

THE MOTHER'S TRAGEDY

SCENE.—*The room is furnished with comfort as well as luxury. A crucifix is in the window to the East, and the room is flooded with a ray of sunlight.*

CORA VAVASOUR (*late of the Halls*).

ULRIC, *illegitimate son of Cora.*

MADELINE, "girl in love with" Ulric.

THE SPIRIT OF TRAGEDY, *as Chorus.*

SPIRIT OF TRAGEDY

HERE, in the home of a friend,
Here, in the mists of a lie,
The pageant moves on to the desolate end
Under a sultry sky.
Noon is upon us, and Night,
Spreading her wings unto flight,
Visits the lands that lie far in the West,
Where the bright East is at peace on her breast :
Opposite quarters unite.
Soon is the nightfall of Destiny here ;
Nature's must pass as her hour is gone by.
Only another than she is too near,
Gloom in the sky.
One who can never pass over shall sever
Links that were forged of Love's hand ;

Love that was strong die away as a song,
Melt as a cable of sand.

But I am watching, with unwearied eye,
The wayfare of the tragedy.
I see the brightness of the home ; I see
The grisly phantom of despair to be.
I see the miserable past redeemed,
(Intolerable as its purpose seemed,)
Redeemed by love : I see the jealous days
Pass into sunshine, and youth-beaming rays,
Quicken the soul's elixir. Let me show
How these air-castles tumble into woe.

CORA.

Why did your eyelids quiver as I spoke ?
A smile, a tear ? that trembling, in their deep
Violet passion, of the beautiful
Eyes that they half discover ? Speak to me.
I have long thought a secret was your spouse,
Shared your deep fancies and your lightest word,
Partook your maiden bed, and gave you dreams
Somewhat too troublous to be virginal.

MADLINE.

My dear kind Cora, do they lie to you,
These fancies of my idle hours ? Believe,
I seem to tremble at my inward thought ;
My heart is full of wonder. When I go
Nightward beneath the moon, and take my thoughts

Past her pale beauty through some glowing skies
Not unfamiliar, through exulting gates—
“Lift up your heads,” I hear the angels cry;
“Be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors.
A child-heart seeks the Lover of the Child!”
O meek and holy Jesus, hath Thy heart
Yearned unto me, Thy maiden? For I knew
A bliss so pregnant with the unforeseen
As brought me to the very feet of Christ,
Weeping. How clouded that mysterious
Passion! I fell a-weeping in my bed,
Forgetting, or not knowing. For a fire
Too perfect for my sinful soul to touch
Gathered me closely in itself, to hide
Its utter glory from me. Now I feel
Swift troubled tremblings in myself: I seek
Again those visionary skies. Alas!
That angel chorus swells another note
I cannot understand.

CORA.

I am so moved,
I cannot find it in my heart to say
The words I purposed. Let my folly pass
As an old worldly woman's talk.

MADLINE.

O no!
Your bear the sainted fragrance of your love
Higher than even my dreams. In earthly life

You are not earthly. I have often thought
The Virgin has some special care for you,
And given of her beauty and her peace
A special dower. Your thoughts are ever pure ;
Your soul in sweet communion with God !
Why, you are crying ?

CORA.

 You say this to me ?
O could you look within a magic glass,
Holding my hand, such sights would come to you
Beyond your knowledge—aye, beyond belief !
I am no saintly virgin wrapped in prayer,
Nor is my life one river of clear water
Drawn from the wells of God. You foolish child !
My love for you you cannot understand,
Nor the low motive—you have shown it me—
Of this beginning of our talk.

MADLINE.

 Say on !

CORA, *meaningly*.

Much less you understand the love I bear
To Ulric !

MADLINE *gives a little cry*.

 Heart of Christ ! it cannot be !

CORA.

No, child ; I tricked you. Is your secret out ?

MADLINE.

I am dismayed at my discovery.
(*Slowly.*) I never guessed my own poor silliness
Until that moment when you frightened me.

CORA.

