Gorboduc.
Thomas Norton and Thomas Sackville.

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THE

TRAGEDY OF GORBODUC;

Whereof three Acts were written by

Thomas Nortone[1], and the two last by

Thomas Sackuyle[2].

Set forth as the same was shown before the
Queen's most excellent Majesty, in her highness'
Court of Whitehall, the xviii day of January,
Anno Domini[3]. 1561. By the Gentlemen
The Argument of the Tragedy.

Gorboduc, king of Britain, divided his Realm in his lifetime to his Sons, Ferrex and Porrex. The Sons fell to division and dissention. The younger killed the elder. The Mother that more dearly loved the elder, for revenge killed the younger. The people moved with the Cruelty of the fact, rose in Rebellion and slew both father and mother. The Nobility assembled and most terribly destroyed the Rebels. And afterwards for want of Issue of the Prince whereby the Succession of the Crown became uncertain. They fell to Civil war in which both they and many of their Issues were slain, and the Land for a long time almost desolate and miserably wasted.

The names of the Speakers.

Gorboduc, king of great Britain.
Videna, Queen and wife to king Gorboduc.
Ferrex, Elder son to king Gorboduc.
Porrex, Younger son to king Gorboduc.
Clotyn, Duke of Cornwall.
Fergus, Duke of Albany.
Mandud, Duke of Leagre.
Gwenard, Duke of Cumperland.
Eubulus, Secretary to the king Gorboduc.
Arostus, A Councilor to king Gorboduc.
Dordan, A Councilor assigned by the king to his Eldest Son Ferrex.
Philander, A Councilor assigned by the king to his younger Son Porrex.
(Both being of the old king’s Counsel before.)
Hermon, A Parasite remaining with Ferrex.
Tyndar, A Parasite remaining with Porrex.
Nuntius, A Messenger of the elder Brother's death.
Nuntius, A Messenger of Duke Fergus rising in Arms.
Marcella, A Lady of the Queen's privy Chamber.
Chorus, Four ancient and Sage men of Britain.

The Order of the dumb show before the first Act, and the Signification thereof.

First the Music of Violins began to play, during which came in upon the Stage six wild men clothed in leaves. Of whom the first bore in his neck a fagot of small sticks, which they all both severally and together assayed with all their strengths to break, but it could not be broken by them. At the length one of them plucked out one of the sticks and broke it: And the rest plucking out all the other sticks one after another did easily break, the same being severed: which being conjoined they had before attempted in vain. After they had this done, they departed the Stage, and the Music ceased Hereby was signified, that a state knit in unity doth continue strong against all force. But being divided, is easily destroyed. As befell upon Duke Gorboduc dividing his Land to his two sons which he before held in Monarchy. And upon the dissention of the Brethren to whom it was divided.

Viden, Ferrex.

Viden
1
The silent night that brings the quiet pause,

From painful travails of the weary Day:
Prolongs my careful thoughts and makes me blame
The slow Aurore that so for love or shame
Doth long delay to show her blushing face,
And now the Day renews my grievfull plaint

Ferrex
My gracious Lady and mother dear,
Pardon my grief, for your so grieved mind
To ask what cause so tormenteth your heart.
Viden
10 So great a wrong and so unjust despite,
   Without all cause against all course of kind.

Ferrex

Such causeless wrong and so unjust despite,
May have redress, or at the least revenge.

Viden

Neither my Son, such is the froward[16] will,
15 The person such, such my mishap and thine.

Ferrex

Mine know I none, but grief for your distresses.

Viden

Yes: mine for thine my son: A father? no:
In kind a father, but not in kindliness.

Ferrex

My father: why? I know nothing at all;
20 Wherein I have misdone[17] unto his Grace.

Viden

Therefore, the more unkind to thee and me.
For knowing well (my son) the tender love
That I have ever born and bear to thee,
He grieved thereat[18], is not content alone,
25 To spoil thee of my sight my chiefest Joys,
But thee, of thy birth, right and Heritage
Causeless, unkindly and in wrongful wise[19],
Against all Law and right he will bereave,
Half of his kingdom he will give away.

Ferrex.
30 To whom?

Viden.

Even to Porrex his younger son
Whose growing pride I do so sore suspect,
That being raised to equal Rule with thee,
Me thinks I see his envious heart to swell
Filled with Disdain and with ambitious Pride
35 The end the Gods do know, whose Alters I
Full oft have made in vain of Cattle slain,
To send the sacred smoke to Heaven’s Throne[20],
For thee my son if things so succeed,
As now my Jealous mind misdeemeth[21] sore.

Ferrex
40 Madam leave care and careful plaint for me;
    Just hath my Father been to every wight[22],
    His first injustice he will not extend
    To me I trust, that give no cause thereof,
    My brother’s pride shall hurt himself, not me.

Viden
45 So grant the Gods: but yet thy father so
    Hath firmly fixed his unmoved mind
    That plaints and prayers can no whit[23] avail,
    For those have I assayed, but even this day,
    He will endeavor to procure assent
50 Of all his Council to his fond device.

Ferrex
    Their Ancestors from race to race have borne
    True faith to my forefathers and their seed,
    I trust they eke[24] will bear the like to me.

Viden
    There resteth all, but if they fail thereof,
55 And if the end bring forth an evil success
    On them and theirs the mischief shall befall,
    And so I pray the Gods requite[25] it them,
    And so they will, for so is wont[26] to be
    When Lords and trusted Rulers under kings
60 To please the present fancy of the Prince,
    With wrong transpose the course of governance
    Murders, mischief, or civil sword at length,
    Or mutual treason, or a just revenge,
    When right succeeding Line returns again
65 By Jove’s[27] just Judgment and deserved wrath
    Brings them to civil and reproachful death,
    And roots[28] their names and kindred’s from the earth.

Ferrex
    Mother content you, you shall see the end.
Viden
The end? thy end I fear, Jove end me first.

**Actus primus. Scene Secunda.**

Gorboduc, Arostus, Philander, Eubulus.

Gorboduc

1  My lords whose grave advice and faithful aid
   Have long upheld my honour and my Realm
   And brought me from this age from tender years,
   Guiding so great estate with great renown;

5  Now more importeth[30] me the erst[31] to use
   Your faith and wisdom whereby yet I reign,
   That when by death my life and rule shall cease,
   The kingdom yet may with unbroken course,
   Have certain Prince, by whose undoubted right,

10  Your wealth and peace, may stand in quiet stay[32],
   And eke that they whom nature hath prepared,
   In time to take my place in Princely Seat,
   While in their Father’s time their pliant youth
   Yields to the frame of skilful governance

15  May so be taught and trained in noble Arts,
   As what their father’s which have reigned before
   Have with great fame derived down to them
   With honour they may leave unto[33] their seed:
   And not be taught for their unworthy life,

20  And for their Lawless swarving[34] out of kind,
   Worthy to lose what law and kind them gave
   But that they may preserve the common peace,
   The cause that first began and still maintains
   The Lineal course of King’s inheritance,

25  For me, for mine, for you, and for the state
   Whereof both I and you have charge and care.
   Thus do I mean to use your wonted faith
   To me and mine, and to your native Land,
   My Lords be plain without all wry[35] respect

30  Or poisonous craft to speak in pleasing wise,
   Lest as the blame of ill succeeding things
   Shall light on you, so light the harms also.

Arostus

Your good acceptance so (most noble king)
Of such your faithfulness as heretofore[36]

35  We have employed in duties to your Grace,
And to this Realm whole worthy head you are,
Well proves that neither you mistrust at all,
Nor we shall need no boasting to wise to show,
Our truth to you, nor yet our wakeful care

For you, for yours, and for our native Land,
Wherefore (O King) I speak for one as all,
Sith all as one do bare you equal faith:
Doubt not to use their Councils and their aids
Whose honours, goods and lives are whole avowed
To serve, to aid, and to defend your Grace.

Gorboduc
My lords I thank you all. This is the case
Ye know, the Gods, who have the sovereign care
For kings, for kingdoms, and for common weals,
Gave me two sons in my more lusty Age,
Who now in my deceiving years are grown
Well towards riper state of mind and strength,
To take in hand some greater Princely charge,
As yet they live and spend their hopeful days,
With me and with their Mother here in Court

Their age now asketh other place and trade,
And mine also doth ask another change,
Theirs to more travail, mine to greater ease:
When fatal death shall end my mortal life,
My purpose is to leave unto them twaine

The Realm divided into two sundry parts;
The one Ferrex mine elder son shall have,
The other shall the other Porrex rule
That both my purpose may more firmly stand,
And eke that they may better rule their charge,

I mean forthwith to place them in the same:
That in my life they may both learn to rule,
And I may Joy to see their ruling well.
This is in the sum, what I would have ye weigh:
First whether you allow my whole device,

And think it good for me, for them, for you,
And for our Country, mother of us all:
And if ye like it and allow it well,
Then for their guiding and their governance?
Show forth such means of circumstance,

As ye think meet to be both known and kept:
Lo, this is all, now tell me your advice.
Arostus

And this is much, and asketh great advice,
But for my part my Sovereign Lord and king
This do I think your Majesty doth know,

80 How under your Justice and in peace,
Great wealth and Honour, long we have enjoyed
So as we cannot seem with greedy minds
To wish for change of Prince and governance,
But if ye like your purpose and device,

85 Our liking must be deemed to proceed,
Of rightful reason, and of heedful care,
Not for ourselves, but for our common state:
Sith our own state doth need no better change
I think in all as erst your Grace has said:

90 First when you shall unload your aged mind,
Of heavy care and troubles manifold[45],
And lay the same upon my Lords your sons
Whose growing years may bear the burden long
And long I pray the Gods grant it so:

95 And in your life while you shall so behold
Their rule, their virtues and their noble deeds,
Such as their kind behighteth[46] to us all,
Great be the profits that shall grow thereof,
Your age in quiet shall the longer last

100 Your lasting age shall be their longer stay,
For cares of kings, that rule as you have ruled
For public wealth and not for private joy,
Do waste man’s life and hasten crooked age,
With furrowed face and with enfeebled limbs,

105 To draw on creeping Death a swifter pace.
They two yet young shall bear the party reign
With greater ease, than one now old alone
Can wield the whole, for whom much harder is
With lessened strength and double weight to bear

110 Your eye, your Council, and the grave regard
Of Fathers, yea of such as father’s name,
Now at beginning of their sundered reign,
When it is hazard of their whole success
Shall bridle so their force of youthful heats,

115 And so restrain the rage of insolence[47],
Which most assails the young and noble minds,
And so shall guide and train in tempered stay
Their yet green bending wits with reverent awe.
As now inured\[48\] with virtues at the first.

120 Custom, O king, shall bring delightfulness
By use of Virtue, Vice shall grow in hate,
But if you so dispose it, that the day
Which ends your life shall first begin their reign,
Great is the peril, what will be the end,

125 When such beginning of such liberties
Void of such stays as in your life do lie,
Shall leave them free to randon of their will\[49\].
An open prey to traitorous flattery,
The greatest pestilence of noble youth:

130 Which peril shall be past, if in your life,
Their tempered youth with aged father’s awe
Be brought in ure\[50\] of skillful staidness.
And in your life, their lives disposed so,
Shall lengthen your noble life in joyfulness.

135 Thus think I \[51\] your grace hath wisely thought
And that your tender care of common weal,
Hath bred this thought, so to divide your Land
And plant your sons to bear the present rule
While you yet live to see their ruling well,

140 That you may longer live by joy therein.
What further means behooveful\[52\] are and meet
At greater leisure may your Grace devise
When see have said, and when we be agreed
If this be best, to part the realm in twain,

145 And place your sons in present government;
Whereof, as I have plainly said my mind,
So would I hear the rest of all my Lords.

