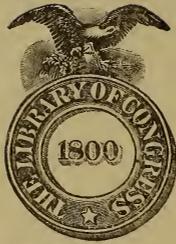


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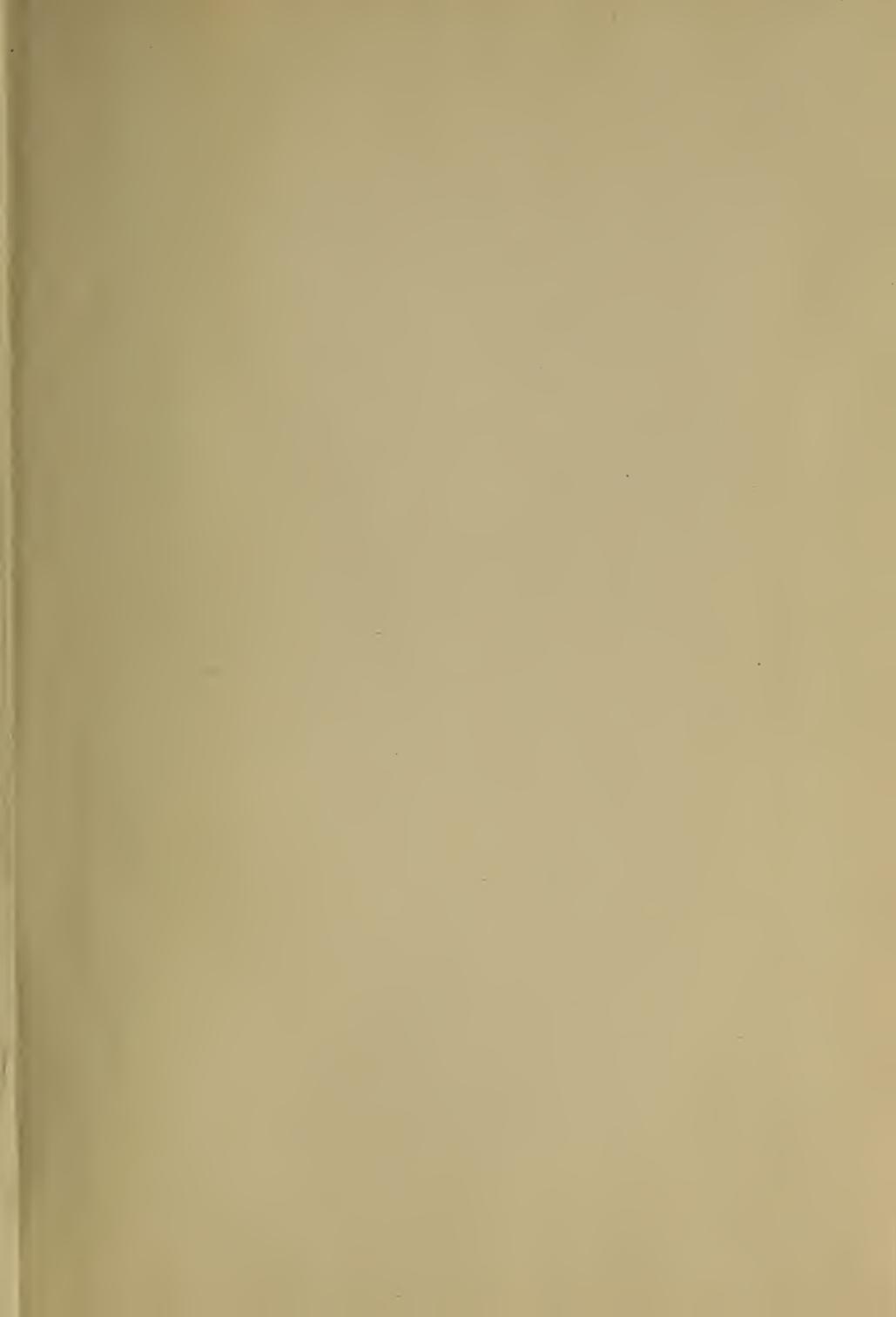
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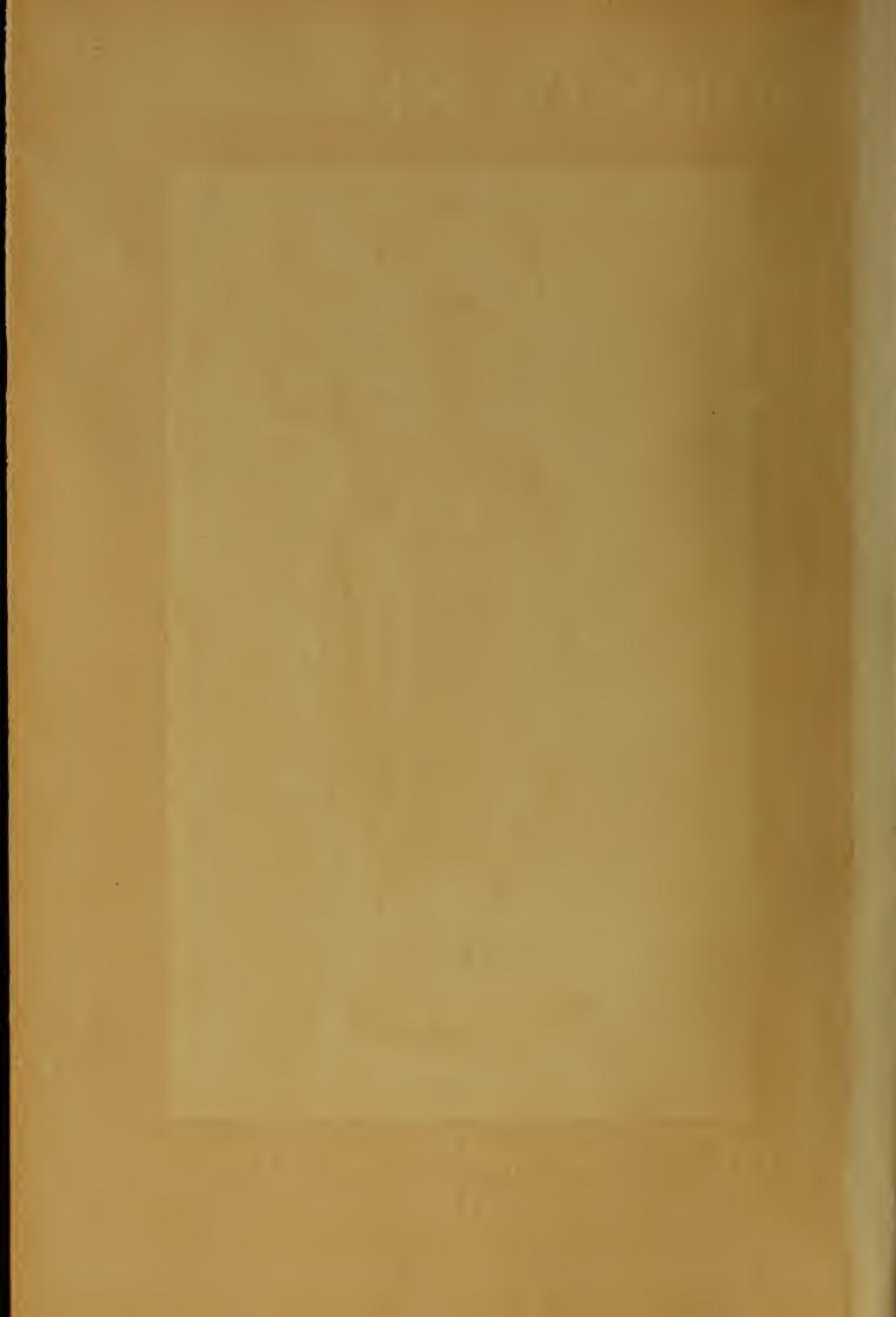
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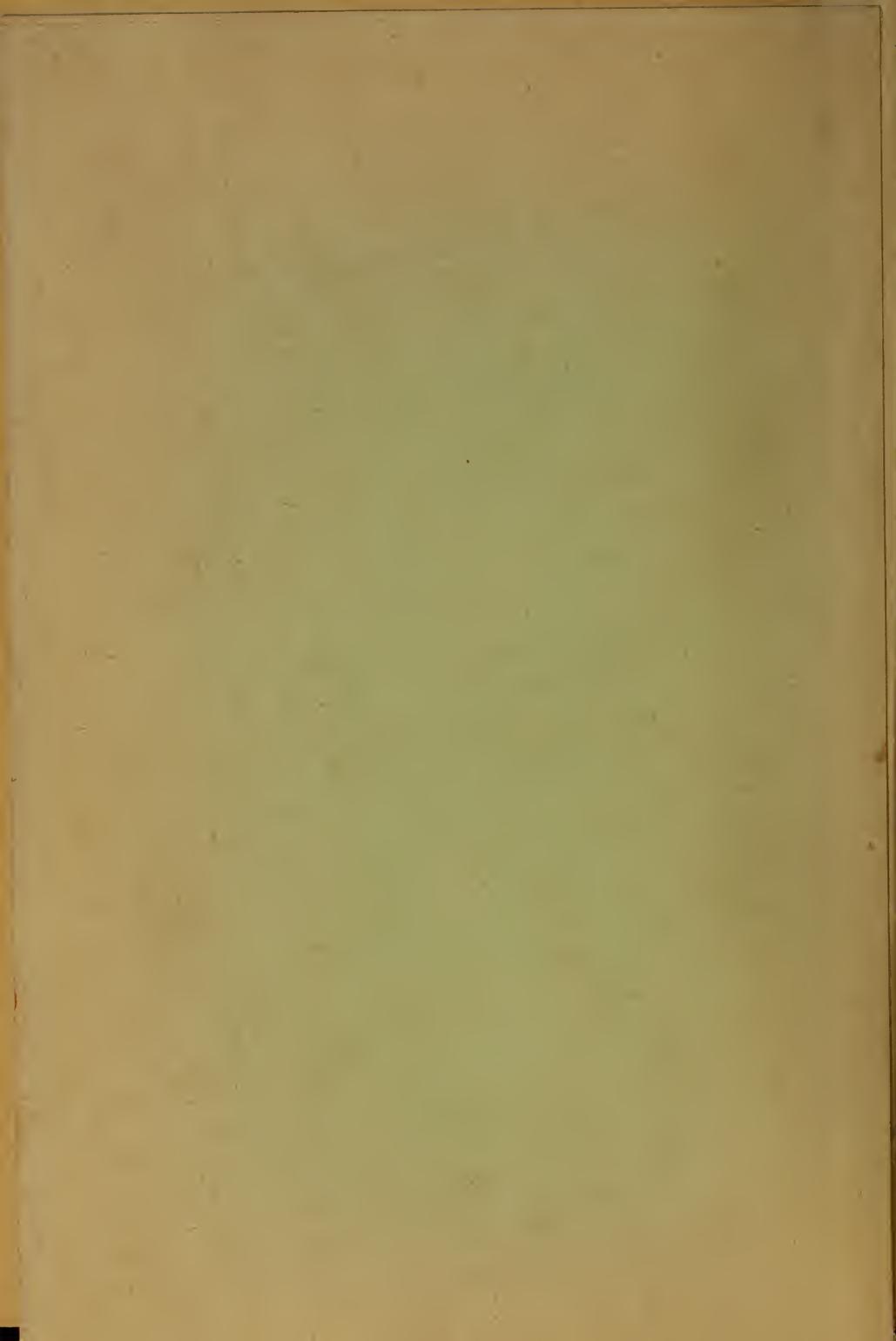




JOHN OF NEPOMUK



THE NINETEENTH GROVE PLAY
OF THE BOHEMIAN CLUB



JOHN OF NEPOMUK

PATRON SAINT OF BOHEMIA

565
1516

BY

CLAY M. GREENE

WITH A NOTE ON THE MUSIC BY THE COMPOSER

HUMPHREY J. STEWART

THE NINETEENTH GROVE PLAY OF THE
BOHEMIAN CLUB OF SAN FRANCISCO

AS PERFORMED BY ITS MEMBERS IN THE BOHEMIAN GROVE
SONOMA COUNTY, CALIFORNIA, ON THE THIRTIETH
NIGHT OF JULY, NINETEEN TWENTY ONE



SAN FRANCISCO
BOHEMIAN CLUB

1921

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G. E. M. Aug 10 / 21

FOREWORD

THE authorities in respect to the life and death of John of Nepomuk are so conflicting as to create the suspicion in the searcher's mind that their chroniclers have been swayed by religious creed rather than historical fact. Some of them have even gone so far as to deny that John was ever the Father Confessor of Queen Joanna and to insist that his torture and death resulted from seditious activities against King Wenceslaus and his religious superior, the Archbishop of Prague. Also that the romantic story to the effect that he suffered death rather than reveal the secrets confided to him by a guilty Queen in the sanctity of the Confessional was nothing more than deftly contrived legend.

To the playbuilder, however, such contradictory evidence is no deterrent to the evolution of a drama. It justifies him in the selection of such excerpts from history or legend, fact or fiction, as may be best suited for the creation of human or dramatic interest; and this, it is earnestly hoped, has been accomplished.

During the action of the play, it will be noted, the unities of time and place have been disturbed, for the purpose of adapting it to the somewhat arbitrary requirements of the Grove stage. The further defense is offered that, in the exigencies of play-making, dramatic license is not only allowable but sometimes unavoidable.

Before closing this somewhat apologetic Foreword, I make bold to dissent from the gracefully worded opinions of former Grove Play authors to the effect that such plays should not be geographic, historical or narrative of human happenings; that their plots and characters should grow out of inspirations

seeded in the Grove itself, and that in no case should the natural scenic splendors of the great stage be marred or disfigured by artificial embellishment of any kind.

This dissent was foreshadowed long ago, for in selecting my theme I was actuated by the memory of an incident in club history, when, with elaborate ceremonies, John of Nepomuk was duly declared to be the Patron Saint of the Western Bohemia, because he had suffered torture and death rather than betray the secret of a woman.

I then chose his martyrdom as the basis of my Grove Play, should I ever be honored by an invitation to write one, and now that I have accepted that long awaited honor I ask to be pardoned for having transgressed so far upon what has been set down, at least in some opinions, as Club tradition, in the hope that this labor of love may not have been in vain.

