

Henrik Ibsen

Brand

A Dramatic Poem in Five Acts

Translated by John Northam

I b s e n . n e t

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PREFACE

The imposing figure of Brand looms large in Ibsen's development as a dramatist. The dramatic poem that bears his name links Ibsen's earlier output with his later emergence as the writer of modern tragedies.

Ibsen's earlier career to date had been more or less equally divided between his poems (see [The Collected Poems](#) on this website) and his plays. The poetry shows a restless preoccupation with stanzaic forms: lyrics, odes, sonnets, together with long epic and other narrative pieces. Much of the poetry is conventional in style and sentiment, but there are some indications almost from the beginning of a desire on Ibsen's part to bring it to bear on contemporary life. The direct precursors of Brand, the epics and quasi-epics, serve to illustrate the point.

Ibsen's first essay in the epic mode was the naive *Helge Hundingbane*, a simple endorsement of ancient saga heroics. *Terje Vigen* was a tale of a simple peasant caught up in the chaos of recent wars, *On the Heights*, a quasi-epic that explored the spiritual predicament of a young idealist in a prosaic world. These works, though they relate to modern reality and start to define its problems, do not penetrate deeply into the inner life of the protagonists.

Ibsen's early plays, too, also reflect his preoccupation with form. Some are written in prose, some in prose interspersed, for no obvious dramatic purpose, with rhyme, some combine rhymed with blank verse. At times the rhymed passages assume, almost involuntarily, stanzaic form.

But the plays show less inclination than do the poems to confront modern life. All of them, with one exception, are set in a distant past which lends them a ready-made glamour and nobility but inhibits any relevance to the Norway that Ibsen knew. The one exception, *Love's Comedy*, a verse play that offers just such a confrontation arising out of the choice of a husband, is a light-weight piece that invites comparison with a Gilbert and Sullivan operetta. Ibsen's own assessment of it is suggested by the assurance, given to a friend while he was working on *Brand*, that it would not be "another *Love's Comedy*."

The first of Ibsen's attempts to depict Brand, in the so-called epic, differs from this earlier work by asserting, unambiguously, its directness of reference to modern Norwegian society. Its clear intention is to trace the career of a missionary spirit, conceived not as a nobleman but as a priest whose heroic stature lies in his inner spiritual strength, progressively revealed through a series of encounters with his fellow countrymen, without recourse to archaic models. Such is the intention, but the candid reader is likely to feel that Ibsen's adherence to a fixed narrative form defeated his object. Everything is narrated or described. The unvaried verse form inhibits characterisation through dialogue and slows down the action. After 212 eight-line stanzas the epic has got nowhere.

There have been many conjectures as to why Ibsen suddenly abandoned the epic, but a reason may be deduced from an episode very near its end in which Brand watches the Mayor doling out famine relief to the starving peasantry. The scene captures in dramatic terms the social degradation that Brand must confront; the figure of the callously complacent official is the most vividly realised character in the whole epic. Ibsen had suddenly found a new, dramatic way of telling his tale.

Brand, the dramatic poem, begins where the epic broke off, with an immediate confrontation with a peasant and his son. Everything thereafter is conceived in dramatic terms. The non-stanzaic verse rhymes but is more flexible, allowing each of a wide range of characters to speak in their own tone of voice. Metres, too, are deployed for dramatic purposes: iambics largely for discourse, trochaics to suggest moments of intense introspection or debate. The settings in which the encounters take place are no longer described at length but become, in an imagined performance, visual images that help to define the emotional, moral and spiritual pressures under which the various characters labour.

Even the biblical references, which are remarkably numerous, are made to serve a dramatic purpose. Brand's quotations are invariably precise and apposite; the Dean uses them as mere stock-in-trade, the Mayor allows himself a flippant reference to God's approval of His creation by judging his own paltry church festival to be, in God's own words "very good", and has the gall to liken his unfeeling charity work to Jesus's feeding of the multitude in the desert.

Biblical references and visual settings combine, dramatically, in the final catastrophe to focus on the complex judgement that Brand's missionary endeavours invite. The vastness of the avalanche lends stature to Brand's destruction but also to the moment of his melting into humanity. The intervention, from God himself it seems, asserting that "He is the God of love", together with the imagery that describes the avalanche as white as a dove, refers us back to the dove that God sent down to Jesus after His baptism by St John. The difference between the two occasions makes us focus on the ambiguity of Brand's death. God's blessing upon Jesus was unequivocal, while the affirmation "He is the God of love" may seem a rebuke to a man who, throughout his missionary career, has subordinated love to rigour. But the words may also suggest that God's love might still be extended to a man who, though humanly flawed, had laboured heroically in a noble cause.

Ibsen did not portray Brand as either a flawless missionary or a destructive bigot; he is in a sense both. He is the first embodiment of Ibsen's emergent understanding of the tragic complexities inherent in contemporary life, in which it is not fate or the gods that influence human destinies but the insidious power of social pressures, environment, upbringing and heredity that initially distorts the individual's sense of personal identity. Brand's subordination of love is due to the loveless home into which he was born. The protagonists of the modern plays are characters who are likewise brought slowly to face their own induced inauthenticity and, in a flash of Aristotelian recognition, to respond to the promptings of their essential selves. Their endings, whether in death or by the sacrifice of everything they had hitherto valued, celebrate the reassertion of integrity despite a degraded and degrading world.

The scale of the modern plays is obviously more restricted than that of Brand, the circumstances, like their language, more prosaic, yet the vision they embody and the dramatic intensity they deploy in its expression owe much to the dramatic poem. Indeed Brand might be thought of as the first of Ibsen's modern tragedies.

CHARACTERS

Brand.
His Mother.
Einar, a Painter.
Agnes.
The Mayor.
The Doctor.
The Dean.
The Sexton.
The Schoolmaster.
Gerd.
A Peasant.
His half-grown Son.
Another Peasant.
A Woman.
Another Woman.
A Clerk.
Priests and Officials.
The Crowd, Men, Women and Children.

The Tempter in the Wasteland.
The Invisible Choir.
A Voice.

(The action takes place in our time, partly in partly around a village by the fjord on the West Coast of Norway.)

ACT 1

(In snow on the high plateau. Mist, thick and heavy; wet and murky weather)

BRAND (dressed in black, with staff and pack, clambers his way westwards) A PEASANT and his half-grown SON (who have been accompanying him, a little way behind)

Peasant *(shouts after Brand)* Hi, mister, not so fast I say!

Where are you?

Brand Here.

Peasant You're off the way!

The mist's so thick you'll hardly see
your staff's end for the way it's packing —

Son There's splits here, Dad!

Peasant And here it's cracking!

Brand We've lost the trail now, utterly.

Peasant *(yells)* Stop, man! Good grief — ! The snow there's barely
stronger than piecrust! You tread wary!

Brand *(listens)* I hear the boom of waterfall.

Peasant A beck's been scooping out down under;
too deep to plumb, I shouldn't wonder; —
could swallow you down, us and all!

10

Brand I *must* go on, I said before.

Peasant Too much for mortal strength, that's sure.
Look; — ground here's hollow, rotten too —
Stop man! It's life and death for you!

Brand *Must* — in a great one's cause I'm shod.

Peasant And who is that?

Brand His name is God..

Peasant And what might you be then?

Brand A priest.

Peasant Maybe; but this I know at least,
be you a bishop or a dean,
you'll lie at death's last gasp between
now and next daybreak, man, if you
will go where ice is eaten through.

20

(approaches warily and persuasively)

Look, priest, you may be learned, wise,
but who'd risk such an enterprise?

Turn back; don't be so set on strife!

We've only got the one bare life;
lose that, and then what's left, I say?

The nearest farm's seven mile away,*
and with the mist so thick, I lay
you could well cut it with a knife.

30

Brand Well, if it's thick, we shan't be led
by jack-o'-lanterns on ahead.

Peasant But there's an ice-tarn somewhere near,
and tarns like that are things to fear.

Brand We'll walk across.

Peasant. Walk water? Hoo!

Brand That's easier said than done, by God!
Brand *One* showed the way, — where faith is true *
 a man could slip across dry-shod. 40
Peasant Yes, in the past; but now he'd drop
 straight to the bottom, neck and crop.
Brand (*leaving*) Goodbye.
Peasant You're risking life and limb!
Brand If God can use my death at all —
 then welcome flood, cracks, waterfall!
Peasant (*aside*) He's wild and crazy too, that's him.
Son (*half crying*) Dad, let's turn back! There's signs that tell
 of dirtier weather, rain as well!
Brand (*stops and comes back towards them*)
 Now listen, man; at first, you said:
 your daughter living by the shore 50
 had sent you word she's soon to die;
 but daren't, for hope of bliss, daren't fly
 this world before you'd met once more.
Peasant That's true, so help me God, that's true!
Brand To-day's the date she set for you?
Peasant Yes.
Brand Nothing later?
Peasant No.
Brand Come then!
Peasant It can't be done. Turn back again.
Brand (*fixes him*)
 A hundred dollars — just so many —
 you hear? — might ease her death; you'd pay?
Peasant Yes, priest!
Brand Twice that?
Peasant I'd sign away 60
 my house and home, my every penny
 if she could pass away in peace!
Brand But give your life, too, have *that* cease?
Peasant What! Life! Why, bless me —
Brand Well, would *you*?
Peasant (*scratches behind his ear*)
 Well, no there must be limits to — !
 In Jesu's name, you've not forgotten
 my wife, the children I've begotten?
Brand He whom you named then had a mother.*
Peasant Yes, long ago, in times quite other, —
 a miracle was common stuff; 70
 not like to-day, though, sure enough.
Brand Go home. Death's road is your life's lot *
 You know not God, God knows you not.
Peasant Why, you are hard!
Son (*tugs at him*) Let's get away!
Peasant But he must come with us I say!

Brand O, must I?
 Peasant Yes; you disappear
 in this god-awful weather here,
 and word gets round, no question whether
 we all set out from home together,
 I'll end up in the court of laws, — 80
 you drown in bog or tarn, look you,
 it's bolts and bars I'm sentenced to —
 Brand You'd suffer in our Lord's great cause.
 Peasant His cause and yours aren't my affair;
 I've cares a-plenty, and to spare.
 So come!
 Brand Farewell! (*hollow rumble in the distance*)
 Son (*yells*) A slip just gone!
 Brand (*to the Peasant who has grabbed him by the collar*)
 Hands off me!
 Peasant No!
 Brand Hands off!
 Son Come on!
 Peasant. (*struggles with Brand*) No, devil take me —!
 Brand (*breaks loose and throws him into the snow*) Yes — so true;
 believe me, that's just what he'll do! (*leaves*)
 Peasant (*sits rubbing his arm*) Ow, ow! He's stubborn he is, tough. 90
 Calls that the Lord's work, like enough! (*calls as he rises*)
 Hey, priest!
 Son He's off there, hell-for-leather.
 Peasant But I can see him still out there. (*calls again*)
 Hi, mister — you remember where
 we left the track there altogether?
 Brand (*in the mist*) You'll have no need of signpost board; —
 the way you're on's already broad. *
 Peasant I wish to God that you were right,
 I'd sit down snug and warm tonight.
 (*he and the son head back east*)
 Brand (*appears higher up and listens in the direction the Peasant has gone*)
 You grope for home. You spineless thrall, 100
 if will swelled in your breast at all,
 if you had merely lacked the vigour,
 I'd have cut short your journey's rigour;
 I should have carried you right gladly,
 my back near breaking, foot bruised badly; —
 but help won't aid the creature who
 won't will beyond what he can do. (*moves on a step*)
 Hm; life, ah, life; grotesque how dear
 life is to all the goodfolk here!
 Each weakling sets such emphasis 110
 on life as though the world's salvation,
 the spiritual health of all creation,
 lay on that puny back of his.

God knows, they sacrifice and strive!
 But life, ah life — that must survive.

(smiles as in recollection)

Two notions struck me as a lad
 and sent me into fits of laughter
 which, when the school-dame's mood was bad,
 earned me a well-tanned hide soon after.

A night-scared owl was one farrago, 120
 then a hydrophobic fish. I'd roar;

I'd try to jettison mind's cargo
 but they'd hang on there, tooth and claw. —

What brought it on, this laughing fit?
 Why, the obscurely-sensed deep split
 between the thing itself as such
 and thing as it *should* be ideally, —
 between the *having* to, and merely
 finding the burden all too much. —

Each countryman, fit state or foul, 130
 is such a fish. or such an owl.

He's fashioned for the depths and toiling,
 should live life's murk without recoiling,
 and *that's* what frightens him the more.

He flounders for the shelving shore, —
 his own star-chamber, *that* he'll shun,
 and scream for "Air, and day's warm sun!"

(stops for a moment, taken aback and listens)

Now what was that? A song-like sound.
 Yes, it is song that's mixed with laughter.

Hark, — there's a cheer — another, after, — 140
 a third — fourth — fifth, too, in a round!