Philander

150 As for dividing of this Realm in twain
And lotting out the same in egal\[53\] parts,
To either of my Lords, your Grace’s sons,
That think I best for this your Realm’s behoof\[54\],
For profit and advancement of your sons,

155 And for your comfort and your honour eke:
But so to place them while your life do last,
To yield to them your Royal governance,
To be above them only in the name
Of father, not in kingly state also,
I think not good for you, for them, nor us.
This kingdom since the bloody civil field
Where Morgan[55] slain did yield his conquered part
Unto his Cousin’s sword in Camberland
Containeth all that whilom[56] did suffice,

Three noble sons of your forefather Brute;[57]
So your two sons, it may also suffice,
The moe[58] the stronger, if they agree in one:
The smaller compass that the realm doth hold
The easier is the sway thereof to weld,

The nearer Justice to the wronged poor,
The smaller charge, and yet enough for one.
And when the Region is divided so
That Brethren be the Lords of either part,
Such strength doth nature knit between the both,

In sundry bodies by conjoined love
That not as two, but one of doubled force,
Each is to other as a sure defense,
The Nobleness and glory of the one
Doth sharp the courage of the other’s mind

With virtuous envy to contend for praise,
And such an egalness[59] hath nature made,
Between the Brethren of one Father’s seed,
As an unkind wrong it seems to be,
To throw the other Subject under feet

Of him, whose Peer he is by course of kind,
And nature that did make this egalness,
Oft so repineth at so great a wrong,
That oft she raiseth by a grudging grief,
In younger Brethren at the elder’s state:

Whereby both towns and kingdoms have been razed
And famous stocks of Royal blood destroyed:
The Brother that should be the Brother’s aid
And have a wakeful care for his defense,
Gapes for his death, and blames the lingering years

That brings not forth his end with faster course
And oft impatient of so long delays,
With hateful slaughter he prevents[60] the fates
And heaps a just reward for Brother’s blood,
With endless vengeance on his stock for aye:

Such mischiefs here are wisely met withall:
If egal state may nourish egal love,
Where none has cause to grudge the other’s good,
But now the head to stoop beneath them both,  
Ne[61] kind, ne reason, ne good order bears.

205 And oft it hath been seen, that where Nature  
Hath been perverted in disordered wise  
When Fathers cease to know that they should rule  
And Children cease to know they should obey,  
And often our unkindly[62] tenderness,

210 Is Mother of unkindly Stubbornness:  
I speak not this in envy or reproach,  
As if I grudged the glory of your sons,  
Whose honour I beseech the Gods to increase:  
Nor yet as if I thought there did remain,  
So filthy Cankers in their noble breasts,  
Whom I esteem (which is their greatest praise)  
Undoubted children of so good a king.  
Only I mean to show my certain Rules,  
Which kind hath graft within the mind of man

220 That Nature hath her order and her course,  
Which (being broken) both corrupt the state  
Of minds and things even in the best of all.  
My Lords, your sons, may learn to rule of you  
Your own example in your noble Court

225 Is fittest guider of their youthful years,  
If you desire to seek some present Joy  
By sight of their well ruling in your life,  
See them obey, so shall you see them rule,  
Who so obeyeth not with humbleness  
Will rule with outrage and insolence  
Long may they rule I do beseech the Gods,  
But long may they learn ere[63] they begin to rule.  
If kind and fates would suffer, I would wish  
Them aged Princes and immortal kings:

235 Wherefore, most noble king, I well assent,  
Between your sons ÿ you divide your Realm.  
And as in kind, so match them in degree  
But while the Gods prolong your Royal life  
Prolong your reign, for thereto live you here,

240 And therefore have the Gods so long forborne  
To join you to themselves, that still you might  
Be Prince and father of our common weal:  
They, when they see your children ripe to rule,  
Will make them room, and will remove you hence,

245 That yours in right ensuing of your life  
May rightly honour your mortal[64] name.
Eubulus

Your wonted true regard of faithful hearts,
Makes me (O king) the bolder to presume
To speak what I conceive within my breast,

Although the same do not agree at all
With that which other here my Lords have said
Nor which yourself have seemed best to like,
Pardon I crave and that my words be deemed
To flow from hearty zeal unto your Grace,

And to the safety of your common weal:
To part your Realm unto my Lords your sons
I think not good for you, ne yet for them,
But worst of all, for this our Native Land:
For with one Land, one single rule is best:

Divided Reigns do make divided hearts,
But Peace preserves the Country and the Prince.
Such is in man the greedy mind to reign,
So great is his desire to climb aloft,
In worldly Stage the stateliest parts to bear,

That faith and Justice and all kindly love,
Do yield unto desire of Sovereignty:
Where egal state doth raise an egal hope
To win the thing that either would attain
Your grace remembreth how in past years

The mighty Brute, first prince of all this Land
Possessed the same and ruled it well in one,
He thinking that the compass did suffice
For his three sons, three kingdoms eke to make
Cut it in three, as you would now in twain:

But how much British blood hath sithence been spilt
To join again the sundered unity?
What Princes slain before their timely hour?
What waste of towns and people in the Land?
What Treasons heaped on murders and spoils?

Whose just revenge even yet is scarcely ceased,
Ruthful remembrance is yet had in mind:
The Gods forbid the like to chance again
And you (O king) give not the cause thereof:
My Lord Ferrex your elder son, perhaps,

Whom kind and custom gives a rightful hope
To be your Heir and to succeed your Reign,
Shall think that he doth suffer greater wrong
Than he perchance will bear, if power serve.
Porrex the younger so upraised in state,

290 Perhaps in courage will be raised also,
If Flattery then which fails not to assail
The tender minds of yet unskillful youth,
In one shall kindle and increase distain[70]: And Envy in the other’s heart enflame,

295 This fire shall waste their love, their lives, their land,
And ruthless ruin shall destroy them both,
I wish not this (O King) so to befall,
But fear the thing, that I do most abhor
Give no beginning to so dreadful end,

300 Keep them in order and obedience:
And let them both by now obeying you
Learn such behavior as beseems[71] their state.
The Older, mildness in his governance,
The younger, a yielding contentedness:

305 And keep them near unto your presence still,
That they, restrained by the awe of you,
May live in compass of well-tempered stay,
And pass the perils of their youthful years.
Your aged life draws on to feeble time,

310 Wherein you shall less able be to bear
The travails that in youth you have sustained
Both in your person’s and your Realm’s defense
If planting now your sons in further parts,
You send them further from your present reach

315 Less shall you know how they themselves demean.
Traitorous corrupters of their pliant youth
Shall have, unspied, a much more free access,
And if ambition and inflamed distain
Shall arm the one, the other, or them both
To civil war, or to usurping pride.
Late shall you rue that you ne recked[72] before:
Good is, I grant, of all to hope the best,
But not to live still dreadless of the worst,
So trust the one, that the other be forseen,

320 Arm not unskilfulness with princely power
But you that long have wisely ruled the reins
Of royalty within your noble Realm
So hold them, while the Gods for our avails
Shall stretch the thread of your prolonged days.

325 Too soon he climbed into the flaming Cart,
Whose want of skill did set the earth on fire.[73]
Time and example of your noble Grace,
Shall teach your sons both to obey and rule:
When time hath taught them, time shall make them
The place that now is full: and so I pray
Long it remain, to comfort of us all.

Gorboduc
I take your faithful hearts in thankful part
But sith I see no cause to draw[74] my mind,
To fear the nature of my loving sons,
Or to misdeem that Envy or distain,
Can there work hate, where nature planteth love
In one self[75] purpose do I still abide,
My love extendeth egally to both,
My Land sufficeth for them both also:

Humber[76] shall part the Marches[77] of their Realms:
The Southern part the elder shall possess,
The Northern shall Porrex the younger rule,
In quiet I will pass mine aged days.
Free from the travail and the painful cares
That hasten age upon the worthiest kings.
But lest the fraud that ye do seem to fear
Of flattering tongues, corrupt their tender youth
And writhe[78] them to the ways of youthful lust[79],
To climbing pride, or to revenging hate
Or to neglecting of their careful charge
Lewdly[80] to live in wanton recklessness
Or to oppressing of the rightful cause
Or not to wreak[81] the wrongs done to the poor
To tread down truth, or favor false deceit

I mean to join either of my sons
Some one of those whose long approved faith
And wisdom tried may well assure my heart:
That mining[82] fraud shall find no way to creep
Into their fenced ears with grave advise[83]:

This is the end, and so I pray you all
To bear my sons the love and loyalty
That I have found within your faithful breasts.

Arostus
You, nor your sons, our sovereign Lord, shall want
Our faith and service while our lives do last.
Chorus

370 When settled stay doth hold the royal throne
    In steadfast place by known and doubtless right:
    And chiefly when descent on one alone
    Make single and unparted reign to light.
    Each change of course unjoints the whole estate

375 And yields it thrall to ruin by debate.
    The strength that knit by fast accord in one
    Against all foreign power of mighty foes,
    Could of itself defend itself alone,
    Disjointed once, the former force doth lose

380 The sticks, that sundered brake so soon in twain
    In fagot bound attempted were in vain.[84]
    Oft tender mind that leads the partial eye
    Of erring parents in their children’s love
    Destroys the wrongly loved child thereby:

385 This doth the proud son of Apollo prove
    Who, rashly set in the chariot of his sire,
    Inflamed the parched earth with heaven’s fire.[85]
    And this great king, that doth divide his land
    And change the course of his descending crown

390 And yields the reign into his children’s hand,
    From blissful state of joy and great renown,
    A Mirror[86] shall become to Princes all
    To learn to shun the cause of such a fall.

The Order and signification of
the dumb show before the second Act.

First, the Music of Cornets began to play, during which came in upon the Stage a king accompanied with a number of his Nobility and Gentlemen. And after he had placed himself in a Chair of estate prepared for him: there came and kneeled before him a grave and aged Gentleman and offered up a Cup unto him of Wine in a glass, which the king refused. After him comes a brave and lusty young Gentleman and presents the king with a Cup of Gold filled with potion[87], which the king accepted, and drinking the same, immediately fell down dead upon ý stage, and so was carried thence away by his Lords and Gentlemen, and then the Musick ceased. Hereby was signified, that as Glass by nature holdeth no poison, but is clear and may easily be seen through, ne boweth[89] by any Art: So a faithful Counsellor holdeth no treason, but is plain and open, ne yieldeth to any undiscreet[90] affection, but giveth wholesome Counsel, which the ill-advised Prince refuseth. The delightful gold filled with poison betokeneth Flattery, which under fair seeming of pleasant words beareth deadly poison, which destroyeth the prince ý receiveth it. As befell in the two brethren Ferrex and Porrex who, refusing the wholesome advise of grave Court fellows, credited these young Parasites and brought to
themselves death and destruction thereby.

**Actus secundus. Scena prima.**

Ferrex, Hermon, Dordan.

Ferrex

1

I Marvel much what reason led the king

My father thus without all desert,
To reave me half ý kingdom which by course
Of law and nature should remain to me.

Hermon

5

If you with stubborn and untamed pride

Had stood against him in rebelling wise,
Or if with grudging mind you had envied
So slow a sliding of his aging years,
Or fought before your time to haste the course

10

Of fatal death upon his Royal head,

Or stained your Stock with murder of your kin:
Some face of reason might perhaps have seemed
To yield some likely cause to spoil ye thus.