C. M. G.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

JOHN OF NEPOMUK Vicar General of Prague	DION HOLM
WENCESLAUS IV, King of Bohemia	RICHARD M. HOTALING
SIGISMUND, King of Hungaria	WILLIAM B. HANLEY
(The Song of SIGISMUND sung by HARRY ROBERTSON)	
JOHN III, Archbishop of Prague	J. WILSON SHIELS
VLADISLAV, Confident of King Wenceslaus	BENJAMIN A. PURRINGTON
HAJEK, Jester to King Wenceslaus	WILLIAM S. RAINEY
LABOCAN, The Court Astrologer	E. MALCOLM CAMERON
BALBINUS, Court Chamberlain	MARION VECKI
TOMAK, A Soldier	J. BOYD OLIVER
MATHIAS, Captain of the Guard	E. COURTNEY FORD
MALEK, A Soldier	M. C. THRELKELD
—AND—	
JOANNA, Queen of Bohemia	RICHARD LEONARD

*Chorus of Monks and Peasants, Ladies and Gentlemen of
the Court, Acolytes, Deacons, Courtesans,
Soldiers and Chorus of Angels*

TIME: *A. D. 1393*

PLACE: *A forest near Prague, Bohemia*

HISTORICAL NOTE: *John of Nepomuk, born in Pomuk, Bohemia, 1335; died in Prague, Bohemia, 1393; canonized by Pope Benedict XIII, 1729.*

CHORUS OF MONKS, PEASANTS AND ANGELS

F. N. ANDERSON	R. A. GLENN	WM. OLNEY
M. ANGER	R. B. HEATH	H. W. ORR
A. A. ARBOGAST	W. F. HOOKE	G. B. PETERSON
H. K. BAXTER	W. H. HOPKINSON	R. PROBASCIO
EUGENE BLANCHARD	OTIS JOHNSON	G. PURLENKY
A. R. BROWNE	A. G. KELLOGG	C. A. RIESER
R. A. BROWN	WALTER KNEISS	F. E. RODOLPH
C. F. BULOTTI	R. H. LACHMUND	E. W. ROLAND
E. J. CARDINAL	A. F. LAWTON	B. ROMAINE
P. S. CARLTON	RICHARD LUNDGREN	B. M. STICH
E. D. CRANDALL	R. I. LYNAS	A. H. STILL
M. E. CRESWELL	F. A. MACK	J. M. TEEL
W. W. DAVIS	E. H. McCANDLISH	C. F. VOLKER
T. G. ELLIOTT	JOHN McEWING	P. H. WARD
DAVID EISENBACH	W. A. MITCHELL	T. G. WHITAKER
C. E. ENGVICK	P. J. MOHR	MARK WHITE
C. J. EVANS	F. MUELLER	G. R. WILLIAMS
R. E. FISHER	R. M. NELLY	W. S. WILSON
H. FREEMAN	W. P. NIELSON	A. Y. WOOD
E. GERSON	R. O'BRIEN	

SOLDIERS

L. D. ADAMS	R. M. HARDIN	PRESTON McKINNEY
	RICHARD O'CONNOR	E. J. THOMAS

DEACONS

F. S. HOWARD	A. M. DUPERU
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LADIES OF THE COURT

W. H. BISSELL	R. L. CHAMBERLAIN	P. A. DREW
W. T. RAMBO		M. F. STEELE

HERALDS

ARTHUR W. CHRISTIE	GEORGE WIHR
--------------------	-------------

DANCING SOLDIERS

A. M. BROWN, JR.	CHESTER DECHANT	FRED KAPPLEMAN
LESLIE CUPPLES	CHARLES DECHANT	WARREN MACK
WILLIAM CUPPLES	ELMER GUNTHER	HAROLD MAUNDRELL
	JOHN MESSERSCHMIDT	

DANCING COURTESANS

HARRIS ALLEN	WILLIAM GERBER, JR.	GROVER LA VELLE
JOHN F. CONNOLLY	GEO. HAMMERSMITH	CARL MAX
FRED DAVIS	GEORGE HASHINGER	FRED. W. McNULTY
	ERLE OSBORN	

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REGINALD TRAVERS

LIGHTING

EDWARD J. DUFFEY and
RAY F. COYLE

DIRECTORS OF DANCE

TED SHAWN assisted by
GEORGE HAMMERSMITH

PROPERTIES

RAY F. COYLE assisted by
HARRY CARLTON and
HARRY S. FONDA

CHORUS MASTER

EUGENE BLANCHARD

CONDUCTOR

HUMPHREY J. STEWART

CONCERT MASTER

L. FENSTER

ORCHESTRA MANAGER

WALTER OESTERRICHER

THE PLOT OF THE PLAY

IT is the hour of approaching dawn, in a forest situated some leagues from the capital city of Prague, Bohemia, immediately preceding the arrival of the Court of KING WENCESLAUS IV for the solemnization of Easter ceremonies and the holding of revels.

Sentries are guarding the canopied thrones of KING WENCESLAUS and QUEEN JOANNA, and at the altar HAJEK, the Court Jester, is kneeling in prayer. Contemplating him mockingly is one LABOCAN, who has gained the confidence of the KING through false claims that he can draw auguries from the stars.

A song is heard through the darkness of the forest which awakens only the interest of the Sentries. The opening scene establishes the opposite characters of the two men. HAJEK, a hunchback of forbidding visage, sees nothing but brightness and happiness in the world, while LABOCAN, whose features and physique are normal, is surly, distrustful and finds no good in anything human.

The refrain of the song is heard, nearer, and VLADISLAV, a mercenary who has ingratiated himself into the confidence of the KING, enters in a state of apparent alarm, calls attention to the mysterious song and relates how on the night of the coronation of WENCESLAUS this same song was heard under the window of QUEEN JOANNA, creating much scandal about the Court, for the singer proved to be none other than SIGISMUND, half brother to the KING, and a suitor for her hand before she had been lured by the proffer of a crown.

The form of a woman is seen to cross the stage in the

direction of the song. VLADISLAV is certain that this is the QUEEN hurrying to keep an assignation with her old lover, but HAJEK, who has crept close enough to her to recognize her, denies it is she.

JOHN OF NEPOMUK arrives with a procession of Monks to prepare for the religious ceremonies, and VLADISLAV and LABOCAN tell him of the song and their suspicions. With deep feeling JOHN defends the QUEEN, asserts his conviction of her innocence of wrong and declares his belief that she will prove it by being present during the approaching ceremonies.

The royal retinue arrives in resplendent procession and the QUEEN is in her proper place, to the deep confusion of her enemies. The KING addresses his subjects, stating the reasons for moving the Court into the forest, and calls for the Easter revels to begin. JOHN, much amazed, protests that the Mass must come first, and in this he is touchingly encouraged by the QUEEN.

It is now intimated by the KING that there is deep distrust as to his QUEEN's loyalty and virtue. Her opposition to his will regarding the precedence of religious ceremonies over his long awaited revels so moves him to strange spite that he decides to submit the matter of that precedence to a fool, and calls upon HAJEK, the Jester. Frankly confessing that it is to his interests to decide against his better instincts in favor of the KING, he calls for the revels to come first.

JOHN again protests against these unholy functions in the presence of the Altar of God, when the KING angrily directs that it be taken away. The QUEEN is about to descend from the throne to follow the removal of the Shrine, but JOHN reminds her that it is her duty to submit to the will of her liege Lord and she sadly complies with his injunction.

Wine is brought and the QUEEN is compelled to offer the first toast to Bohemia, following which the COURT CHAMBERLAIN is called upon to begin the revels with a song dedicated to wine and drunkenness. Continuance of the revels is interrupted by LABOCAN, who declares that the stars have predicted coming disaster, and the KING in deep rage orders him from the Court until he can woo kindlier inspirations out of the skies.

The banquet is announced and the Court adjourns to feast on its promised dissipations. As the KING is about to follow his courtiers the song of SIGISMUND is heard again, and VLADISLAV recalls the singing of the same song at the coronation, when the CAPTAIN OF THE GUARD is summoned and ordered to send soldiers to apprehend the mysterious minstrel.

The QUEEN bribes the soldier, TOMAK, who is sent on this mission, by giving him her necklace, and the suspicions of JOHN are aroused as to her loyalty and honor as a wife. She convinces him, however, that her offence has been only political, and that she has not deceived him in her confessions. This is interrupted by the appearance of the faithful HAJEK, who warns her of the enemies that are leagued against her and insists that she must dissemble with the KING and not oppose him in any of his whims, however mad they may be.

The cupidity of the bribed TOMAK is aroused and, returning to the QUEEN, he reports SIGISMUND's escape and claims the balance of his reward, which is given him. SIGISMUND, however, not willing to escape until he has had an interview with the QUEEN, suddenly appears and an affectionate greeting is interrupted by JOHN, who also pleads with him to escape, as his life is in danger. His departure is detected by the prying VLADISLAV, who demands information as to his identity. This JOHN

refuses to give and TOMAK is again sent to bring the stranger back.

The KING and his revellers return from the banquet. Flushed with wine, he refuses to discuss matters of state with VLADISLAV until the revels are over, and calls for another song of wine and his favorite dance of the Bacchanals. This over, the KING declares himself ready for the religious ceremonies of the morning, when TOMAK is brought in a prisoner, with the report that he has permitted the mysterious minstrel to escape. The QUEEN's necklace is found on him and he is ordered to death. The QUEEN on her knees protests her innocence of any intentional wrong, when SIGISMUND also is brought in under arrest.

WENCESLAUS angrily accuses him of having defiled the royal bed and is slapped in the face, which action he avenges by stabbing his half brother. SIGISMUND is only wounded, however, and demands his release, stating that he is a KING as powerful as WENCESLAUS and if he were made prisoner Hungaria would at once invade Bohemia.

SIGISMUND is set free and, immediately following his departure, KING WENCESLAUS determines to lift the veil of secrecy from the soul of the QUEEN through her FATHER CONFESSOR, and orders JOHN brought before him, even if he must be torn from the exercise of his Holy Office. This sacrilegious order is carried out, but JOHN indignantly defies the KING to wrest from him the secrets of the church and is ordered to torture.

The QUEEN, several times during the progress of the tortures, offers to reveal her secrets to the KING, but she is stayed by warning admonitions from the suffering priest, who forbids her to speak on penalty of the anger of Heaven. HAJEK manages to communicate with her unseen by the KING; declares that the only hope

now of saving JOHN's life is through the intervention of the ARCHBISHOP and leads her to where horses are waiting for her.

Finding that the QUEEN has disappeared, the fury of the KING is redoubled. He orders greater tortures inflicted, and the death of the Holy Man soon ensues. The KING is now struck with alarm at the error he has committed, and directs that the body of JOHN be thrown into the river, so that the sight of it shall not inflame his people.

The QUEEN returns with the ARCHBISHOP to demand the release of JOHN, but on hearing of his death the curse of the Church is hurled at the now terrified KING, who pleads for mercy but is again accursed of God.

A terrible storm follows the curse of the ARCHBISHOP, and after the resultant darkness a blinding white light comes from out of the Heavens, the figure of JOHN rises from the river toward it, and a great Angel Chorus speeds him upward on his flight into Paradise.

THE INDUCTION

(Omitted in the representation)

SCENE

In the Temple of History. This is a small domed structure, so constructed as to be easily removed without the dropping of a curtain. The floor of this is slightly raised and two steps lead up to it.

HISTORY is discovered with THESPIIS seated on a white Greek chair, and THESPIIS is below him at the foot of the steps. HISTORY has his arms extended as if in protest.

HISTORY

No more! Again do I protest, O THESPIIS.
But, since no argument hath motive force
Unless there be two sides to it, I grant,
For its sake only, that you have a premise
In which to plant the seeds that fruit good judgment.

THESPIIS (making an abject obeisance)

I bow in humblest gratitude to learn
That History, stern, unimpeachable,
Down thro' the ages, who hath carved on stone
In letters bold, ineradicable,
The deeds and words of Fame's great men and women,
Hath stooped to ease his burden of conceit
And grant that THESPIIS merits seed or premise.

HISTORY (severely)

Briars have sprouted in your thoughts and speech,
To scratch away the film of modesty
And show beneath it vain and dull sarcasm.

THESPIS

If my sarcasm's dull, then Art's awry;
The fame I've won upon the mimic stage
Becoming impotent; a tawdry cheat,
Clouding perfection with the taint of sham.

HISTORY

Your mimic stage, alas! is full of that
As is my temple of recorded fact.
Your men and women blatant in perversions
Of time, of place, of reason and of truth.
You welcome glaring inconsistency;
Unbridled license seeps thro' all your work,
And Fiction dulls the glow of History.

THESPIS

Fiction himself shall tell how many times
You have invoked his aid to fill some gap
Your bungling scribes made, knowing not the truth.

HISTORY

I am the truth!

THESPIS

You arrogate too much.
Fiction shall teach you better. Fiction, ho!
[calling off to the left.

I choke! History throttles me again,
And stifles argument in clouds of cant!

[Enter FICTION.

FICTION

Who calls on Fiction?

THESPIS

History and I.

HISTORY

I called you not.

THESPIS

Then I did, he consenting.
He bragged just now, "I am the truth!"

FICTION (*in amused surprise*)

He said so?

THESPIS

In wrathful vanity accusing me.

FICTION

He will not say he never called on me
To gloss his records with the guilt of legend,
Or let invention limn when doubt appeared.

THESPIS

I firmly do assert he said just that
When I set forth for him the argument,
The portraitures and lessons of the play
Bohemia shall listen to within this vast
And soul-inspiring playhouse of the Gods,
Buildd by nature for her yearly revel.

HISTORY

Ay, 'twas for that I frowned his project down,
For mummers must not juggle with my truths.

FICTION

Then hear me speak!

HISTORY

Nay, listen first to me!

[indicating the trees and sky by a sweep of his arms.]

Mark you yon vaulted blue dimmed by the night,
Whose million upon million stars keep guard
Above the loyal hearts of Manhood's kings
That beat alone for Friendship's glory. See
How majestic these befeathered spires
Bend not beneath Time's burdens thro' the ages;

Nor marred by tempests of a thousand years,
Grove upward thro' the hazes of the gorge,
Wooing the breezes into requiems
Of fragrant praise to Nature and to God!

FICTION (*with a low bow*)

I thrill 'neath words that baffle contradiction.

HISTORY

Each of those stars reflects a shining truth;
These mighty obelisks, scarred, gaunt and hoary,
Are living monuments to Nature's facts,
Incontrovertible as flint by dust.

So, I protest these hallowed aisles and naves
Should ne'er resound with song or spoken word
That do not spring from out the loins of truth!

FICTION

Art finished?

HISTORY

Ay.

FICTION

Well said and well bethought.

THESPIS

But much too long, methinks, for what it told.
Too many words engulf the tale within them.

[FICTION *makes a restraining gesture to* THESPIS.]

FICTION

One question, History. If its reply
Be as convincing as your words well chosen,
Then I have finished too.

HISTORY

That were but just,
For I weighed well my words and spoke not idly.

FICTION

What was their bearing on the play to-night?

HISTORY

The subject's mine, its truths all written down
So that posterity may read them.

FICTION

Well?

HISTORY

For this it should be held inviolate
From any tincturing of mere invention,
And weak romance that paints the baser hues
Of human nature: envy, love and lust.

THESPIS

'Twould be like wine that never had fermented.

FICTION

Or folk-lore without Legend's poesies.

HISTORY

Folk-lore and Legend blaspheme History!
ST. JOHN OF NEPOMUK, against my will,

[pointing to THESPIS.

Has he filched from my records, here to strut
In paint and tinsel thro' a pagan pageant.

FICTION

He that was canonized the patron saint
Of old Bohemia as the foe of scandal;
Whose breast held in the grip of loyal fervor
The ugly secret of a guilty QUEEN;
Who died in torture with his conscience dumb,
Is held in manly reverence and awe
By that newer Bohemia of to-day.
So, THESPIS wooed him from thy treasure chest,
To live again here on this stage of Nature,
Where oft were Fact to Fiction haply wed.

HISTORY (*with much earnestness*)

I am protector of the living truth
That never dies, and JOHN's sainthood is truth.
But I've no record of JOANNA's guilt
And you and Legend would besmirch her soul.

FICTION

Then, History, your records are besmirched!
For both Legend and I were called upon
Out of the spheres of beauteous imag'ry,
To fill the voids in their disputed lores.

HISTORY (*appealingly to THESPIS*)

THESPIS! Deny this brazen heresy
That would make History a thing of doubt
And weak inconsequence. Dispute my taste,
But not my hold on truth!

