not for me this glory is prepared,
For I have ever labored for another.

Thou movest in her and she in me and I
Am but a cloud upon her gale and storm.
Let no man move a foot. I know my time.
You see me but you see not what I see.

God hath arranged to bring us face to face.

This is no combat between merely men.

All Heathendom gives chase in this big hound.

Our brother stands for all men lost to God.

And my hand is the hand of Christendom.

(Bacqueur offers him a sword.)

THE SAXONS

Nay, I have weapons that ye know not of.

(Looking off at the storm.)

The lightnings whip the foothills and the clouds

Sag with the weight of the wrath of the Lord of Hosts.

(His face becomes luminous.)

Who hears what I hear? Speak out. Then be still.

(With an old scarlet flag, amid the folds of which sections of a white cross are seen, Hugh Capet comes running in. Seeing the priest entranced upon the steps and the men hushed with awe, he checks himself.)

FATHER BENEDICT—*(Lifting his hand, without turning.)*

If any man moves I will call down fire. *(A silence.)*

To-day the last great tower of Hell goes down.

(He comes down the steps.)

JACQUES SAR—*(His voice quivering with emotion.)*

This banner once waved over Acre, men.

HUGH CAPET—And we will plant it on Jerusalem.

SHOUTS—God's with us! God's with us!

FATHER BENEDICT—*(Lifting his hand.)*

Hear my last word.

JACQUES SAR— Silence!

FATHER BENEDICT— Let there be

No shouting or any noise. Let us go

Quietly as befits the Sabbath day.

The vales blow white. Yonder the mountains stand

Like quiet altars waiting sacrifice.

You, with the holy banner of God, stand here.

Now if there be among you one who hath

Guilt, looking upon this storm let him step

Out, lay his spear down and stay here and not

Tempt the wrath of God. For soon upon the heights

The heavens shall blacken and there shall be a loud

Burst of His power and the shining glory of God.

I pause a moment. Let that man step out

Now. *(A pause.)*

THE SAXONS

Then you have naught to fear. The innocent
Are safe. God's shield is over them. Come.

JACQUES SAR—The signal, Father.

FATHER BENEDICT— The signal shall be this:

JACQUES SAR—Attention, men!

FATHER BENEDICT— I shall uplift the Christ.

(He raises the crucifix.)

And God, burning the clouds to ashes, will throw
Lightning upon Antichrist. Then you
Charge. *(A roll of thunder.)*

The trumpets of the heavenly host.

JACQUES SAR—

Now, men!

Up with your spears.

FATHER BENEDICT— There shall be wonders done.

(He starts right, the lines following him.)

In years to come, men, tell your children this:

When God crowned Benedict upon the heights

It was not Benedict but the Church He crowned.

(They go out silent. The scene has become darker and the wind is heard whistling among the white crosses in the churchyard. Back in the church through the open door is seen the beautifully carven Christ with overhead in golden letters the inscription: FORGIVE THEM FOR THEY KNOW NOT WHAT THEY— The DO has never been put on.)

SCENE THREE—*The mountain side, as in Scene one of the third Act. There is heard a steady roar as of wind over vast forests, and all about are signs of an approaching storm. At intervals an unnatural, ghastly light as from rifted clouds swiftly driving overhead passes across the scene. In a moment the gloom has returned and the trees are racing back into the shadow.*

THE SAXONS

Back upon the ledge, his long yellow hair tossing in the wind, stands Rudolph watching the gathering of the storm.

RUDOLPH—*(To himself.)*

Flying on starless wings the Powers of night
Keep back the bird of morning till the Norns
Have traced the lines of guilt and set the snare.

(A moment later Canzler appears coming down the sheep-path.)

CANZLER—What was that shouting down the mountain for?

RUDOLPH—*(Turning quickly.)*

The whirling of the wheel!

CANZLER— The wheel?

RUDOLPH—*(Hurrying forward.)*

Look there

Where the vast felly flies! Far out it swings
And sways the forests. Look at it, Canzler!
For miles around below the mountain heads
The storm goes racing in a wheel whose hub
Turns on the village spire.

(Canzler follows him back along the ledge.)

Awhile ago,

Divinely guided through the mountain ways,
A common cloud, afloat upon the dark,
Blotted the stars that glimmered in the tarn
And whirled into a wheel. Around the rim
Flows the white cloud-wool, and a thread is drawn
Under the hills. The distaffs of the Norns
Grow big with fate, and, sitting there in silence,
Their withered fingers from this flying skein
Loop off the lives of men. Val-father takes
In his almighty hand the reins of things
And drives them either way through earth and air.

(Shouting far down the mountain.)

CANZLER—I heard that far up on the mountain tops.