Ferrex

The wreakful Gods pour on my cursed head,

15

Eternal plagues and never dying woes,

The Hellish Prince, adjudge my damned ghost
To Tantalus’ thirst or proud Ixion’s wheel
Or cruel Gripe to gnaw my growing heart
To during torments and unquenched flames

20

If ever I concerned so foul a thought,

To wish his end of life, or yet of reign.

Dordan

Ne yet your father (O most noble Prince)
Did ever think so foul a thing of you
For he with more than father’s tender love

While yet the fates do lend him life to rule,

(Who long might live to see your ruling well)
To you my Lord, and to his other son
Lo he resigns his Realm and Royalty
Which never would so wise a Prince have done

If he had once misdeemed that in your heart

There ever lodged so unkind a thought.
But tender love (my Lord) and settled trust
Of your good nature, and your noble mind
Made him to place you thus in Royal throne

And now to give you half his realm to guide

Yea and that half within abounding store
Of things that serve to make a wealthy Realm
In stately Cities and in fruitful soil,
In temperate breathing of the milder heaven,

In things of needful use, which friendly Sea

Transports by traffic from the foreign Ports.
In flowing wealth, in honour and in force,
Doth pass the double value of part
That Porrex hath allotted to his reign,

Such is your case, such is your father’s love.

Ferrex
Ah love, my friends, love wrongs not whom he loves.

Dordan
Ne yet wrongeth you, that giveth you
So large a reign ere that the course of time
Bring you to kingdom by descended right,

Which time perhaps might end your time before.
Ferrex

Is this no wrong, say you, to reave from me
My native right of half so great a realm,
And thus to match his younger son with me
In equal power, and in as great a degree?

55

Yea[98] and what son? The son whose swelling pride

Would never yield one point of reverence,
When I the Elder and apparent heir
Stood in the likelihood to possess the whole
Yea and that son which from his childish age

60

Envieth my honour, and doth hate my life,

What will he now do? When his pride, his rage,
The mindful malice of his grudging heart
Is armed with force, with wealth and kingly state?

Hermon

Was this not wrong? Yea ill advised wrong

65

To give so mad a man so sharp a sword,

To so great peril of so great mishap,
Wide open thus to set so large a way.

Dordan

Alas my lord, what grievful thing is this?
That of your brother you can think so ill

70

I never saw him utter likely sign

Whereby a man might see or once misdeem
Such hate of you, ne such unyielding pride
Ill is their council, shameful be their end,
That raising such mistrustful fear in you,

75

Sowing the seed of such unkindly hate,

Travail by reason to destroy you both.
Wise is your brother and of noble hope,
Worthy to wield a large and mighty Realm,
So much a stronger friend have you thereby,

80

Whose strength is your strength, if you gree[99] in one.
Hermon

If nature and the Gods had pinched so
Their flowing bounty and their noble gifts
Of Princely qualities from you my Lord
And poured them all at once in wasteful wise

85

Upon your father's younger son alone:

Perhaps there be that in your prejudice
Would say that birth should yield to worthiness:
But sith in each good gift and Princely Act,
Ye are his match, and in the chief of all

90

In mildness and in sober governance

Ye far surmount: And sith there is in you
Sufficing skill and hopeful towardness
To wield the whole, and match your Elders praise
I see no cause why ye should lose the half,

95

Ne would I with you yield to such a loss:

Lest your mild sufferance of so great a wrong
Be deemed cowardice and simple dread:
Which shall give courage to the fiery head
Of your young Brother to invade the whole,

100

Whilest therefore sticks in the peoples' mind

The loathed wrong of your disheritance,
And ere your Brother have by settled power,
By guileful cloak of an alluring show,
Got him some force and favour in this Realm

105

And while the noble Queen your mother lives,

To work and practice all for your avail
Attempt redress by Arms, and wreak yourselves
Upon his life, that gaineth by your loss,
Who now to shame of you, and grieve of us

110

In your own kingdom triumphs over you:

Show now your courage meet for kingly estate
That they which have avowed to spend their goods
Their lands, their lives and honours in your cause,
May be the bolder to maintain your part

115
When they do see that coward fear in you,

Shall not betray ne fail their faithful hearts.
If once the death of Porrex end the strife,
And pay the price of his usurped Reign,
Your Mother shall persuade the angry king.

120
The Lords your friends eke shall appeal his rage

For they be wise, and well they can foresee,
That ere long time your aged father’s death
Will bring a time when you shall well requite
Their friendly favour, or their hateful spite,

125
Yea, or their slackness to advance your cause

Wise men do not so hang on passing state
Of present Princes, chiefly in their age.
But they will further cast their reaching eye
To view and weigh the times and reigns to come

130
Ne is it likely though the king be wroth

That he yet will, or that the Realm will bear
Extreme revenge upon his only son:
Or if he would, what one is he that dare
Be minister to such an enterprise.

135
And here you be now placed in your own

Amid your friends, your vassals[102] and your strength
We shall defend and keep your person safe
Till either counsel turn his tender mind
Or age, or sorrow end his weary days

140
But if the fear of Gods and secret grudge

Of Nature’s Law, repining at the fact,
Withhold your courage from so great attempt:
Know ye that lust of kingdoms hath no Law
The Gods do bear and well allow in kings

145
The things they abhor in rascal routs,[103]

When kings on slender quarrels run to wars
And then in cruel and unkindly wise,
Command thefts, rapes, murder of Innocents
To spoil of towns, and reigns of mighty realms
150
Think you such Princes do suppress themselves

Subject to Laws of kind and fear of Gods,
Yet none offence, but decked with glorious name
Of noble Conquests in the hands of kings,
Murders and violent thefts in private men
155
Are heinous crimes and full of foul reproach:

But if you like not yet so hot devise,
Ne list to take such vantage of the time.
But though with great peril of your state
You will not be the first that shall invade,
160
Assemble yet your force for your defense,
And for your safety stand upon your guard.

Dordan
O heaven was there ever heard or known,
So wicked council to a noble prince?
Let me (my Lord) disclose unto your grace
165
This heinous tale, what mischief it contains:

Your father’s death, your brothers and your own
Your present murder and eternal shame:
Hear me (O king) and suffer not to sink
So high a treason in your Princely breast.

Ferrex
170
The mighty Gods forbid that ever I

Should once conceive such mischief in my heart
Although my Brother has bereft[104] my Realm
And bear perhaps to me an hateful mind
Shall I revenge it, with his death therefore?
175
Or shall I so destroy my father’s life

That gave me life? The Gods forbid I say,
   Cease you to speak so anymore to me
   Ne you my friend with Answer once repeat
   So foul a tale, in silence let it die:

What Lord or Subject shall have hope at all

That under me they safely shall enjoy
   Their goods, their honours, lands and liberties,
   With whom, neither one only brother bears
   Ne father dearer, could enjoy their lives?

But sith, I fear my younger brother’s rage,

   And sith perhaps some other man may give
   Some like advice, to move his grudging head
   At mine estate, which council may perchance
   Take greater force with him, than this with me,

I will in secret so prepare myself,

   As if his malice of his lust to reign
   Break forth with arms or sudden violence
   I may withstand his rage and keep mine own.

Dordan

   I fear the fatal time now draweth on

When civil hate shall end the noble line

   Of famous Brute and of his Royal seed
   Great Jove defend the mischief’s now at hand
   O that the Secretary’s wise advice
   Had erst been heard when he besought the king

Not to divide his land, nor send his sons

   To further parts from presence of his Court
   Ne yet to yield to them his governance
   Lo such are they now in the Royal throne
   As was rash Phaeton in Phoebus’ Car

Ne then the fiery steeds did draw the flame
Gorboduc

With wilder random thought the kindled skies
Then traitorous counsel now will whirl about
The youthful heads of these unskillful kings,
But I hereof their father will inform

210
The reverence of him perhaps shall stay

The growing mischiefs, while they yet are green[107]
If this help not, then woe unto themselves,
The Prince, the people, the divided land.

Actus secundus. Scena secunda.[108]

Porrex, Tyndar, Philander.

Porrex

1
And is it thus? And doth he so prepare

Against his Brother as his mortal foe?
And now while yet his aged father lives:
Neither regards he him, nor fears he me?

5
War would he have? And he shall have it so.

Tyndar

I saw myself the great prepared store
Of Horse, of Armour and of weapons there,
To bring I to my Lord reported tales
Without the ground of seen and searched truth

10
Lo secret quarrels run about his Court

To bring the name of you my Lord in hate
Each man almost can now debate the cause
And ask a reason of so great a wrong,
Why he so noble and so wise a Prince,

15
Is as unworthy refit[109] his Heritage.

And why the king misled by crafty means
Divided thus his land from course of right.
The wiser sort hold down their grieffull heads
Each man withdraws from talk and company,
Of those that have been known to favour you,

To hide the mischief of their meaning there,
Rumours are spread of your preparing here.
The Rascal numbers of the unskillful sorts
Are filled with monstrous tales of you and yours

In secret I was counseled by my friends

To haste me thence, and brought you as you know
Letters from those, that both can truly tell
And would not write unless they knew it well.

Philander

My Lord, yet ere you move unkindly war,

Send to your Brother to demand the cause.

Perhaps some traitorous tales have filled his ears
With false reports against your noble grace:
Which once disclosed shall end the growing strife
That else not stayed with wise foresight in time

Shall hazard both your kingdoms and your lives:

Send to your father eke, he shall appease
Your kindled minds, and rid you of this fear.

Porrex

Rid me of fear? I fear him not at all:
Ne will to him, ne to my father send

If danger were for one to tarry there

Think ye if safety to return again.
In mischiefs such as Ferrex now intends
The wonted courteous laws to messengers
Are not observed, which in just war they use.

Shall I so hazard any one of mine?

Shall I betray my trusty friend to him?
That hath disclosed his treason unto me?
Let him entreat that fears, I fear him not:
Or shall I to the king my father send?
Yea and send now while such a mother lives
That loves my Brother and that hateth me?
Shall I give leisure by my fond delays
To Ferrex to oppress me all unaware?
I will not, but I will invade his Realm
And seek the Traitor Prince within his Court
Mischief for mischief is a due reward.
His wretched head shall pay the worthy price
Of this his Treason and his hate to me
Shall I abide, entreat and send and pray?
And hold my yielde[n] throat to Traitor’s knife?
While I with valiant mind and conquering force
Might rid my self of foes and win a Realm,
Yet rather when I have the wretch’s head,
Than to the king my father will I send,
The bootless[111] case may yet appeal his wrath:
If not I will defend me as I may.

Philander
Lo here to the end of these two youthful kings
The father’s death, the reign of their two realms
Do most unhappy state of Counselors
That light on so unhappy Lords and times
That neither can their good advice be heard,
Yet must they bear the blames of ill success
But I will to the king their father haste
Ere this mischief come to that likely end,
That if the mindful wrath of wreakful Gods
Since mighty Ilion’s[112] fall not yet appeased
With these poor remnants of the Trojan[113] name
Have not determinedly unmoved fate
Out of this realm to raze the British Line
By good advice, by awe of father’s name
By force of wiser Lords, this kindled hate
May yet be quenched, ere it consume us all.