And now you know how dear he is to you!
Come, child, I love you both. Your happiness
Is my life's purpose. I have seen the truth
Of this in you; it comes to every one.
I know that he is half in love with you.
Look once again as you did look just now,
And he would die for you. O foolish girl!
[MADLINE *weeps quietly for a little,*
CORA *caressing her.*

MADLINE.

Please let me go: you are too kind to me!

CORA.

Rest, sunny head! A little while to sleep,
And then—perhaps the Mother in a dream
May comfort you. A woman's love is this
To have one heart, an undivided love;
But Hers—division in the universe
Makes multiple each part. Sweet Madeline,
Believe me, She will come to maiden dreams,
Bestow Her peace, and so direct the life
That is not unto God unconsecrate
For being dedicated unto love! [*Exit* MADLINE.]

CORA *remains thinking.*

I was no bolder twenty years ago!
Time, Time, thou maker and destroyer both,
Only in resurrection hast no part! [Broods.

SPIRIT OF TRAGEDY.

How light and how agreeable,
Paved pathway to the gate of hell!
See how all virtues, graces, shine,
Till woman half appears divine!
But I am waiting, watching still
The treason of the powers of ill.
Soft, moveless, as a tigress glides,
Strange laughing devilry abides
Its hour to poison. How they gloat,
The fiends, upon her lips and throat!
They touch her heart, they spear her eyes,
They linger on the lovely prize!
O dead she thought them! It is written:
"Eve's heel is by the serpent bitten,
His head she bruises." No indeed!
Not woman, but the woman's seed!
Hark! in the cloak of "Love of Truth"
They whisper "Memory of Youth";
And, mindful of the deadliest sin,
Hint: "Sinful woman, look within!"

CORA.

Ah me! if she could look within a glass
With spells and pantacles well fortified!

I have a glass whose bitter destiny
No wizard may conjure. Arise ye there,
Old hours of horror, clear by one and one,
In the confused and tossing ocean,
Where memory picks spar and spar from out
The dreadful whirlpool hardly yet appeased,
To join together in imagination
The ship—the wreck! And yet I stand at last
Secure in my unselfish love to them,
Repaid in mine own currency. I trust
God that made smooth the road beneath the hearse
Of my forgetful age. All must be well.

SPIRIT OF TRAGEDY.

Mortals never learn from stories
How catastrophe becomes ;
How above the victor's glories
In the trumpets and the drums,
And the cry of millions "Master!"
Looms the shadow of disaster.
Every hour a man hath said
"That at least is scotched and dead."
Some one circumstance: "At last
That, and its effects, are past."
Some one terror—subtle foe!—
"I have laid that spectre low!"
They know not, learn not, cannot calculate
How subtly Fate
Weaves its fine mesh, perceiving how to wait ;
Or how accumulate

The trifles that shall make it master yet
Of the strong soul that bade itself forget.

CORA.

Let me not shrink! Truth always purifies.
I will go through those two impossible
Actual years. The city was itself;
Hard thinking if hard drinking—sober-sides!
One night I stepped up tremulous on the stage,
Sang something, found my senses afterward
Only to that intolerable sound
Of terrible applause. They shook the sky
With calling me to answer. And I lay—
A storm of weeping swept across my frame—
Till the polite, the hateful manager
Led me to face a nation's lunatic
Roar of delight. I soon got over that,
And over—yes, the other thing. Three months—
They used to quote me on the Stock Exchange!
I will say this to me, I will not shrink:
Look up you coward, Cora Vavasour!
Which fathered me the bastard? Every rag,
Prurient licksores of society,
Gave it a different father. Am I sure
Myself? The shameful Mammon was his name,
Glittering gold! I loved my opulence,
Cursed my “misfortune.” Childbirth sobered me.
I loved the child, the only human love
I ever tasted, and I sacrificed
The popularity, the infamy,

Of my old life ; I sought another world.
I “got religion”—how I hate the phrase!—
So jest the matron newspapers. The end.
Since then I live, as I am living still,
Wrapped in the all-absorbing love of him
My child, my child! And now my selfishness
Is shamed, and I have made the sacrifice
To give this pure heart to that maidenly,
And let mine old age grow upon my hair,
Finding my happiness in seeing him
The all-devoted, and in God’s good pleasure
Have little children playing at my knees,
That I may listen, in their innocent prayers,
For Jesus’ voice. And I will never break
The secret of his being to my boy
Lest he despise me. This one reticence
I think my long-drawn agony may earn.
For I will do without a mother’s name
If only I may keep a son’s love still!