There comes the sun. The mist is lifting.
 I see the whole moor white with drifting.

And over there, a happy band
 up on the ridge in morn's bright glow
 casts westward shadows on the snow;
 exchanges words and clasp of hand.

Now they divide. The others wander
 to eastward, two, though, heading west.

They're sending, as a last behest, 150
 farewells, with hat, hand, veil back yonder.

*(the sun progressively breaks through the mist. He stays there, looking down at the
 couple approaching)*

That couple there is bathed in splendour.
 It is as though the mist made way,
 as though ling clad the bank and brae
 and heaven beamed on them, warm and tender.
 They must be kin. Hand clasped in hand
 they bound across the spread of heather.
 The girl moves light as any feather;

and he's as supple as a wand.

She broke away there! Off she went,

160

then he went chasing nimbly after — — !

The chase turns into merriment — !

Hark; now it's changed to song, their laughter.

(EINAR and AGNES, in light walking gear, both of them flushed and warm, come playing across the plateau. The haze has gone; a clear summer's morning over the mountain)

Einar Agnes, my beautiful butterfly,

I'll make a game of your capture!

I'm weaving a net of finest mesh,

the mesh is my songs of rapture!

Agnes *(dances backwards in front of him and keeps giving him the slip)*

 If I'm a butterfly, tiny and pure,

let me drink at the tips of the heather,

and if you're a lad who's fond of his game

170

then *chase* me but *catch* me never!

Einar Agnes, my beautiful butterfly,

I've finished the net I'm conceiving;

your fluttering flight will not help you at all, —

you'll be caught in the net of my weaving!

Agnes If I'm a butterfly, young and bright,

I'm happy to play at this scampering;

but if you should catch me beneath your web,

don't damage my wings with your tampering!

Einar No, I shall gather you up with such care,

180

and lock you away as heart's treasure;

there you can play your whole life long

the game that you've learnt gives most pleasure!

(without being aware, they have come to a sheer precipice; they now stand right on its very edge)

Brand *(shouts down to them)*

 Don't move! A precipice below!

Einar Who's calling?

Agnes Look!

Brand Stop while you can!

 You're on a hollow ledge of snow;—

it overhangs a sheer drop, man!

Einar *(puts an arm round her and laughs up at him)*

 Don't waste concern on her and me!

Agnes We have a life-time for our play!

Einar We're promised sunshine all the way,

190

to last at least a century.

Brand So it won't set till then? My, my!

Agnes *(waves the veil)* No, then the fun will soar sky-high.

Einar A century of pleasures legion,

with bridal-lamps lit every night, —

a lifetime's, century's delight —

Brand And then — ?

Einar Then home — to heaven's region.

Brand You mean to say you've come from there?
Einar Why, naturally; if not, then where?
Agnes Well, that's to say, most recently 200
 we're from the dale east of these quarters.
Brand Yes, I imagined I could see
 you where the ridge divides the waters.
Einar That's right. We'd just said our goodbyes
 to boy and girl friends all together,
 swapped kisses, handshakes, hugs and sighs,
 to seal sweet memories for ever.
 Join us down here! For my oration
 on how God's been beyond compare, —
 and then you'll share our jubilation — ! 210
 Don't stand as though you're frozen there!
 That's right! Thaw out! Won't bother me.
 To start with, well I paint, you see,
 and He was decent to supply
 the means whereby my thoughts could fly,
 hence *I* trick *life* out, colour-wise
 as *He* turns grubs to butterflies!
 But God's best gift was to provide
 me with dear Agnes for my bride!
 I'd made a long trip south, returning 220
 with rucksack full of painting gear —
Agnes (*eagerly*) Bold, happy as a king, mind clear —
 with countless songs that he'd been learning!
Einar. Just as I chanced to pass that way,
 she had arrived there for a stay.
 She'd come to drink the mountain air,
 the sun, the dew, the pine-scent there.
 Some god-head drove *me* to the mountain;
 within me sang: "Seek Beauty's fountain
 by forest stream, where pine-trees march, 230
 where clouds float under heaven's arch!" —
 And there my masterpiece I painted:
 her cheek whereon a rose-blush stole,
 a pair of eyes, joy's gleam untainted,
 a smile that sang within the soul —
Agnes But paid your sitter scant attention, —
 in one blind draught you'd drain life's cup
 and then one fine day you turned up
 with staff in hand, pack tied, no mention —
Einar Then suddenly the thought arose: 240
 you've quite forgotten to propose!
 Hurrah! The question popped, accepted,
 and all was thus arranged, effected.
 Our good old doctor, dear old boy,
 was quite beside himself with joy.
 Arranged a party, singing, dancing

for me and her, three whole days' prancing;
 from bailiff, sheriff, J.P., priest,
 to young grown-ups, all joined the feast.
 Last night we tore ourselves away; 250
 that didn't mean the fun, though, ended; —
 with flags aloft, hats trimmed with bay,
 we climbed the slopes, the heights we wended,
 by all the company attended.

Agnes A dance, our moorland journeying,
 now two and two, now in a ring.

Einar Sweet wine we drank from silver bright —

Agnes The song rang through the summer night —

Einar And mist, hung heavy from the north,
 made humble way as we set forth. 260

Brand And now your way lies — ?

Einar Straight ahead,
 to town.

Agnes Where I was born and bred.

Einar. But first the final peaks for clearing;
 then down to meet the fjord's west bay;
 on Egir's steed we'll go careering, *
 steam up, for home and wedding-day, —
 and then, together, south we head
 like swans upon their maiden flight — !
 And then — ?

Brand

Einar A life of bliss, once wed,
 a mighty dream, a legend bright; — 270
 for know that on this sabbath morrow,
 though in mid-moor, without a priest,
 our life's proclaimed as free from sorrow,
 and consecrated to life's feast.

Brand Who by?

Einar The whole blithe congregation.
 With clink of cup each stormy cloud
 that dare oppress our habitation
 of dainty leaves they disavowed.
 Banned from the language each expression
 that warned of thunder's din ahead; 280
 with leaves in hair made this profession:
 we were Joy's children, born and bred.

Brand Goodbye you two ! (*moves to leave*)

Einar (*starts and looks at him more closely*) No, wait a bit!
 There's something, come to think of it,
 about your face —

Brand (*coldly*) No, I'm a stranger.

Einar At school perhaps, or home — no danger
 I shan't recall, I'm sure I can —

Brand At school; yes, we were friendly then.
 I was a boy, then; now, a man.

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| Einar | It couldn't ever be — <i>(suddenly shouts)</i> it's Brand! — | 290 |
| | Now I can see — it's you again! . | |
| Brand | I knew you from the very start. | |
| Einar | Well met, well met with all my heart ! | |
| | Let's look at you! The same old creature, | |
| | as self-sufficient, just the same, | |
| | who never could be lured to feature | |
| | with rowdy schoolmates in a game. | |
| Brand | I lacked a home amongst you all. | |
| | But you I liked, as I recall, | |
| | though all from that same southern quarter | 300 |
| | were of a different cast from me, | |
| | born on a headland by the water, | |
| | shadowed by heights without a tree. | |
| Einar | But isn't this home-ground for you? | |
| Brand | That's where I'm headed — passing through. | |
| Einar | You're passing through? Then? Off to roam? | |
| Brand | Yes; far; and fast — beyond my home. | |
| Einar | A priest, then? | |
| Brand (smiles) | Just a curacy. | |
| | A hare beneath the greenwood tree, | |
| | my dwelling-place now here now there. | 310 |
| Einar | And now your destination's where? | |
| Brand (<i>quick and hard</i>) | Don't ask! | |
| Einar | Why not? | |
| Brand (<i>alters his tone</i>) | Well yes, that's true! | |
| | The ship that's waiting for you two | |
| | will also bear me on my way. | |
| Einar | My bridal steed? Hooray, hooray! | |
| | Agnes, he'll join us, aren't you bucked? | |
| Brand | But I've a funeral to conduct. | |
| Agnes | A funeral? | |
| Einar | You? Who's for the grave? | |
| Brand | The God that you have just avowed. | |
| Agnes (<i>recoils</i>) | Come, Einar! | |
| Einar | Brand! | |
| Brand | In casket, shroud, | 320 |
| | God of each hack, time-serving slave — | |
| | he'll get broad-daylight burial. | |
| | An end there <i>must</i> be to it all . | |
| | It's time you understood that here's | |
| | a God declined these thousand years. | |
| Einar | Brand, you are sick! | |
| Brand | No, fit and fine | |
| | as mountain juniper or pine; | |
| | but it's to-day's sick breed for sure | |
| | that stands in urgent need of cure. | |
| | You're all for laughter, fun and glee, | 330 |

believe a bit, but will not see, —
 you'd heap the load of agony
 on one who, men have said, had come
 and borne, for you, that martyrdom.
He wore the crown of thorns for *you*,
 it's Him you owe your dancing to; —
 yes, dance — but where your dance will end,
 that's quite another thing, my friend!

Einar Ah yes, I see! The song that's new
 and popular the whole land through. 340
 You're one of that new brood that must *
 term life here vanity and dust, *
 that would, by threats of hell-fire, call
 down sack-cloth, ashes on us all *

Brand I'm not a preaching hack at least —
 I don't speak here now as a priest;
 scarce know if I'm a Christian really,
 yet know full well I am a man,
 and know full well that I see clearly
 the cancer eating up this land. 350

Einar (*smiles*) But then I never did hear tell
 that our good land's reputed well
 for superfluity of zest.

Brand No, joy explodes in no-one's breast; —
 but splendid if it were that way.
 What if you're pleasure's slave, let's say, —
 but be it then, each livelong day.
 Not one thing for a day or two
 and in a twelve-month something new.
 Be what you are, complete and whole, 360
 not a divided, piecemeal soul.
 A Bacchant's an ideal that's plain, *
 a drunk is just next morning's pain —
 Silenus has a fine allure, *
 a toper's his caricature.
 Just travel round about this land
 observing everyone to hand —
 each one has taught himself to be
 a bit of everything, you'll see.
 A bit of gravity for Sunday, 370
 some faith in the forefather's ways,
 some appetite for Mass — well, some day, — *
 for that's the trail our forebears blaze, —
 a bit inflamed at celebrations
 with songs in honour of the nation's
 small-sized but rock-firm little folk
 that lashings, beatings never broke —
 a little lavish when there's pledging, —
 a little close when sober, hedging

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| | on promises made at some do | 380 |
| | to meet the bill when payment's due. | |
| | But everything's in small amounts; | |
| | no vice or virtue really counts; | |
| | it is a fraction overall, | |
| | of good and bad, and that is all; — | |
| | but worst, each fraction from the start | |
| | destroys the whole of which it's part. | |
| Einar | Contempt comes easy; it would be | |
| | more handsome to show leniency — | |
| Brand | Perhaps. But less sound medicine. | 390 |
| Einar | All right; I grant the nation's sin, | |
| | amen the lot, make no objection; | |
| | but I can't fathom the connection | |
| | with Him you want to lay to rest, — | |
| | the God I've all my life professed. | |
| Brand | My cheerful friend, paint's been your grounding; — | |
| | show me the God you've been expounding. | |
| | Of course you've painted him, I've heard | |
| | the portrait left the public stirred. | |
| | He looks quite elderly, you'd say? | 400 |
| Einar | Well yes — ! | |
| Brand | Of course he is. And grey? | |
| | Thin-haired like many an aged sire, | |
| | a beard like ice or silver wire, — | |
| | kindly disposed, yet so severe | |
| | he'd chase a child to bed in fear? | |
| | Whether you gave him slippers too | |
| | I leave, for what it's worth, to you; | |
| | I'm sure, though, it would suit the chap | |
| | to give him glasses and a cap. | |
| Einar (<i>angry</i>) | Where is this leading — ? | |
| Brand | It's no jest. | 410 |
| | That is his likeness to a T; | |
| | our people's homely deity. | |
| | As catholics turn our hero-Saviour | |
| | into a toddler, so we here | |
| | turn Lord to dotard in behaviour, | |
| | whose second childhood's all too near. | |
| | Just as on Peter's throne the Pope | |
| | has double keys for sole possession,* | |
| | so you reduce God's realm in scope | |
| | from world-wide to the church in session. | 420 |
| | You cut life off from faith and teaching; | |
| | no-one thinks <i>being</i> worth the preaching; | |
| | to raise your soul, that's your endeavour, | |
| | but to live whole and fully ? — never! | |
| | You need, for such a shilly-shally, | |
| | a God who'll wink occasionally; — | |

its God must, like the age, look grey,
 skull-capped, with baldness on the way.
 But *your* God's not like mine, for He's
 a mighty storm not just a breeze, 430
 inflexible, where yours can't hear,
 all-loving where your own is drear;
 and He's as young as Hercules, — *
 no grandad in his seventies!
 His voice struck terror, lightning came, *
 when He, a thornbush-burning flame,
 on Horeb before Moses stood,
 a giant to his pigmyhood.
 In Gibeon's vale He stayed the sun, *
 untold the wonders that were done, 440
 and He would still perform them too
 were not the age as weak as you!