Chorus
When youth not bridled with a guiding stay
Is left to rando[114] of their own delight
And welds whole Realms, by force Sovereign sway
Great is the danger of unmastered might
Lest skills rage throw down with headlong fall
Their lands, their states, their lives, themselves and all.
When growing pride doth fill the swelling breast
And greedy lust doth raise the climbing mind
Oh hardly may the peril be repressed
Ne fear of angry Gods, ne Laws kind,
Ne country care can fired hearts restrain
When force hath armed Envy and disdain.
When kings of foreset[115] wills neglect the rede,[116]
Of best advise, and yield to pleasing tales
That do their fancies noisome[117] humour feed
Ne reason, nor regard of right avails
Succeeding heaps of plagues shall teach too late
To learn the mischiefs of misguiding state.
Foul fall the Traitor false that undermines
The love of Brethren to destroy them both
Woe to the Prince, that pliant care inclines,
And yields his mind to poisonous tale, and floweth
From flattering mouth, and woe to wretched land
That wastes it self with civil sword in hand.
Lo, thus it is poison in gold to take,
And wholesome drink in homely cup forsake.

The Order and signification of
the dumb show before the third Act.

First the Music of Flutes began to play during which came in upon the stage a company of Mourners all clad in black betokening Death and sorrow to ensue upon the ill-advised misgovernment and dissension of brethren, as befell upon the murder of Ferrex by his younger Brother. After the Mourners had passed thrice about the stage, they departed, and then the Music ceased.

Actus tertius. Scena prima.[118]

Gorboduc, Eubulus, Arostus, Philander, Nuntius.

Gorboduc
1  O Cruel fates, O mindful wrath of Gods
Whose vengeance neither Simois' strained streams
Flowing with blood of Trojan Princes slain
Nor Phrygian fields made rank with Corpses dead
Of Asian kings and Lords can yet appease,
Ne Slaughter of unhappy Priam's race
Nor Ilion's fall made level with the soil,
Can yet suffice: but still continued rage,
Pursue our lives, and from the farthest Seas
Doth chase the issues of destroyed Troy:
Oh no man happy, till his end be seen
If any flowing wealth and seeming joy
In present years might make a happy wight,
Happy was Hecuba the woefullest wretch
That ever lived to make a Mirror of
And happy Priam with his noble sons
And happy I till now, alas I see
And feel my most unhappy wretchedness:
Behold my lords, read you this letter here
Lo! It contains the ruin of our Realm
If timely speed provide not half the help
Yet (O ye Gods) if ever woeful king
Might move you kings of kings, wreak it on me
And on my sons, not on this guiltless Realm.
Send down your wasting flames from wrathful skies
To reave me and my sons the hateful breath
Read, read my Lords: this is the matter why
I called you now to have your good advice.

The Letter from Dordan the Counselor of the elder Prince

Eubulus reads the Letter
My sovereign Lord, what I am loath to write
But loathe I am see, that I am forced
By letters now to make you understand
My lord Ferrex, your eldest son, mislead
By traitorous fraud of young untempered wits
Assembleth forces against your younger son,
Ne can my Counsel yet withdraw the heat
And furious pangs of his enflamed head:
Disdain (sayeth he) of his inheritance
Arms him to wreak the great pretended wrong
With civil sword upon his brother's life,
If present help does not restrain this rage
This flame will waste your sons, your land, and you

Your Majesties faithful and most
humble subject Dordan

Arostus
45 O King, appeal your grief and stay your plaint
Great is the matter and a woeful case
But timely knowledge may bring timely help
Send for them both unto your presence here
The reverence of your honour age and state
50 Your grave advice, the awe of father’s name
Shall quickly knit again this broken peace
And if in either of my Lords your sons
Be such untamed and unyielding pride
As will not bend unto your noble Hests[123]
55 If Ferrex the elder son can bear no peace,
Or Porrex not content, aspires to more
Than you him gave, above his Native right:
Join with the juster side, so shall you force
Them to agree: and hold the Land in stay

Eubulus
60 What meaneth this: Lo yonder comes is haste
Philander from my Lord your younger son.

Gorboduc
The Gods send joyful news.

Philander
The mighty Jove
Preserve your Majesty, O noble king.

Gorboduc
Philander, welcome: But how doth my son?

Philander
65 Your son, sir, lives and healthy I him left:
But yet (O King) this want of lustful health
Could not be half so grievful to your Grace,
As these most wretched tidings that I bring.
O heavens yet more no end of woes to me.

Philander
70 Tyndar, O King, came lately from the Court
Of Ferrex, to my Lord your younger son,
And made report of great prepared store
Of war, and says that it is wholly meant
Against Porrex for high disdain that he
75 Lives now a king and equal in degree
With him, that claims to succeed the whole
As by due title of descending right
Porrex is now so set on flaming fire,
Partly with kindled rage of cruel wrath,
80 Partly with hope to gain a Realm thereby,
That he in haste prepares to invade
His Brother’s Land, and with unkind war
Threatens the murder of your elder son
Ne could I him persuade that first he should
85 Send to his Brother to demand the cause
Nor yet to you to stay his hateful strife
Wherefore sith there no more I can be heard
I come my self now to inform your Grace
And to beseech you, as you love the life
90 And safety of your Children and your Realm,
Now to employ your wisdom and your force
To stay this mischief ere it be too late.

Gorboduc

Are they in Arms? would he not send for me?
Is this the honour of a Father’s name?
95 In vain we travail to assuage[124] their minds
As if their hearts whom neither Brother’s love
Nor Father’s awe, nor kingdom’s care can move
Our Councils could withdraw from raging heat
Jove slay them both, and end the cursed Line
100 For though perhaps fear of such mighty force
As I my Lords, joined with your noble Aides
May yet raise, shall repent their present heat
The secret grudge and malice will remain
The fire not quenched, but kept in close restraint
105 Fed still within, breaks forth with double flame
Their death and mine must pease[125] the angry gods.

Philander
Yield not, O king, so much to weak despair
Your sons yet live, and long I trust, they shall:
If fates had taken you from earthly life

110 Before beginning of this civil strife
Perhaps your sons in their unmastered youth
Loose from regard of any living wight
Would run on headlong, with unbridled Race
To their own death and ruin of this Realm

115 But sith the Gods that have the care for kings,
Of things and times dispose the order so
That in your life this kindled flame breaks forth
While yet your life, your wisdom and your power
May stay the growing mischief and repress

120 The fiery blaze of their enkindled heat
It seems, and so ye ought to deem thereof
That loving Jove has tempered so the time
Of this debate to happen in your days
That you yet living may the same appease

125 And add it to the glory of your latter age
And they your sons may learn to live in peace
Beware (O king) the greatest harm of all
Lest by your wailful plaints your hastened death
Yield larger room unto their growing rage:

130 Preserve your life, the only hope of state:
And if your highness herein list[126] to use
Wisdom or force, Council or knightly aid:
Lo we our persons, powers and lives are yours
Use us till death, O King, we are your own.

Eubulus

135 Lo here the peril that was erst foreseen
When you, (O king) did first divide your land
And yield your present reign unto your sons,
But now (O noble Prince) now is no time
To wail and plain, and waste your woeful life,

140 Now is the time for present good advice
Sorrow doth dark the Judgement of the wit
The Heart unbroken and the courage free
From feeble faintness of bootless despair
Doth either rise to safety or renown

145 By noble valour of an unvanquished mind
Or yet doth perish in more happy sort
Your grace may send to either of your sons
Someone both wise and noble personage
Which with good counsel and with weighty name
Of father shall present before their eyes
Your hest, your life, your safety, and their own
The present mischief of their deadly strife
And in the while, assemble you the force
Which your Commandment and the speedy haste
Of all my Lords here present can prepare:
The terror of your mighty power shall stay
The rage of both, or yet of one least.

Nuntius
O King the greatest grief that ever Prince did hear
That ever woeful Messenger did tell,
That ever wretched land hath seen before
I bring to you. Porrex your younger son
With sudden force, invaded hath the land
That you to Ferrex did allot to rule:
And with his own most bloody hand he hath
His brother slain, and doth possess his Realm.

Gorhoduc
O Heavens send down the flames of your revenge,
Destroy I say with flash of wreakful fire
The Traitor son, and then the wretched sire
But let us go, that yet perhaps I may
Die with revenge, and pease the hateful gods

Chorus
The lust of the kingdoms knows no sacred faith
No rule of Reason, no regard of right
No kindly love, no fear of heaven’s wrath:
But with contempt of Gods, and man’s despite
Through bloody slaughter doth prepare the ways
To fatal Scepter and accursed reign
The son so loathes the father’s lingering days
Ne dreads his hand in Brother’s blood to stain
O wretched Prince, ne dost thou yet record
The yet fresh Murders done within the Lands
Of thy forefathers, when the cruel sword
Bereft Morgan his life with cousin’s hands?
Thus fatal plagues pursue the guilty race
Whose murderous hand imbrued with guiltless blood.
Asks vengeance before the heaven’s face,
With endless mischiefs on the cursed brood
The wicked child this brings to woeful Sire
The mournful plight to waft his weary life:
Thus do the cruel flames of Civil fire
Destroys the parted reign with hateful strife
And hence doth spring the well from which doth flow:
The dead black streams of mournings, plaints and woe.

The Order and signification of
the dumb show before the fourth Act.

First the Music of Hautboys began to play during which there came forth from under the Stage, as though out of Hell three furies Alecto, Megera and Cisiphone and in black garments sprinkled with blood and flames. Their bodies girt with snakes, their heads spread with Serpents instead of hair, the one bearing in her hand a Snake, the other a whip, & the third a burning Firebrand: each driving before them a king and a Queen, which moved by Furies unnaturally had slain their own Children. The names of kings & Queens were these. Tantalus, Medea Athamas, Ino, Cambises, Althea. After that the Furies and these had passed about the Stage thrice, they departed and then the Music ceased: hereby was signified the unnatural murders to follow, that is to say. Porrex slain by his own Mother. And king Gorboduc and Queen Viden, killed by their own Subjects.

Actus quartus. Scena prima.

Viden sola.

Viden
1  Why should I live and linger forth my time
   In longer life to double my distress?
   O me most woeful wight whom no mishap
   Long ere this day could have bereaved hence.
5  Mought not these hands by fortune or by fate,
   Have pierced this breast and life with iron reft
   Or in this Palace here where I so long
   Have spent my days, could not that happy hour
   Once, once have hapt in which these hugy framed
10  With death by fall might have oppressed me
   Or should not this most hard and cruel soil
   So oft where I have pressed my wretched steps
   Sometime had ruth of mine accursed life
   To rend in twain and swallow me therein
15  So had my bones possessed now in peace
   Their happy grave within the closed ground
And greedy worms had gnawed this pined[139] heart
Without my feeling pain. So should not now
This living breast remain the ruthless tomb

20 Wherein my heart yielded to death is graved:
Nor dreary thoughts with pangs of pining grief
My doleful mind had not afflicted thus,
O my beloved son: O my sweet child,
My dear Ferrex, my joy, my life’s delight.

25 Is my well beloved son, is my sweet child,
My dear Ferrex, my joy, my life’s delight
 Murdered with cruel death? O hateful wretch,
O heinous Traitor both to heaven and earth,
Thou Porrex, thou this damned deed hast wrought

30 Thou Porrex, thou shall dearly aby[e140] the same
Traitor to kin and kind, to Sire and me,
To thine own flesh, and Traitor to thyself
The Gods on thee in hell shall wreak their wrath
And here in earth this hand shall take revenge

35 On thee Porrex, thou false and caitiff[e141] wight
If after blood, so eager were thy thirst
And murderous mind had so possessed thee,
If such hard heart of Rock and stony Flint
Lived in thy breast, that nothing else could like

40 Thy cruel tyrant’s thought but death and blood
Wild savage beasts mought not (your) slaughter serve
To feed thy greedy will, and in the midst
Of their entrails to stain thy deadly hands
With blood deserved, and drink thereof thy fill?