[*Exit.*

SPIRIT OF TRAGEDY.

She will not break an oath so wisely sworn,
Unlock her secret to disdain.
Wisdom is hers—what angel need to warn?
Since angels only seek to gain
That wisdom of the unprofane.
All future happiness I surely see.
I am the Soul of Tragedy!

Enter ULRIC.

Naked as dawn, the purpose of the hour
Grows on my vision, and my cynic laughter
Chills in my veins: the old avenging power
Shows me the thing that is to be hereafter.
I gloated on the coming of the curse—
I did create an hearse,
Black plumes and solemn mourners; and I
 saw
The triumph of some natural law
Fit for a poet's verse.
I saw some common fate to lure, to tempt;
(No mortal of the ages is exempt)
Some notable disaster to the house
Wherein such piety and love abide;
I saw some hateful spouse
Carry away the bride.
That feeble prescience of events to come,
That stultified imagining, hath lied;
And I can see, though all the signs be dumb
And auguries unfruitful—I can see,
Now, some intolerable tragedy
Fit for a god to picture, not a man!
I see the breaking of the rosary,
And Fate's cold fingers snap the span
Of three most innocent and pleasant lives.
So terrible a happening dives
Swift from God's hand to the abyss of hell,
And in its torment thrives,
Gathering curses from the darkest cave,
Calling corruption from the grave

to form one shape of aspect multiple
Divided in its single spell;
One spectre smooth and suave,
More horrible than any fear or active
doom,
Beckoning with its lewd malignant finger,
Beckoning, beckoning, to no pious tomb
Where pitiable memory might linger.
A creeping, living horror hems me in,
A masterpiece of sin!
Even my soul, inured to contemplate
The dreadful, the perverse design of Fate,
In many stories never meant to win
Applause of mortals or of gods, but
made
To choke man's spirit in its shade,
And make him, in his pride and happiness,
In virtue's mantle and love's seemly dress,
Immeasurably afraid.
The hour is on them—let its weight express
All blood, all life, from the disastrous grape!
In God, in mercy, there is no escape,
No anchor for distress.
The hour strikes mournfully upon the bell
Of the most awful precipice
That merges hell in hell.
There is deep silence in that dread abyss;
There is deep silence in the sphered sun;
There is deep silence where the planets
run,

Majestic fires! Before the throne of God
Deep silence waits the lifting of the rod,
The moving nod.
Silence, reflected thence, still and intense, into the
firmament ;
Such silence as befits the event.

Re-enter CORA.

CORA.

This is the hour, O child whom I have loved
With love more tender than a mother's love,
Bringing thy friend ; this moment have I sought,
Awaiting always the propitious time,
To speak some purpose grown more definite
Than is our wont. We spend the honey days
In gentle intercourse : high souls have stood
Watching us drink from their crystalline stream
Meandering through language : mighty kings
Have listened as we read of their dead
pomp ;
Fair women blushed as their imagined shapes
Flitted before us in the tender page.
We too have followed every curve and line
In fairy fancies on our canvas drawn
Of stately people, and the changing rhyme
Of virgins dancing before Artemis ;
In all the pleasures that delight the mind,
Invigorate the soul, lend favour to
The body of the youth—for I am old—

ULRIC.

My Cora! old! But urgently a word
Came of some purpose. I am half afraid
To hear it—and yourself! Reluctance sits
Dogged against the will to speak. Dear friend,
Let us sit close and whisper.

CORA.

Listen, then!

You are grown man: young men seek happiness.
Is there one joy your soul hath never felt?
One pure sweet passion?