Einar (*with an uncertain smile*)

And is the age to be reborn?

Brand

It shall be, sure as is my sense
 that I am, on this planet, sworn
 to cure its plague and pestilence!

Einar (*shakes his head*) Don't quench the flax, for all its reeking, *

before it lights what lies ahead;
 don't scrap the tongue's old ways of speaking
 before you've coined new words instead! 450

Brand

But I aspire to nothing new:
 it's Law eternal I pursue.
 It isn't doctrine or the kirk
 I want to raise up through my work;
 for both these saw their natal day,
 and therefore it needs must befall
 that both shall see their twilight pall.
 All things created pass away:
 moth shall corrupt them and the worm, *
 they must give place by law and norm 460
 to some yet-unbegotten form.

But something does endure, one thing; —
 it is the uncreated soul,
 at once both lost and ransomed whole
 in Time's first fresh and bracing Spring,
 that flung, with Man's bold faith its force,
 a bridge from flesh to soul's prime source. *
 It's sold now piecemeal, hawked and sold,
 thanks to the view of God we hold; —
 but from these bits of soul now scattered, * 470
 these torso-lumps of spirit shattered,
 these heads, these hands, there shall arise
 a wholeness God can recognise,
 His Man, His masterpiece sublime,

His offspring, Adam, strong and prime!
 Einar (*interrupts*) Goodbye. I think it would be best
 we parted here.

Brand You travel west,
 I travel north. Two ways from here
 lead to the fjord, and both quite near.
 Goodbye!

Einar Goodbye!

Brand (*turns as he is about to descend*) Keep light apart 480
 from reek. Remember, — life's an art.

Einar (*waves him away*) You stand the world upon its head;
 I'll stick to my old God instead!

Brand Good; paint Him with a cripple's crutch; —
 I go to bury Him as such! (*descends the track*)

Einar (*moves across in silence and follows Brand down with his eyes*)
 Agnes (*stands as though preoccupied for a moment; then she gives a start, looks around
 uneasily and asks*) The sun's gone down?

Einar A cloud, no more,
 passed over; bright now, as before.

Agnes The wind here's cold.

Einar A breeze, that's all,
 came through the cleft there in the wall.
 Here's our way down.

Agnes That southern scar 490
 has never seemed so black a bar.

Einar You missed it as we played about,
 until his bawling put you out.
 But leave him to his break-neck stair;
 we'll pick up with our game back there.

Agnes No, not just now; — I've had enough.

Einar And truth to tell, I feel the same —
 and going down's a bit more tough
 than level moor, the way we came.
 But when we've left the heights behind, 500
 we'll dance despite him and his kind, —
 yes, wilder, bolder, ten times more
 than ever we'll have danced before. —
 See, Agnes, that blue strip below,
 that sparkles to the sun's warm glow;
 look, now it's rippling, now it smiles,
 now amber-shade, now silvery;
 it is the vast and bracing sea
 you gaze on, stretching out for miles!
 And can you see that inky smoke 510
 that's marked the channel with one stroke?
 And can you see that small, black speck
 that's just, look, cleared the headland's neck?
 See, it's the steam-boat; — yours and mine!
 Heads for the fjord, dead straight on line!

This afternoon it leaves the fjord,
to sea, with you and me on board! —
The mist is closing, thick and grey. —
But Agnes, did you note the play
on sea and sky, that lovely streaking?

520

Agnes (*looks straight ahead, preoccupied, and says*)

I did. But did you see the way — ?

Einar What?

Agnes (*without looking at him, and hushed, as in church*)

How he grew, while he was speaking!
(*she goes down the path. Einar follows*)

(*A path along the ridge with a sheer drop off to the right. Above and behind the mountain
higher ground can be glimpsed, with peaks and snow*)

Brand (*comes up the track, starts to descend, pauses halfway on a projecting crag and looks
down into the depths*)

Now I recognise the spot!
Every boat-shed, every plot,
land-slip bank, the fairway birch,
that brown pile there, the old church,
elders by the river-side, —
childhood memories that abide.
But I fancy it's more grey,
smaller, too, than in my day;
and the over-hang, protruding
more than it had ever done,
shaves another sliver, gaining
on the strip of sky remaining,
leaning, threatening, dark and brooding, —
stealing yet more of the sun.

530

(*sits and scans the distance*)

The fjord. Did *that* seem, to my mind,
quite so ugly, so confined?

Patch of rain. A yawl ahead
running on a homeward reach.

540

South, the part the outcrop's shading,
there's a shack, a quay for lading,
then a farmhouse, painted red.

It's the widow's by the beach!
Widow's place. My childhood home.
Memory's memories swarm and roam.
In that stony desolation
childhood passed in isolation. —

There's the weight that's pressing in
on me, of my being kin
to a soul that's concentrated

550

on things earthly, alienated.
 All I've willed that's great in scale,
 wavers as behind a veil. *
 Courage, strength, have all abated,
 heart and soul lack pith and sap;
 now, near home, I feel I've woken,
 feel a stranger by that token, —
 waking bound and shorn and broken,
 Samson in the harlot's lap.* 560
(looks into the depths again)

What's this flurry, where's the search?
 Out from every farm and cot,
 women, children, menfolk trot.
 In long lines they go careering,
 lost in screebanks, slopes high rearing,
 show themselves now, in a knot —
 down towards the ancient church.*(stands)*
 Through and through, I know your kind,
 weak of soul, inert of mind!

Your Lord's Prayer that should ascend 570
 unabridged lacks will's strong winging,
 lacks the needful groan of dread,
 to reach Heaven in the end;
 whole, in full, your voices ringing, —
 asking more than daily bread!

That's the call the people heed,
 on *that* summons folk have thriven.
 Out of context wrenched and riven,
 carved in every heart as given,
 there it lies, a tempest-driven 580
 wreckage of your total creed! —
 Leave that cold and clammy pit!
 Full of mine-gas, mine-diseases; —
 there's no flag can fly in it,
 flutter free to freshening breezes!

(makes to leave; a stone is flung from above and rolls down the slope close by him)

Brand *(calling up)* Hi there! Who's throwing stones?
(GERD, a fifteen-year-old girl, runs along the edge of the cliff with stones in her apron)

Gerd A skirl.

I hit him! *(throws again)*

Brand Stop that game my girl!

Gerd He sits there, not a scratch to see,
 just rocking on a wind-felled tree. *(throws again and shouts)*
 And here he comes, wild as before! 590
 Help! Ow! He's gashed me with his claw!

Brand In heaven's name — !

Gerd Hush! Who are you?

Keep still, keep still; there, off he flew.

Brand Who flew?

The hawk, he'll not come sneaking in;
 he sets him down on Svartetind, —
 and there he sits, the ugly bane,
 the cock upon my weather vane.

Brand Wild is your way and wild your soul, —
 a lute that's split across the bowl.
 The *base* breeds *base*, that's understood, — * 640
 but *evil* can well change to *good*.

Gerd A rush of wings and there he soars!
 It's time I made my way indoors!
 I'm safe inside the church. Goodbye —
 the ugly brute, hoo! — see him fly!
 (*shrieks*) Don't you come near! I'll throw a stone!
 You claw at me, I'll break your bone!
 (*flees up the mountainside*)

Brand (*after a pause*) Look, she attends church like the rest.
 In dale, — on upland, who fares best?
 Who's worst and wildest like to roam, 650
 grope farthest from his peaceful home, —
 the *feckless*, garlanded with bay,
 who plays right on the sheerest brink, —
 the *spineless*, plodding on his way,
 because that's use and wont, men think, —
 the *wild*, whose flight's so fanciful
 that evil straight seems beautiful? —
 It's total war, war hip and thigh
 with this three-leagued confederacy!
 I see my call; it gleams afar, 660
 like sunshine through a chink ajar!
 I know my task; these trolls, these three,
 their fall redeems world's misery; —
 if *our* age buries them today *
 world-pestilence is swept away!
 Up; arm thee, soul! Thy weapon draw!
 For Heaven's freemen on, — to war! *
 (he descends towards the settlement)

ACT 2

(Down by the fjord with steep rockwalls around. The old, tumbledown church lies on a slight rise nearby. A storm is brewing.)

The crowd, MEN, WOMEN and CHILDREN, gather in groups, some on the shore, some on the slopes. The MAYOR sits in the middle on a stone, a CLERK assists him; corn is being distributed and other necessities. EINAR and AGNES stand surrounded by a ring of people a little further off. Some boats lie on the beach. BRAND appears on the church mound unnoticed by the crowd.*

Man *(pushing through the press)*

Make way there!

Woman

I came first!

Man *(shoves her aside)*

Get back!

(forces his way through to the Mayor)

Here, fill the belly of my sack!

Mayor

Now wait.

Man

Can't; — must get home, full speed;

four hungry mouths — no five — to feed!

Mayor *(joking)* What, don't you know the latest score?

Man

I left one lying at death's door.

Mayor

Hold on. I suppose you're in the book? *(leafs through papers)*

No; — yes, you are. Your luck's in, look. *(to the Clerk)*

Give number twenty-nine his share. —

Now, now, good people, steady there!

10

Nils Snemyr?

Man 2

Yes?

Mayor

Today you draw

three-fourths of what you had before.

Of course you're fewer now.

Man 2

That's right, —

My Ragnhild, yes, she died last night.

Mayor *(makes note)*

One less. Still, every little counts.

(to the man as he is leaving)

No dashing off though, full of bounce,

to wed a second time!

Clerk *(titters)*

Tee-hee!

Mayor *(sharply)* What's *that* laugh for?

Clerk

I'm laughing, see,

because the Mayor's so droll.

Mayor

Is he!

This meeting's not for light relief;

though a joke's the finest cure for grief.

20

Einar *(steps out of the crowd with Agnes)*

I've stripped myself of every penny,

purse, wallet, pockets — not left any; —

I board the ship a tramp forlorn,

and that's with watch and stick in pawn.

Mayor Your coming here was nicely timed.
 What I've collected's not a lot,
 as all can see, it can't compete
 where needy hands and mouths half-primed
 must share what little share they've got 30
 with those without a bite to eat.
(catches sight of Brand and points up at him)
 One more! You're welcome! If you've heard
 our famine talked of, drought, distress,
 unknot your purse-strings, in a word.
 We'll take from all sorts, come who may.
 Our stocks will soon run out, this way; —
 five fishes in the wilderness*
 of poverty's no meal today.

Brand Share thousands in an idol's name,
 no soul would profit from the same. 40

Mayor It wasn't words I asked you for.
 Words are mere stones where hunger's sore.

Einar You cannot know how long and keen
 these people's sufferings have been!
 A failed year, dearth and sickness, Brand.
 With corpses —

Brand Yes, I understand.
 The leaden circle round each eye
 proclaims who's in authority.

Mayor And yet you're standing there flint-hard.

Brand *(steps down among the crowd and speaks with emphasis)*
 If life here jogged along unmarred, 50
 just keeping pace with each day's need,
 your cry for bread I well might heed.
 Forced on all fours to crawl, I know
 the beast in you is bound to show.
 Where day tracks day in deathly calm,
 advancing at a funeral pace,
 one might suspect enduring harm,
 one's stricken from God's book of grace.*
 But He's been far more good to you;
 infused your blood with terror's dew; 60
 with peril's deadly scourge He's flayed;
 reclaimed the precious gifts He'd made —*

Several *(break in threateningly)* He's mocks us in our need, our dread!

Mayor He slanders us who gave you bread.

Brand *(shakes his head)* O, if the whole of my heart's blood
 could slake you like a healing flood,
 it would gush forth abundantly
 until the arteries drained dry.
 But helping here would be a sin!
 God lifts you from the mire you're in; * 70
 a folk with life, though powerless,

sucks strength and marrow from distress;
the listless vision hawk-like soars
and wide surveys and wide explores,
the slack will straightens up its spine,
beyond the strife sees victory shine;
but should the need beget no daring
the flock will not be worth the sparing!

Woman Here comes a squall, the fjord's been hit
as if his words had woken it! 80

Another He's goading God! You mark me well!
Brand *Your* God can't work a miracle!
Women Look at the storm!

Voices from the crowd Stones, knives — let's clear
this hardened soul from out of here!

(The crowd swarms round Brand threateningly. The Mayor gets between them. A WOMAN, wild and ragged, rushes down over the slopes)

Woman *(calls to the crowd)* Help! where's some help, in Jesu's name!
Mayor What's wrong? Just state your need, your claim —
Woman It isn't claim or need with me!
It's the most dreadful thing can be!
Mayor What's that? Speak up, then!
Woman I can't speak!
It's comfort, help — a priest I seek! 90
Mayor There's no priest here —
Woman Forlorn, forlorn!
God, you were hard when I was born!