45 Or if nought else but death and blood of man
Mought please thy lust, could none in Britain land
Whose heart he torn out of his loving breast
With thine own hand, or work what death thou wouldest
Suffice to make a Sacrifice pease

50 That deadly mind and murderous thought in thee?
But he who in the self-same womb was wrapped
Where thou in dismal hour received life?
Or if needs, needs this hand must slaughter make
Moughtest thou not have reached a mortal wound

55 And with thy sword have pierced this cursed womb?
That thee accursed Porrex brought to light
And given me a just reward therefore.
So Ferrex, yet sweet life might have enjoyed
And to his aged father comfort brought,

60 With some young son in whom they both might live
But whereunto waste I this ruthless speech
To thee that hast thy brother’s blood thus shed
Shall I still think that from this womb thou sprung
That I thee bear or take thee for my son

65  No traitor, no; I thee refuse for mine,
Murderer I thee renounce, thou are not mine:
Never, O wretch, this womb conceived thee,
Nor never bode I painful throes for thee:
Changeling to me thou art, and not my child

70  Nor to no wight, that spark of pity knew,
Ruthless, unkind, Monster of Nature’s work.
Thou never sucked the milk of woman’s breast
But from thy birth the cruel Tiger’s teats
Have nursed, nor yet of flesh and blood

75  Formed is thy heart, but of hard Iron wrought[142].
And wild and desert woods bred thee to life:
But canst thou hope to scrape my just revenge?
Or that these hands will not be wroke[143] on thee
Doest thou not know that Ferrex’s mother lives

80  That loved him more dearly then herself?
And doth she live, and is not venged on thee?

Actus quartus. Scena secunda.[144]

Gorboduc, Arostus, Eubulus, Porrex, Marcella.

1  We marvel much whereto this lingering stay
Falls out so long: Porrex unto our Court
By order of our Letters is returned
And Eubulus received from us behest[145]

5  At his arrival here to give him charge
Before our presence straight to make repair
And yet we have no word whereof he stays.

Arostus
Lo where he comes and Eubulus with him.

Eubulus
According to your highness’ hest to me

10  Here have I Porrex brought even in such sort
As from his wearied Horse he did alight,
For that your Grace did will such haste therein.
Gorboduc

We like and praise this speedy will in you
To work the thing that to your charge we gave

15 Porrex, if we so far should swerve from kind,
And from those bounds which law of Nature sets
As thou hast done by vile and wretched deed
In cruel murder of thy Brother’s life,
Our present hand could stay no longer time,

20 But straight should bathe this blade in blood of thee
As just revenge of thy detested crime.
No we should not offend the law of kind,
If now this sword of ours did slay thee here:
For thou hast murdered him whose heinous death

25 Even Nature’s force doth move us to revenge
By blood again: But Justice forceth us
To measure Death for Death, thy due desert,
Yet sithens thou art our childe, and sith as yet
In this hard case what word thou canst allege

30 For thy defense, by us hath not been heard
We are content to say our will for that
Which justice bids us presently to work:
And give thee leave to use thy speech at full
If ought thou have to lay for thine excuse.

Porrex

35 Neither O king, I can or will deny
But that this hand from Ferrex life hath reft:
Which fact how much my doleful heart doth wail
Oh would it might as full appear to sight
As inward grief doth pour it forth to me,

40 So yet perhaps if ever ruthful heart
Melting in tears within a manly breast
Through deep repentance of his bloody fact
If ever grief, if ever woeful man
Might move regret with sorrow of his fault,

45 I think the torment of my mournful case
Known to your grace, as I do feel the same,
Would force even wrath her self to pity me.
But as the water troubled with the mud
Shows not the face which else the eye should see,

50 Even so your Ireful mind with stirred thought,
Can not so perfectly discern my cause.
But this unhap, amongst so many heaps
I must content me with, most wretched man,
That to myself I must reserve my woe

That to myself I must reserve my woe
In pining thoughts of mine accursed fact
Since I may not show here my smallest grief
Such as it is, and as my breast endures,
Which I esteem the great misery
Of all mishaps that Fortune now can send,

Not that I rest in hope with plains and tears
Should purchase life: for the Gods I clepe
For true record of this faithful speech,
Never this heart shall have the thoughtful dread
To die the death that by your Grace’s doom

By just desert, shall be pronounced to me:
Nor never shall this tongue once spend this speech
Pardon to crave, or seek by suit to live:
I mean not this as though I were not touched
With care of dreadful death, or that I held

Life in contempt: but that I know, the mind
Stoops to no dread, although the flesh be frail,
And for my guilt, I yield the same so great
As in myself I find a fear so sue
For grant of life.

Gorboduc

In vain, O wretch thou showest
A woeful heart, Ferrex now lies in grave,
Slain by thy hand.

Yet this, O Father, hear:
And then I end: your Majesty well knows,
That when my Brother Ferrex and myself
By your own hest were joined in governance

Of this your Grace’s Realm of Britain Land
I never sought nor travailed for the same,
Nor by my self, nor by no friend I wrought.
But from your highness’ will alone it sprung,
Of your most gracious goodness bent to me,

But how my Brother’s heart even than repined
With swollen disdain against mine equal rule
Seeing that realm, which by descent should grow
Wholly to him, allotted half to me;
Even in your highness’ Court he now remains,

And with my Brother then in nearest place
Who can record, what proof thereof was showed
And how my brother’s envious heart appeared
Yet I that judged it my part to seek
His favor and good will, and loath to make
95 Your highness know, the thing which should have brought
Grief to your grace, and your offence to him
Hoping my earnest suit should soon have won
A loving heart within a Brother’s breast
Wrought in that sort that for a pledge of love
And faithful heart, he gave to me his hand.
This made me think, that he had banished quite
All rancour from his thought and bear to me
Such hearty love, as I did owe to him:
But after once we left your Grace’s Court
And from your highness’ presence lived apart
This equal rule still, still did grudge him so
That now those Envious sparks which erst lay raked
In living cinders of dissembling breast,
Kindled so far within his heart’s distain
100 That longer could he not refrain from proof
Of secret practice to deprive me life
By Poison’s force, and had bereft me so.
If mine own servant hired to this fact
And moved by truth with hate to work the same,
105 In time had not betrayed it unto me:
When thus I saw the knot of love unknit
All honest League and faithful promise broke
The Law of kind and truth thus rent[153] in twain
His heart on mischief set, and in his breast
110 Black treason hid then, then did I despair
That ever time could win him friend to me
Then saw I how he smiled with slaying knife
Wrapped under cloak, then saw I deep deceit
Lurk in his face and death prepared for me:
115 In time had not betrayed it unto me:
120 Even nature moved me then to hold my life
More dear to me than his, and bade this hand
Since by his life my death must needs ensue,
And by his death my life to be preserved:
To shed his blood, and seek my safety so,
125 And wisdom willed me without protract[154]
In speedy wise to put the same in ure.
Thus have I told the cause that moved me
To work my Brother’s death and so I yield
My life, my death to judgment of your grace.
Gorboduc
130 Oh cruel wight, should any cause prevail
To make thee stain they hands with brother’s blood
But what of thee we will resolve to do
Shall yet remain unknown: Thou in the mean
Shalt from our royal presence banished be

140 Until our Princely pleasure further shall
To thee be showed, depart therefore our sight
Accursed[155] child. What cruel destiny
What forward fate hath sorted us this chance
That even in those, where we should comfort find

145 Where our delight now in our aged days
Should rest and be, even there our only grief
And deepest sorrows to abridge our life,
Most pining cares and deadly thoughts do grow?

Arostus
Your Grace should now in these grave years of yours
150 Have found ere this the price of mortal Joys,
How short they be, how fading here in earth
How full of change, how Brittle our estate,
Of nothing sure, save only of the Death,
To whom both man and all the world doth owe

155 Their end at last, neither shall nature’s power
In other sort against your heart prevail,
Than as the naked hand whose stroke assays
The Armed breast where force doth light in vain.

Gorboduc
Many can yield right grave and sage advice
160 Of patient spirit to others wrapped in woe,
And can in speech both rule and conquer kind,
Who if by proof, they might feel nature’s force,
Would show themselves men as they are indeed,
Which now will needs be gods: but what doth mean

165 The sorry cheer of her that here doth come?

Marcella
Oh where is ruth? Or where is pity now?
Whether is gentle heart and mercy fled?
Are they exiled out of our stony breasts
Never to make return? Is all the world
170 Drowned in blood and sunk in cruelty?
If not in women mercy may be found
If not (alas) within the mother’s breast
To her own child, to her own flesh and blood
If ruth be banished thence, if pity there

175 May have no place, if there no gentle heart
Do live and dwell where should we seek it then?

Gorboduc

Madame (alas) what means your woeful tale?

Marcella

O silly women I, why to this hour,
Have kind and fortune thus deferred my breath

180 That I should live to see this doleful[156] day
Will every wight believe that such hard heart
Could rest within the cruel mother’s breast,
With her own hand to slay her only son
But out (alas) these eyes beheld the same,
They saw the dreary sight, and are become
Most ruthless records of the bloody fact.
Porrex, (alas) is by his mother slain,
And with her hand a woeful thing to tell,
While slumbering on his careful bed he rests

190 His heart stabbed in with knife is bereft of life.

Gorboduc

O Eubulus, oh draw this sword of ours,
And pierce this heart with speed. O hateful light,
O loathsome life, O sweet and welcome Death,
Dear Eubulus work this we thee beseech.

Eubulus

195 Patience your Grace, perhaps he liveth yet.
With wound received, but not of certain death.

Gorboduc

O let us then repair, unto the place,
And see if Porrex, live or thus be slain.

Marcella

Alas he liveth not, it is too true,

200 That with these eyes of him a peerless[157] Prince,
Son to a king, and in the flower of youth;
Even with a twink[158] a senseless stock[159] I saw.

Arostus

O damned deed.

Marcella

But here this ruthful end.
The noble Prince pierced with the sudden wound
205 Out of his wretched slumber hastily start
   Whose strength now failing straight he overthrew
   When in the fall his eyes even new unclosed
   Beheld the Queen and cried to her for help
   We then, alas, the Ladies which that time
210 Did there attend, seeing that heinous deed
   And hearing him oft call the wretched name
   Of mother, and to cry to her for Aid
   Whose direful hand gave him the mortal wound
   Pitting, (alas, for naught else could we do)
215 His ruthless end, ran to the woeful bed
   Dispoiled straight his breast, and all we might
   Wiped in vain with napkins next at hand,
   The sudden streams of blood that flushed fast
   Out of the gaping wound: O what a look,
220 O what a ruthless steadfast eye me thought
   He fixed upon my face, which to my death
   Will never part from me, when with a braid
   A deep felt sigh he gave and therewithal
   Clasping his hands, to heaven he cast his sight.
225 And straight pale death pressing within his face
   The flying ghost his mortal corpse forsook.
Arostus
   Never did age bring so vile a fate.
Marcella
   O, hard and cruel hap, that thus assigned
   Unto so worthy a wight so wretched end
230 But most hard cruel heart, that could consent
   To lend the hateful destinies that hand
   By which, alas, so heinous crime was wrought,
   O Queen of Adamant, O marble breast
   If not the favor of his comely face,
235 If not his Princely cheer and countenance,
   His valiant Active Arms, his manly breast.
   If not his fair and seemly personage
   His noble Limbs in such proportion cast
   As would have rapt a silly woman’s thought
240 If this might not have moved the bloody heart
   And that most cruel hand the wretched weapon
   Even to let fall, and kissed him in the face.
   With tears for ruth to reave such one by death
   Should nature yet consent to slay her son
245 O mother, thou to murder thus thy child
Even Jove with Justice must with lightening flames
From heaven send down some strange revenge on thee.
Ah noble Prince, how oft have I beheld
Thee mounted on thy fierce and trampling steed

250 Shining in Armor bright before the tilt[165]
And with thy Mistress Sleeve tied on thy Healm
And change thy staff to please thy Lady’s eye
That bowed the head piece of thy friendly foe,
How oft in Arms on horse to bend the mace
How oft in Arms on foot to break the sword,
Which never now these eyes may see again.