ULRIC.

Sweet! you speak of love!

You must have guessed I meant to question you,
And smoothed the passage to my modesty.

CORA, *with bitter sorrow at her heart.*

You make me very glad. Yes, yes, indeed,
Love is my meaning. Does it shame me much
To talk so openly of love to you?
But I am old enough to be—to be—

ULRIC.

My wife! O Cora, I have loved you so!
My heart is like a fountain of the sea.
I burn, I tremble; in my veins there swims
A torrid ecstasy of madness. Ah!
Ah God! I kiss you, kiss you! O you faint!

Sweetheart, my passion overwhelms your soul.
Your virginal sweet spirit cannot reach
My fury. You are silent. Yet you love!
I read it in the terror of your eyes,
The crimson of your burning face. I know,
I know you love me! Cora, Cora, tell me!
O she will die! I would not—I was rough—
My overmastering desire to you—
My queen, my wife, this maddens me.

CORA, *recovering*.

You fool!

You beast! I hate you for your stupid self!
I am defiled! Go! touch me not! Speak not!
I am accursed of the Lord my God. [Shrieks.

ULRIC.

Darling! my darling! How have I done this?

CORA.

Fool! It is madness! Yes, and punishment.
O God, that all my love should come to this!
You, you are mad! I speak of love, and you,
You—you are acting! I was taken in!
Let's laugh about it! [Tries to laugh, sinks back.

It was not well done.

[ULRIC is silent, and, puzzled, waits for her to
go on.

Surely you know that it was Madeline!

ULRIC.

What! I should wed that pretty Puritan?

The downcast eyes and delicate white throat,
The lily, when I saw the rose before me?
Your full delicious beauty was as God!
You are a bunch of admirable grapes
Fit to intoxicate my being! Yes!
I would not give that sunny fruit of yours
For twenty such frail flowers as Madeline.
I am a man—you mate me with a girl?

CORA.

Stop! not a word! My blasphemy to hear,
Yours to speak out—when you are told the truth!

ULRIC.

What truth? This word hath first an ugly sound.
The truth! God curse it to His blackest hell
If but it stand between us and our love!

CORA.

O Ulric, Ulric! bear with me awhile!
Speak no more words—each syllable strikes here,
[Hand to heart.
A cloud of winged scorpions, that rage
In mine own deepest self; for there I know
Tame harpies that had ceased to torture me;
And this more ghastly brood renews their sting,
Adding a triple poison! O my soul
Is torn with pangs more horrible than hell,
Scorching the very marrow of my bones,
Corrupting me—corrupting me, I say,—

O God! is any safety at Thy feet?
 Be silent, O be silent for awhile,
 And I will shrivel up thy wretched ears,
 Give thee to curse the hour that saw thee first,
 To curse thy parents and thine own young head.
 May God forbid that thou should rail on Him!
 Leave me a little to my torment yet,
 That I may quell the host of devil forms
 That eat my soul up, many torturing,
 And one—ah! one accursèd beyond all—
 Soothing! O heart of Jesus, bleed with mine!
[Kneels towards East.

 See, see! I seek Thee on maternal knees!
 Conceive Her pangs that bore Thee, when her shame
 Devoured Her, with no memory of love—
 As mine, as mine! O bitter memories! *[A pause.*

ULRIC.

Tell me, dear friend! anxiety and love
 Are like to kill me. Tell me in three words.

CORA *slowly and deliberately.*

I am a dancer and a prostitute!

ULRIC *smiles contemptuously.*

Why trick me with so pitiful a lie?
 Where you the vilest woman on the earth,
 Mere scum of filth shed off the city's dregs—
 Were you the meanest and most treacherous—
 Were you the sordid soul that most contrasts

With your true, noble, and unselfish self—
Were you the synthesis of all I hate,
In mind and body leprous and deformed—
Did every word and gesture fill my soul
With hatred and its parody, disgust—
It touches not my question! This one fact
O'ermasters all eccentric circumstance :
I love you—you, and not your attributes !

CORA.