Brand *(approaches)*
Perhaps there *is* one here to-day.

Woman *(grips him by the arm)*
Then let him come, but don't delay!

Brand Tell me your need and come he can.
Woman Across the fjord there —
Brand Well?
Woman My man —
house empty, three kids hunger-crammed, — —
say no, say no — he isn't damned!

Brand First tell me.
Woman Well, my milk had dried;
no man, God neither, would provide; 100
the youngest's agonies were wild;
they tore his soul; — he killed the child — !
Brand He killed — !
Crowd *(in horror)* His child!
Woman And as he did
he saw the pit his actions hid!
Remorse poured out of him so fast;
turned violent on himself at last. —
Quick, save his soul though seas be high!
He can't live on, he dare not die;

he hugs the body of his son
 and calls upon the Evil One! 110
 Brand (*quietly*) Yes, this is need.
 Einar (*pale*) Can such things be!
 Mayor She's not in my locality.
 Brand (*curtly, to the crowd*)
 Get out a boat and take me there!
 Man 1 In such a storm? No-one would dare!
 Mayor A path runs round the fjord —
 Woman No, no; —
 there's no road that way you can go;
 I walked it, but a torrent tossed
 the bridge away that I'd just crossed!
 Brand Get out the boat.
 Man 1 Not now; good grief,
 there's rough sea over shoal and reef! 120
 Man 2 See that! A mountain flurry broke
 and set the whole fjord there a-smoke!
 Man 3 A day like this, all clap and blow,
 the priest'd cancel Mass, you know!
 Brand With judgement near, a soul that's sinned
 can't wait on weather and the wind!
 (*gets into a boat and shakes out the sail*)
 You'll risk the boat, then?
 Owner Yes; but stay!
 Brand Right; — who will risk his life — this way!
 Man 1 I'll not make one.
 Man 2 No more will I.
 Several The surest way, is that, to die. 130
 Brand *Your* God's helped no-one cross a fjord;
 remember though that *mine's* on board!
 Woman (*wrings her hands*) He'll die unshriven.
 Brand One's enough
 to do the bailing, help to luff.
 Here, one of you that just now gave!
 Give, men, right to the very grave!
 Several (*turning away*) Don't ask such things!
 Individual (*threateningly*) Come out of there!
 Tempting the Lord's too much to dare!
 Several Storm's getting up, look.
 Others Line there's gone!
 Brand (*holds hard with the boat-hook and calls to the woman stranger*)
 Right, *you* come then; but hurry on! 140
 Woman (*hangs back*)
 What me! When no-one — !
 Brand Let them be!
 Woman I can't!
 Brand You can't?
 Woman My babes need me — !

Brand (*laughs*) It's sand you build on, I can see! *

Agnes (*turns quickly with flushed cheeks to Einar, puts her hand on his arm*)
 You heard all that?

Einar Yes; he is tough!

Agnes Bless you! Your duty's clear enough. (*calls to Brand*)
 Look, here's one man who's fit to share
 your rescue mission to despair.

Brand Come then!

Einar (*pales*) Me!

Agnes I have offered you!
 My narrowed vision soars anew!

Einar I would have made that offer, too, 150
 and gladly gone, before we met —

Agnes (*quivering*) But now — !

Einar Life's young and precious yet; —
 I simply can't!

Agnes (*recoils*) What have you said!

Einar I simply daren't!

Agnes (*cries out*) Just then there spread
 a world-wide ocean that divides
 us two with tempest and fierce tides!

(*to Brand*) I'll sail with you!

Brand Good; quick, this way!

Women (*terrified as she jumps in*)
 Christ help us!

Einar (*desperately tries to restrain her*) Agnes!

All (*rush forward*) Turn back! Stay!

Brand Which way's the house?

Woman (*points*) It's yonder, so, —
 the point past where those black reefs show! 160
 (*The boat puts out from land*)

Einar (*shouts after her*)
 Think of your kin, your mother too!
 Your life!

Agnes We've three aboard as crew!
 (*The boat sails off. The crowd gathers on the high ground and follows it with great anxiety*)

Man 1 He's cleared the headland!

Man 2 No!

Man 1 Well, see —
 it lies astern now on his lee.

Man 2 A gust! It's done for them has that!

Mayor Look, look — it's blown away his hat!

Woman 1 Black as a raven's wing his hair
 streams wet and wild just anywhere!

Man 1 One seething mist of spume.

Einar That hail,
 what was it, there above the gale? 170

Woman 1 Came from the fell there.

Woman 2 (*pointing up*) Look, it's Gerd,
just laughing, hooting as he fared!
Woman 1 She's blowing in an old ram's horn
and throwing stones like magic corn! *

Woman 2 She's swung the horn now like a wand
and toots into her hollowed hand!

Man 1 Yes, toot, you ugly troll, and yell, —
that man's watched over, shielded well! *

Man 2 Next time, with him to helm on board,
I'd risk worse weather on the fjord. 180

Man 1 What was he?

Einar Priest.

Man 2 What'er he be, —
he was a man, that's plain to see!
He's brave and strong and tough at least.

Man The very man to be our priest!

Several Yes, he's the man to be our priest!
(*they scatter over the slopes*)

Mayor (*collects his papers and books*)
It's not good form, not right at all
to trespass on another's call,
and get involved and risk your skin
without good cause for stepping in. —
I do my duty, go the rounds, — 190
but keep within my district's bounds. (*goes*)

(*Outside the hut on the point. It is well on into the day. The fjord is bright and calm.*)
(*AGNES is sitting by the beach. Shortly afterwards BRAND comes out of the door.*)

Brand *That was dying, fear's oppression
and its stain all wiped away;
calm, of noble mien he lay,
peaceful, radiant of expression.
Can delusion in this way
transform night to such a day?
Of his sin's wild, mortal feature
he saw just the outer shell —* 200
*what the mouth can name and tell, —
what the hand can grasp and handle, —
what now brands his name with scandal, —
violence on that little creature.
But that pair who sat so rapt,
staring, frightened-eyed and cuddling
close together, strayed birds huddling
in the ingle-corner, trapped, —
they who could but stand and stare,
though at what, quite unaware —*
they whose souls' deep-etched, foul stain 210

they'll not have eradicated,
 though Time scour and scour again,
 even as bent old men, white-pated;
they whose life-stream takes direction
 from this awful recollection, —
they who'll grow, now, in the light
 of his ghastly deed of night, —
they, who'll not succeed in burning
 out thought's funeral pyre of flame,—
those who hold, past his discerning, 220
 in their hands the means of earning
 for their sire gross after-fame. — *
 And from them may stretch through time
 link on link to sin and crime.
 Why? hell's hollow answer runs, —
 that they were their father's sons!
 What is cancelled out by silence?
 What smoothed over by compliance?
 Where does culpability
 start for one's heredity? * 230
 What a moot, what litigation
 at the great adjudication! *
 Who will try, who will bear witness,
 all being guilty of offence;
 who submit, with sense of fitness,
 handed-down, soiled documents?
 Will it *then* suffice, the plea
 that the debt's hereditary?
 Dizzying, black-as-night confusion,
 no-one's managed your solution. 240
 Yet upon the brink there's dancing,
 mindless mob and senseless prancing; —
 souls should quake, should shriek misgiving, —
 yet, in a thousand, none surmises
 what a peak of guilt arises
 from that little word of — living!

(Some men from the crowd come from behind the house and approach Brand)

Man We have to meet again, we do.
 Brand He's in no need of help from you.
 Man He has been helped and purified;
 but still there's those three sat inside. 250
 Brand Well then?
 Man We've brought a bite to sup
 from scraps that we'd been saving up —
 Brand If you give *all* but then stop short *
 at life, then you'll have given nought.
 Man This man who's dead, if he today
 stood placed in mortal danger's way
 and called for help, clung to his keel,

I'd risk my life I would, for real.
 Brand But soul's dire need, then — that's all one?
 Man We're sons of toil, all said and done. 260
 Brand Then turn your full gaze from the sight
 of ridges outlined by the light;
 don't squint, as now, the left eye tending
 to heaven while the right invokes
 the dirt where, with your backs all bending,
 you've stretched yourselves into your yokes.
 Man I had expected, when you spoke,
 advice to cast aside the yoke.
 Brand Yes, if you can.
 Man It lies with you.
 Brand With me?
 Man There's many *told* us, true, 270
 and *shown* us where the road should be; —
 they *pointed*, but you *trod* it, see?
 Brand You mean — ?
 Man A thousand words won't leave
 the print one deed can well achieve.
 It's in the parish name we plead; —
 we see a man just fits our need.
 Brand (*uneasy*)
 What do you want?
 Man Stay here as priest.
 Brand Me? Here!
 Man You've heard and read at least
 our flock's been priestless in its woes.
 Brand Yes, I recall —
 Man This place was thriving 280
 a while back — now, it's scarce surviving.
 When bad years came, when corn-crops froze,
 when man and beast both caught disease,
 when want had brought us to our knees,
 when need sang all our souls to sleep,
 when the price of wheat and seed increased, —
 up too then went the price of priest.
 Brand Ask what you will, but *that* can't be!
 A greater duty's laid on me.
 I need life's strong and stirring tension, 290
 I need to have the world's attention.
 What's here for me? With crags surrounding,
 the human voice can have no weight.
 Man Where crags reply, the word keeps sounding
 much longer, that's if spoken straight.
 Brand Who'd shut him in the mineshaft's winding
 when broad meads beckon free and fair?
 Who'd plough the barren waste when there
 are acres, freehold, for the finding?

Who'd want to harvest crops from seed, 300
 when trees surround him ripe with fruits?
 Who'd blunt the mind with dull pursuits,
 when blessed with vision's light and speed?

Man (*shakes his head*)
 I grasped your deed, — not what you say.

Brand Don't keep on asking! Let's away! (*makes to go*)

Man (*stands in his way*)
 This call, then, that you won't let go,
 this task, then, that you look to so —
 it means a lot — ?

Brand In every way
 it's my entire life!

Man Then stay. (*with emphasis*)
 If you give all but then stop short 310
 at life, remember, you give nought.

Brand You own one thing you can't surrender;
 your inner self, identity.
 You dare not check or stem or hinder
 vocation's stream from flowing free; —
 it has to reach the caverned sea.

Man Stuck in a mere or tarn, look you, —
 it can still join the deep as dew.

Brand (*looks hard at him*)
 Who filled your mouth with words like those?

Man You did, when time for deeds arose, 320
 when storm a-shrieking, sea all rent,
 when spite of storm and sea you went,
 when for a soul whose sins were rank,
 you risked your life upon a plank, —
 then it struck deep in many a mind,
 now hot, now cold, like sun and wind, *
 then it rang out like bells that chime — — . (*drops voice*)
 Maybe it's gone by morning time;
 then we'll have furled the flag away
 you hoisted over us today. 330

Brand Where there's no strength, a call's no good (*hard*)
 If you can't be the thing you *should*, —
 then be in earnest what you *can*;
 be out and out the earthly man.

Man (*looks at him for a moment and says*)
 Woe unto you if you withdraw;
 woe unto us, who briefly *saw*!
 (*he leaves; the rest follow in silence*)

Brand (*watches them a long while*)
 One by one, their shoulders sagging,
 homeward goes that silent group.
 Minds depressed, their footsteps dragging,
 tired and heavy off they troop; 340

each one leaves as though corrected *
 by a rod, with downcast eyes,
 leaves like mankind's sire, rejected,
 driven out of Paradise, —
 leaves like him with sin-veiled forehead, —
 stares like him in gloom's abyss, —
 bears like him his new-won knowledge,
 bears lost innocence like his.
 Make man whole again and blightless,
 such was my declared intent — 350
 there's the product; — sin's own likeness,
 not God's image, as was meant. —
 Out, and seek some greater height;
 there's no room here for a knight! *

(about to leave but stops when he sees AGNES on the shore)

Look, she sits and listens, quite
 rapt, as though to breeze-borne singing.
 Sat there in the boat, too, listening
 as it cleaved the troubled sea, —
 listened, to the seat-thwarts clinging,
 listened, brushing spindrift glistening 360
 on her brow's serenity.
 As though hearing changed its guise
 and she listened through her eyes. *(approaches)*
 Well, young woman, are you pondering
 on the fjord that's winding by — ?

Agnes *(without turning)*

Not the fjord's, nor world's vain wandering;
 both of them deceive the eye.
 On a vaster world I gaze;
 etched on air it never quivers;
 I glimpse seas and mouths of rivers; 370
 through the mist bright sunbeams blaze.
 I see dazzling light that traces
 cloud-wrapped summits with its playing,
 see a desert's boundless spaces.
 In the distance palms are swaying
 to the piercing wind's insistence,
 there black shadows disarraying.
 Not a sign of life, existence;
 like a world in parturition;
 and I hear loud-ringing voices, 380
 offering interpretation:
 choose salvation or perdition;
 to your task, affirm your choices; —
 you shall people this creation! *

Brand *(carried away)*

Say what more you sense!