THESPIS

Alas! I fear
That I'm heretic too. As I have said,
I hold that Legend, Fiction and Romance
Supply my needs far better than mere fact.
Dispute you not my calling's loyalty;
It is my mission only to amuse,
To thrill, instruct, delight and entertain.
Now, sometimes Fact is cold as cryptic lore,
And, lest my patrons shun me, I perforce
Must call sometimes on questionable aid.

HISTORY (*rising angrily to his feet*)

Then do I ease my conscience of ye both,
And purge my soul of any willing share
In this fantastic mime that mirrors lies!

HISTORY

HISTORY (*coming down from the chair*)
Unto the wiser Gods of high Olympus

I do consign the fabric of to-night,
And be they merciful to him that made it!

[*Exit* HISTORY.]

FICTION

We've won!

THESPIA

So must the play or we'll have failed,
And shall no more come to Bohemia
To write another page of Friendship's glory
Into the tome that holds her history.

FICTION

United be the Gods 'gainst such a fate!

THESPIA

Amen, with all my soul! But where we lack,
Music is by with trumpets, drums and lutes,
To drown our faults in limpid harmonies,
And quicken dullness with the lilt of song.

FICTION

Well then, let's begin!

THESPIA

What ho, without there!
A trumpet's call! Bohemia's host is here,
To judge upon the pageant of the year.

[*There is a loud flourish of trumpets as THESPIA and
FICTION hurry away on opposite sides, and the
scene fades into darkness.*]

END OF THE INDUCTION.

THE PLAY

SCENE.—*A forest distant two leagues from the capital city of Prague, Bohemia.*

A river is indicated crossing at the foot of the hillside. This is spanned by a bridge, at the end of which is a short flight of steps to the stage.

On the right, the front of it reaching well toward the center, is a magnificent canopy, or shelter tent, fashioned out of draperies of barbaric and Oriental designs and colors. At the back of this canopy there is a slightly elevated dais, on which are two thrones, and at the foot of the dais steps are several fanciful seats of tabaret form.

On the upper center, and well toward the back, is a temporary shrine, with a small altar, on which two candles are burning.

It is the hour of darkness immediately preceding the dawn, and no light is seen except from the two candles on the altar and a strong ray of moonlight shining upon it from well above the canopy.

Through the darkness at the back may be detected the light of flitting fireflies and the feebler glimmer of glow-worms.

HAJEK, the Jester, is discovered kneeling by the altar, dimly lighted by the moonrays, and LABOCAN stands out in the moonlight regarding him. TOMAK is on guard before the throne, but is unseen save when he paces to and fro across the small zone of moonlight. MALEK is on guard on the bridge, and other soldiers are on post along the pathways.

From the forest depths to the left of the stage is heard the

voice of SIGISMUND singing. As the song begins, LABOCAN turns and listens intently, still within the rays of the moon.

HAJEK continues at his devotions, but LABOCAN and TOMAK become more and more interested.

BOHEMIAN LOVE SONG SIGISMUND

THE BLINDED EYES OF LOVE

I

Fate on the Page of History
Writes ever of Love's mystery;
How can it win, inspired by sin,
Or sent from Heaven above?
No soul but yearns to feel its sway,
No heart but throbs to turn astray;
Black silent night shuts from the light
The Blinded eyes of Love.

(Refrain)

Alone Love wanders thro' the night
Its secret mate to find;
Behind the mantle of delight
To seek its bliss in kind.
But ah! the truth's unmasked for me,
That Faith can pierce Love's mystery
And always see that Love must be
Forever, ever blind.

II

So ever must Love's mystery
Bedim the page of History,
With Hope's fair gleams to solve its dreams,
Pure as the spotless dove.
O Love, be freed from dread alarms;
Live 'neath the sting of envy's harms

And strive to see if Fate can free
The Blinded eyes of Love.
(*The refrain as before*)

[*As the last strains of the song die away, and HAJEK is still in deep prayer, LABOCAN becomes impatient and calls him testily. At the same time the black of night begins to give place to the purples of dawn.*]

LABOCAN

HAJEK! HAJEK I say! What, art thou deaf?

HAJEK

I would I were when I'm at my devotions!

[*rising from his knees and coming to LABOCAN.*]

The devil take thy scorpion stings of temper!

LABOCAN

How can prayer hurry what Fate hath in store?

HAJEK

Well, be that true or false, Faith thinks it can,
And even Faith that's blind hath comfort in it.

LABOCAN

Will it turn straight thy crooked legs and back,
Thy face that women greet with pitying sighs,
And pewling dirty brats delight to laugh at?

HAJEK

Oh fiddle-faddle! Likewise, bah, reviler!
No woman, nay, nor yet their dirty, pewling brats,
As thy spleen calls them, ever laughed at me.

LABOCAN

Scores on scores of times I've heard them.

HAJEK

Laugh?

I grant thee, but *with* me and never *at* me.

And by yon moon coquetting with the tree-tops,
There is a difference as vast as that
Between her radiance and the shadows yonder.

[By this time the stage, which during the above has been growing lighter, is now sufficiently so to render the hillside and the characters more visible. The light of purpling dawn is seen to creep slowly down the hillside from the summit, and a characteristic theme is played softly by the orchestra as HAJEK continues.]

HAJEK

Believe me, grim and sour-faced LABOCAN,
Whom I affect to love with lying heart,
There never yet was an infirmity
But God provided compensation for it.

[LABOCAN makes an impatient gesture of protest, which HAJEK checks.]

HAJEK

Nay, hear me speak. Look on this face of mine
That hath no feature in't kin to the other;
These twisted shoulders, and a pair of legs
So gnarled and bent, 'twould puzzle any eye
To guess at my direction when I walk.
Thou hast a face a sculptor'd like to chisel;
A stature that might make Adonis jealous,
And legs! God's truth! Venus might wish them hers.
Compare that form with mine, then laugh at it;
Yet for thy scorn I'll hold no bitterness,
No slightest touch of envy or resentment,
For they have wed me to a merry life,
A place at court, the love of men and women.
And yet we ever are like black and white,
The one foe to the other. No lands have I;

I have no wealth save glibness of the tongue;
Thou hast grown rich through making men believe
Invented auguries filched from the stars.
Now, men love me for I see naught but sunshine,
Whilst thee they fear for that thy nature throttles
All that is good between the claws of evil.
Thy sighs evoke my smiles, thy tears my laughter,
Because I've love and faith in many things,
Thou hatred and distrust in everything.

[During the above speech LABOCAN has been listening with a hard, unbending countenance, denoting an attitude of inattention. The refrain of SIGISMUND'S song is heard and suddenly LABOCAN'S manner changes to one of suspicious animation.]

LABOCAN

That song again!

HAJEK

Have I then talked to stone?

Then my next sermon shall be preached to swine!

[The refrain of the song continues, and at its close VLADISLAV appears on the left of the second stage and crosses the bridge to the front. TOMAK salutes him as he passes.]

HAJEK

Had I a song like that I'd woo a wife.

Sing coaxful songs if thou wouldst win with women.

LABOCAN

Peace, rattlebrain!

VLADISLAV

Heard'st thou that, LABOCAN?

LABOCAN

I did. It ill befits the season's purpose.

HAJEK

A very pretty song, divinely sung,
And, being about love, befits all seasons.
Where were there breeding else?

LABOCAN

O, blessed world,
If it but knew 'twould breed no more like thee!

[HAJEK *laughs*. VLADISLAV, *who has been listening intently as if for a repetition of the song, rejoins the others.*

VLADISLAV

I've heard that song before.

HAJEK

I'm sorry for thee.

VLADISLAV

Why sorry?

HAJEK

For that it is stale to thee,
Yet it delights my soul with something new,
And novelty's the leaven of good nature.

LABOCAN (*to VLADISLAV*)

Suspicion clouds thine eyes, friend VLADISLAV.

VLADISLAV

It is my trade to angle with suspicion
As bait to catch the guilty.

HAJEK

God be praised,
For that He hath endowed me with a soul
That hath within it no room for suspicion,
While each of you've become espoused to it.

LABOCAN

Peace, chatterer!

HAJEK

I chatter to some purpose.
But, since thine ears are deaf to all but evil,
Let evil have its swing, whilst I recline
To conjure jests for our too morbid king.

[HAJEK moves a little apart and reclines reflectively,
while LABOCAN continues with VLADISLAV.]

LABOCAN

What was there in that minstrel's trivial song
To move thee to suspicion, VLADISLAV?

VLADISLAV

As I have said, I heard it once before
From SIGISMUND, once lover of our QUEEN
And cast aside when WENCESLAUS was crowned
That she might sit beside him on a throne.

[HAJEK turns toward the two, listening intently.]

LABOCAN

Well I remember that.

VLADISLAV

The dynasty
That long had ruled Hungaria was dead,
Her throne untenanted, and WENCESLAUS
Was sued to name a royal candidate.
So, lest his jilted, still love-sick half brother
Continue stolen interviews at dead of night,
To tempt a queen prone to adultery,
He wisely named him for Hungaria's throne.

HAJEK

An idle tale. (*rising*) As true as perjury,
As false as that I have on earth no friend,
Or LABOCAN no foe.

LABOCAN

Peace, ere I strike!

VLADISLAV

Stay, stay! Leave him to me.

[his hand on his sword threateningly.]

Saidst thou I lied?

HAJEK (*shrinking away a little from him*)

I did not say so if 'twas in my thought.

And, say 'twere on my tongue; What wouldst thou do?

VLADISLAV

Why, tear it out!

HAJEK

Then I perforce must lie,

And say I neither said nor thought it.

[HAJEK dodges a threatening blow from VLADISLAV and takes a position up near the bridge as VLADISLAV turns to LABOCAN.]

LABOCAN

Well?

VLADISLAV

SIGISMUND had been crowned Hungaria's king.

The feast was over, and with plaintive voice

And face all flooded o'er with earnestness

He sang the crooning song we heard but now.

Next day 'twas shuttlecocked about the court

In tones unguarded, and with whisperings

Of anxious tremor, that twice in the night

He sang again beneath JOANNA'S window,

While she sat streaming tears behind her lattice.

[The refrain of the song is heard in the distance, and both men start.]

By all the saints, he still is there!

[The cloaked and veiled form of a woman (QUEEN JOANNA) is seen to steal nervously from the right of the second stage and proceed in the direction of

the voice. HAJEK recognizes her and looks nervously at the two men. LABOCAN detects the figure and points.

LABOCAN

Look, look!

[As the QUEEN reaches the spot where HAJEK is standing she quickens her pace, and as she steals away there is a start of mutual recognition. As she passes out of sight the last notes of the refrain die away and HAJEK comes down.]

VLADISLAV (to HAJEK)

Was it the QUEEN?

HAJEK

She did not wait to say.
Her tongue was silent and her form so veiled
That I saw not if she were black or white.

VLADISLAV

But thou dost know 'twas she.

HAJEK

Be not so sure.

For I believe in nothing that my conscience
Incites me to forget, so please you both.

VLADISLAV

That tells us nothing.

HAJEK

Then let nothing serve,
For nothing's nothing most when nothing's said.

[VLADISLAV makes a gesture of angry impatience and turns up the stage.]

LABOCAN (to VLADISLAV)

Where now?

VLADISLAV

To clinch or deepen my suspicion
That assignation's call adulterous
Is heard and answered by our saintly QUEEN.

[VLADISLAV *hurries away in the direction of*
JOANNA'S *exit.*

HAJEK

"Our saintly QUEEN." Thou heardst him, didst thou not?

LABOCAN

I did, and caught the meaning of the words.

HAJEK

I caught that too.

LABOCAN

And still believe her blameless?

HAJEK

Here doubt becomes, good LABOCAN, a ball
To juggle side by side with sentiment's;
One up, one down, and we can cast away
The one of them that's foeman to our wish.
Now my wish lets doubt fall and roll away—
Since it must cloud the honor of my QUEEN,—
And, true or false, 'tis not for me to judge.

LABOCAN

Nor me to clear her name.

HAJEK

Why, look thee now;

Yon cringing, sycophantic spying worm
Is well prepared to spread whatever scandal
The court of WENCESLAUS is cursed withal
Without thy meddlesome, conniving friend.

LABOCAN

Call me not friend.

HĄJEK (*bowing*)

Oh, as thou wilt, sweet foe.

I meant it for a jest, not sentiment.

[*Here the music of the entree of JOHN OF NEPOMUK is heard, and HĄJEK changes his tone.*

HĄJEK

Those strains announce the coming of the Holy.

Banish all doubt, suspicion and the like,

And on thy knees learn mercy and forgiveness.

[*LABOCAN tries to speak, but HĄJEK stays him by a commanding gesture, and both of them kneel, well down stage a little to the right, as the retinue of JOHN OF NEPOMUK is seen descending the hill-side.*

THE ENTREE OF JOHN OF NEPOMUK.

(ORDER OF PROCESSION.)

1. *Two boys with smoking censers.*
2. *A Priest in vestments bearing the Cross.*
3. *Chorus of Monks, chanting.*
4. *Four Acolytes bearing the Tabernacle.*
5. *JOHN OF NEPOMUK carrying the Cross.*

CHORUS OF MONKS.

Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!

O, Filii et Filiae,

Rex Coelestus, Rex Gloriam,

Morte surrexit hodie,

Alleluia!

Et mane prima sabbati,

Ad ostium monumenti,

Acceserunt discipuli,

Alleluia!

In albis sedens Angelus,
Praedixit mulieribus
In Gallilea est Dominus,
Alleluia!

In hoc festo sanctissimo,
Sit laus et jubilatio,
Benedicamus Domino,
Alleluia!

[*Translation.*

Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!
Yes, sons and daughters of the Lord,
The King of Glory, King adored,
This day himself from death restored,
Alleluia!

All in the early morning gray,
Went holy women on their way
To see the tomb where Jesus lay.
Alleluia!

An angel clad in white they see,
Who sat and spake unto the three:
"Your Lord hath gone to Galilee."
Alleluia!

On this most holy day of days,
To God your hearts and voices raise,
In laud and jubilee and praise.
Alleluia!

[*The procession moves across the bridge to the stage
and past the throne which JOHN blesses. He then
crosses to the altar followed by the Monks, kneels*

before it for a moment, then faces front and invokes the blessing.

JOHN

Dominus vobiscum!

MONKS

Et cum spiritu tuo!

JOHN

Benedicamus Domino!

MONKS

Amen! Amen!

[The MONKS and ACOLYTES form in solemn procession, march across the bridge and off to the left. JOHN comes down slowly, sees TOMAK kneeling before the throne and blesses him. Then similarly blesses LABOCAN and HAJEK.]

JOHN

Arise, my sons. (BOTH rise) With souls all purged I know,
Of spite and sin, and scandal's burning stain.

HAJEK

Mine is almost so purged, O Holy Father.

JOHN (to LABOCAN)

But thine! Alas! Poor pagan LABOCAN,
Where is thy faith, to glint with reverence
The holy radiance of this Eastertide?

LABOCAN (*bowing humbly*)

Great Vicar General, what faith I have,
I lock within my conscience as mine own
Rather than flaunt it like a peddler's cry
[with a cynical glance at HAJEK]

As others do.

HAJEK (*laughingly*)

Another shaft that missed.

JOHN (*to LABOCAN*)
I pity thee. (*to HAJEK*) But I can say of thee
That in thy faith, expressed in act and voice,
There is as much of humble reverence
As in the soul of him that would conceal it.