Great noble soul! I hate myself the more
That I must wound you further with the truth.
A double prong this poisoned poinard
Snaps in our hearts. I kept the secret long.
Your breath, that burns upon me, wraps me round
With whirling passion, pierces through my veins
With its unhallowed fire, constrains, compels,
Drags out the corpse of twenty years ago
From the untrusty coffin of my mind,
To poison, to corrupt, to strike you there
Blind with its horror.

ULRIC.

Leave these bitter words!
They torture me with terrible suspense,
And you with fear. I see by these dread looks,
Tedious prologues, that there is a truth
You are afraid to speak.

CORA *aside*.

What subterfuge ?

What shield against the lightning of his love?
(*Hastily.*) I have a husband living.

ULRIC.

Think you, then,
I have lived so long and looked into your eyes
To listen to so hastily disgorged
A prentice falsehood not grown journeyman?
Then, had you fifty husbands, am I one,
Reared in the faith of high philosophy,
Schooled from my childhood in the brotherhood
Of poets, to descend to this absurd
Quibble of tedious morality?
Shame not your truth with that ignoble thought!
And also—tell me, once for all, the truth! [*Bitterly.*]
Say that you love him—it is on your tongue

CORA.

Learn the momentous horror of thy birth! [*A pause.*]

ULRIC.

I would not urge my suit against that plea,
But—I have known you, and your own pure soul
Should cast no doubt against me—you have said
“Rather we love such as the child of love;
And pity—he is not unpitiful
In this vile system; and respect him too—
He stands alone, the evidence of Strength!”
You move your purpose with no bastardy!
Only you claim to speak the generous thought:
For you I wait, for you, to offer love!

CORA.

All is too true—my own philosophy
Mars my world's wisdom. (*Suddenly.*) Can you
tell me why
I loved you as a child, and why I dare
Now take your head between my hands and kiss
Your forehead with these shameful lips of mine,
These harlot lips, and kiss you unashamed?

ULRIC.

Strange are these words, and this emotion strange!

CORA.

Strange is the truth, and deadly as an asp.

ULRIC.

Wear me no more with this anxiety.

CORA.

How can I speak? For this will ruin us.

ULRIC.

Unspoken, I demand thy heart of thee.

CORA.

My heart is broken. This will murder thine.

ULRIC.

Kill, but not torture! Let me know the truth.

CORA.

This shaft is aimed even against thy life.

ULRIC.

What is my life without the love of thee ?

CORA.

I hate each word as I do hate the devil.

ULRIC.

I, each evasion. I am bound a slave
To this wild passion. I will eat me up.

CORA.

You cannot guess the horror that you speak.
I tell you, if I know your golden heart,
This detestation of yourself shall cry
The cry of Ædipus—"I have profaned——"

ULRIC.

What sphinx more cruel? What new Ædipus?
You riddle, Cora, and it breaks my heart.

[He sinks exhausted.]

(Rallying.) By God, I swear to you no lie shall keep
Its Dead Sea bar against our marrying.

CORA.

The truth! The truth! The truth! I am indeed
That whore I told you. That makes nothing here.
I am the mother of thy bastard birth!

ULRIC.

Stop! stop! I did not hear you. O my God!
What agony is this? What have I done
To earn this infamy? Or rather, Thou,
What have I not done? Have Thou pity yet;
Sustain me in this vile extremity!

[He prays silently.]

CORA *watching him.*

How wonderful! He will abide the shock.
Death and mute horror fight within his face
Against a will made masterful to Fate.

ULRIC *raises his eyes and lifts his arm in act
to strike.*

Then I detest you! Mother! Treacherous!
Vile as the worm that battens on the dead!

CORA.

Ulric! He's mad! Sweet heaven! what is this?
*[CORA is now hysterical. URIC does not notice.
She shrieks at each new insult.]*

ULRIC.