Agnes *(lays her hand on her breast)* A feeling

in my breast of great strengths glowing,
 I can sense the flood-tides flowing;
 I can see a new dawn stealing.
 Like a universe, reflection's
 heart expands in all directions, 390
 and I hear a proclamation:
 thou shalt people *this* creation.
 Each thought seeking definition,
 each unfinished undertaking,
 sighs and whispers, restless, waking,
 brought at last to parturition;
 and I, sensing more than seeing
Him who soars above our being,
 feel *Him* watching from on high
 full of grief and charity, 400
 bright and mild as dawn's sweet morrow,
 yet filled unto death with sorrow; *
 and I hear the ringing voices:
 now create and be created;
 be redeemed or desolated; —
 to your task, affirm your choices!
 Brand Inward! Inward! There's the message!
 There's the road, the trail's clear presage!
 Heart itself — an earthly clod,
 new-created, ripe for God; 410
there Will's vulture shall be slain, *
 Adam *there* be born again.
 Let the world then go its way
 under song or thralldom's sway; —
 should we clash though, might and main, —
 should it try to wreck my work, —
 then, by heaven, I'd fight, not shirk!
 Space in earth's wide vault to be
 one's self, in its entirety, —
 that is man's due right in law, 420
 and I ask for nothing more!
(reflects quietly for a moment and says)
 Be one's self? But how then, measure
 one's legacy of debts and treasure?
(breaks off and looks into the distance)
 Who's that earth-bound crone who presses
 up the hillside, bent and shambling? —
 Head down but she keeps on scrambling.
 Now she stops — her breath's run short —
 holds on to prevent her slipping,
 with her skinny fingers gripping
 fiercely in her poke's recesses 430
 on some precious thing she's brought.
 On her wizzened frame a baggy

kirtle, like a barn-fowl's leg;
 hands like pincers, gnarled and scraggy;
 she's an eagle, drooping, saggy
 on the barn-door from a peg. (*sudden anguish*)
 What chill childhood memories stir,
 what keen blasts from fjord and home
 cast a freezing frost on her, —
 worse frost on my soul confer — — ?
 God of grace! My mother's come!

440

BRAND'S MOTHER (comes up into view, pauses when half-visible on the slope, shades her eyes with her hands and looks around her)

Mother Here's where they said he was. (*comes nearer*)
 Not pleasant,
 the devil take this blinding light!
 Son, is that you?

Brand Yes.

Mother (*rubs her eyes*) Ugh, too bright,
 the glare fair burns into your sight;
 why, there's no telling priest from peasant.

Brand At home I saw no sun at all
 from fall of leaf to cuckoo-call.

Mother (*laughs quietly*)

No, *there* it's grand. You freeze, I warrant,
 like icicles that fringe the torrent.
 You grow so strong that you would dare
 just anything — without a care.

450

Brand Good day! Goodbye! My time is short.

Mother Yes — always were the hasty sort.
 You couldn't wait to get away —

Brand You thought it best I went, at least.

Mother As proper now as then I'd say;
 strong reason you should be a priest.
 (*inspects him more closely*)

Hmm, — grown up big and strong, that's clear.
 But just you mark my word, d'you hear? —
 You watch your life, now!

460

Brand Is that all?

Mother What, life? What more is there beside?

Brand I mean: the counsels you let fall,
 is *that* the whole?

Mother You can decide
 what use you make of more. But save it,
 your life, for me, the one who gave it. (*angry*)
 What you were at's been widely pondered;
 and that has made me cross and scared.
 That fjord today! You could have squandered
 what, for *my* sake, you should have spared.
 You are the family's last surviving.
 You are my flesh and blood, my son —

470

the roof-tree that I've been contriving
should get the house I've slaved on done.
Hold fast; stand firm; and keep on going!
Don't ever yield! You stay alive!
An heir's one duty's to survive, —
and you'll be mine — some day — no knowing — —

Brand So that is why you've come to visit,
with pockets full and bulging, is it? 480

Mother Son, are you mad! (*recoils*) Don't you come near!
Stay there! I'll cudgel you, my knave! (*calmer*)
What did you mean by that? — Look here!
I'm getting older year by year;
and that means soon or late the grave;
then you'll get all I've owned and treasured;
it's all there, counted, weighed and measured — .
It isn't on me! — no it merits
being left back home. Not much, I know,
but he won't beg, he who inherits — . 490
Don't you come near me! Stay just so!
I promise you, I shan't have hidden
one farthing where it can't be found, —
in nooks and crannies in the ground, —
nor under stones, there'll be no hiding
in walls or under boarded floors; —
my son, the legacy's all yours;
you'll get the lot, and no dividing.

Brand There are conditions?

Mother One — providing
that gambling with your life's forbidden. 500
Keep up the line, son after son;
I want no other payment, none.
And take good care that there's no waste, —
no sharing, splitting up in haste; —
increase it as you like or not;
but year by year, keep what you've got!

Brand (*after a short pause*)
One thing we must have out, we two:
I've always been at odds with you; —
you were no mother, I no son,
till now you're grey, my growing's done. 510

Mother I don't need fuss nor pampering.
Be as you like; I'm no soft thing.
Be hard, ice-cold, be obstinate, —
that won't get through my armour-plate;
just keep your pile — though dead and dry, —
so long as it's in the family!

Brand (*takes a step nearer*)
What if I took it in my head

to cast it to the winds instead?

Mother (*recoils*)
 Cast what through years of drudgery
 has bent my back and turned me grey! 520

Brand (*nods slowly*)
 Yes, cast it.

Mother
 Cast it! If you do
 you'll cast my soul to windward too!

Brand
 Suppose I do it, even so?
 Stand by your bed as shadows grow,
 before the couch, a taper there,
 you, clutching at a book of prayer,
 sleeping the sleep of death's first night —
 suppose I grope and search and handle,
 exposing hoard on hoard to sight, —
 suppose I take and light a candle — 530

Mother (*coming closer in her suspense*)
 What put that notion in your brain?

Brand
 What put it? Shall I say?

Mother
 Out plain.

Brand
 A strange event from boyhood days
 my memory never could erase,
 that marks my soul with scars as real
 as those from hare-lips when they heal.
 An autumn evening. Father dead,
 and you lay sick. I crept my way
 where pale by taper-light he lay.
 I stood there in a nook to stare, 540
 and saw he held a book of prayer;
 what struck me was the sleep he's in,
 and how his wrists had grown so thin;
 I caught the stench of clammy sheet; —
 then, in the passage, sound of feet; —
 in came a woman, — on she sped,
 not seeing me, straight for the bed.
 She set to work there, groped and sifted,
 first it's the corpse's head she lifted,
 pulled one roll out first, then a store — 550
 she counted, hissed: there must be more!
 Then in the pillows there she spotted
 a packet well done up and knotted;
 she tore, she snatched, all hasty fingered,
 used teeth on any tie that lingered.
 She dug again; another store.
 She counted, hissed: there must be more!
 She prayed, she moaned, she cursed, she cried;
 in each and every nook she pried,
 and found, — with anxious joy straightway 560
 she pounced, a falcon on its prey.

Each cranny emptied by the end,
 she left the room like one condemned;
 she wrapped her finds up in a shawl
 and softly moaned: "So *that was all!*"
 Mother My claim was great, my find well short;
 and it was more than dearly bought.
 Brand It cost you dearer than you knew;
 it stole my filial heart from you.
 Mother O, that! There's nothing new, you'll find, 570
 in trading goods for heart and mind.
 To start with, I paid dear, I guess;
 I paid a shipwrecked life, no less.
 I paid with something that's now dead; —
 meant light to me, and wings outspread,
 a something fair though dunderhead;
 scarce know, now, what I paid and spent; —
 love was the name by which it went. —
 I well recall the struggle's price,
 I well recall my dad's advice: 580
 "Forget the farm-hand; take instead
 the other; wizzened — ? That's no trouble;
 that chap's got wits inside his head;
 he'll get his property to double!" —
 I took him — shame, though for my pains.
 He never stretched to double gains! —
 But since that time I've drudged and wrought,
 so now it's but a little short.
 Brand Do you recall, so near death's vale,
 you're putting up your soul for sale? 590
 Mother Best proof I do so and not least,
 my son was put to be a priest.
 And when the time comes, you'll take care
 of all my needs as grateful heir.
 I've got a tidy pile put by;
 you've comfort, words, authority.
 Brand You were so shrewd, but wrong, alas,
 to view me in the family glass.
 Up hill, down dale, full many there
 have known the same parental care; — 600
 child seen as steward, that's what matters,
 of family hand-me-downs in tatters;
 eternity, just now and then,
 swims gleaming bright into your ken;
 you reach for it, think things are leading
 it closer to life's orbit when
 you graft inheritance on breeding; —
 fuse death and life by this proceeding,
 think that eternity inheres
 in the mere totting-up of years. 610

Mother Don't probe your mother's mind son, — you
just take your legacy, when due.

Brand And debt?

Mother What debt? What sort of debt?
There is no debt.

Brand Ah well; and yet
if debt there were, I'd feel committed
to settling every claim submitted.
Each son, from sense of duty, aims,
on mother's grave, to meet all claims.
Were the house bare that came to me, —
you debt-book's still my legacy. 620

Mother There's no law says so.

Brand None, I think,
that's written down with pen and ink;
but in each truly filial mind
there's carved a law of different kind, —
that law requires compliancy.
Blind creature, you must learn to see!
You've fouled God's earthly habitation, *
your loan of soul you've ill defrayed,
the image after which you're made *
you have bemired with filthiness; 630
the soul once winged for aspiration
you've wing-clipped into worldliness.
That is your debt. What shall you do
when God requires His own of you? *

Mother (*abashed*)

Brand What shall I do? What then?

Brand Don't fret;
your son takes on himself your debt.
God's image that you've stained and blotted
shall rise in me, will-cleansed, unspotted!
Go join the dead, find peace therein.
My mother shall not sleep in debt; 640
I clear the debt.

Mother Debt *and* the sin?

Brand Your debt. Mark what I say; just debt.
Your son shall clear your debt of soul;
your sin, though, *you* must settle, whole.
Man's full indebtedness, though he
be tortured by earth's drudgery,
can to the last scrap be repaid,
last farthing, by another's aid:
but when that's wasted, *there's* the sin,
for which, repent — or die therein! 650

Mother (*uneasy*) I'd best be getting home, maybe,
to where the ice-cap shadows me;
there's poison-thoughts thrive in the heat

of the confounded sun-glare here;
the smell of them well-nigh distracts you.

Brand Seek out your shadow, I'll be near.
If light, if heaven once more attracts you,
if you desire that we should meet,
then send me word and I'll be waiting.

Mother Yes, you with your judging and your baiting! 660

Brand No, warm as son and kind as priest
I'll temper terror's blast at least;
the songs I'll sing beside your couch
will cool your fevered blood, I vouch!

Mother Your promise, heart-and-hand, was meant?

Brand I'll come the moment you repent. (*moves closer*)
But I must set conditions too.
All earthly bonds now binding you
you must cast off and freely waive,
and go down naked to your grave. * 670

Mother (*strikes out wildly at him*)
Part heat from fire, then, by that notion,
part frost from snow, wet from the ocean!
Ask less!

Brand Cast overboard a child
then ask "Lord, bless my deed, be mild!"

Mother Some other penance, hunger, thirst, —
not one thought greatest and the worst.

Brand Who shuns the greatest must assume
not all the rest will ease his doom.

Mother I feed the poor-box, silver, too!

Brand All?

Mother Son, but won't a *fair bit* do? 680

Brand You have no penance left to try,
till, Job-like on piled ash, you die. *

Mother (*wrings hands*)
Life gone to waste, soul cast away;
possessions squandered any day!
Home then, and hug to me, alone,
all that can still be called my own!
My goods, my goods, my child of pain, —
I've bled my breast for you in vain; —
home now and like a mother weep
my sickly little mite to sleep. — 690
Why make my soul and flesh one whole
if fleshly love's death to the soul? — *
Stay by me, priest! — No longer clear
how I shall feel when dread looms near.
If I'm to lose all while I live, —
I'll hold on to the last, not give (*leaves*)

Brand (*looks after her*)
Yes, your son will now wait near you

for the word that you've amended,
 warm your chilled, old hand to cheer you
 just as soon as it's extended. (*goes to Agnes*) 700
 Evening's not like morn before.
 Heart and mind were then at war;
 I heard distant war-cries ringing,
 sought to set wrath's sword a-swinging,
 slay the trolls, make falsehood yield all,
 crush the world within the shield-wall.*

Agnes (*turns and looks up at him joyfully*)
 Morn was pale compared with eve.
 Then I sought to play, deceive,
 sought to gain, amass more dross
 when my gain lay in its loss. * 710

Brand
 Mighty dreams, and lovely visions,
 like a flock of swans ascending
 bore me, broad-winged, on my missions.
 I could see my path extending; —
 scourge of a whole generation,
 boldly seeking confrontation.
 Church processions, pomp and show,
 incense, hymns, silk banners wending,
 gold cups, victory celebrations,
 to the throng's wild acclamations, 720
 cast upon my work a glow. —
 Vast temptation, wealth galore; —
 yet a fiction, nothing more,
 just an upland tinsel spun
 half from lightning, half from sun. —
 Where I stand now, dusk is pending
 long before the day's true ending, —
 stand between the scree and sound,
 barred the teeming world, and lonely,
 with the sky a sliver only, — 730
 but I stand upon *home's* ground.
 Now it's sung, my Sabbath song;
 ungirthed now my wingèd steed;
 but a greater goal I see
 than the clash of chivalry, —
 daily tasks, chores set day-long,
 shall be ranked a sabbath-deed.