HAJEK
I thank thee, Father, that we so agree.

JOHN
Now warn for me the faithful, who but wait
To know the time when WENCESLAUS shall come
For worship in these Nature-pillared halls,
Away from heresies that mock our faith.

[HAJEK and LABOCAN move toward the left. HAJEK
exits after a bow to JOHN, but LABOCAN tarries
reflecting.]

JOHN
Why tarry, LABOCAN? Upon thy face
Conscience hath seemed to trace foreboding clouds
That should be absent from the sacred feast
But now beginning.

LABOCAN
Thou dost read aright,
Transcendent Vicar. Warnings from the stars
Indeed have written dread upon my face
Of sinful happenings at hand.

JOHN
From whom?
Who, blind unto the canons of the Church,
Would stoop to taint with even thought of sin
The sacramental feastings of to-day?

LABOCAN
No less a person than our vaunted QUEEN.

JOHN (*very severely*)
Tell me no more! Along the path of years
An hundred times have I rebuked thy nature,
Which finds no good in either man or woman.

[VLADISLAV *is seen approaching across the bridge
from the left.*

LABOCAN (*noting the approach of VLAD-
ISLAV*)
But now suspicion is affirmed by truth!

JOHN
All doth depend upon who speaks that truth,
For truths will lies become when framed by hate.
[VLADISLAV *has now come to them.*

LABOCAN
Mine affirmation's come and thou shalt hear
Suspicion deep submerged in floods of truth.
[*addressing VLADISLAV*]
Hail VLADISLAV! Our gracious Vicar here
Refuseth to believe that venal sin
Can taint the fervent soul of QUEEN JOANNA.

VLADISLAV
He always did.

JOHN
And always shall, my son,
Until these eyes behold the sin unmasked
So surely that concealment's cloak were lifted
And she stood blushing in her naked guilt.

LABOCAN
Speak, VLADISLAV, concealing nothing.

JOHN
Ay,
Equivocation is the liar's casque

To shield his face from truth's defying challenge.
Proceed, I'll listen.

VLADISLAV

At the coronation
Of SIGISMUND, hast thou forgotten how
A single song he sang plunged all the court
In screaming gossip, till KING WENCESLAUS
In jealous rage declared the feasts adjourned
And hurried back to Prague?

JOHN (*sadly*)

That I remember.

VLADISLAV

That song was here but now, piercing the mists
Of darkened dawn with tuneful plaintiveness,
To lure the soul of guilt with its refrain.
The voice was SIGISMUND's by any penance
That in thy will thou may'st impose upon me.
Soon it was answered by the skulking form
Of her who waited for it, stealing there
Across the moon-rays far into the forest.

[HAJEK *returns from left and listens.*]

JOHN

Go on.

VLADISLAV

I followed. But with that deceit
That's treason's gift to charm away distrust,
This guilty twain seemed merged into the haze
Of gathering dawn like smoke lost in the night.

JOHN

Still thou hast told me nothing.

HAJEK

Less than that!

VLADISLAV

The woman was none other than the QUEEN,
The minstrel SIGISMUND upon mine oath!

JOHN

How know'st thou that,—didst see her face?

VLADISLAV

Why no.

But shall guilt go unpunished for the lack
Of eyes to see and ears to hear the truth?

LABOCAN

Conviction is enough, O holy man,
And I'm convinced as he.

JOHN

'Tis not enough!

No drop of blood shall fall, no cutting lash
Mangle the quivering flesh, no soul be lost
Or reputation stained, when those accused
May seek the healing salve of one small doubt.
If there be doubt, then should no judgment hold;
If there be guilt, let fall the ax of law.
'Tis mere suspicion that is brought me here,
And I shall mangle any cloak of doubt
That dims the lustre of the reverence
Bohemia holds for her beloved QUEEN.

[HAJEK *has been evincing deep interest in the scene.*

VLADISLAV

Still I protest——

LABOCAN

And I!

JOHN

Protest no more!

I do forbid ye both to speak of this,

Upon the pain of penance most severe,
Until doubt yields to truth inviolate.

VLADISLAV

I purpose naught but that, and still believe
That QUEEN JOANNA hath met SIGISMUND,
And, disobeying what her Lord commanded,
Will not be present at the feasts to-day.

Say she were not. Where then protecting doubt?

*[Two Heralds appear high up on the hillside and
come down to the middle distance.]*

VLADISLAV

Where then thy priestly reverence for her?

JOHN

Gone!

VLADISLAV

Is't agreed her absence proves her guilt?

JOHN

Beyond all doubt, but, trust me, she'll be there!

[The Heralds blow long blasts from their trumpets.]

JOHN

Lo! 'tis the signal that we soon shall know
How once again Scandal's envenomed tongue
Is struck dumb by the touch of innocence.

LABOCAN (*bitterly*)

Or how the Church absolves the powerful,
It matters not how deeply steeped in sin.

JOHN

Praise be to God it can absolve thee too.

[VLADISLAV and LABOCAN come down and take positions slightly to the left of center facing the canopy.]

[John mounts the steps to the bridge and the Monks appear from the left, cross the bridge and group about the altar.]

[HAJEK joins LABOCAN and VLADISLAV, with anxious looks toward the hillside.

[Peasants appear from over the bridge, in a boat that moves on from the right in the river, and form groups on the left.

[JOHN stands waiting at the foot of the steps.

[The music of the *Entree* of the KING and QUEEN, which, during the above, has been subdued to create the effect of distance, now wells forth loudly for the

GRAND ENTREE OF THE KING AND QUEEN.

(ORDER OF PROCESSION.)

1. *A Priest carrying the Cross.*
2. *Four Acolytes.*
3. *Sixteen soldiers.*
4. *BALBINUS, Court Chamberlain.*
5. *Four pages.*
6. *KING WENCESLAUS (mounted).*
7. *Two soldiers.*
8. *QUEEN JOANNA in a palanquin.*
9. *Four ladies of the Court.*

ENTRANCE MARCH AND CHORUS.

Hail, Hail, Bohemia!
Quest of the loyal brave;
Hail, hail, Bohemia!
Land of the foeman's grave.
Hail, hail, Bohemia,
Fair home of the ever free,
Glorious Bohemia,
We give our lives for thee!

We live to limn thy weal,
We glory in thy zeal,
Bohemia, Bohemia,
Let paeans loudly peal.
For thou must live to glorify
The friendship that can never die,
Bohemia, Bohemia,
Whose sons should never sigh.

[When the procession reaches the second stage, its participants group on the lower stage and wait for the KING and QUEEN. The KING assists the QUEEN from the palanquin and, after JOHN has blessed them, he escorts them to the throne, taking a position at the foot of the steps near the QUEEN.]

HAJEK (to VLADISLAV and LABOCAN)

A lie choked at its birth! The QUEEN is there!

CHORUS.

(Continuing after the KING and QUEEN are seated.)

The poets shall write of thy glory and fame,
And voices of Friendship thy lore shall acclaim,
The deeds of the just shall be writ in thy name,
Bohemia, Bohemia!
Huzza, huzza, huzza!

[At the close of the chorus, JOHN, who is standing at the altar, offers the Benediction, all kneeling.]

JOHN

Benedicite!

OMNES

Amen, amen, amen!

KING

Arise, ye faithful of Bohemia,
And learn why, in obedience to your King,
Ye are assembled in these forest shades;

Where cant and prejudice must never come,
Nor malice tear sweet Friendship's bond apart.
We come in reverence to celebrate
The ceremonials of Holy Easter,
That mark the closing of the Lenten fast,
In merry revel and unbridled cheer.

JOHN (*coming to the center*)

List, royal one! How bow with reverence
Amidst the ravings of unbridled orgie?
How stand in Heaven's presence flushed with wine
That never knew the chalice of the Church,
Nor softened 'neath the glow of sanctity?

KING (*impatently*)

Opposest thou again my spoken will?

JOHN

I do oppose all revels, orgies, songs,
Blaspheming jests and dances that breed lust
[pointing to the peasants.

Within these natures innocent of all.

KING

I say I've had enough these forty days
Of masses, vespers, missions and retreats.
Enough of silence in my banquet halls;
Prayers in my chamber, and my privy council
Echoing ever murmurings of priests
Against the inroads made upon our faith
By so-called heretics led by JOHN HUSS.

JOHN

Thou didst deny our right to drive them out,
To stifle these rebellious heresies.

KING (*becoming more impatient*)

I shall deny no man the right to pray
In any form or tongue he may elect,

Provided treason sways no flaming torch
To burn away the lustre of my throne.

JOHN (*with great earnestness*)
Still I do warn thee——

KING (*interrupting hotly*)
This is not the time
For matters of religious argument!
For see how frown my patient subjects there,
Affrighted that their forty days of shrift
May not be leavened by our Easter revel,
Whose promise long hath wooed their appetites
And made their consciences fear all religion.

JOHN
Amazement chills my blood!

MONKS (*holding out their arms in supplication*)

And mine, and mine!

QUEEN
So does it mine, and urges this my soul
To fling away my love, kill my respect,
And shun allegiance to a KING like thee!

[During the above dispute the lookers on have been evincing mingled surprise and alarm and divide themselves into groups according to their ranks.]

KING (*in deep sarcasm*)
Does it all that? What right hast thou to speak
Defiant to fulfillment of my will?
When hast thou ever entertained for me
Allegiance, love, or even cold respect?

JOHN
I know that thou dost wrong thy royal mate,
Deeply as though thou didst accuse her soul
Of machinations to destroy the State.

KING (*with deep meaning*)
Time was when rumor hath said even that!
Thou knowest all that's hidden in that soul,
And would I had the power to wrest it from thee!

JOHN
Ay, twice before thou hast tried that and failed,
With prison and with torture. Still again,
I hurl rebuke 'gainst that unholy taunt
Upon the lock of the confessional,
[pointing to the altar]
Within the shadow of the Cross of Christ!

KING (*in deep rage*)
Then take the cross away!
*[Consternation is shown by all upon the stage, and
JOHN regards the KING for a moment in speech-
less amazement.]*

QUEEN (*rising in horror*)
No, no, not that!
Thou dost not mean such cruel blasphemy
Against the shining symbol of our faith!
Recall it, O, my Lord, recant I pray thee!

KING
Sit down! I will recall no single word!

JOHN (*with uplifted arm, to the assem-
blage*)
Upon your knees all of ye that are faithful,
And plead forgiveness for this selfish KING
Who holds mad revel paramount to prayer!
*[All kneel reverently except the KING and HAJEK.
The QUEEN remains seated, bowing her head rev-
erently, and the KING stands as if reflecting upon
the nature of his reply.]*

LABOCAN (*to HAJEK*)

Why kneel'st thou not?

HAIJEK

Why, I am deep in thought.

For in a conflict 'twixt the Church and State
I am in doubt which of the two to serve
And hold mine office. But I think I'll kneel,
And cheat my conscience to the safer side.

JOHN (*who for several moments has been
regarding the KING severely*)

Why stand'st thou there in stern rebellious silence,
Defiant of my just command to kneel?

KING

'Tis not defiance. Thou nor no one else,—
Even the power that rules the Church at Rome,—
Shall question mine allegiance to my faith.
But I will have my way! Rise all of you!

[All rise and contemplate the throne inquiringly.]

KING

I am the KING: what I decree is law,
And 'tis my wish the revels shall come first.

JOHN (*in sore amazement*)

Amazement now curbs even power of speech,
[bowing his head as though conscious of defeat.]
And 'neath the spell of such irreverence
One without sense or reason were my master.

KING

So be it then. Such shall decide between us.
We'll leave it to a fool. Is HAJEK there?

HAIJEK (*moving to the front of the throne*)

He's here or there as thou wouldst will, my liege.
Now I am here, not there.

KING

Thou hast heard all
These flights of temper 'twixt the Church and me?

HAJEK (*glibly*)

Mine ears are ever open, baited well
To catch all sprats of human frailty. For
I am of choice a fawning sycophant
Who can hang on both horns of a dilemma
Or argue as may best subserve my purpose,
On this or that side of an argument.

KING (*greatly pleased*)

Good! I have summoned into conference
A fool who's wise enough to be sincere,—

*[With a meaning glance at the QUEEN, which she
tries to evade.]*

Or false as woman's love, according to
His humors or his needs. Continue, fool.

HAJEK

It doth amaze me that so wise a KING,
Who can read every fawning courtier's soul,
Should call on one who nurses the worst blemish
That man's accursed withal.

KING

And what is that?

HAJEK

Why, selfishness. Those few who are without it
We find in legend and in fairy tales.
There have been some, I grant, who have it not,
But they've been canonized and turned to Saints.

JOHN

Must I, the Lord's anointed, lend mine ear
Unto the flippant jests and heresies
Of this blasphemmer who deceives for hire?

HAJEK (*bowing in reverence*)

I grant your grace; all of these sins are mine
Save that I do blaspheme. My faith forbids it,
Yet coward conscience fears to disobey.

KING

What is thine answer? Thy prologues are dull.

QUEEN

Ah, good, my Lord, why mock this holy day?

KING (*in deep sarcasm*)

So then, thou art alive! I thought thee dead,
For thou'st been dumb and silent as a corpse,
With visage frozen and impenetrable,
As if 'twere cast in bronze. Dost thou rebel
Against my wish again?

QUEEN

Again, my Lord,
And yet again must this my voice cry out
Against this mockery upon our faith,
That leaves such grave decision to a knave!

[HAJEK *betrays some nervousness at being in such
embarrassing position.*

KING

Why should he not decide when I command it?

QUEEN

Because 'tis monstrous that a jester's quip
Can turn to naught an edict from the Church.

KING (*with much bitterness*)

Look in thy soul for what is hidden there;
I'll unmask mine and challenge thee to show
Which one most shuns the danger of exposure.

[*The QUEEN starts as if conscience stricken and
sinks into her seat.*

That thrust, methinks, sank deep into thy conscience,
Which none may read save thy confessor there,
And in good time I'll wring thy secrets from him.

JOHN

Thou canst not!

KING

By my crown I'll find some way
To tear the mask from off her hidden guilt!

JOHN

There is no way save through the voice of God.

KING

The voice of God checks not the will of Kings,
And mine hath spoken. But enough of this.
It is my wish to have this wisdom's fool
Decide if mass or revel shall come first.
Speak, HAJEK.

HAJEK (*as if trying to evade the sought
for answer*)

Gracious liege, the wisdom in me
Nudges my conscience with a prodding thumb
And bids me 'ware of such a grave decision,
On which doth rest three potent influences.

KING

What influences?

HAJEK

Thou, my royal liege,
The Vicar General, and my beauteous QUEEN.

KING

Do as I bid thee or I'll have thee flogged!

HAJEK

That wages war 'twixt cowardice and courage,
And courage loses, for these twisted shoulders
Are marred enough already.

KING

Speak, I say!

HAJEK

I fear I talk too much, and that's a fault
That leads to half the mischief of the world.

KING

Thou talk'st too much, indeed. Would'st thwart my purpose?

HAJEK

I could not if I would. This my decision.

[All listen eagerly for the decision.]

If we hold revels first, I fear me much
There'll be so many of us steeped in sin
That there would not be priests enough to shrive us.
Hold masses first, confessors will inspire
Our souls with so much humble reverence
That there would be no revels. And since they
Stand first among the wishes of the KING,
And to oppose them might inspire his wrath,
We'll hold the revels first.

KING

Good! Come, begin!