THE SAXONS

RUDOLPH—In some procession honoring their god.

CANZLER—But louder now.

RUDOLPH— And nearer.

CANZLER— Where is Fritz?

RUDOLPH—Rounding the sheep up. (*Shouting again.*)

They have crossed the bridge.

CANZLER—(*Turning and looking at Rudolph.*)

Honoring their god upon the mountain side?

RUDOLPH—'Tis the great dragon crawling through the hills.

CANZLER—No wonder darkness fills the valley.

(*After a pause.*)

And in a storm like this!

RUDOLPH— Hunger.

CANZLER— No doubt.

And there is hunger in the heavens, too.

RUDOLPH—And the two face. (*They listen.*)

The Asas all night long

Were loud above the mountains as though some

Vast purpose long pent up were finding way.

CANZLER—And Selma heard it like a river flow

Washing the peaks and down the wooded slopes

Into the valley where the dragon lies.

(*Shouts still afar but growing nearer.*)

That belly levels all things in the plain. (*Thunder.*)

RUDOLPH—Val-father's voice from out the clouds mid-air

Meets with the dragon's voice and devours it. Hark!

CANZLER—It may lay hands on Fritz.

(*He goes back along the ledge and starts down the mountain.*)

RUDOLPH— Be careful, chief!

The wheel moves this way.

CANZLER— It is following them.

RUDOLPH—Here he comes running up the mountain!

CANZLER— Where?

RUDOLPH—Wait till the lightning shows the slopes again.

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(They listen. The shouts draw nearer.)

CANZLER—The Bailiff's blood has roused them.

RUDOLPH— With that blood
Val-father has enticed it from its lair
To tempt the mountains and to seek for more.

(Lightning.)

Up here! Coming up here!

CANZLER—*(Shouting.)* Fritz!

RUDOLPH— The dark bloom,
Whose scattered roots the years have fed, at last
Unfolds its petals to the sun. The North
In all her graves is waiting for the dawn.
To-day Val-father lays his shadow by.

CANZLER—Go up the rocks and blow the battle horn.

(Rudolph goes leaping up the rocks.)

And let the battle cry be "Dachtelfeld"!

RUDOLPH—The peaks are tipped with day!

(He disappears up the rocks.)

VOICE OF SELMA—*(Above.)* Where are you, Father?

(Lightning.)

CANZLER—Stay from the timber! Don't get near the trees!

(Thunder.)

Stay in the open, Selma!

(The form of Canzler, who stands back upon the ledge, disappears in the gathering gloom.)

VOICE OF SELMA— Father!

VOICE OF FRITZ—*(Down the mountain.)* Chief!

(There is heard, at first scarcely audible but rising more and more, low music as of spirit voices. Above, just where the sheep-path enters the bushes, Selma appears coming hurriedly down. Hearing the music, she stops and, listening, becomes as one entranced.)

SELMA—*(Almost in a whisper.)*

Father!

(Canzler comes forward into view. The girl, still trans-

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ported and more like a being of the air, has come further down the path.)

Oh, hear them!

CANZLER— Go back, go back, child!
They shall not harm you. (*She rushes to him.*)

They will not come up here.

(*The girl lays her hand on his arm. They listen.*)

Only Val-father's voice along the storm.

VOICE OF FRITZ—Chief!

CANZLER— It is Fritz.

SELMA— The trees—the trees are singing.
The wild vines and the mountain flowers—Oh!

O Father, see!

CANZLER— What ails you, child?

SELMA—The elves—the storm elves gather in the air,
And up the mountain there—

Hear them. Father! Hear the fairies calling!

Oh, the white flakes! The dog-wood blooms are falling!

(*She runs wildly up the path.*)

He's coming. Father! Oswald's coming!

(*She disappears among the bushes. In the rear Fritz is seen climbing up the mountain.*)

FRITZ—(*Who goes leaping on up the rocks.*)

Chief!

CANZLER—Here I am.

(*Fritz leaps back down to the ledge and comes hurrying forward.*)

FRITZ—(*Out of breath.*)

They've killed—they've killed the sheep!

Like hungry dogs. It's us they're after, though.

Dashed in and slashed them with their swords. Hear that!

(*Wild shouting below.*)

That's for *our* blood. (*They listen.*)

If we don't arm, chief,—

CANZLER—

Hark!

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FRITZ—(*After a pause.*)

If we don't arm—

(*Up the mountain sounds the battle horn.*)

To have lived to see this day!

(*He hurries up the path and disappears.*)

CANZLER—Val-father's winds have blown them here to die.