Agnes
 Brand
 And that God, whose fall was nigh?
 He shall fall still, just the same, —
 but secretly, to no acclaim, 740
 not exposed to every eye.
 Clearly a mistake of mine,
 that redemptive medicine.
 No heroic ostentation
 will uplift and change the nation;

calling on strength's opulence
 will not mend its soul's great rents.
 It is *will*, the will that matters!
 Will that liberates or shatters,
 Will intact in anything, 750
 light or heavy, life may bring. —
 (*turns towards the hamlet where the evening shadows are beginning to fall*)
 Come, then, you who droop and wander
 in my home-dale's isolation;
 soul to soul, through disputation
 we'll attempt our cleansing yonder.
 Faint-heart slaying, Falsehood fighting,
 Will's young lion-cubs inciting!
 Hands on hoe, like hands on sword,
 both with human worth accord;
 one goal, — to become the fit 760
 writing-tablet for God's writ — *
 (*turns to go. Einar intercepts him*)
 Einar Stop and give me what you took!
 Brand Her, you mean? She's sitting there.
 Einar (*to Agnes*) Choose between the uplands fair
 and this dismal, gloomy nook —
 Agnes I've no choice I can assure you.
 Einar Agnes, hear me, I implore you!
 Think of the old saw, declaring
 "light to lift loads, hard the bearing".
 Agnes Go with God, your fair words flatter; 770
 come what may it shall not matter.
 Einar Think of loved ones, fond and caring!
 Agnes Greet my mother, family;
 if they write they'll hear from me.
 Einar Out there where the water's gleaming,
 white sails sever from the strand; —
 like a dream-filled inspiration,
 lofty, spray-dashed prows go creaming
 urgent for their destination
 in a far-off promised land! 780
 Agnes Sail to west or sail to east,
 think of me as one departed.
 Einar Come as my sister then, at least!

 Agnes (*shakes her head*)
 Oceans part us now, uncharted.
 Einar O — go home then to your mother!
 Agnes (*quietly*) Not from teacher, friend and brother.
 Brand (*moves a step nearer*)
 Think, young woman, and think well.
 Squeezed between fell after fell,
 roofed by crags, by summits shaded,

| | | |
|--|---|-----|
| | in this cleft's half-night blockaded, | 790 |
| | from henceforth my life's one faded, | |
| | long and grim October spell. | |
| Agnes | Now the murk no longer frightens; | |
| | through the cloud clear starlight brightens. | |
| Brand | I am hard, mark what I say! | |
| | <i>All or Nothing</i> is my call; * | |
| | should you by the road-side fall, * | |
| | then your life's been thrown away. | |
| | No concessions to distress, | |
| | no reprieve for trespasses; — | 800 |
| | and should life not bear the strain, | |
| | you must gladly die, no less! | |
| Einar | Stop this game, it's wild and vain! | |
| | Leave this grim, dogmatic man; | |
| | live the life you know you can! | |
| Brand | Choose; — the parting of the ways. (<i>goes</i>) | |
| Einar | Choose the storm or calmer days! | |
| | Choose to <i>stay</i> or choose to <i>fly</i> | |
| | choose between delight and sorrow, | |
| | choose the night or sweet tomorrow, | 810 |
| | choose to live or choose to die! | |
| Agnes (<i>rises and says slowly</i>) | | |
| | I descend into death's night.— | |
| | And beyond the dawn gleams bright. | |
| | <i>(she follows Brand. Einar stares after her a while as though dazed, bows his head and descends in the direction of the fjord again).</i> | |

ACT 3

(Three years later. A little garden at the parsonage. High wall of mountains all around; encircling it, a stone wall. The fjord lies narrow and enclosed in the background. The door of the house gives onto the garden. Afternoon.)

BRAND *stands on the steps outside the house;* AGNES *sits on the steps below.*

Agnes My dear, you scan the fjord again
 with anxious eyes that tell of strain —

Brand I wait a call.

Agnes You're agitated!

Brand I wait my mother's call in vain.
 Three years I've faithfully awaited
 the call that's not been brought to me.
 To-day I'm told with certainty
 her time will very soon be ending.

Agnes *(softly and lovingly)*

 Brand, you should go without her sending.

Brand *(shakes his head)*

 If she repent not of her sin,
 there is no comfort I can bring.

10

Agnes She is your mother.

Brand Not for me
 to treat as gods my family.

Agnes Brand, you are hard!

Brand To you?

Agnes O, no!

Brand I promised you a path of woe.

Agnes *(smiles)* It wasn't so; you didn't keep
 your word.

Brand But here the cold bites deep;
 the bloom upon your cheek's been lost;
 your tender mind's been nipped with frost.
 Our house knows no prosperity;
 it stands ringed round by rocks and scree.

20

Agnes But all the more securely so.
 The glacier's so built out with snow
 that when it melts at blossom-tide
 it shoots right out beyond us all,
 the parsonage stands safe inside
 as in a hollow waterfall. *

Brand And sun, that never shines here quite.

Agnes O but it dances warm and bright
 upon the shoulder that we face —

30

Brand Three weeks in summer, yes — its light
 can never reach, though, to the base.

Agnes *(looks at him steadily, rises and says)*

Brand, something's scaring you like this!
 Brand You're scared!
 Agnes No, you!
 Brand You're frightened, and
 you keep it hidden.
 Agnes You too, Brand!
 Brand You're gazing into some abyss!
 Out with it! Speak!
 Agnes I quake with fear — — (*checks*)
 Brand You quake? For whom?
 Agnes For Alf, my dear.
 Brand For Alf!
 Agnes You too!
 Brand At times I may!
 But no, he can't be snatched away! 40
 Why, God is good. It won't be long
 before my lad's grown big and strong.
 Where is he now?
 Agnes He's sleeping.
 Brand (*looks through the doorway*) See;
 no dream of pain or malady;
 his little hand is plump and round —
 Agnes But pale.
 Brand Yes, pale. But that will go.
 Agnes How sweet he sleeps and peaceful so.
 Brand God bless you, sleep now, deep and sound! (*closes door*)
 When you two came, light pierced the murk,
 and peace descended on my work; 50
 each time of grief, each heavy care
 made easy, thanks to you, to bear;
 with you, my courage stood the fray,
 my strength drew on his childish play.
 I took my call for martyrdom,
 but see how changed it's all become,
 how fortune's sped me, never swerved —
 Agnes Yes, Brand, but fortune well deserved.
 O, you have striven, suffered, braved, —
 encountered evil, toiled and slaved, — 60
 I know the heart's-blood wept unseen —
 Brand I thought how easy it had been;
 with you love entered to impart
 a spring-day brightness to my heart.
 I'd never known the like of it;
 something my parents never lit;
 instead they damped such sparks as were
 shot from the ashes here and there.
 As though the stored-up tenderness
 I'd kept, unable to express, 70
 was saved to make a halo shine

Agnes on him and you, sweet wife of mine.
 Not only us, though; all that we
 now number in our family,
 each son of sorrow, brother in need,
 each child that's wept, each mother grieved,
 have at your heart's rich board received
 a seat and food that they might feed.

Brand Thanks to you both. You've bridged the sky
 with rainbows of your clemency. 80
 No soul can cherish *all* mankind *
 who has not first loved *one* alone;
 I had to yearn, to thirst and find,
 my heart and hardened into stone —

Agnes Your love's still hard, though, nonetheless;
 it smites the one you would caress.

Brand You, Agnes?
 Agnes Me? O no, my dear;
 light was the load you bade me bear; —
 but many a soul's been known to fall
 away at *All or Nothing's* call. 90

Brand What all the world may label love,
 I neither know nor will approve.
 God's love I know and understand,
 and that is nothing weak and bland;
 it's hard, to death's last fearful rite,
 commands that the caress should smite.
 What in the grove was God's reply? *
 His son in sweating terror lay
 and begged, begged "take the cup away".
 Remove his cup of agony? 100
 No, child, he had to drain it dry.

Agnes O, measured by so strict a scale,
 all earthly souls are doomed to fail.

Brand No man can know whose judgement's near;
 but an eternal flame writes clear:
 be faithful to the end, unflinching, *
 life's crown's not won with penny-pinching!
 It's not enough to bathe in terror;
 there's torment's flame to pass through still.
 To lack the *strength* is venial error — 110
 but never to have lacked the *will*.

Agnes Yes, all you say, it must be true.
 O, where you climb, raise, raise me, too;
 o, lead me towards your heaven on high;
 desire is strong but courage fails;
 I feel I swoon, fears multiply,
 my weary, earth-bound footstep trails.

Brand See, Agnes, one demand applies
 to all: no coward compromise!

120 A man's condemned in all his works*
 if he skimps half and cheats and shirks.
 It should be raised to law, this creed:
 not by mere word, but living deed.

Agnes (*throws her arms round his neck*)
 No matter where, I'll follow you.

Brand No crag can be too steep for two.
 (*The DOCTOR has come down the road and stops beyond the garden fence*)

Doctor. Well! Doves at play, what? — bill-and-cooing,
 amongst these bare, brown hummocks, wooing!

Agnes My dear old doctor, come in, do!
 Is this a visit? (*runs down and opens the garden gate*)

Doctor Not to you!
 You know you make me cross, a lot. 130
 To tie oneself to such a spot,
 where mountain winds and weather slice
 right through the soul and skin like ice — !

Brand Not through the soul.

Doctor You think not? Well — !
 That's how it seems — but who can tell?
 It seems your compact made in haste
 survives quite well and firmly based,
 though, as the saying goes, we know
 one might expect that what was so —
 well, easy come — might easy go. 140

Agnes One sunbeam kiss, one bell-stroke may
 well usher in a summer's day.

Doctor Goodbye. A patient — I've been called.

Brand My mother?

Doctor Yes. You're set to go?

Brand Not now.

Doctor You've been already?

Brand No.

Doctor Parson, you're hard. I've truded and crawled
 in fog and sleet across that moor
 although she's one of those, I'm sure,
 that pay as though they're pauper-poor.

Brand God bless your skill and industry. 150
 Ease, if you can, the agony.

Doctor God bless my will; I answered need
 as soon as called on, with all speed.

Brand You she has sent for; I've no part; —
 I'm waiting, waiting, sick at heart.

Doctor Why wait a call?

Brand Until I'm sent for
 there'd be no purpose that I went for.

Doctor (*to Agnes*)
 You hapless wretch, a sacrifice

in hands as hard as any vice!

Brand I am *not* hard.

Agnes He'd give his whole 160
life's blood if it would cleanse her soul!

Brand I, as a son, with no regrets
inherited her book of debts.

Doctor Pay off your own!

Brand *One* can, you'll find, *
redeem God's debt for all mankind.

Doctor Not one who's over ears a debtor,
a beggarman himself, no better.

Brand Beggar or rich; — my will's intact; —
and that's enough, that single fact.

Doctor (*looks at him steadily*)
Yes, "human will-power *quantum satis*" * 170
stands in your credit side all right,
but, priest, your entry *caritatis*,
that page is still a virgin white! (*goes*)

Brand (*follows him with his eyes for a moment*)
No word's been tarnished so with lies
as this word love man misapplies; —
it's used with a satanic skill
to cover up defects of will;
thus hiding what is cause for shame,
that life's a cunning weasel-game.
If it be strait, the road above, * 180
it can be shortened still — through love;
the man who travels sin's broad way,
can live in hope even so — through love;
who sees his goal yet shirks the fray,
can triumph after all — through love;
who, knowing better, yet would stray, —
there's refuge for him still — through love!

Agnes Yes, *that* is false, yet I must go
on asking: *is* it truly so?

Brand One thing's skimmed over; will must first 190
assuage Law's equitable thirst.
First you must *will*, not merely all
that's feasible in great and small,
not merely where the deeds involve
some toil and trouble to resolve, —
no, you must will with strength and joy
through all that horror may deploy.
It is not martyrdom, to die
upon the cross in agony;
first *will* your death upon the tree, 200
will as you suffer bodily,
will midst the soul's dread fear, endure, —
that first and your redemption's sure.