[The decision meets the approval of all except the QUEEN, LABOCAN, VLADISLAV and the clericals. This disapproval is indicated by the dividing of the crowd into excited groups, according to sympathy. JOHN comes down from his position not far from the throne.]

JOHN

One plea, O King, and I am done.

KING

Well, name it.

JOHN

Since revels must come first, I beg of thee
That they be held not here where they must bring
Defilement to the symbols of our faith.

KING (*with determination*)

I'll have my throne, for once in all my reign,
Drenched in the atmosphere of pleasure, joy
And license unrestrained midst floods of wine.

JOHN (*holding out his arms pleadingly*)

Not here, my son, not here! Respect the tears
That fall adown the cheeks of reverence,
Appalled that this our shrine were so defiled.

QUEEN

My suit with his. Recant this hideous wrong!

KING

Silence! Who bade thee speak? I'll have my will,
And if 'twill bring defilement to the shrine,
Take it away as I have said before.

[JOHN bows his head and is about to proceed to the altar, when the QUEEN stays him.]

QUEEN

I will go with thee.

[She starts to join JOHN, when the KING seizes her wrist and forces her back upon the throne.]

KING

Stay! Do thou not stir!

QUEEN (*struggling to be released*)

Thou shalt not force me to this hideous feast.

KING (*still holding her*)

What, shall not?

QUEEN

No!

JOHN

Love, honor and obey!
That was thy marriage vow!

QUEEN

Thou tell'st me that?

JOHN

It was thy vow, thine oath!
[*The QUEEN bows her head in submission and the KING laughs at her. JOHN goes to the altar and the Monks and some of the peasants crowd about it.*]

KING

Ha, ha, ha, ha! I thank thee rev'rend father,
That thou'st reminded my rebellious wife
Of what she had forgotten. What ho, there!
Fill up the tankards full and bring the cups.
We'll pledge the glories of our Easter feast,
And when 'tis o'er, those of us who have sinned
In penitence will sue for absolution.

[*The altar has by this time been lifted by four Monks, and the procession led by JOHN comes down to the steps leading to the bridge. On beholding the procession all bow with reverence, including the KING. The QUEEN hurries from the throne, meets JOHN at the foot of the bridge steps, and extends her arms appealingly.*]

JOHN

Patience, my daughter. When 'tis o'er, I come.

[*The procession bearing the altar moves across the bridge and off to the left, headed by JOHN. While the music of the procession has been played, all have maintained an attitude of reverence. This is changed to one of gaiety when servants enter bearing*]

tankards and wine cups on trays, and the QUEEN has returned to the throne.

[A large table is brought, which is placed in the front of the canopy. As soon as the religious procession has disappeared and the cups are ready, the KING speaks.]

KING (*with two cups in his hand*)

Attention, all! The QUEEN begins the feast!

[Offers her a cup.]

QUEEN

What, I?

KING

Love, honor and obey, he said.

And, by the mass, I will have one of them!

QUEEN (*taking the cup, thinks for a moment, then elevates it.*)

Drink we in hope of a repentant KING;
May God forgiveness for his errors bring,
Mercy for those who do excite his ire,
And burn suspicion in Truth's endless fire.
To true Bohemia! May traditions sweet
Lead in the paths of right her wand'ring feet.
Come ne'er dissension to enmesh her glory,
And write Fate naught but honor in her story!

(she elevates the cup and drinks)

Bohemia!

KING

Good!

(raising his cup)

Bohemia!

OMNES

To Bohemia!

[50]

[*As all drink HAJEK, who has not taken a cup, goes close to LABOCAN and speaks.*

HAJEK

Would I had cut my throat before I spoke!

LABOCAN

'Twere better if thou hadst, poor prattling fool!

HAJEK

The only thing thou'st ever said to me,
That went not in this ear and out at this.

[*emphasizing by touching both of his ears.*

KING

Ho Chamberlain! Thy voice is full of music;
A song from thee, and be it one of wine!

DRINKING SONG BALBINUS

“DRINK TO OUR GLORIOUS KING”

BALBINUS

Who shuns the drink in the ruddy, ruddy bowl?

CHORUS

Not we, no, no, no, not we!

BALBINUS

Who lacks the thrill of the merry, merry soul?

CHORUS

Not we, no, no, no, not we!

BALBINUS

Then while there's light in the morning sky
Or speed in the falcon's wing;
Or glow in the fire of the lover's eye,
Or flowers on the breast of Spring;
We'll drink, drink, drink till our eyes flash fire
In an orgie of Friendship's thrill;

We'll laugh at the taunts of the weakling's ire
And sing with a right good will;
So lives there joy in the merry, merry soul,
And mad delight in the ruddy, ruddy bowl,
Let trumpets blare and dingle-dangles toll,
As we drink to our glorious KING!

BALBINUS

A fig care I for the weakling blade
Who loves not the flagons filled;
Come rather death than the life that's made
To never with drink be thrilled.
Now as there's blood that is warm and red
In the veins of the brave and strong,
Or pride in the souls that have fought and bled
Or right that can laugh at wrong;
So lives there joy in the merry, merry soul,
And mad delight in the ruddy, ruddy bowl,
Let trumpets blare and dingle-dangles toll
As we drink to our glorious KING!

CHORUS

Drink! Drink! Drink! Drink!
Drink deep to our glorious KING!
Drink! Drink! Drink! Drink!
To WENCESLAUS, our KING.

*[All take long draughts from the cups, ending with a
prolonged A-h-h-h!]*

KING (*speaking from the throne to
LABOCAN*)

Thou'st long been dumb, prophetic LABOCAN.
What do thy stars portend this festal day?

LABOCAN

Last night I saw in them no sign but evil.

*[During the following lines the KING betrays signs of
rapidly rising anger.]*

LABOCAN

No portent save of trouble to the State,
With everywhere the cries of torture's pain
And thine own feet mired deep in streams of blood.

KING (*in a towering rage*)

I'll have thy life for this!

LABOCAN

I only told

What last night I saw written in the stars.

KING

They lied! And till thy stars have told thee so,
Show not thy face again in court. Begone!

[LABOCAN starts to go, and the KING stays him.]

KING

But stay. Get me the proofs of things implied,
And evils coming, or, off with thy head!

[*He waves LABOCAN off to the right by a sweep of the hand, and then summons HAJEK.*]

KING

Come hither, HAJEK.

HAJEK *approaches him as if afraid.*

Nearer! What dost think?

HAJEK

I'd rather whisper softly what I think
Of LABOCAN, dread Sire.

KING

Nay, not of him.

But of his message from the stars last night.

HAJEK

My liege, I've no acquaintances with stars,
Save those that make strange twinkles when I'm drunk.
Then, to my vision, stranger things than stars

Flit in fantastic figures, forms and faces,
In such wild contrast with this mask of mine
That I believe myself a thing of beauty
Without a care in all this babbling world.

KING

But what of LABOCAN?

HAJEK

Of him? God's mercy!

He doth disturb me not, nor what he says.
For both himself and those mad lies he utters
Are in collusion to evade the truth
And substitute weak films of superstition.

KING

So? An imposter who would cheat his King!

HAJEK

I prithee, calm thyself, poor cheated monarch;
For there is scarce a shadow in the court
But doth conceal a brace of them.

KING

Art sure?

HAJEK

As sure as thou that thou art truly great.
But it disturbs me not and should not thee,
For if all of us were inviolate,
Why, this poor world would be too dull to live in.

KING

Find my soothsayer straight, and bid him draw
More kindly inspiration from the stars
And curb his love for evil, or—

HAJEK (*drawing his finger across his
throat*)

His head?

KING

Ay, tell him that.

HAIJEK

But let me hope, in words
Less murderous, tho' equally direct.

KING

Come, come, make haste!

HAIJEK

Most admirable liege,
Would I could make my peace with Heav'n as quickly.

[With an extravagant bow he hurries away to the right, and BALBINUS enters from the left, bustling with officiousness. At the same time JOHN enters and comes across the bridge, then slowly moves to the foot of the throne.]

BALBINUS

Most noble lord, the feast is heavy spread.
And such a feast! The very table groans
Beneath the weight of viands, wreathed in smiles
Of expectation to be quick dispatched.
Ragouts that were not bettered on Olympus;
Haunches of venison by our hunters slain,
And hung for weeks to give them succulence.
The brains of peacocks, partridges and hares,
With biting condiments to give them zest
And there are wines, my liege,—

KING

Give o'er, give o'er,
We'll judge of those ourselves. Unto the feast,
Beloved subjects, by BALBINUS led.
Fall to and eat, and I will follow on,
Forgetting precedence and ceremony.

[Now follows the chorus of the Drinking Song, and

the stage is cleared of all except the KING and QUEEN standing in front of the throne, with VLADISLAV waiting at the foot of the steps and JOHN, who is a little above, but near the QUEEN.

KING (*to the QUEEN*)

Come thou with me.

[He leads her to the foot of the throne steps, and she stops.]

QUEEN

I prithee, good my lord,
That I have leave awhile to rest me here;
For I am ill disposed almost to fever.
Ah, why wert thou so blinded in thine anger,
Humiliating me before them all?

KING

And didst thou not deserve it? Where wert thou
When with my courtiers I moved from the palace?

QUEEN

I've told thee that before.

KING

Thou'st lied before,
And who shall say that, too, was not a lie.

JOHN (*coming forward*)

I will. Sorely thou wrong'st thy noble QUEEN.
My honor on it.

KING

That I must accept,
And, if enfeebled by indisposition,
She may remain here in thy charge.

JOHN

'Tis well.

I'll answer for her safety and her honor.

QUEEN

I thank thee, husband, deeply.

KING (to VLADISLAV)

To the Feast!

[The refrain of SIGISMUND's song is heard as before. The KING is about to exit toward the left when VLADISLAV stays him with a significant gesture and both listen. JOHN and JOANNA are now on the bridge. She is trembling with anxiety, but JOHN quiets her.]

KING

What song is that I hear?

VLADISLAV

Hast thou forgot
When that same song made fact of idle rumor
The night thy brother SIGISMUND was crowned?

KING *(as if his memory of it had returned all in a moment)*

She would not dare!

VLADISLAV

That very song was sung
Here in the dark before the sunrise came.
I saw the QUEEN, close veiled and slyly creeping
Toward the sound.

KING

Know'st thou 'twas SIGISMUND?

What didst thou do?

VLADISLAV

Followed, but found them not.
[JOHN and the QUEEN come down from the bridge and approach the throne smilingly, as if in ordinary conversation.]

Behold her now, affecting unconcern
As if she knew not that he waits for her.

KING

Thou'st bred this doubt before yet nothing proved.

VLADISLAV

But if I prove it now?

KING

Thou shalt be noble,
First in my council. There must be no doubt,
For I am sick of unsupported rumor
That murders love, yet leaves no punishment
Remember, VLADISLAV, proof or disgrace!

[The KING hurries off to the left and loud huzzas of greeting are heard. The QUEEN and JOHN are strolling leisurely toward the steps again. VLADISLAV turns to MATHIAS who has just entered from the left, as if for orders.]

VLADISLAV

Mathias!

MATHIAS

Yes, my lord.

VLADISLAV

Assemble guards;
Search well the forest, find that skulking minstrel
And drag him bound before the KING or me.

[The QUEEN and JOHN are seen on the bridge together, and TOMAK is also there on guard.]

MATHIAS

He shall be found, my lord.

VLADISLAV

He must be found.
That or thy rank, and then—perhaps a prison.

[VLADISLAV hurries off to the left. The QUEEN is seen talking with TOMAK]

MATHIAS (*calling to TOMAK*)

Tomak!

TOMAK (*hears the call, and comes down quickly*)

Yes, Captain.

MATHIAS

Didst thou hear that song?

TOMAK

I did.

[*Saluting.*]

MATHIAS

Then search the forest with dispatch;
Arrest the minstrel, bind and bring him here.
Good men shall meet thee from the other side.

[*TOMAK salutes and MATHIAS hurries away in the direction of VLADISLAV'S exit. TOMAK hurries toward the bridge, where he is intercepted by the QUEEN.*]

QUEEN

Stay, soldier. Whither goest thou so fast?

TOMAK

I go to apprehend yon stranger minstrel.

QUEEN

Why? He hath done no wrong. I beg of thee,
Let him escape and warn him of his danger.

TOMAK

I dare not.

QUEEN (*taking a jewelled necklace from her neck*)

Take this, all of it is thine.

JOHN

What would'st thou do? Not offer him a bribe?

QUEEN

They are all bribed to hound him to his death,
Then let me bribe that I may save his life.

(to TOMAK)

Here, take this as an earnest of the rest
That I shall give thee when I know he's free.

[TOMAK *reflects a moment, takes the necklace, places it into his doublet and hurries away. HAJEK and LABOCAN enter from the right. Seeing JOHN and the QUEEN and the departure of TOMAK, HAJEK takes LABOCAN by the shoulders and turns his back to them.*

HAJEK

What I have won with dice thou shalt have back
If thou retrieve thy staff ere I count twenty.

[*Snatches the staff from him and throws it far to the right.*

LABOCAN

Have at thee, fool. This time I'll beat thee.

HAJEK

Good!

[LABOCAN *hurries off to the right and HAJEK runs to the QUEEN and kneels to her.*

Forgiveness, QUEEN, that I have seemed so faithless!
Because I feared the anger of the KING.

[to JOHN]

And, Reverence, my prayers for absolution
That I opposed thee. But, what right have slaves
To feel or think save as their masters do?

JOHN

My heart is with thee, son, thou art absolved.

[*Places his hand on his head and blesses him.*

HAJEK (*looking toward either side earnestly*)

My time is short. Thou art in danger, QUEEN.
Suspicion of thee burns in every mind,
And every bush conceals an enemy.
Let wisdom lead thee to appease the KING;
And thou must revel in this impious feast
Or thou art lost!

[LABOCAN *returns running from the right.*

LABOCAN

Well, have I come too late?

HAJEK

Nay, time to spare, for I forgot to count.

[*taking money from a purse hanging at his girdle.*
There is the money won from thee at dice.

LABOCAN

Ay, loaded dice.

HAJEK

Why not? These heads of bone
Are loaded with deceit, so why not dice?

[*Laughter, clicking of wine cups and other sounds of
revel are heard off to the left.*

HAJEK

Lo! where our master lord drinks with the lowliest
And lets his vassals pat him on the back.
Would that our QUEEN were less particular,
For, think of it! She curtly hath refused
To sing and dance with them.

[*The sounds of the revel are repeated but louder.*

Ah, welcome sound!

[*Takes LABOCAN by the arm and pulls at it.*
Some wine, some wine! For I would see a smile
Upon that granite face.

LABOCAN

I loathe such revels.

HAJEK

Then make me drunk and thou shalt see a fool
Run riot with the wit that's hid in drink.

LABOCAN (*struggling to release himself
from HAJEK's grasp*)

I say I will not!

HAJEK

But I say thou shalt!

And I have sinews that could tear apart
Those flabby ones of thine! Come on, come on!

[HAJEK *drags* LABOCAN *away and the* QUEEN *comes
over and looks after them.*

QUEEN

Suspicion, danger everywhere, he said.

JOHN (*who has come down with her*)

Suspicion melts away when conscience clean
Unmasks its proofs; and danger hath no power
To pierce the iron mail of innocence.

QUEEN

Have I not seen poor innocence destroyed
And steeped in its own blood? Suspicion, too,
Is murderous when leagued with enmity.
And foes are everywhere,—he told me so!