Arostus
Madame, alas, in vain these plaints are shed,
Rather with me depart and help to assuage,
The thoughtful griefs that in the aged king

260 Must needs by nature grow by death of this
His only son, whom he did hold so dear.

Marcella
What wight is that which saw that I did see
And could refrain to wail with plaint and tears
Not I, alas, that heart is not in me,

265 But let us go, for I am grieved anew,
To call to mind the wretched father’s woe.

Chorus
When greedy lust in Royal seat to reign
Hath reft all care of gods and eke of men,
And cruel heart, wrath, Treason and disdain

270 Within the ambitious breast are lodged then
Behold how mischief wide herself displays
And with the brother’s hand the brother slays.
When blood thus shed, doth stain this heaven’s face
Crying to Jove for vengeance of the deed.

275 The mighty God even moveth from his place
With wrath to wreak, then sends he forth with speed
The dreadful furies, daughters of the night
With Serpents girt[166], carrying the whip of Ire[167],
With hair of stinging snakes and shinning bright

280 With flames and blood, and with a brand of fire:
These for revenge of wretched Murder done
Do make the Mother kill her only son
Blood asketh blood[168], and death must death require
Jove by his just and everlasting doom
285 Justly hath ever so required it
These times before record, and times to come,
Shall find it true, and so doth present proof,
Present before our eyes for our behoof.
O happy wight that suffers not the snare
290 Of murderous mind to tangle him in blood:
And happy he that can in time beware
By others harms and turn it to his good
But woe to him that fearing not to offend
Doth serve his lust, and will not see the end.

The Order and signification of
the dumb show before the fifth Act.

First the Drums and Flutes, began to sound, during which there came forth upon the Stage a company
of Harquebusiers[169] and of Armed men all in order of Battle. These after their Pieces discharged,
and that the Armed men had three times marched about the Stage, departed, and then the Drums and
Flutes did cease. Hereby was signified tumults[170], rebellions, Arms, and civil wars to follow, as fell
in the Realm of great Britain, which by the space of fifty years and more continued in civil war
between the Nobility after the Death of king Gorboduc, and of his Issues, for want of certain limitation
in the Succession of the Crown, till the time of Dunwallo Molmutius[171], who reduced[172] the Land
to Monarchy.

Actus quintus. Scena prima.[173]

Clotyn, Mandud, Gwenard, Fergus, Eubulus.

Clotyn

1 Did ever age bring forth such Tyrant’s hearts?
The Brother hath bereft the Brother’s life;
The mother she hath died her cruel hands
In blood of her own son, and now at last
5 The people lo forgetting trouble and love,
    Contemning quite both Law and loyal heart
    Even they have slain their sovereign Lord and Queen.

Mandud

Shall this their traitorous crime be unpunished rest?
Even yet they cease not, carried out with rage,
10 In their rebellious routes, to threaten still
    A new bloodshed unto the prince’s kin
    To slain them all, and to uproot the race
    Both the king and Queen, so are they moved
With Porrex’s death, wherein they falsely charge
The guiltless king without desert at all
And traitorously have murdered him therefore,
And eke the Queen.

Gwenard

Shall Subjects dare with force
To invoke revenge upon their Prince’s fact?
Admit the worst that may; as sure in this
The deed was foul, the Queen to slay her son
Shall yet the Subject seek to take the sword
Arise against his Lord, and slay his king?
O wretched state, where those rebellious hearts
Are not rent out even from their lying breasts
And with the body thrown onto the fowls
As Carrion[174] food, for terror of the rest.

Fergus.

There can no punishment be thought too great
For this so grievous crime: let speed therefore
Be used therein for it behooveth[175] so.

Eubulus.

Ye all my Lords I see consent in one
And I as one consent with ye in all:
I hold it more than need with the sharpest Law
To punish the tumultuous bloody rage.
For nothing more may shake the common sate
Than sufferance of Uproars without redress
Whereby how soon kingdoms of mighty power,
After great Conquests made, and flourishing
In fame and wealth have been to ruin brought
I pray to Jove, that we may rather wail
Such hap in them than witness in ourselves
Eke fully with the Duke my mind agrees
That no cause serves, whereby the Subject may,
Call to account the doings of his Prince,
Much less in blood by sword to work revenge
No more then may the hand cut off the head,
In act nor speech, no: not in secret thought
The Subject may rebel against his Lord
Or Judge of him that sits in Ceasar’s Seat.
With grudging mind be damn those he mislikes.

Though kings forget to govern as they ought,
Yet Subjects must obey as they are bound:
But now my Lords before ye farther[176] wade
Or spend your speech, what sharp revenge shall fall
By justice plague on these rebellious weights

Methinks ye rather should first search the ways
By which in time the rage of this uproar
Might be repressed, and these great tumults ceased
Even yet the life of Britain Land doth hang,
In Traitors Balance of unequal weight.

Think not my Lords the death of Gorbuduc
Nor yet Videna's blood will cease their rage:
Even our own lives, our wives and children,
Our Country dearest of all in danger stands,
Now to be spoiled, now, now made desolate

And by ourselves a conquest to ensue:
Forgive once sway unto the peoples' lusts,
To rush forth on, and stay them not in time,
And as the Stream that rolleth down the hill,
So will the headlong run with raging thoughts.

From blood to blood, from mischief unto moe,
To ruin of the Realm, themselves and all
So giddy are the common people's minds,
So glad of change, more wavering than the Sea.
Ye see (my Lords) what Strength these Rebels have,

What huge number is assembled still,
For though the traitorous fact, for which their rose
Be wrought and done, yet lodge they Still in fields
So that how far their furies yet will stretch
Great cause we have to dread, that we may seek

By present Battle to repress their power.
Speed must we use to levy force therefore
For either they forthwith will mischief work
Or their rebellious roars forthwith will cease:
These violent things may have no lasting long

Let us therefore use this for present help
Persuade by gentle speech, and offer grace
With gift of pardon save unto the chief,
And that upon condition that forthwith
They yield the Captains of their enterprise

To bear such guerdon[177] of their traitorous fact
As may be both due vengeance to themselves,
And wholesome terror to posterity.
This shall I think: scatter the greatest part
That now are holden[178] with desire of home,

Wearied in field with cold of Winter's nights,
And some (no doubt) stricken with dread of Law
When this is once proclaimed, it shall make
The Captains to mistrust the multitude
Whose safety bids them to betray their heads

And so much more because the rascal routes.
In things of great and perilous[179] attempts,
Are never trusty to the noble race.
And while we treat and stand on terms of grace,
We that both stay their furies rage the while,

And eke gain time, whose only help sufficeth
Without war to vanquish Rebel's power
In the meanwhile, make you in readiness
Such band of Horsemen as ye may prepare:
Horsemen (you know) are not the Common's strength

But are the force and store of noble men
Whereby the unchosen and unarmed sort
Of skillless Rebels, whom none other power
But number makes to be of dreadful force
With sudden brunt may quickly be oppressed

And if this gentle means of proffered grace
With stubborn hearts cannot so far avail
As to assuage their desperate courages.
Than do I wish such slaughter to be made.
As present age and eke posterity

May be adrad[180] with horror of revenge
That justly than shall on these rebels fall
This is my Lords the sum of mine advice.

Neither this case admits debate at large,
And though it did: this speech that hath been said

Hath well abridged the tale I would have told:
Fully with Eubulus do I consent
In all that he hath said: and if the same
To you my Lord, may seem for best advice,
I wish that it should straight be put in ure.

My Lords than let us presently depart
And follow this that liketh us so well.

If ever time to gain a kingdom here
Were offered man, now it is offered me:
The realm is reft both of their king & Queen

The offspring of the Prince is slain and dead
No issue now remains, the Heir unknown,
The people are in Arms and mutinies
The Nobles they are busied how to cease
These great rebellious tumults and uproars

140 And Britain Land now deserted left alone
Amid these broils uncertain where to rest
Offers herself unto that noble heart
That will or dare pursue to bear her Crown:
Shall I that am the Duke of Albany
Descended from that Line of noble blood,
Which hath so long flourished in worthy fame
Of valiant hearts, such as in noble Breasts
Of right should rest above the baser sort,
Refuse to adventure life to win a Crown

150 Whom Shall I find enemies that will withstand
My fact herein, if I attempt by Arms
To seek the Same now in these times of broil
These Dukes poor power can hardly well appease
The people that already are in Arms.

155 But if perhaps my force be once in field
Is not my strength in power above the best
Of all these Lords now left in Britain Land?
And though they should match me with power of men
Yet doubtful is the chance of Battles joined

160 If Victors of the field we may depart,
Ours is the Scepter than of great Britain,
If slain amid the plain this body be
Mine enemies yet shall not deny me this,
But that I died giving the noble charge
To hazard life for conquest of a Crown.

165 To hazard life for conquest of a Crown.
Forthwith therefore will I in post depart
To Albany and raise in Armour there
All power I can: and here my secret friends,
By secret practice shall solicit[181] still,

170 To seek to win to me the peoples hearts.

Actus quintus. Scena secunda.[182]

Eubulus, Clotyn, Mandud, Gwenard, Arostus, Nuntius.

Eubulus

1 O Jove, How are these peoples hearts abused
What blind fury, thus headlong carries them?
That though so many books, so many rolls
Of Ancient time record what grievous plagues,

5 Light on these Rebels aye and though so often
Their ears have heard their aged fathers tell
What just reward these Traitors still receive.
Yea though themselves have seen deep death and blood
By strangling cord and slaughter of the sword

10 To such assigned, yet can they not beware:
Yet cannot stay their lewd rebellious hands,
But suffering to foul treason to distain
Their wretched minds, forget their loyal heart,
Reject all truth and rise against their Prince,

15 A ruthful case that those, whom duties bond
Whom grafted Law by nature truth and faith
Bound to preserve their Country and their king
Born to defend their Commonwealth and Prince,
Even they should give consent thus to subvert

20 The Britain Land, and from the womb should spring
(O native soil) those, that will needs destroy
And ruin thee and eke themselves in fine:
For lo, when ones the Duke had offered Grace
Of pardon sweet (the multitude mislead

25 By traitorous fraud of their ungracious heads)
One sort that saw the dangerous success
Of stubborn standing in rebellious war
And knew the difference of Prince’s power
From headless number of tumultuous routes,

30 Whom common Countries care and private fear
Taught to repent the terror of their rage
Laid hands upon the Captains of their band,
And brought them bound unto the mighty Dukes
Another sort not trusting yet so well

35 The truth of Pardon or mistrusting more
Their own offense than that they could conceive
Such hope of pardon for so foul misdeed:
Or for that they their captains could not yield
Who fearing to be yielded, fled before,

40 Stole[184] home by silence of the secret night,
The third unhappy and enraged sort
Of desperate hearts, who stained in Prince’s blood
From traitorous furor could not be withdrawn
By love, by law, by grace, nay yet by fear,

45 By proffered life, nay yet by threatened Death,
With minds hopeless of life, dreadless of Death,
Careless of Country and aweless of God:
Stood bent as to fight as furies did them move
With violent death to close their traitorous life:
50 These all by power of Horsemen were oppressed
And with revenging sword slain in the field,
Or with the strangling Cord hanged on the trees
Where yet the carrion Carcasses do preach
The fruits that Rebels reap of their uproars,
And of the murder of their sacred Prince,
But lo, where do approach the noble Dukes,
By whom these tumults have been thus appeased.