Say rather, what are you? I loved you once
Childlike; then came the power of reasoning,
And I beheld you, the unselfish one,
Befriending me, the angel of my life.
See what it rested on, my happiness!
Your sacrifice is utter selfishness;

Me, the sole pledge of your debaucheries
You keep—your love, the mere maternity
You share with swine and cattle! All your care
Is duty: let the harlot cleanse herself—
Tardy repentance!—In the name of God!
Worse, you have lied, and built me up a house
Of trust in you as being truth and love,
Who are in truth all lies, all treachery!
You made me love you as an honest man!
You watched this passion, this intolerable
Desire, this flame of hell; you fed it full,
Sunned it and watered—O my brain will snap!—
Only to blast it. Take your story back;
Be what you will except that infamous!
For as my mother—I should spit on you!

[CORA *is at his feet grovelling. She half rises
to listen.*

Ignoble is your foul maternity,
The cattle-kinship. But the other crime
Is viler than the first one. “Look!” you say:
“His passion threatens to defile my bed!”
And put a hideous abiding curse
On both our lives to save your modesty
From my incestuous embrace! O God!
My love is nobler—to defy the past,
Deny!—your love is merely natural;
Mine, against Nature, is the love Divine!
What crime is this? Thy pale Son’s martyrdom
Cleansed earth from no such vile hypocrisy
As this my mother’s. And I call thee, God,

To witness ; and I call mankind to hear ;
This is my faith : I live and die by it.
I, nobler, cast away the infamy,
Break with my hands these rotten barricades,
 *[He picks up his mother's Bible, tears it, and
 casts it into the fire,*

And swear before the Spirit of the World,
In sight of God, this day : I love you still
With carnal love and spiritual love !
And I will have you, by the living God,
To be my mistress. If I fail in this,
Or falter in this counsel of despair,
May God's own curses dog me into hell,
And mine own life perpetuate itself
Through all the ages of eternity.

Amen ! Amen ! Come, Cora, to my heart !

*[He stoops to embrace her. Horror and madness
 catch him, and he runs about the room
 wildly, crying for CORA, whom he cannot
 see. MADELINE enters.*

MADELINE.

O Cora ! Cora ! Ulric ! Help ! Help ! Help !

ULRIC regains his self-control.

Hush ! All is well ! I cannot tell you now.
Some news—a letter—it has frightened her.

MADELINE.

But you were crying as a madman would.

ULRIC.

Believe me, I am nervous and distraught.
You know me, how excitable I am.
A moment, and you see me calm again.
Come, Cora, do not frighten Madeline!
[He raises her to lead her from the room.]

CORA.

Where would you lead me? I am blind with tears.

ULRIC.

I have no tears. Mine eyes are hard and cold
As my intention. Help me, Madeline.

CORA.

God will avenge me bitterly on you
If you stretch hand to aid this infamy.

ULRIC.

You shall not wreck her life. Be silent now!
Believe me, it is nothing, Madeline!
She often falls into a fit like this.
Excess is danger, equally in prayer
(Her vice is prayer) as in debauchery.
*[He is again going mad. He drags CORA from
the room.]*

MADELINE.

It is not illness that hath made them mad.
I cannot guess what storm has lashed itself

Thus in one hour from peace and happiness
To such a fury that the very room
Seems to my fancy to be tossed about,
Rocking and whirling on some dizzy sea.
There is a horrible feeling in the air. [*She shudders*]

SPIRIT OF TRAGEDY.

The keystone of this arch of misery
Is set by the unfaltering hands
Of Fate. How desperate the anarchy
Wrought in one hour!
The fickle sands
Run through the glass, and all the light is gone.
Abysses without name the mighty power
Spans with spread fingers; on the horizon
Blood stains the setting sun,
The shattered sun; it shall not rise again!
No resurrection to the trampled flower,
No hope to angels watching as in vain
Love—lies—slain!
Madness and Terror and the deadly mood of
Fortitude,
A misbegotten brood
Of all things shameful—O the desolate eyes
Of the cold Christ enthroned! The weeping heaven
Answers for angels: the oppressive skies
See them dislink from bodily form and shape,
Unloved and unforgiven,
Unwept, unpenitent, unshriven!
Their hell of horror knows no gate of any escape.