JOHN

What sick'ning fear is this that smites my soul,
Inspired by warnings from an angry Heaven?

QUEEN

What fear? (*this with an expression of guilt*)

JOHN

Thou hast not told me all!

QUEEN

All what?

JOHN

Thou hast not told me all! Conviction's scourge
Doth lash the confidence I had in thee!
Concealment hath made mockery of faith,
And absolution hath been given thee
Lured by equivocation.

QUEEN (*falling on her knees*)
Mercy, Father!

JOHN

Poor erring child! Then thou art guilty?

QUEEN

Yes!

JOHN

Guilty with SIGISMUND?

QUEEN

No, 'tis not that!

JOHN

But thou hast loved him. Love him now!

QUEEN

Yes, Father.

Love him as I loved him ere the time
When first mine eyes had fall'n on WENCESLAUS.
Love him, as when sore tempted by a crown
I made his heart a desert. But not then,
Nor ever thro' that hell of bitter years,
Was that sweet love enslaved by sin.

JOHN

That song

Was SIGISMUND's?

QUEEN

Yes, Father.

JOHN

Shame, oh shame!

Why comes he here if not thro' guilty love?

QUEEN

He seeks to overthrow Bohemia,
Drive from his throne the husband whom I hate;
And that old love, rekindled, fired my soul
With ardor for the cause of SIGISMUND.
Now, as I hope for absolution's peace,
This was the only sin that I concealed;
For that he urged it and my love obeyed.

JOHN

On the authority of my high office
I do forbid this aimless dream of treason!
And must demand full revelation of it
Within the shadow of the Holy Cross,
Where thou may'st nothing leave unsaid. Come, child.

QUEEN

Thou'llt not betray him?

JOHN

Faith knows not betrayal.

Within the shadow of the Cross, I said.

[She bows her head in deep humility; he offers his hand, which she takes. They are proceeding toward the bridge when TOMAK runs across it from the path and up to them.]

QUEEN (*anxiously*)

What news—he's found?

TOMAK

Ay, lady, and I come

To claim the rest of the reward.

QUEEN

Yes, yes,

But is he safe?

TOMAK

That rests with him. But first
Himself shall show you that I set him free.

QUEEN (*now much alarmed*)

Not coming here?

TOMAK

I knew no other way.

Haste! The reward! Thou saidst there would be more,
And 'tis well earned.

QUEEN (*stripping rings from her fingers*)

Take this—and this—and this.

JOHN

Away, lest someone see thee, soldier! Go!

[TOMAK hurries toward the bridge. At the same time
SIGISMUND appears quickly from the direction of
TOMAK'S entrance. TOMAK stands at the bottom
of the steps and salutes, permitting SIGISMUND to
pass him, when he crosses the bridge and hurries
away.]

SIGISMUND

JOANNA!

[*She is about to rush into his arms when JOHN steps
between them with both arms uplifted in admon-
ition.*]

Why should I not? Is not her soul mine?

JOHN

No!

SIGISMUND

Ay! Soul, heart, trust, cause, fate and all are mine,
As is yon flaming sun part of the Heavens;
Or these gaunt spectres of forgotten years

[*indicating the trees*]

Part of the forest where their twisted roots
Draw sustenance from out the feeding earth.

So are my heart, my trust, my cause her own;
And I am come prepared to fight my way
To that fair haven of eternal peace
Where broken hopes shall find at last fulfillment.

JOHN

Nay, that shall never be!

SIGISMUND

What dost thou say?

QUEEN

Fly, SIGISMUND!

SIGISMUND

Not till I've held thee tight

Within these empty arms that scarce have known thee!

JOHN

That, too, must never be!

QUEEN

Ah, list to me!

JOHN

Nay, but to me! If on Bohemia's border

Thou hast an army of adventurers

To rob its treasury, kill its traditions,

And undermine its chosen dynasty,

Why, lead them back and come not here again.

SIGISMUND

Who told thee that? JOANNA! Thou'st betrayed me!

QUEEN

No, no!

JOHN

She told the Church,—the secret's safe.

[The noises of revel are heard louder than before.]

Dost thou hear that? Fly, ere it be too late!

Thy direst foes, inflamed insane with wine,

Would tear thy limbs apart!

SIGISMUND

What, told them too?

[*The QUEEN tries to speak, but JOHN stays her.*

JOANNA, not by thee?

JOHN

Nay, son, by thee!

Thy song betrayed thee thrice this very morn.

[*The sounds of revel are heard again.*

QUEEN

Fly, SIGISMUND, or thou art lost!

SIGISMUND

Until

Thou promise that our tryst be kept to-night,

I will not stir tho' I be cut to pieces!

QUEEN

I promise, then. When tyranny's asleep

Thy enemies writhe in their drunkenness,

And the white moon can guide me through the forest,

I will come.

JOHN

To say farewell forever!

SIGISMUND

If she shall so decide, 'twill be forever.

If, midst the anguish of her loveless life,

Her heart breaks 'neath its weight of solitude,

Then will I come though 'twere a march to death!

[*The noises of the revel are heard again more boisterous
and drunken.*

QUEEN

Begone, begone, they come!

[*SIGISMUND hurries to the bridge and turns.*

SIGISMUND

To-night?

QUEEN

To-night!

[SIGISMUND hurries away over the same path by which he came. JOHN takes the hand of the QUEEN and is about to follow across the bridge when VLADISLAV and MATHIAS enter from the left.

VLADISLAV (to JOHN)

Who was that crossed the bridge but now?

[JOHN does not answer and he persists.

Dost hear?

JOHN

Who gave a satellite at court the right
To question any office of the Church?

VLADISLAV

Thine answer's vague. My voice speaks for the KING!

JOHN

Mine for a Holier Power, that holds His sway
Above the sceptres of a thousand Kings!
Question me not again—I will not answer.

[Takes the QUEEN by the hand and leads her away to the upper left.

VLADISLAV

He knows, knows all the truth, and yet, alas!
His office seals his lips. Hast heard from TOMAK?

MATHIAS

Not yet, my lord, though every path is traversed
By better men than he.

[He notices TOMAK hurrying across the bridge.

Comes he not there?

[TOMAK hurries down and salutes.

What news, man? Speak!

TOMAK

My lord, he was not there.

VLADISLAV (*threateningly*)

Back, then, and find him!

[TOMAK *hurries back to the bridge.*

Stay! To fail again

Will mean destroying anger from the KING.

[TOMAK *hurries away over the bridge, and VLADISLAV turns to MATHIAS excitedly.*

VLADISLAV

Call all thy men; encircle every tree;

Sweep every pathway, for he must be found!

[MATHIAS *hurries off to the left, passing LABOCAN and HAJEK. The latter holds a filled cup in his hand and shows the effects of wine.*

HAJEK

Why run away when revel's at its height?

LABOCAN

It sickens me, I've had enough of it!

[VLADISLAV *is about to exit to the left, when HAJEK stops him.*

HAJEK

Ha, ha! A cup of wine with me, sweet friend!

[VLADISLAV *shoves him angrily aside. He staggers, reels toward the center of the stage and falls on his haunches, spilling some of his wine.*

A blow! A fall, and half my wine is spilled!

[*He makes an attempt to rise, but fails.*

Attend me, LABOCAN!

VLADISLAV (*to LABOCAN*)

Think well of this:

How loyal art thou to the KING?

LABOCAN

What, I?

Thou heard'st him tell this fool to spy on me.

HAJEK (*plaintively*)

Oh, LABOCAN!

VLADISLAV (*to LABOCAN*)

The words were not his thought.
The QUEEN had angered him. Now what of her?

LABOCAN (*to VLADISLAV*)

No worse a woman, and no better either,
Than any who hath made her husband cuckold.

VLADISLAV

Ay, but dost thou believe it?

LABOCAN

'Tis in the stars!

HAJEK (*very plaintively*)

Sweet LABOCAN!

VLADISLAV (*to LABOCAN*)

An augury like that

Sent from the stars to him and thou art rich!

LABOCAN

I think I catch thy meaning, and the stars
Have told me nothing but that she is false.

HAJEK

Thou devil, LABOCAN!

LABOCAN

I come.

VLADISLAV

Keep near me.

Upon thine evidence depends thy power.

[VLADISLAV *hurries off to the left* and LABOCAN *goes to* HAJEK.]

LABOCAN

What ails thee, fool?

HAJEK

No more than ails all fools

Who drink more wine than they can safely carry.
Why leave me thus when I do love thee so?

LABOCAN

Thou lov'st me not.

HAJEK

As much as thou lov'st me.

So now the secret's out. Give me thy hand
And raise me up.

[LABOCAN offers his hand, which he takes.

How strange that, being down,

[Rising to his feet with an effort.

My knees are hinges. But afoot again,
They're stiff as spokes. I thank thee, LABOCAN,
And if thou'lt fill my cup I'll truly love thee.

LABOCAN (*turning away from him*)

Not I! I would there were no wine at all.

HAJEK

God's mercy! What were then this beauteous world?
An arid plain of parching nothingness;
A thirstful desert camels dare not cross,
Nor even serpents pause to spawn their young.
A vast menagerie of flannel tongues,
And stomachs, never schooled to use of water,
Spraying the tasteless stuff upon the sands.
Then piteous howls of anguish: "Wine, wine, wine!
That I may know what 'tis to smile again."
Bricks without straw; love without passion's fire;
A thing of sighs and griefs unrecompensed,
And sorrows deep that water cannot quench.
Water! That brings no sustenance or life,
Save to the ground that nourishes the vine.
There is but one more use I see for water:
To drown myself in it when there's no wine!

[Laughter is heard on the left, then loud voices.

VOICES

Long live WENCESLAUS! Mighty WENCESLAUS!
KING OF BOHEMIA!

LABOCAN

They come this way.
A thousand priests could never shrive that throng.

HAJEK

Not when thy sins clog the confessional,
For if thou'rt honest 'twould consume a year.

*[The KING enters showing signs of much drinking
but preserving his dignity with effort. BALBINUS
is supporting him and leads him to the throne,
while the crowd that comes with him groups itself.]*

KING

Well done, most faithful subjects! And your KING,
Proud of your merry prowess at the feast,
Will make return in merrier entertainment.
My dancers, CHAMBERLAIN!

BALBINUS

Most patient liege—

KING

Thou liest! Patience is not in my nature.
Where are my dancers?

BALBINUS

They are making ready,
With eager earnestness to please their KING.

KING

Some singers, then. Come, come, we're wasting time,
A pious mass may soon disturb our revel.
Who hath a voice and words attuned to it?

BALBINUS

'Tis said that HAJEK here can sing most rarely.

KING (*to HAJEK*)

What say'st thou, HAJEK?

HAJEK

Not that I sing rarely,
For, to speak truly, sir, I rarely sing.
But I have learned some lilt set to a tune.

KING

Is it of wine?

HAJEK

It reeks with it, my liege.

SONG HAJEK and CHORUS

A KINGDOM WITHOUT WINE

HAJEK (*recitative*)

With most uncompromising, sweet docility
Apologizing for my poor ability,
List to my scandalizing the futility
Of any kingdom's joy that hath no wine.

CHORUS

Oh tell us, pray, without delay,
What were a nation's joy bereft of wine?

HAJEK

An arid waste of reticence,
A desert of improvidence,
All days and nights but sorry plights of desolation sore.
No hope of joy's satiety,
But ever songs of piety,
That sing but of sobriety
With water to the fore.

CHORUS

Alas! the songs of piety
That sing but of sobriety
With water to the fore.

So all Bohemia's hosts rebel
Against red wine's forbidden spell.
Let no decreed memorial,
With law inquisitorial,
And arrogance censorial,
Bohemia's revels quell.

HAJEK (*recitative*)

What matter if one loseth the agility,
To woo his tongue to pungent risibility?
Why welcome not calm, dreamy imbecility
Through seeking the oblivion of wine?

CHORUS

Oh, tell us, pray, of joy's delay
Without the sweet oblivion of wine.

HAJEK

No man to greet one smilingly,
No maid to smile beguilingly,
With callow youth become uncouth as pranks of aged kine;
No home for pleasure's oracle,
No bacchanals historical,
All joy phantasmagorical,
The kingdom without wine.

CHORUS

No home for pleasure's oracle,
Yes, yes, phantasmagorical,
A kingdom without wine.
So all Bohemia's hosts rebel
Against red wine's forbidden spell.
Let no decreed memorial,
With law inquisitorial,
And arrogance censorial,
Bohemia's revels quell.

[During the song the KING's cup has been filled by a tankard bearer at his side. At its close, after many expressions from the crowd, with elevated cups, the KING speaks.]

KING

A royal effort, fool!

HAJEK

Ay, crowned with dross,
That shines but thro' the twinkling of a laugh.

KING

There is no crown so bright as approbation.

HAJEK

Approval pays no debts, my liege.

KING

Balbinus!

See all his debts discharged.

BALBINUS

They are, my liege,
Clusters of grapes as sour as vinegar.

HAJEK

Nay, dry as sponges, liege.

KING

Why, what care I?

He sweetens clusters of my cares with song,
And so I sweeten his. Pay every one.

[BALBINUS bows submissively and HAJEK struts about vainly, and pats LABOCAN on the back with a smack that causes him to writhe.]

VLADISLAV

Listen, great sire!

KING

I'll not be interrupted

While in this cup the ruddy vintage woos me!

[elevates his cup]

Drop each his thirstful ire into his cup,
And drink perdition to the canting knaves
Who would inhibit wine and frame the lie
That any kingdom's weal were best without it!

[The KING drains his cup, as do all who have them.

*HAJEK attempts to pour some of his wine down
LABOCAN'S throat, but he wriggles away and
strikes HAJEK with his staff. VLADISLAV again
earnestly addresses the KING.*

VLADISLAV

A matter of great moment, sire!

KING

Of state?

VLADISLAV

It doth concern two states.

KING

Then we've no time

To interject so much state in this revel.

VLADISLAV *(appealingly)*

Ah, sire!

KING

Have done, I say!

VLADISLAV

The stars would speak.

KING *(with rising anger)*

The stars have waited for ten thousand years,
Let them wait longer! Are the dancers ready?

BALBINUS

They do attend thee, sire.

KING

Let them begin!

[VLADISLAV holds out his hands to the KING who waves him away. BALBINUS goes up and beckons toward the left.

THE DANCE OF THE BACCHANALS.

[This begins with a figure by the soldiers alone. When this is finished, an equal number of girls enter with wine cups. They place them to the lips of the soldiers and then the tempo of the music changes to that of wild and sensuous revel. As the last strains of this are playing, the QUEEN glides on from the back, dances a brief solo and then forms the center of the finishing figure.

[The KING regards the picture with amazement for a moment, and VLADISLAV and LABOCAN mingle discomfiture with their own amazement.

[JOHN, who has appeared during the dance, stands looking on in horror.

KING

My soul rejoices that my beauteous QUEEN
Hath by some whim of changeful womanhood
Plotted within herself to wake my wrath,
Only to change it to admiring love
By this inspiring sacrifice. Joanna!

[He comes down the steps a little and extends his hand. She goes to him.]

Thus do I seal my boundless admiration.

[He kisses her upon the forehead, and leads her to her throne. VLADISLAV turns to LABOCAN deeply puzzled.]

VLADISLAV

What treason-plot can she be hatching now?

KING (*indicating the presence of JOHN*)
Our Vicar General stands gravely by
To lead us to religious ceremony.
But ere we be in penitence absolved
From all the worldly sins we have contrived,
We'll have the dance again, so this my QUEEN
May sin with us together; then, to mass!