Agnes (*hugs him tightly*)

When the demand appals the weak, —
then, my strong husband, you must speak!

Brand

When will has triumphed in *such* strife,
then comes indeed the time for love,
descending, a white turtle-dove, *
to bring the olive-leaf of life;
but here, for times degenerate,
a man's best love must be to hate! (*in horror*)
Hate! Hate! There's world-wide war incurred
by willing that one paltry word!

210

(*enters the house hastily*)

Agnes (*looks in through the open door*)

He kneels there by his darling son
and rocks his head as though in grief;
pressed up against the cot like one
at loss for counsel and relief. —
O what a wealth of love is wrung
out of that manly soul of steel!

Alf he *can* love; his baby heel *
the serpent world has not yet stung.

220

(*breaks out in dismay*)

Leaps to his feet, his hands clenched tight!
What does he see? He's ashen white!

Brand (*from the steps*)

Is there no message?

Agnes

No, there's not.

Brand (*looks back into the house*)

His skin is drawn and burning hot;
his temples throb, pulse in commotion — !
Agnes, stay calm!

Agnes

My God, what notion —

Brand

No, stay quite calm — (*calls across the road*)

Here comes my call!

Man (*through the garden gate*)

You must come, Father!

Brand (*hurriedly*)

Yes, straightway!

And what's your message?

Man

Hard to say;

230

sat up in bed she did, a-sprawl,
and said: "The parson, have word sent;
the half my goods for the sacrament."

Brand (*recoils*)

The half! O, no! Say no!

Man (*shakes his head*)

That rate

you wouldn't get the message straight.

Brand

The *whole* is what she must have said.

Man

Maybe; but loud it was she pled
and clear, too. I'm no muddle-head.

Brand (*gripping him by the arm*)

On Judgement Day, before the Lord,
you'd testify she used that word?

240

Man Yes.

Brand (*firmly*) Tell her that my word was meant, —
there'll be no priest, no sacrament.

Man (*looks at him uncertainly*)

You can't have understood me clear.
It's from your mother that I'm here.

Brand I recognise no law that's in
two parts, for strangers and one's kin.

Man Hard words!

Brand She knew full well the price
was all-or-nothing sacrifice.

Man Priest!

Brand Say, one scrap of golden calf
serves on idolatry's behalf.

250

Man I'll use your answer's scourge to flay
as soft and gentle as I may.

She's got this comfort left, it's true:
God isn't half as hard as you! (*goes*)

Brand O yes, that comfort's carrion-breath
has often plagued the world with death.
Some panic, hymns when things get rough,
will butter a judge up soon enough.

Of course it works!.! It *must* be so!

They know their man from long ago; —
they've learnt what all His works reveal:
the old man's glad to strike a deal.

260

(*The man has met another on the road; they return together*)

Brand New message!

Man 1 Yes.

Brand What does it say?

Man 2 It goes, nine tenths she'll give away.

Brand Not *all*?

Man 2 Not all.

Brand My word was meant; —
there'll be no priest, no sacrament.

Man 2 She's paid right hard in toil and strife. —

Man 1 Remember, priest, she gave you life!

Brand (*wrings his hands*)

I dare not use two scales to weigh *
my foes and my own family.

270

Man 2 She's in real desperate need we've heard;
come — or at least a kindly word.

Brand (*to the first man*)

Do as I bade — tell her, nigh-dead:
clear board for grace's wine and bread. (*the men leave*)

Agnes (*clings to him*)

You scare me, Brand: you're like a sword, *
a flaming weapon of the Lord.

Brand (*tears in his voice*)
 Am I not by the world defied,
 with sword-drawn scabbard at its side?
 Does it not spill my soul's blood, smite
 with a relentless, spineless spite? 280

Agnes
 Harsh, the conditions you impose.

Brand
 Dare you set milder ones than those?

Agnes
 Set such a goal as you see fit,
 and see how few match up to it.

Brand
 No, there you've every cause to fear.
 So mean, perverse, exhausted, drear,
 this generation's sense of living.
 It's rated high is someone's giving,
 much praised but modestly, by stealth,
 the legacy of all his wealth. 290
 Bid hero to erase his name,
 be satisfied that victory came;
 propose those terms to Kaisers, Kings,
 and see what great return that brings.
 Bid poet to uncage discreetly
 his birds of beauty and completely
 conceal the slightest clue that *he*
 gave them a voice, gold plumery.
 Tempt boughs wind-sered or lushly crowned;
 self-abnegation's nowhere found. 300
 That slavish view is all-prevailing; —
 man, on a wild abyss that's sheer,
 grabs at life's suckers and, that failing,
 he claws into the dust in fear
 at any roots and tendrils near.

Agnes
 And to an age in frantic fall
 you make your *All or Nothing* call!

Brand
 If you'd succeed, then give your all;
 climb even higher for the fall. —
 (*silent for a moment, his voice alters*)
 Yet when to single souls I make 310
 my full demand for their uplifting,
 I'm like a castaway who's drifting
 storm-tossed upon a shipwrecked strake.
 With grief and secret anguish wrung
 I've bitten my chastising tongue, —
 yet, with my arm upraised to smite,
 I thirsted to embrace them tight! —

Go, Agnes, watch him while he's sleeping;
 and lull him to a happy dream;
 a child's clear, gentle soul can gleam 320
 bright as a tarn to summer's beam;

a mother hovers o'er it, sweeping
with bird-like grace, a lovely sight
deep-mirrored there in soundless flight.

Agnes (*pale*) What is it, Brand? Where'er you claim
to shoot thought's arrows, *he's* their aim!

Brand It's nothing. Tend him gently, mind!

Agnes A word for me.

Brand Severe?

Agnes No, kind.

Brand (*embraces her*)
He that is free from sin shall live. *

Agnes (*looks up at him, radiant, and says*):
We've one thing God daren't ask us give! 330
(*enters the house*)

Brand (*contemplatively*)
But should He dare? God dare once more
what "Isaac's terror" dared before? (*shakes off the thought*)*
No, no; I've sacrificed my all,
I have renounced my old life's call, —
to echo like the Lord's own thunder
and rouse earth's sleepers from their slumber.
A lie! No sacrifice involved;
that vanished when the dream dissolved,
when Agnes woke me — shared the vision
in this obscure and modest mission. (*scans the path*) 340
Why does the sufferer still delay
news of her penance, sacrifice
that would uproot sin in a trice,
its deepest fibre, wildest spray! —
But there, look — ! No, it's just the mayor,
well-meaning, plump and debonair,
both hands in pocket, quite sublimely
like brackets in parenthesis.

Mayor (*entering through the garden gate*)
Good morning! Why, how rare this is,
our meeting, and I'm sure untimely — 350

Brand (*indicating the house*)
Come in — .

Mayor Fine here, — thanks, anyhow;
if you'd admit my errand, now,
I'm pretty certain things would tend
to turn out better in the end.

Brand Well, name the errand.

Mayor I'm assured
your mother's sickness can't be cured.
I'm truly sorry.

Brand I've no doubt.

Mayor *Extremely* sorry.

Brand Say your say.

Mayor Well, she is old; — Lord knows, the way
we all must go, there's none left out. 360
And since I was just passing by
I thought: as well jump in, thought I,
as creep my way in; furthermore
I'd heard from several folk before
that she and you have both contrived
a family split since you arrived.

Brand A family split?

Mayor They say she's tight,
clings to what's hers — grips hard they say.
Inclines, *you'd* think, too much that way.
One can't ignore one's interests. 370
She holds by undivided right
your patrimonial bequests —

Brand By undivided right; — no doubt.
And that's where relatives fall out.
And since on various grounds I'd guess
you're waiting for her passing hence
with unwrung withers, more or less,
I trust that you won't take offence,
but hear me out, — though the timing's truly
somewhat ill-chosen.

Brand Not unduly; 380
now, later — it's all one to me.

Mayor So, straight to business, then. You see,
as soon as your poor mother dies
and in the earth's blest bosom lies, —
which won't be long now — you'll be rich.

Brand You think so?

Mayor Think? There's no denying.
In every creek, no matter which
you turn the glass on, she's been buying.
You're rich, priest!

Brand Probate notwithstanding?

Mayor (*smiles*) How's that involved here? That's for handling 390
disputes where several claims impinge;
there's no-one's rights here to infringe.

Brand But say a rival did appear
to claim the wealth and debt that's here,
and said : *I* am the rightful heir?

Mayor He'd have to be Old Nick, I swear!
Depend on me; in this affair
there's no-one else has any say;
rely on me; I'm quite *au fait*.
Now then; you'll be a solid man, 400
perhaps a rich one; no vocation
need tie you to this dull location;
the whole land's yours, the length and span.

Brand Now look, Mayor, doesn't all you say
boil down to simply: "Go away" ?

Mayor Yes, pretty much. It seems quite clearly
best for all parties. If you'll merely
examine carefully the herd
for whom you now expound the Word,
you'll see you no more suit the peasant 410
than wolf would suit the goose and pheasant.
Don't take me wrong! You've got the shoulders
for bigger places, grander scale, —
disaster, though, for small free-holders,
self-styled, of crannies in the boulders,
heirs to some claustrophobic dale.

Brand Man's footing in home ground must be
what roots are to the growing tree; —
if there's no backing for him *there*,
his project fails, his songs despair. 420

Mayor The first law of all business reads:
adapt to what the country needs.

Brand That need's best viewed from higher ground,
not from a country hole, fell-bound.

Mayor Big-city talk, that, for big rallies,
not dale-folk in their wretched valleys.

Brand You people, with your sharp divide
between the plain and mountain-side!
You claim rights as a great world-power,
yet from all obligations cower; 430
abjectly think it clears you all
to scream out: " Help, we're only small!"

Mayor To everything there is a season, *
to every age, its task, its quest.
Our place has thrown its mite, I'd reason, *
into the world's great mission-chest;
that was, of course, some time ago;
the mite not all that tiny, though.
We're run down now, depopulated,
and yet our fame's still celebrated; 440
its long-lost greatness fitting nicely
with old King Bele's reign, precisely; — *
there's many a tale told still, in awe,
of the two brothers, Ulf and Thor,
and doughty fellows by the score
who raided Britain's coast and went
and plundered to their hearts' content.
They squealed, those southrons, cold with fright: *
"God save us from the demons' might!"
And those same demons, past all doubt, 450
were local men that *we'd* sent out.
And how those likely lads would settle

old scores, and slay in clash of metal!
Yes, one's still named who in fine fettle
took up the Lord's cross, crusade-bent; — *

Brand No doubt a swarm of sons is due
 to that great man of promise?

Mayor True;
 but how did *you* know?

Brand O, I thought
 the family likeness could be caught 460
 in promise-heroes of to-day,
 crusading in the same old way.

Mayor Yes, it's come down, that lineage.
 But we're concerned with Bele's age!
 When our first raids abroad were planned,
 we visited our neighbour's land,
 and kinsman's, with the keen-edged axe;
 we trampled all his corn-crops down,
 burned steepled churches, humble shacks
 and wove ourselves a glorious crown. — 470
 Perhaps the bloodshed has a touch
 been boasted of a bit too much;
 still, after all that I've just said,
 I think, with decent moderation,
 I may point back to days long dead,
 when greatness dignified the nation,
 and claim this place contributed
 its mite in terms of steel and flame
 to world-advancement's mighty aim.

Brand But what you say I think demeans 480
 noblesse oblige, and all that means,—
 with harrow, plough, it seems to me
 you bury Bele's legacy.