(*He goes up the path. The music is now distinctly heard above the noise of the storm. A flash of lightning reveals, in the rear, the dwarf climbing up the mountain, leading Oswald by the hand. Instantly loud and prolonged shouting bursts up from about a hundred feet below. The two come hurrying forward along the ledge. Oswald's face is streaked with blood and from the end of its black cord, his silver crucifix, likewise stained, dangles almost to his knees. Gradually it slips lower and lower till it finally falls and lies upon the grass. Having reached the path, they make their way up and are soon lost to view. That peculiar light which one sometimes sees when clouds are rifted during a storm illumines the scene and makes the green grass and trees show almost like flame. Below, voices are heard, and soon, climbing up the mountain, Father Benedict appears, his face pale, his eyes set before him. Upon the skirt of his snow-white chasuble there is seen, slanting down, a red streak as though he had pressed against a bloody sword-blade. Behind him, scattered, come, first, Hugh Capet with the great flag blown straight out in the wind, then Jules Bacqueur and Jacques Sar, their swords dripping, and, after them, the other villagers.*)

JULES BACQUEUR—Straight ahead. Father! Straight ahead!

A VOICE—(*From below.*)

See them, Hugh?

JACQUES SAR—You come on; we'll find them.

(*Instead of coming forward to the path, which the bushes*

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and bowlders hide from their view, they go pushing straight on up the rocks.)

HUGH CAPET—Come on, men!

JACQUES SAR—Stay together, men! (*A pause.*)

Hold her low, Phil!

(Up the mountain sounds the battle-horn.)

CRIES—Hear that! Hear that!

JACQUES SAR—Don't get scared, men!

CRIES—Don't get scared! Don't get scared!

A VOICE—God's with us!

ALL—God's with us! God's with us!

HUGH CAPET—Come on, men!

JACQUES SAR—Wait for the signal! Wait for the signal, men!

(All look to the priest.)

Now then.

JULES BACQUEUR—Now, Father.

A VOICE—Now. (*A pause.*)

HUGH CAPET—Signal! signal!

(Above, sounds the battle-horn, this time nearer.)

JACQUES SAR—Now!

JULES BACQUEUR—Now then!

CRIES—Now! Now! NOW!

(Slowly the priest lifts the crucifix.)

ALL—God's with us! God's with us!

(They go springing up the mountain. A flash of lightning strikes the uplifted crucifix and clings for a moment like a wreath of blue fire round the brow of the priest whose face shows white as chalk. The crucifix slips from his fingers and he reels and falls backwards.)

CRIES—Men! Men! Men!

(As the men turn and see the priest, whom Jules has caught in his arms, borne backward down the slope, some of them throw down their arms and flee terror-stricken down the mountain. There is a loud crash of thunder

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followed, above, by the shouts of the Saxons who come charging down upon them. Attempting to rescue the priest's body, before which Bacqueur has thrown his great shield, the villagers receive the shock and are driven back fighting down the mountain, Fritz hacking at Hugh Capet's head with his battle ax, Rudolph charging old Jacques, while Canzler with one slash of his magic sword slices in two Bacqueur's great shield which falls like paper from his hands. Even after they have disappeared, from down the mountain can still be heard the voice of old Jacques calling to his men in God's name to stand. Up the slope, caught in the bushes where it fell, hangs the crucifix, the figure of which is tarnished and melted by the lightning. On the ledge just below, outstretched upon the grass, his fingers bent as though still clutching the crucifix, lies the body of the priest. The scene gradually becomes darker and the thunder is still heard reverberating through the mountains.)

SCENE FOUR—*A forest on the mountain tops. Untouched by the storm, which has swept the lower slopes, the trees here stand calm and motionless. Flowers are everywhere. Far off, between the innumerable trunks, is seen a space of dark sky rifted near the horizon and bright with the red and gold of the new dawn. From the left, into this forest stillness, silent as the scene itself, comes the dwarf leading Oswald by the hand. There is now no blood upon the latter's face which, slightly upturned, is lighted as with a soul conscious of a great crisis and hearing its approach in the least noise. Suddenly, from far to the right, the voice of Selma is heard. Instantly the dwarf vanishes. Oswald starts and stands as one in a dream.*

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SELMA—

(At first afar, then drawing nearer and nearer until at last she rushes in gleefully. She is dressed, as in the first Act, in green, and upon her head she wears a coronet of wild-flowers.)

Oswald! Oswald! Oswald! Oswald! Oswald!

(She starts, and throws herself at his feet, covering her face with her hands. The disc of the sun, emerging above the line of clouds, shoots its myriad golden needles through the wood. Revealed in the light, like things seen in a mirage, a number of fairies are discerned watching the two. From far down the mountain comes the sound of a bell tolling.)