JOHN (*from his position on the bridge*)
It shall not be!

KING
Not be? What ho! The music!

JOHN (*with great impressiveness*)
Who plays a single note shall be accursed!
So shall each one of you that disobeys
The Captain of your Faith!

KING
I'll not be ruled!

QUEEN
It was thy promise, WENCESLAUS, that when
The revels ended, he alone should rule.

KING (*submissively*)

Ay, so it was.

[*The QUEEN presses his hand fervently.*

VLADISLAV (*to LABOCAN*)

Some witchery is here!

KING (*rising to his feet*)

Proceed, ye all, in humble reverence,
And penitential awe where he doth lead,
And this my QUEEN and I will follow on.

[*To the strains of the organ JOHN and the MONKS
lead the religious procession on over the bridge and
off to the left, leaving on the stage the KING, the
QUEEN, VLADISLAV, LABOCAN and HAJEK.*

[When the procession has disappeared and the others are about to follow, MATHIAS and MALEK (a soldier) hurry on with TOMAK who is bound with ropes. The QUEEN recognizes him and with difficulty conceals her deep concern.]

KING

What hath he done?

MATHIAS

Betrayed his duty, Sire.

For it is known that when, upon my order,
He was dispatched to find the minstrel stranger
And take him, he did so, then set him free.

KING

His life the forfeit!

QUEEN

No, no, no, not that!

KING

And why dost thou plead mercy for this knave?

QUEEN

I'd plead for any life unjustly crushed
Before there's time to interpose defense.
Show him this mercy!

VLADISLAV

He hath no defense!

KING

None that his KING will hear. Off with his head!

VLADISLAV

Be it my joy to see it done.

[The QUEEN holds out her arms appealingly to the KING, but he pushes her aside and glares savagely upon TOMAK. VLADISLAV goes to TOMAK, as if to drag him away, and discloses part of the neck-

lace given him by the QUEEN protruding from his doublet.

What's this?

[VLADISLAV *drags the necklace out and hands it to the KING, who recognizes it and turns to the QUEEN angrily.*

KING

My wedding gift to thee, thou traitress wanton!
Thy death shall follow close on his!

TOMAK

My death!

Nay, say not that, O KING, for on the life
That thou would'st take away I truly swear
I found the bauble where 'twas lost!

KING

Thou liest.

TOMAK

If there be guilt, 'tis hers, not mine!

KING

No more!

Take him to death!

[VLADISLAV *makes a sign to the soldiers, who hurry TOMAK away crying for mercy. The KING turns savagely upon the QUEEN.*

[*To the QUEEN.*

Where now is thy defense?

For what gav'st thou that bribe?

QUEEN

Thou'st heard him say

He found the bauble.

KING

Thou'st heard me say

He lied, and thou know'st if he did or no!

QUEEN

Faced by his God how can a soldier lie?

VLADISLAV

To shield a guiltier than he,—his QUEEN!

[The QUEEN, staggered by this reply, stands as if stunned with apprehension.]

HAJEK (to VLADISLAV)

A thousand oaths that thou art lying now!

[VLADISLAV deals him a heavy blow and he falls to the ground.]

KING

That was well done! Out of my sight, poor fool,
And be not seen about the court again
On peril of thy neck!

HAJEK

Poor, pestered KING,

That listeneth to lies before the truth:
There is no peril grave enough to still
The voice of courage, when it cries aloud
To curb the slanderers of helpless woman!

KING

Out of my sight!

[HAJEK is about to reply, when VLADISLAV seizes him and roughly pushes him off to the left.]

Now, faithful VLADISLAV,

More of thy charge, and if thou liest, too,
Myself shall drag thy life from thee by shreds!

VLADISLAV

I am content, dread Sire.

KING

Whence came thy knowledge?

QUEEN

He hath no knowledge of the truth!

KING

Speak, then. Ha, thou art silent. *[to VLADISLAV]* Hast thou?
Then, speak thou.

VLADISLAV

I had it from the stars.

QUEEN

Through LABOCAN!
Imposter, cheat and trickster!

LABOCAN *(urged by VLADISLAV to speak)*
Ay, through me!

QUEEN *(to the KING)*

Surely thou'lt not believe him?

KING

If he dare
To tell me aught that comes not true,—the rack!

LABOCAN *(stepping toward the throne
with great impressiveness)*

I do take up the gage. The stars have said
Thy QUEEN is false to thee! She hath been so
Throughout the years since thou hast made her wife!

QUEEN

It is not true!

KING *(now full of jealous rage)*
Peace, woman! *(to LABOCAN)* Said they more?

LABOCAN

Last night they warned me of a lover, come
Again cloaked in the strains of melody,
To lure her once again away from thee
Into thy brother's arms. He's played thee false
From ere thy wedding night until this morn,
When these ears heard his song.

VLADISLAV

And mine!

KING

And mine!

[to the QUEEN

Now what hast thou to say, when all of us
Have proved thee traitress to thy God and KING?

QUEEN

That all have lied! Lied for the changeless stars,
To lend their silence unto superstition
And smirch the honor of my marriage vow!

KING

Then where is SIGISMUND?

QUEEN

I do not know!

[MALEK and another soldier are seen coming down
one of the paths with SIGISMUND a prisoner.

And could my conscience speak 'twould say to thee
These eyes of mine his image have not seen,
Nor these ears heard his voice.

[By this time MALEK and the soldier with SIGIS-
MUND are crossing the bridge, and VLADISLAV
sees them.

VLADISLAV

Then who is here?

[All turn and regard the approaching group. The
QUEEN with horror and the others with a sort of
vindictive triumph.

KING (to the QUEEN, savagely)

The damning proof that thou basely lied!

[He comes down from the throne and meets SIGIS-
MUND. The QUEEN follows him closely and with

great apprehension. The KING faces SIGISMUND venomously.

Now what defense hast thou?

SIGISMUND

This: Thou hast dared
To have me, thy half brother and a King
Powerful as thou, trailed like a common felon
Along the forest paths and dragged before thee.
For what?

KING

Dost thou not know? Then I will tell it thee!
To lure thy mistress from thy brother's bed,
To one which thine adultery hath defiled!

SIGISMUND (*looking into the KING's face*)

This to my face?

KING

Into thy soul, seducer!

[SIGISMUND deals him a smart blow on the cheek.
He draws his dagger and is about to stab SIGISMUND when the QUEEN, who is close behind him, stands between them and forces the KING away.
At the same time the soldiers hold SIGISMUND.

Unhand me!

QUEEN

No!

KING

But he shall not escape

The punishment that is the cuckold's right.

[By a sudden and fierce movement he throws the dagger at SIGISMUND. SIGISMUND staggers, draws the weapon from his breast, throws it aside and then falls to the ground. The QUEEN throws herself across his prostrate form and turns savagely to the KING.

QUEEN

Murderer!

SIGISMUND (*reviving*)

No, that crime is spared his soul.

[*He is assisted to his feet by the QUEEN.*]

I shall not die, nor even lose my strength,
Till I have lifted from thy stainless name
The foul reproach that he hath cast upon it.

[*to the KING*]

Thy mother and mine own were one. I know
Thy soul holds her in sainted memory.
Now by that memory and her dead love
For both of us, devoutly do I swear
That thou hast lied in naming her my mistress,
Or doubting her allegiance to her troth!
Thou dost wrong her and me believing so.

KING

Why com'st thou here, then, seeking her?

SIGISMUND (*to one of the soldiers*)

Good man,

[*handing him his handkerchief*]

Some water. I would stanch my bleeding wound.

[*The soldier takes his handkerchief, goes to the river's
bank and wets the handkerchief in the stream.*]

KING (*to SIGISMUND*)

Thou hast not told me.

SIGISMUND

Told thee what?

KING

The cause

For which thou camest here.

SIGISMUND

That nothing has
To do with the defiling words thou'st uttered,

And those I swear are false. Deep in thy soul
Thou knowest it! I'll tell thee nothing more,
And dare thee to do more.

[to the QUEEN.

Lady, farewell!

[The soldier returns with the handkerchief.

KING

Thou shalt not go!

*[SIGISMUND takes the handkerchief from the soldier
and thrusts it into his doublet.*

SIGISMUND

Not go? Till thou hast proved

My kingdom enemy to thine, thou durst not stay
My coming or my going as I will.

[His arm about the soldier's neck.

Give me this stalwart youth to be my prop
To where my horse is tethered, and I'm gone.

[The KING makes a consenting signal to the soldier.

I thank thee. Let no others hear of this

And I will lock the secret tight. Farewell!

*[He leans upon the soldier heavily and proceeds with
difficulty across the bridge. The QUEEN starts as
if to go to his assistance, but the KING takes her by
the wrist and holds her. When SIGISMUND and the
soldier have disappeared, he speaks.*

KING *(to the QUEEN)*

Some mystery is here! Woman, reveal it!

QUEEN

My heart conceals no secrets but mine own,
And only conscience can make revelation.

KING

That thou dissemblest is writ on thy face
And I will tear it from thee!

QUEEN

If thou canst!

KING

Suppose I torture thee?

QUEEN

Do, to my death,
And I'll reveal not what thou must not know!

KING

One other knows all that thou knowest!

QUEEN

Who?

KING

Who? Thy Confessor! I will summon him,
And one or both of you shall lift the mask
From what is hidden in your guilty breasts.

QUEEN

Thou durst not!

KING

Dare I not? Then thou shalt see!

[MATHIAS *and a soldier enter from the left.*

MATHIAS

The work is done, my liege. TOMAK is dead.

QUEEN

Ah!

[*Buries her face in her hands and sinks upon the throne steps.*

KING

Good! For thy dispatch I'll make thee Colonel.

[MATHIAS *makes a grateful bow.*

Go thou unto the Vicar General
And bring him hither. Even from the altar!

MATHIAS

The altar, Sire?

KING

Ay, even from his prayers!

Dost thou refuse?

MATHIAS

I dare not.

KING

Go!

[MATHIAS hurries across the bridge and off to the left.
The KING goes to the QUEEN, attempts to lift her
to her feet and finds that she has fainted.

Attend her.

[VLADISLAV and LABOCAN go to the QUEEN and lift
her to a near-by couch.

Think'st thou she doth malingers?

LABOCAN

No, my liege.

Her courage and her strength are not in tune.
But guilt's a burden strength cannot defy,
Faced by the ghastly shadow of a crime.

[MATHIAS hurries from the left and across the bridge
accompanied by JOHN

JOHN (*with great dignity*)

What sacrilege is this that I am dragged
Out of the sanctity of holy office
To hear the plaints of a blaspheming KING?

KING

Nay, but the plaint of a just monarch, wronged
By enemies, conspiracies and plots;
Of secrets whose disgrace is hidden deep
Within thy brain behind the walls of faith.

JOHN (*in deep surprise*)

What dost thou mean?

KING

That, this time, I shall find them weak as chalk,
For I will tear them down!

JOHN (*in amazement*)

What! Make revelation of the sins I've shrived?
Through all the struggles of our Holy Church
No tongue save thine hath uttered such defilement.

*[A large number of the faithful, accompanied by the
Monks, are seen coming across the bridge in great
alarm.]*

See where my faithful ones come to protest
Against this act of Pagan profanation!
Mark on their faces horror at thy sin,
Reviling God's most holy ritual,
The celebration of the Sacrament.

KING

MATHIAS! VLADISLAV! Call all your guard,
And drive these rebels trembling to the city!

MONKS and CROWD (*all kneeling*)

Mercy! Mercy!

KING

And wield your swords to kill,
If any of them dare to disobey!

*[MATHIAS and several soldiers who have hurried on
drive the crowd across the bridge and up the paths.]*

JOHN (*who has been regarding the episode
in amazement*)

Hast thou gone mad that thou dost rail like this
And lay thy soldiers' hands upon my monks?

KING

If madness be the name for just revenge
Upon the trusted ones who've played me false,
Then am I mad! And be that mine excuse
For throttling skulking treason at its birth!

JOHN (*deeply surprised*)
Treason! Where?

KING
In mine own bed! And thou
Hast it stored guiltily within thy breast!

JOHN
And speakest thou—

KING (*interrupting and pointing to the*
QUEEN)
Of her who's lying there!

JOHN (*noticing the QUEEN for the first*
time)

Joanna!

[JOHN goes over to her, bends over her and strokes her
hair.

KING
Even she! (*with deep significance*)
Thy conscience, priest,
Conceals the damning evidence we seek,
And I am firm resolved to tear it from thee!

JOHN
Such blasphemy was never known before
In all the centuries the Church hath lived!

KING
Well, then I'll break the dull monotony,
And rule that when there's danger to the State
Confessors must reveal what they know of it.

JOHN
Thou hast no right to make so base a law!
Know, if a million kings a million times
Should make its counterpart, in all the world
There's not one priest so base as to obey it!

KING (*fiercely*)

By God, there's one priest shall! But I'll relent
So far as this: Affirm what we suspect,
That SIGISMUND, Hungaria's King, and she
Have assignations made in mockery
Of wifely vows and loyalty to me.

JOHN

Why, thou wouldst mock my cloth, blaspheme my Faith,
Laugh at thy God to dream it in thy sleep!
I'll hear no more!

[he is about to go.]

KING

Stop! Thou shalt move no step!

Mathias, call thy guard!

[MATHIAS hurries off to the left. The KING continues to JOHN and, unseen by anyone, the QUEEN begins to revive.]

Now thou shalt see
If thou art King, or I! For by my crown,
Lest thou'rt compliant to my just demand
I'll have thee tortured to my will!

[The QUEEN rises and totters faintly over to JOHN]

QUEEN

No, no!

I'll make complete revelation!

JOHN

On thy soul

Thou must not!

(to her)

It will mean thy death,
And his; ten thousand deaths in war!

KING

Reveal what she hath told and thou art free!
JOANNA, speak on thy Confessor's life!

JOHN

And if thou dost, thou wilt but mock thy faith!

KING

Lay hands on him!

[MATHIAS *and soldiers hesitate*

On peril of your lives

Do as your King commands!

[MATHIAS *signals to the soldiers and they place their hands on JOHN.*

JOHN

Hold off your hands!

[*The soldiers release him and he turns to the KING.*

Till thou hast proved me traitor to the crown

Thou durst not bait me like a criminal!

KING

That shalt thou see.

(*to the soldiers*)

Your hands upon him tight,

Nor loosen them again till ye are bid!

Are tortures ready?

VLADISLAV

Ay, my liege.

QUEEN (*deeply horrified*)

Tortures!

KING

Thou canst prevent them with a single word.

QUEEN

Then that word will I speak!

JOHN

I do command

Of thee the silence God imposed on me!

What thou'st confessed is His, not mine or thine.

QUEEN

Not if he torture thee?

JOHN
Not for my life,
Or thine, or yet an hundred more!

KING
Take him away!
[*The soldiers are about to drag him away, when the*
QUEEN *kneels and hangs upon his robe.*

QUEEN
I cannot hold it longer, I will speak!

KING
Speak all the truth?

QUEEN
Ay, every word!

JOHN
Not one!
Lest Heaven's vengeance fall upon thee!

KING
Speak!

QUEEN
To save thee torture—death!

JOHN
That cannot be!
Remember, twice before I've braved his wrath.
So, courage, child. He dare not wreak his threat!
And if he did, no thong would tear my flesh,
No heaviest scourge raise welts upon my back
Nor red hot swords sear blisters on my skin.