Clotyn
    I think the world will now at length beware
    And fear to put on arms against their Prince.

Mandud
60 If not: those treacherous hearts that dare rebel
    Let them behold the wide and huge fields
    With blood and body spread with rebels slain,
    The lofty tress clothed with corpses dead
    That strangled with the cord do hang thereon.

Arostus
65 A just reward such as all times before
    Have ever lotted to those wretched folks.

Gwenard
    But what means he that cometh here so fast.

Nunitius
    My Lords, as duty and my truth doth move
    And of my Country work and care in me
70 That if the spending of my breath avail
    To do the Service that my heart desires,
    I would not shun to embrace a present death,
    So have I now in that wherein I thought
    My travail might perform some good effects
75 Ventured my life to bring these tidings here,
    Fergus, the mighty Duke of Albany
    Is now in arms and lodgeth in the fields
    With twenty thousand men, hither he bends
    His speedy march, and minds to invade the Crown
80 Daily he gathereth strength and spreads abroad
    That to this Realm no certain Heir remains,
    That Britain Land is left without a guide,
    That be the scepter seeks for nothing else
But to preserve the people and the Land
85 Which now remains as ship without a Stern
Lo, this is that which I have here to say.

Clotyn
Is this his faith? and shall he falsely thus
Abuse the vantage of unhappy times?
O wretched Land, if his outrageous pride,
90 His cruel and untempered wilfulness
His deep dissembling shows of false pretence
Should once attain the Crown of Britain land
Let us my Lords, with timely force resist
The news attempt of this our common foe
95 As we would quench the flames of common fire.

Mandud
Though we remain without a certain Prince
To weld the Realm or guide the wandering rule
Yet now the common Mother of us all,
Our Native Land, our Country that contains
100 Our wives, children, kindred, ourselves and all
That ever is or may be dear to man
Cries unto us to help ourselves and her:
Let us advance our powers to repress
This growing foe of all our liberties.

Gwenard
105 Yea let us to my Lord's with hasty speed,
And ye (O Gods) send us the welcome death,
To shed our blood in fields and leave us not,
In loathsome life to linger out our lives
110 To see the hugy heaps of these unhaps,
That now roll down upon the wretched Land
Where empty place of Princely Governance
No certain stay now left of doubtless heir,
Thus leave this guideless Realm an open prey.
Thus endless storms and waste of civil war.

Arostus
115 That ye (my Lords) do so agree in one
To save your Country from the violent reign
And wrongfully usurped Tyranny
Of him that threatens conquest of you all
To save your realm, and in this realm yourselves
120 From foreign thraldom[185] of so proud a Prince,
Much do I praise and I beseech the Gods,
With happy honour to requite it you.
But (O my Lords) sith now the Heaven’s wrath
Hath reft this land the issue of their Prince:

125 Sith of the body of our late Sovereign Lord
Remains no more since the young kings be slain
And of the Title of descended Crown,
Uncertainly the diverse minds do think
Even of the learned sort and more uncertainly

130 Will partial fancy and affection deem:
But most uncertainly will climbing pride
And hope of reign withdraw to sundry parts
The doubtful right and hopeful lust to reign
When once this noble service is achieved

135 For Britain land the Mother of ye all,
When once ye have with armed force repressed,
The proud attempts of this Albanian[186] Prince
That threatens thraldom to your Native Land
When ye shall vanquishers return from field

140 And find the Princely state an open prey.
To greedy lust and to usurping power,
Then, then (my Lords) if ever kindly care
Of ancient honour of your ancestors,
Of present wealth and noblest of your stocks

145 Yea of the lives and safety yet to come
Of your dear wives your children and yourselves,
Might move your noble hearts with gentle ruth,
Then, then, have pity on the torn estate,
Then help to salve the well-near hopeless sore

150 Which ye shall do, if ye yourselves withhold
The slaying knife from your own mother’s throat
Her shall you save, and you, and yours in her
If ye shall all with one assent forbear
Once to lay hand or take unto yourselves

155 The Crown by colour of pretended right,
Or by what other means so ever it be
Till first by common counsel of you all
In Parliament the Regal Diadem[187].
Be set in certain place in governance,

160 In which your Parliament and in your choice,
Prefer the right (my Lords) without respect
Of strength or friends, or whatsoever cause
That may set forward, any other’s part,
For right will last, and wrong cannot endure,

165 Right mean I his or hers, upon whose name
The people rest by mean of Native line,
Or by the virtue of some former Law,
Already made their title to advance:
Such one (my Lords) let be your chosen king
170 Such one so born within your Native Land
Such one prefer and in no wise admit
The heavy yoke of foreign governance,
Let foreign Titles yield to Public wealth,
And with that heart wherewith ye now prepare
175 Thus to withstand the proud invading foe,
With that same heart (my Lords) keep out also
Unnatural thralldom of stranger’s reign,
Ne suffer you against the rules of kind
Your Mother Land to serve a Foreign Prince.

Eubulus
180 Lo here the end of Brutus’ royal Line,
And lo the entry to the woeful wreck
And utter ruin of this noble Realm.
The royal king, and eke his sons are slain,
No ruler rests within the Regal Seat:
185 The Heir, to whom the Scepter longs, unknown
That to each force of Foreign Prince’s power
Whom vantage of your wretched state
By sudden Arms to gain so rich a Realm
And to the proud and greedy mind at home
190 Whom blinded lust to reign leads to aspire.
Lo Britain Realm is left an open prey,
A present spoil by Conquest to ensue,
Who seeth not now how many rising minds
Do feed their thoughts, with hope to reach a Realm
195 And who will not by force attempt to win
So great a gain that hope persuades to have
A simple colour shall for title serve.
Who wins the Royal crown will want no right
Nor such as shall display by long descent
200 A lineal race to prove himself a king,
In the meanwhile these civil arms shall rage,
And thus a thousand mischiefs shall unfold
And far and near spread thee (O Britain Land)
All right and Law shall cease, and he that had
205 Nothing today, tomorrow shall enjoy
Great heaps of good, and he that flowed in wealth
Lo he shall be reft of life and all,
And happiest he that than possesseth least.
The wives shall suffer rape, the maids deflowered
210 And children fatherless shall weep and wail:
With fire and sword thy Native folk shall perish.
One kinsman shall bereave another life,
The father shall unwitting slay the son
The son shall slay the sire and know it not:
215 Women and maids the cruel Soldier's sword
Shall pierce to death, and silly[190] children lo
That playing in the streets and fields are found
By violent hand shall close their latter day.
Whom shall the fierce and bloody Soldier
220 Reserve to life, whom shall he spare from death
Even thou (O wretched mother) half alive
Thou shall behold thy dear and only child
Slain with the sword while he yet sucks thy breast:
Lo, guiltless blood shall thus everywhere be shed:
225 Thus shall the wasted soil yield forth no fruit
But derth[191] and famine shall possess the Land.
The Towns shall be consumed and burnt with fire,
The peopled Cities shall wax[192] desolate,
And thou (O Britain Land) whilom in renown
230 Whilom in wealth and fame shalt thus be torn.
Dismembered thus, and thus be rent in twain,
Thus wasted and defaced, spoiled and destroyed:
These be the fruits: your civil wars will bring.
Hereto it comes when kings will not consent,
235 To grave advice, but follow willful will:
This is the end, when in young Princes' hearts
Flattery prevails, and sage[193] rede hath no place:
These are the plagues when murder is the mean
To make new Heirs unto the Royal Crown.
240 Thus wreak the Gods, when the mother's wrath
Nought[194] but blood of her own child may 'suage[195].
These mischiefs springs with Rebels will arise,
To work revenge and judge their Prince's fact:
This, this ensues when noble men do fail
245 In loyal truth, and subjects will be kings.
And this doth grow when lo unto the Prince,
Whom death or sudden hap of life bereaves,
No certain Heir remains, such certainty
As not all only is the rightful Heir,
250  But to the Realm is so made unknown to be
   And truth thereby vested in Subjects hearts,
   To owe faith there, where right is known to rest
   Alas, in Parliament what hope can be,
   When is of Parliament no hope at all,
255  Which though it be assembled by consent,
   Yet is it not likely with consent to end:
   While each one for himself, or for his friend
   Against his foe, shall travail what he may,
   While now the state left open to the man,
260  That shall with greatest force invade the same,
   Shall fill ambitious minds with gaping hope:
   When will they ones with yielding hearts agree?
   Or in the while, how shall the Realm be used?
   No, no: then Parliament should have been holden[196]
265  And certain Heirs appointed to the Crown
   To stay their title of established right:
   And plant the people in obedience
   While yet the Prince did live, whose name and power
   By lawful Summons and authority
270  Might make a Parliament to be of force,
   And might have set the state in quiet stay:
   But now (O happy man) whom speedy death
   Deprives of life, ne is enforced to see
   These hugy mischiefs and these miseries,
   These civil wars, these murders and these wrongs
   Of Justice, yet must Jove in fine restore
   This noble Crown unto the lawful Heir:
   For right will always live, and rise at length,
   But wrong can never take deep root to last.

The end of the Tragedy of King Gorboduc

[1] Nortone: Norton
[2] Sackuyle :Sackville
[7] dumb show: a mimed show, usually prior to each act, which demonstrates the main actions of that act
[8] fagot: bundle
[9] assayed: tried
travails: work or tasks
Aurore: Roman Goddess Aurora, who is the personification of dawn. Her siblings are the sun and the moon. Four of her sons are the winds coming from the four directions and she causes dew when she weeps for a dead son. She is not very well-known.
griefull: grievous
plaint: verbal expression of sorrow, or a lament
froward: contrary
misdone: done wrong to or harmed
thereat: at that
wise: way
send the sacred smoke to Heaven’s Throne: reference to a sacrifice
misseemeth: falsely judging
wight: person (pronounced “white”)
whit: none at all
ekte: also
requisite: repay
wont: habitual
Jove: the poetic equivalent of Jupiter, the highest deity of the ancient Romans
roots: uproots
Actus primus, Scena Secunda: Act I, Scene II
importeth: communicate
erst: first or before
stay: stability
unto: to
swarving: to repay or avenge
wry: distorted
heretofore: previously
wakeful: vigilant
Wherefore: because (also used as “why?” depending on the context)
Sith: equivalent to our “since”; also spelled “sithe” and “sithen”
weals: common wealth, welfare
lusty: vigorous, energetic (unlike the present day meaning)
twaine: two
sundry: separate
This is... ye weigh: as in advice
troubles manifold: many troubles
beightheht: promise
rage of insolence: outbreak of arrogance or disrespect for authority
inured: trained, accustomed
to randon of their will: to go wildly astray
ure: use
ý: that
Morgan: Morgan and his cousin Cunedag mounted a successful rebellion to take Britain from their aunt Cordelia, but when Morgan, the elder, tried to gain control of the full island, he was killed and his cousin reigned

whilhom: at some past time; once upon a time

Brute: Trojan Brutus, mythical first king of Britain, who divided the kingdom among his three sons