This tragedy is terrible to me.
Even I, its spirit, shudder as I see ;
I, passionless, the moulder of men's hope,
The slayer of them, cast no horoscope
Divining what befell. And I am moved :
Both love, and both are worthy to be loved,
Ah Fate! if thou hadst cast the dies
Whence no appeal, in any other wise !
I am the soul of the grim face of things :
Mine are the Sphinx's wings ;
Mine own live lives with this event !
Yet even I, its very self, lament
The execrable tyranny,
The rayless misery
Of this wild whirlpool sea of circumstance.
Mine old eyes look askance :
It is my punishment to dwell
In mine own self-created hell. [CORA *rushes in.*

MADLINE.

What curse of God hath smitten you? I see
Exceeding horror in abiding shape
Blasting the countenance of peace and love
With some distortion. O your mouth's awry!

CORA, *in a hoarse, horrible voice.*
You cannot tell! I cannot tell myself.
Some vital mist of blood is shrouding sight
From all but my corruption's self. Come here
And look within mine eyes, if you can see

Remembrance that there was a God! I say
I see the whole bright universe a tomb,
With creeping spectres moving in the mist,
Some suffocating poison that was air.
O Phaedra! lend me of thy wickedness,
Lest I go mad to contemplate myself!
I choke—I grope—I fall!

What name is this
That strikes my spirit as a broken bell
Struck by some devilish hammer? In my brain
Reverberates some word impossible.
O I am broken on the wheel of death;
My bones are ground in some infernal mill;
My blood is as the venom of a snake,
Striking each vessel with unwonted pangs,
Killing all good within me. I am—ah!

MADLINE.

Dear friend, dear friend, seek comfort in my arms!
Look to Our Lady of the Seven Stars!

CORA.

Can you not see? I am cut off from God!
Loathsome bull-men in their corruption linked
Whisper lewd fancies in my ear. Great fish,
Monstrous and flat, with vile malignant eyes,
And crawling beetles of gigantic strength,
Crushed, mangled, moving, are about me. Go!
Go! do not touch the carcase of myself
That is abased, defiled, abominable.

MADLINE.

O Heart of Jesus! Thou art bleeding still!
This was Thy true disciple. Leave her not,
Sweet Jesus, in this madness. Who is this?

Enter ULRIC; He carries a razor.

ULRIC.

I have a lovely bride at last, by dear!
A phantom with intolerable eyes
Came close and whispered: I am Wisdom's self,
Thy spouse from everlasting. Mortal king
Of my immortal self, I claim thy love!
So, we are wedded close. Justice demands
The punishment of this accursed one,
Originator of the cruel crimes
My mother-mistress carried to their close.
It was your vile affection, Madeline,
And your perverted hankering for me
That caused this thing abominable. Come!
I will not hurt you in the killing you!

[He catches MADLINE gently by the hair, bending back her head. CORA sits thunder-struck, unable to move or speak.]

MADLINE.

Help, Cora, help! he means to murder me!
Jesus, my Saviour, save them from this deed!
Help!

[ULRIC cuts her throat.]

ULRIC.

So perish the Queen's enemies!
Well, little lover, have I done it well?
Cora, my sweetheart, we are happy now
To think our troubles should be ended so
In perfect love and—I am feeling ill——

[CORA *recovers her mental balance.*

CORA.

A blood-grey vapour and a scorpion steam
To poison the unrighteous life of God!
[ULRIC *looks on in a completely dazed manner,*
uncomprehending.

CORA *takes razor and puts it in his hand.*
Kill yourself.

ULRIC, *smiling, as if with some divine and ineffable*
joy, draws the razor across his throat, cutting in
deeply. He falls bleeding.

My dear!

CORA.

That is my duty to my motherhood.
Let me now think of all this happening.

[*She sinks slowly into a chair trembling. She*
puts her hand to her throat as if choking.
She bites her lip and sits easily back, look-
ing straight before her with uncomprehend-
ing eyes.

CURTAIN.