KING
Away with him!
QUEEN (*clinging to him*)
I will not let thee go!

KING
Tear them apart!

[Two soldiers lay hands upon her, and she brushes them away angrily.]

QUEEN

Unhand me!

[The KING goes over to her, tears her away from JOHN, swings her to the right and faces JOHN.]

KING

Wilt thou speak?

JOHN

Unto my God, not thee!

KING

I'll wait no more!

[Makes a fierce gesture to the soldiers and they lead JOHN away to the left]

Wield thou the lash, good LABOCAN.

LABOCAN

What, I?

KING

Thy fee a thousand florins! Is't agreed?

[LABOCAN bows unwillingly and VLADISLAV leads him away. The KING goes over to the left and speaks to those outside.]

Have all the tortures near, so I may see

And hear his courage break. No, nearer! So!

[The QUEEN has covered her face with her hands, but the KING tears them away roughly and turns her face to the left.]

See where the scourge is ready for his back!

Confess that I accuse thee both aright

And the uplifted arm falls not!

JOHN *(speaking from outside)*

Silence!

KING

Confess!

QUEEN
Then know that—

JOHN
Silence, on thy soul!

KING (*calling off*)

Strike!

[With each blow of the scourge there is heard a sigh of pain from JOHN.]

QUEEN

Ah!

[Buries her face in her hands.]

KING

Again! Again! And yet again!

[turns the QUEEN's face toward the left]

Show him no mercy! Now then, cross the lashes!

QUEEN

No more, no more!

JOHN (*speaking from off the stage with great effort*)

Courage, my child. The sighs

Were those of sorrow, not of pain.

KING (*calling off*)

Again!

[Another blow of the lash is heard with each command.]

Another! Harder!

QUEEN

Stop and I confess!

JOHN

Upon thy soul's salvation, silence!

KING

Strike!

[Another blow is heard accompanied by a cry of pain. The QUEEN places her hands to her ears and runs]

up toward the bridge, the KING following her. He seizes her at the top of the steps. HAJEK appears suddenly, pushes the KING away from the QUEEN and the KING falls to the bottom of the steps.

HAJEK (to the QUEEN)

Horses are ready,—one relief can come!

QUEEN

From whom?

HAJEK

The ARCHBISHOP! No time to lose!

[HAJEK leads the QUEEN off to the right. The KING rises and in a great rage looks for the QUEEN.

KING

What, gone!

[Goes to the left and shouts off

Speak, I command thee!

JOHN

Strike again!

KING (now in an uncontrollable rage)

The horses and the chains! Tear him apart!

[LABOCAN hurries on in terror from the left, carrying in his hands a bloody scourge, and kneels to the KING.

LABOCAN

Ah, gracious Majesty, here on my knees,

In deep humility and reverence,

I beg of thee no torture like to that!

By VLADISLAV compelled, these reeking hands

Belabored with this scourge his naked back

Till it was streaked with living streams of blood!

Ah, was it not enough?

KING

Not half enough!

(calling off to the left)

What ho, I say! The horses and the chains!

[The champing of horses and the clanking of chains are heard.]

LABOCAN (*pointing off to the left in great agony*)

See where they twist the clanking chains and ropes
About his limbs! Look where the champing beasts
Stand dumbly by to wreak their cruel work!

KING

The stars commanded it,—did'st thou not say so?

LABOCAN

The stars commanded no such deed as this,
And if thou say'st I said so, then thou liest!

KING (*drawing his sword*)

What, this to me?

LABOCAN

Ay, though thou hew me down!

KING (*beating LABOCAN off the stage with his sword*)

Back to thy work or thou shalt follow him.

[Calls off to the left.]

Are chains and horses ready?

[VLADISLAV enters from the left nervously.]

VLADISLAV

Yes, my liege,

But all my men, too full of awful pity
For one whom they revere, do now rebel,
Refusing to go further.

KING

Then on thee
Shall fall the honor to uphold my will!

VLADISLAV

Nay, not on me, my liege.

KING

Why, where's the fear?

He'll speak with the first tension on the chains.
And, if thou hold the bridles, I'll make thee
First Lord of Prague!

VLADISLAV

There'll be no doubt of it?

KING

I swear it on my honor and my crown.

VLADISLAV

Then it is done.

[He hurries off to the left.]

KING (*speaking off to the left*)

Now, Vicar General,

This is thy end unless thou do confess!

JOHN (*outside from the left*)

I do defy thee!

KING

Then begin!

*[The chains are heard to tighten and there is a cry
of pain from JOHN.]*

Confess!

JOHN

Still I defy thee!

KING (*calling off savagely*)

Draw! With all their power!

*[The tautening of the chains and the cry of JOHN are
repeated.]*

One word will free thee—yes or no?

JOHN (*in great agony*)
No, no!

KING (*frantically*)

Again, again, although it mean his death!

JOHN (*with an expiring sigh*)

To Thee — Oh Father— I— — commend my spirit!

[LABOCAN *hurries on and kneels.*

LABOCAN

He will not speak. Mercy, I beg of thee!

KING

No!

LABOCAN

Then upon the powers that rule the heavens,
I call to dim yon sun and bring thee darkness!

[*The white light of the stage changes to an amber tone,
which in turn fades and almost total darkness
comes, which is relieved by a strong red light from
the left as if from a fire.*

KING (*now greatly terrified*)

What ho! My Guard! Lights! Cut the villain down!

Death to a sorcerer that rules the sun!

VLADISLAV! VLADISLAV! Where art thou, man?

[VLADISLAV *hurries on, showing great fear.*

His life! I'll have his life!

VLADISLAV

No more, no more!

Enough's already done!

KING

The Vicar General?

VLADISLAV

Dead! His strength was frailer than I thought.

KING (*now frightened*)

Take him away! Let not his corpse be seen,
Lest all my subjects rise up in rebellion
Before I have convinced them of his guilt.
Into the river with him!

[VLADISLAV *hurries off to the left, and HAJEK is seen hurrying down the path. LABOCAN is still crouching slightly to the left, and the KING approaches him.*

Now for thee!

Thou hast brought darkness, bring me back the sun
Or I will kill thee straight! The sun, I say!

HAIJEK (*who has come down running*)

He cannot!

KING

Cannot?

HAIJEK

No, 'tis an eclipse
Hid in his knowledge for these many days
And which he charged me not to speak of.

KING (*about to attack LABOCAN with his sword*)

Dog!

HAIJEK (*interposing*)

Soil not thy royal hands with such as he
On top of what hath been already done.

[*showing his hands*

Leave him to these, unsoiled by murder yet,
But hungering to take this traitor's life
That never knew but lies and foul deception!

KING

Then rest his fate with thee!

[As HAJEK is about to seize him, soldiers led by VLADISLAV and MATHIAS appear bearing the body of JOHN upon a litter. LABOCAN points to this.

LABOCAN

Look there, look there!

[The KING hangs his head in shame. HAJEK forces LABOCAN to his knees and kneels beside him, and the cortege proceeds to the bridge, where the body is cast into the river.

[At the same time, the ARCHBISHOP and the QUEEN are seen hurrying down the path toward the bridge.

KING

Lights! Bring me lights!

VLADISLAV

There are no lights, my liege.

[By this time the ARCHBISHOP and the QUEEN are seen standing on the bridge.

ARCHBISHOP

Lo, this becurtained sun! The work of God,

[All turn and regard him in great fright.

Rebuking thee for what thou'st done to-day.

Speak, KING! Where is my Vicar General?

[There is a moment of deep silence.

Will no one speak?

HAJEK

There's one who dares, your grace,

He's dead.

[The QUEEN kneels, burying her face in her hands.

QUEEN

Dead!

ARCHBISHOP

And from torture?

HAJEK

Torture, ay!

ARCHBISHOP (*to the KING, who stands
trembling near the foot of the throne*)

And thou hast done this through a cruel whim,
Inspired by scandals, rumors and suspicion,
Fed by the minions thou hast taught to speak
As thy thoughts led withal. And truth or lie
Were spoken as best suited to thine aims.
I know not if thy QUEEN be guilty, or
If SIGISMUND conspires against the State.
These secrets thou hast tried with fatal torture
To wring from out a Captain of the Church,
And for this bloody blasphemy I curse thee!

[The KING bows his head in abject terror.

Come never peace into thy life again,
But heresy and war disturb thy realm
So long as thou shalt live! Thy life a hell
With only those accursed to mourn thy death!
And if 'tis in the will of Heaven now
To wreak his anger on this crime of thine,

[lifting his arms as if in prayer

I call on him to crash it in thine ears!
Thou art accursed!

KING

Mercy!

ARCHBISHOP

Accursed of God!

*[Here a violent storm breaks out with wild fury.
There are lurid flashes of lightning, deafening
crashes of thunder and showers of rain and hail.*

- [The ARCHBISHOP holds out his arms to the QUEEN, and she rushes into them as if for protection.
- [The KING, followed by VLADISLAV and the soldiers, hurries up to cross the bridge. A great shaft of lightning strikes it and VLADISLAV rolls down the steps dead.
- [The KING and soldiers are blinded for a moment by the flash, and then hurry terrified up the path.
- [The ARCHBISHOP, with one arm about the QUEEN, hurries away after them.
- [HAJEK seizes LABOCAN by the throat, forces him up to the river, pushes him through the reeds into it, then hurries into the forest.
- [The glow of the fire on the left is now gone, and the stage is in utter darkness, in preparation for—

THE TRANSFIGURATION OF JOHN OF NEPOMUK

- [The figure of JOHN is seen to rise from the river, a halo about his head, and float upward.
- [A dazzling flood of light suddenly suffuses the hillside, and a great chorus of ANGELS is grouped toward the summit.
- [The figure rises slowly toward the light until it has passed beyond it, the intention being to convey the idea that the spirit of JOHN is being translated into Heaven.

CHORUS OF ANGELS

The voices of Heaven do sing in thy glory,
 The lore of Bohemia shall ring with thy fame,
 And poets their Muses shall chain to thy story,
 And Sainthood for ages shall rest on thy name.

Bohemia thy birthland, Bohemia thy deathland,
And Heaven forever thy soul's land shall be;
Bohemia and Heaven, thy glory shall leaven,
Bohemia and Heaven are ever for thee!
*[With the close of the Chorus the light fades slowly
away and the stage is in darkness.]*

THE ILLUMINATION BEGINS.

*[The refrain of the Song of SIGISMUND is heard
through the gloom, and the cloaked form of the
QUEEN is seen approaching it as before, lighted
only by the faint glow from the illumination.]*

THE END.

SYNOPSIS OF THE MUSIC

BY

HUMPHREY J. STEWART

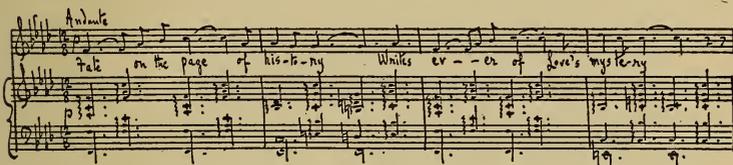
After a short orchestral prelude:



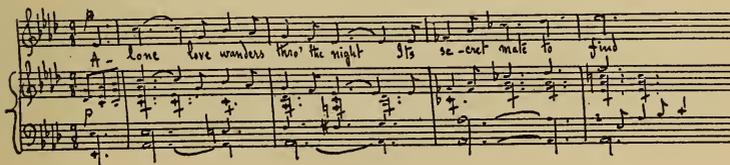
the scene fades to darkness. The music indicates the tragic character of the drama:



Following this brief orchestral movement, we proceed at once to SIGISMUND's Love Song, heard in the distance:

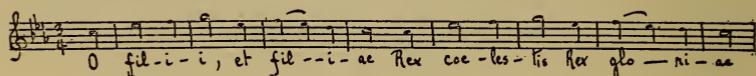


The song has a haunting refrain:



During the dialogue which follows the refrain of the song is heard twice in the distance, but without accompaniment.

At the close of the dialogue between LABOCAN and HAJEK the organ commences, very softly, a prelude to the Easter Hymn, "O Filii et Filiae." For this number the composer has used the ancient Plainsong melody which has been sung to this Hymn for many centuries in the Catholic church.



As the organ prelude ceases the choir sings, from afar, the first verse, without accompaniment. The organ is again heard, gradually increasing in power as the religious procession appears upon the hillside. The second verse is sung with organ accompaniment. After this the orchestra commences with free imitative counterpoint, in the style of the Bach chorales. This is continued as an accompaniment to the third verse, sung by the choir in unison. For the fourth verse the full power of the orchestra, choir and organ is employed with free counterpoint in the bass, leading to an imposing climax. JOHN intones the blessing, to which the choir responds with the "Dresden" Amen.

The next musical number is a March and Chorus, accompanying the entry of the King, Queen and Court:



Chorus
Hail, Hail Bo-he-mia! Quest of the loyal brave

The musical score is for a chorus in 4/4 time. It features a vocal line with lyrics and a piano accompaniment. The lyrics are "Hail, Hail Bo-he-mia! Quest of the loyal brave".

After considerable dialogue we come to BALBINUS' song, with chorus:

Who shuns the drink in the ruddy ruddy bowl?
Not we, no no no, not we!

The musical score is for Balbinus' song in 4/4 time. It includes a vocal line with lyrics and a piano accompaniment. The lyrics are "Who shuns the drink in the ruddy ruddy bowl? Not we, no no no, not we!".

HAJEK's song, with chorus, in which he describes the miserable condition of a kingdom without wine, is the next musical number:

An ar-id waste of ne-ti-cesee, A de-sert of im-pro-vi-sence,

The musical score is for Hajek's song in 4/4 time. It features a vocal line with lyrics and a piano accompaniment. The lyrics are "An ar-id waste of ne-ti-cesee, A de-sert of im-pro-vi-sence,".

The music accompanying the Court revels is a suite de ballet, in three parts:

(I). Mazurka, by the soldiers:

Mazurka

(II). Valse. (Pas de Fascination) by girls:

Valse

(III). Bacchanale, by both groups of dancers:

Bacchanale

The Finale commences with music descriptive of a storm:

Finale. Allegro

As the storm dies away the music changes in character, to illustrate the scene of the Transfiguration of JOHN.

The following theme forms the basis of this movement:

Angello

ppp

A musical score for a piano piece. It consists of two staves: a treble clef staff and a bass clef staff. The key signature has one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 4/4. The piece is marked 'ppp' (pianissimo) and 'Angello'. The melody in the treble staff begins with a half rest, followed by a quarter note G4, a quarter note A4, and a quarter note B4. The bass staff provides a harmonic accompaniment with a steady eighth-note pattern.

This leads to the final Chorus of Angels:

Maestoso

Chorus

The voi-ces of Hea-ven do sing in thy glo-ry, The love of Bo-

A musical score for a chorus. It features a vocal line and piano accompaniment. The key signature has one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 4/4. The tempo is marked 'Maestoso'. The vocal line begins with the lyrics 'The voi-ces of Hea-ven do sing in thy glo-ry, The love of Bo-'. The piano accompaniment consists of chords and moving lines in both hands.

-he-mia shall ring with thy fame

A musical score for the continuation of the chorus. It features a vocal line and piano accompaniment. The key signature has one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 4/4. The vocal line begins with the lyrics '-he-mia shall ring with thy fame'. The piano accompaniment continues with chords and moving lines in both hands.

Schm

a. E. W.

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