moe: more

egalness: equality

prevents: anticipates

Ne: neither, nor

unkindly: overkindly (in this instance)

e: before

mortal: immortal

with: within

compass: extent

sithence: since then

sundered: divided into parts, severed

ruthful: compassionate

distain: stain, sully, or dishonour

beseems: is fitting to

ne recked: did not take heed

Too soon... on fire: a reference to Phaetoon, son of Apollo the sun god. Phaetoon convinced his unwilling father to let him drive the sun-chariot for one day, but due to his inexperience, the sun nearly burnt the earth

draw: influence, change

self: sole, single

Humber: the modern county of Humbria; divides Northern and Southern England

Marches: boundaries

writhe: divert, twist

lust: ambition

Lewdly: basely, wickedly

wreak: avenge, put right

mining: undermining

advise: advice

The sticks... in vain: a direct reference to the dumb show of the first act

This doth... heaven’s fire: another reference to Phaetoon (see note 77)

mirror: show, be an example

Cup of Gold: in legend, poison was commonly administered from golden cups rather than glasses

potion: poison

boweth: yields, submits

undiscreet: indiscreet

Actus secundus. Scena prima: Act II, Scene I
Gorboduc

[92] reave me: violently rob me of
[93] wreakful: vengeful
[94] The Hellish Prince: Hades, prince of Hell
[95] Tantalus’ thirst: In mythology, Tantalus was the son of Zeus who, in turn, fed his son Pelops to the gods. Tantalus was sentenced to an eternity of standing up to his neck in water that receded every time he tried to take a drink, and to stand below succulent fruit trees that were blown out of his grasp whenever he tried to reach them
[96] proud Ixion’s wheel: Another mythological reference, wherein Ixion was banished to Hades and strapped to a fiery wheel that turned endlessly
[97] Gripe to gnaw my growing heart: Allusion to the punishment of Tityus: vultures (gripes) eternally ate his liver, which constantly grew back, only to be eaten again
[98] Yea: expresses agreement, “yes”
[99] gree: agree, come to terms with
[100] towardness: forwardness, forward-thinking
[101] guileful: sly, crafty
[102] vassals: servants
[103] routs: a common or vulgar person
[104] bereft: stolen, robbed
[105] Phaeton: in Greek mythology, Phaeton, son of the sun-god Helios, persuaded his father to allow him to drive the sun-chariot, but swerved out of control, coming close to burning the earth. Seeing this, Zeus sent a thunderbolt to kill Phaeton instantly.
[106] Phoebus: in Greek mythology, the sun is also known as “the lamp of Phoebus,” whose name literally means “the radiant one”
[107] green: inexperienced or not sullied by battle
[109] reft: divided, cleft, split
[110] yielden: submissive
[111] bootless: without help or remedy; incurable, remediless, helpless
[112] Illion: the citadel of Troy, used as name of city
[113] Trojans: inhabitants of the city of Troy, who were conquered after a ten-year siege when a Greek army entered the walls of their city concealed inside an ostensible peace offering of a giant wooden horse
[114] randon: to fly at random.
[115] foreset: predetermined
[116] rede: counsel, advice
[117] noisome: noxious, foul
[118] Actus tertius, Scena prima: Act III, Scene I
[119] Simois: river god of Greek mythology
[120] Phrygian: pertaining to Phrygia, an ancient country of Asia Minor, or its inhabitants who were known for their war-like behavior
[121] Priam: King of Troy during the Trojan war, father of Hector, Paris, Troilus and Cassandra
[122] Hecuba: wife of Priam, Queen of Troy
[123] Hests: requests (noun)
[124] assuage: to calm or appease
[125] pease: to make peace or reconcile with
list: desire, choose
imbrued: stained
Hautboys: A wooden double-reed wind instrument of high pitch.
Alecto, Megera, Cisiphone: three Furies in Greek mythology; Alecto symbolized constant anger, Megaera, jealousy, and Tisiphone was the avenger of murder
Medea: daughter of King Aeetes, Medea aided Jason on his quest for the Golden Fleece: after she was betrayed by her lover, Medusa extracted revenge by killing their two children
Athama, Ino: Athamas and Ino married and in order to save their country from drought they attempted to sacrifice Athamas's two children from his previous marriage. Though they were thwarted, Athamas went mad and killed one of their children. Ino fled with their other son but both drowned
Cambises: a Persian king who murdered first his brother, and then his cousin, who he had married, before he accidentally fell on his own sword
Athea: mother of Meleager, Althea preserved a brand that was linked to her son's life. When he killed her two brothers she threw the brand in the fire and Meleager instantly died
Actus quartus, Scena prims: Act IV, Scene I
sola: alone; therefore, Videna, alone
hapt: happened
hugy: huge
ruth: compassion, pity
pined: exhausted by suffering
abye: purchase, buy
caitiff: wretched, wicked, miserable
wrought: formed, twisted
wroke: to drive, press, force to move
Actus quartus, Scena secunda: Act IV, Scene II
behest: a vow, a promise
sithens: since
Ireful: full of ire; angry, wrathful
 unhap: misfortune, mishap
accursed: lying under a curse or anathema; anathematized; doomed to perdition or misery
clepe: to proclaim, to cry, to call
repined: to feel or manifest discontent or dissatisfaction; to fret, murmur, or complain
rancour: inveterate and bitter ill-feeling, grudge, or animosity; malignant hatred or spitefulness
rent: a separation of parts produced by tearing or similar violence
without protract: to extend in duration; to prolong to cause to continue or last longer
accursed: worthy of the curse, or bringing a curse along with it; execrable, damnable; detestable, hateful
doleful: fraught with, accompanied by, or causing grief, sorrow; distressful, gloomy, dreary, dismal
peerless: without peer; unequalled, matchless
twink: a winking of the eye
senseless stock: senseless or stupid person
direful: dreadful
dispoiled: stripped
braid: a sudden movement
hap: chance or fortune
comely: handsome

tilt: a combat or encounter (for exercise or sport) between two armed men on horseback, with lances or similar weapons, the aim of each being to throw his opponent from the saddle

girt: saddle

ire: anger; wrath

Blood asketh blood: a reference to the Biblical saying “an eye for an eye”

Harquebusiers: a soldier armed with a harquebus, an early type of portable gun, which was supported upon a tripod or trestle in the field, and afterwards upon a forked ‘rest’. The name literally means “hook-gun” in German and Finnish. See Harquebusiers of St. George

tumults: commotion of a multitude, usually with confused speech or uproar; public disturbance; disorderly or riotous proceeding

Mulmutius: son of Cloten, King of Cornwall, who reduced Great Britain to a single monarchy.

Reduced: Recall, bring back

Actus quintus, Scena prima: Act V Scene I

Carion: dead putrefying flesh of human or beast; flesh unfit for food.

behooveth: a contract by deed

farder: farther

guerdon: reward for

holden: possessed

perilous: full of risk and danger

adrad: frightened

solicit: persuade

Actus quintus, Scena secundus: Act V, Scene II

lew: ignorant

stole: secretly made their way

thralldom: captivity

Albanian: Scottish

Regal Diadem: A distinction or adornment conferring glory or dignity; symbolic of a crown

werewith: with which

longs: wants

silly: innocent

derth: scarcity of food

wax: become increasingly

sage: wise, sound judgment

nought: nothing

'suage: assuage (to calm or appease)

should have been holden: should have ruled
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The earliest reference to gunpowder in Pinerolo dates back to 1347. A war was being waged against the Lords of Milan and Monferrato and, in the town's tax records, expenses for the equipment included "pulverem scloporum" proving that fire arms had already been known in the region for some time. The particular skill required to use these weapons favoured competitions and contests, and the Princes' benevolence towards the "Abazie degli Stolti", the youthful companies with military-religious ends, which thrived in many Piedmontese cities, grew. In 1405 there were two in Pinerolo, "of the mountain" for the San Maurizio district and "of the plain" around San Donato. When the enemy attacked, these men, armed with guns and crossbows, would be the first to run to the walls. A map dating back to April 25, 1489 informs us of a "Company of St. George" founded by the consortium of Pinerolo wool merchants. They had their headquarters in the church of San Domenico with an altar dedicated to their patron saint. In 1337, there was already a chapel named for St. George, patron saint of soldiers and knights in the old castle belonging to the Acaja Princes. This manuscript does not however specify whether the woollen merchants were already dabbling with the Harquebus at that time. This art, that had long been fashionable, linked duty with pleasure and, in those turbulent times, everybody had to be able to defend the city and, by extension, their own property. Training especially of young people was vital.
and the company of harquebusiers was very widespread. Almost certainly, our harquebusiers sprang from these early groups but there are no known documents to prove it. The company quickly grew in importance: in 1504 it was legally recognised with an Abbot or Abbà with four syndics. Later it took the title of "Venerable Fraternal Consortium and Holy Century of the Harquebusiers of St. George" and in 1515 this was reconfirmed by the Duke of Savoy, Charles III. In 1553 there were new regulations governing the offer that the wool merchants had to pay to maintain the company: two florins and two grosses for each centre. In 1575 it obtained the same privileges as the Turin company from Emanuel Filbert. The Harquebusiers met on Sundays on the public square in front of their church where they shot at the "tavolazzo" a round wooden target painted with concentric circles and with a nail in the middle, the size of a harquebuse ball. Another target was the "parrot" whose green image was placed on a perch the due distance away. The contest was held annually on St. Donato's day and many people flooded in from the nearby villages. The best shot became king of the Harquebusiers, privileged and exempt from taxes and duty until the contest the next year. In 1630 the French troops of Cardinal Richelieu occupied Pinerolo and brought the plague with them. Over the next two years the city lost more than half its population and the "corporation of woollen merchants" declined but the Harquebusiers of St. George survived in their sentiments of piety and religion, in their attention to succouring the infirm or putting out fires, in their joyful character, in appearing at celebrations and religious occasions, in putting themselves at disposal of the authorities whatever the emergency. They were one of the last "Societies of the People" standing in for the town militia and it was above all for these qualities that they are remembered by the city, in the name of a street to this day. In 1682 the game of the Harquebusier was active in the city since the French conquerors evidently permitted it. In 1696, Pinerolo returned to Savoy rule, the next year permission for the target shooting was denied; a dark period followed that ended in 1732 when permission was once more granted by Charles Emanuel III and was renewed in 1759 and 1818 by Victor Emanuel who renewed the permission to play the "tavolazzo" game. Many people from the nearby villages joined and the number of members grew to such an extent that a new practice area had to be bought in 1827, the present target range. The affiliates of the "Brotherhood of the Holy Sacrament and Rosary" based at the monastery at Cantalupa also came to shoot in Pinerolo. Through royal patents Victor Amadeus had given permission to this brotherhood to practice the game of Harquebuse in that place. In 1836 the Pinerolo Company had become famous, the Duke and Duchess of Genoa presented them with a standard and the state-of-the-art model of carbine. The archives of the Association were given to the City Council in 1851. On April 26, 1896 the Company of the Harquebusiers of St. George merged with the National Target Association thus
reaching the end of the road. A contest with ancient weapons was organised for the commemoration of the Battle of Marseilles (October 4, 1693). The success of the event induced a number of enthusiasts to found a muzzle-loading target shooting section dedicated to the St. George Harquebusiers. Nowadays the shooters of the company take part in a number of national competitions and contents and they have been in the National muzzle-loading championships on several occasions. In Pisa, Milan and Turin they have given good account of themselves winning recognition from the National Association of Harquebusiers.

The ancient weapons thus return to make themselves heard in Pinerolo "Target Shooting", something about which they boast a very old and honoured tradition.