Mayor But not at all. Just you go out
 to parish functions round about
 with bailiff, J.P., sexton, me
 as honoured guests all in attendance,
 when punch arrives, then you will see
 King Bele's memory's in ascendance.
 In toasts, in clink of tankards, song, 490
 in speeches short and speeches long,
 he's well remembered, seems to thrive.
 I've often felt an urge that's strong
 to weave my thoughts on him, contrive
 embroideries of a flowery kind,
 improving many a local's mind.
 I like a bit of poetry.
 As all do, fundamentally,
 round here — in moderation, look you; —

in *life*, don't ever let it hook you, — 500
 just evenings, seven o'clock to ten —
 when folk have time to spare and when,
 exhausted by the daytime shift,
 one needs a bath that gives a lift.
 That's where we differ, you and we:
you'll want to plough *and* fight, you see,
 like fury, simultaneously.
 This, as I see it, is your mission:
 uniting life with ideal vision, —
 crusading and potato-growing 510
 proved ultimately to unite,
 as sulphur and saltpeter going
 with charcoal make gunpowder, right?
 Brand You're close.
 Mayor But here that's ineffective.
 A big place would be more receptive; —
 go there with your high tendency;
 leave us to plough the bog and sea.
 Brand Start then, — plough deep into the sea
 your boast of noble ancestry;
 no dwarf attains full height, though he 520
 have Goliath in his family tree.
 Mayor Great memories encourage growth.
 Brand Where *memory* and *life* meet, both;
 but it's from memory's hollow tomb
 you've built your craven skulking-room.
 Mayor I'll finish where I first began; —
 it's best you leave us, now you can.
 Here there's no future for your mission,
 here there's no grasping of your vision.
 Such modest uplift as is needed, 530
 such raising as, just now and then,
 is wanted for these toiling men,
I shall attend to, cost unheeded.
 Throughout my public ministry
 there's witness to my industry;
 it's thanks to me the population
 has made a two, nigh three-fold rise, —
 because I've drawn to this location
 now this now that new enterprise.
 At war with Nature's stubbornness 540
 we've forged ahead full steam, no less; —
 a road cut there, a bridge built here —
 Brand None spanning life and faith, I fear.
 Mayor Between the fjord and upland snow.
 Brand Between ideal and action though?
 Mayor First, passage between glen and glen,
 first, access between men and men, —

there was one mind on that, at least
 till you turned up as parish priest.
 You've jumbled everything, what's worse, 550
 our miners' lamps with great auroras;
 who's able, by such double light,
 to see what's wrong and what is right,
 what is a blessing, what a curse?
 Relationships, all muddled for us;
 you've split in hostile camps, incited
 the flock that could win through, united.
 Brand Despite you, though, I'm staying here.
 A man can't *choose* his calling's sphere.
 The man who knows and wills his aim 560
 has seen God's very writ proclaim
 "you belong *here*" in words of flame!
 Mayor Then stay! but keep inside your border.
 I'm glad to have you bring some order
 and cleanse the people's rampant sin;
 God knows there's need, the state they're in!
 But just don't make a holy-day
 of labour's six — and don't display
 the flag as though it were the Lord
 on every sloop that plies our fjord. 570
 Brand To profit from your proposition
 I'd have to change both soul and vision;
 but be oneself, *that's* the vocation,
 achieve one's cause through dedication,
 and I'll achieve my cause, I'll fight
 until it fill my home with light!
 The folk your ruling clique's made drowse
 shall once again be made to rouse!
 You've long enough kept cage-confined
 what's left it of its mountain-kind; 580
 your diet of trivia's been designed
 to turn men sullen, dour of mind;
 you've drained away their best of blood,
 the marrow of their hardihood;
 you've ground to little bits, piece-meal,
 each spirit meant to last like steel; —
 yet you could still well hear the roar
 of insurrection, thundering: "War!"
 Mayor War?
 Brand War!
 Mayor If it's to arms you call
 you'll be the very first to fall! 590
 Brand One day the light will dawn, replete:
 the greatest triumph is defeat! *
 Mayor Take thought, now, Brand; it's time for choosing;
 don't gamble on a single card!

| | | |
|----------------------------------|--|-----|
| Brand | And yet I'll do it. | |
| Mayor | Think — by losing, your earthly life's completely marred. You've everything the good life offers, heir to a wealthy woman's coffers, a child to live for, and you've got a wife you love; — a happy lot kind fortune dealt you from the pack. | 600 |
| Brand | And if I should still turn my back on what you've called my happy lot? What if I <i>must</i> ? | |
| Mayor | Then all's to pot if, in this backward hole, you saw the place to start your world-wide war! Move south, to regions well-endowed, where men dare stand with heads unbowed; <i>that</i> is the place for demonstrations, for asking blood of congregations; it's sweat, not blood, we have to shed struggling in rocky scree for bread. | 610 |
| Brand | My home is here; and here I stay, and here my war gets under way. | |
| Mayor | Suppose it failed, the cause you're choosing; — but first, suppose what you'd be losing! | |
| Brand | I lose myself if I surrender. | |
| Mayor | He's done for, Brand, the lone contender. | |
| Brand | My flock is strong; the best that be. | |
| Mayor (<i>smiles</i>) | Perhaps, — but I've the majority. (<i>goes</i>) | 620 |
| Brand (<i>gazes after him</i>) | There goes the true-blue people's man, well-meaning, decent in his fashion, fair, energetic, feels compassion, — and yet a scourge upon his land. No avalanche, flood, winter gale, no famine, frost or pest entail one half the damage that is done year in, year out, by such a one. In plague-time only life is ravaged; — but he - ! How many thoughts are savaged, how many lively wills aborted, how many stirring anthems thwarted by such a soul's cramped shibboleth! How many smiles on peoples' features, what lightning-flashes in their breast, what ecstasies of rage and zest, they might have grown to noble creatures, — if he'd not bled them all to death! (<i>in sudden anguish</i>) No word! No word! She will not budge! The doctor, yes! (<i>rushes to meet him</i>) | 630 |

Is she — ? Speak out! 640

Doctor Your mother stands before her judge.

Brand Dead! — But repentant?

Doctor That I doubt;
she clutched her worldly goods to heart
till the hour struck, and they must part.

Brand (*subdued and moved*)
A wild and forfeit soul's last throes?

Doctor Her sentence may be mild, who knows? —
a merciful, not legal one.

Brand (*quietly*) What did she say?

Doctor Breathed, at the close:
"God's not hardhearted, like my son!"

Brand (*sinks down on the bench in anguish*)
By guilt distracted, when death's nigh, 650
each soul's afflicted with that lie!
(*hides his face in his hands*)

Doctor (*approaches and looks down at him and shakes his head*)
You want an age that's had its day
brought back unchanged in any way.
You still believe the pact's in force
for God and all His folk of course; —
but generations aren't the same;
ours isn't scared by rods of flame,
by nursery-tales of souls in pain, —
its first commandment's: be humane!

Brand (*looks up*)
Humane! That word, yes — weak, perverse, 660
the password of the universe!
With that each weakling hides the fact
he's neither nerve nor will to act;
with that each worm conceals how he
won't stake his *all* on victory;
and so each coward's fickle vow
is, in its name, soon broken now; —
you puny spirits will persist
till all mankind's one humanist!
Was God humane to Jesus Christ? 670
Had *your* God been in charge then, He
would have declared for clemency
beneath the Cross, — made sacrifice
heaven's diplomatic-note device!
(*covers his head and sits in dumb misery*)

Doctor (*quietly*)
You storm-wracked soul; give grief its head;—
best if you could indulge your tears.

Agnes (*has come out onto the steps; pale and terrified, whispers to the Doctor*)
Come, follow me!

Doctor You rouse my fears!

What is it, child?
 Agnes A snake of dread
 coils cold about my heart to fright me — !
 Doctor What is it?
 Agnes (*drags him with her*) Come! — great God Almighty! 680
 (*they go in; Brand does not notice*)
 Brand (*quietly, to himself*)
 Impenitent. So lived, so died.
 Does not God's finger point the trail?
 Through me now shall be multiplied
 the treasure she has misapplied; —
 woe on me ten-fold if I fail! (*rises*)
 By duty bound and, on home's soil,
 henceforward with unflinching toil
 I'll strike, sworn warrior of the Cross,
 for spirit's gain in flesh's loss. *
 God has bestowed His tongue of steel, * 690
 in me His kindled wrath I feel; —
 I stand now in my will's full flush,
 now dare, now can, whole mountains crush!
 Doctor (*hurries out onto the steps, followed by Agnes, and calls*)
 Set your house in order, leave I say! *
 Brand The earth may quake, but I shall stay!
 Doctor Well then, your child's condemned to die.
 Brand (*distraught*)
 Alf! Alf, the child! What fantasy
 of terror's this! My child! (*turns to enter the house*)
 Doctor (*holds him back*) No, wait! —
 Here there's no sun, there is no light,
 a breeze here has an arctic bite, — 700
 we're blanketed with clammy mist;
 one winter more here, I insist,
 he'll wither in his feeble state.
 Leave, Brand, and you will save your son;
 best leave tomorrow, get it done.
 Brand Today, tonight, this very hour!
 O, he will grow up strong, he'll flower; —
 no blast from glacier, snow from shore,
 shall freeze his little bosom more.
 Come, Agnes, tuck him gently round! 710
 Away, away, along the sound!
 O Agnes, Agnes, death's begun
 to weave its net about our son!
 Agnes I've guessed it, quaked in private, — yet
 could only see but half the threat.
 Brand (*to the Doctor*)
 But flight will save him — promise me?
 Doctor The life a father constantly
 keeps watch upon is quite secure.

Be all to him, and you are sure
to see him bloom; fear's premature. 720

Brand O, thank you! (*to Agnes*)
Wrap his cover tight;
the wind blows up the fjord tonight.
(*Agnes goes into the house*)

Doctor (*watches Brand in silence as he stands motionless looking in through the door, then moves over to him, places his hand on his shoulder and says*):
Towards the flock, so unrelenting,
towards yourself, though, so consenting!
No more or less, no compromises
for them — just *All or Nothing's* law;
but one's own courage vaporises
the moment fate is at the door —
and it's *your* lamb it sacrifices.

Brand What do you mean?

Doctor Your mother heard 730
you thunder forth the law's harsh word:
lost, if you shed not all you have,
lost, if not naked to the grave.
And that same cry would often ring
amidst the folk's worst suffering.
Now *you're* the shipwrecked man, to feel
fate's tempest, clinging to the keel;
now, hull capsized, you jettison
your hell-fire sermons, every one, —
it's overboard with that great book 740
you smote your brothers' breast with, look;
now your concern, when gales are rife,
is how to save *your* offspring's life.
Run, run away, flee fjord and bay, —
run from your mother's corpse — away! —
run from your flock of souls, your call; —
the priest has cancelled Mass, that's all!

Brand (*clutches his head in distraction, as if to gather his thoughts*)
Am I blind *now*? Blind hitherto!

Doctor You act as fathers ought to do.
Don't think that I am blaming you; — 750
I find you, in your wing-clipped plight,
much bigger than as man of might. —
Goodbye! It's a mirror I confer; —
now use it, sighing: "Lord of grace,
so that's a heaven-stormer's face!" (*goes*) *

Brand (*stares in front of him, vacantly, for a moment, and then breaks out in a sudden outburst*):
Now or before, — where did I err?
(*AGNES comes through the door with a cape over her shoulders and the child in her arms;*
BRAND does not see her; she is about to speak, but stops as though stricken with terror when

she observes the expression on his face. In the same instant a MAN enters, hurrying in through the garden gate. The sun is setting).

Man Here, parson, you've an enemy!

Brand (*clutches his fist to his breast*)

Yes, here.

Man The Mayor, you mind his humour.

Your seed was sprouting famously
until he blighted it with rumour.

760

He's kept on hinting to the tune
the manse would stand quite empty soon, —
he said you'd turn your back and leave us
the moment your rich mother died.

Brand Suppose —

Man I know you won't deceive us,
and know why such foul lies were tried;
you've stood against both him and his,
he's never cowed your will, your fire —
so *that's* the rumour's root, that is —

Brand (*uneasily*)

It might be thought — he's right in this.

770

Man Then you'll have been a dirty liar.

Brand Have I — ?

Man How many times you'd say
that *God* had roused you for the fray, —
that home was here with us, you saw,
that *here* was where you'd wage your war,
that none dare fail the call, the mission,
that smite he must and no submission.
You've *got* the call, see! Fierce and bright,
your fire's set many a breast alight.

Brand But most are deaf, man, in this hole;
they're burnt out, every single soul!

780

Man But you know better; — many a mind
shines with the light of heavenly kind.

Brand In ten times more, though, all is night.

Man You're like a beacon in that night.

But that's as may be, let it go;
no call to count heads here you know;
because *I'm* here, one single man,
to say: You leave us if you can!

I've got a soul, just like the next;
can't manage just with Book and text;
it's you that's dragged me up from under, —
see if you'd dare let go — I wonder.

790

You can't; and I shall keep my grip;
my soul's lost if the hold should slip! —
Goodbye! I'll wait the news doubt-free:
my priest won't drop his God, and me. (*leaves*)

Agnes (*timidly*) Your lips are pale, you're white of cheek;

you look as though your heart could shriek.
 Brand Each ringing word flung at the rock 800
 comes back at me with tenfold shock.
 Agnes (*takes a step forward*)
 I'm ready.
 Brand But for what? Where to?
 Agnes (*firmly*) For what a mother *has* to do!
 (*GERD runs past on the road outside and stops at the garden gate*)
 Gerd (*claps her hands and calls out, frantic with delight*):
 Have you heard? He's flown, the preacher! —
 Up from grave-mound, off the crest
 swarms of trolls and goblins crawl,
 black and ugly, big and small, —
 phew! and don't they scratch and all — !
 Nearly gouged my eye, one creature;
 half the soul of me's been taken; — 810
 o, I'll manage with the rest;
 still afloat, not all's forsaken!
 Brand Why, your thoughts are running wild;
 look, I stand before you, child.
 Gerd You? Yes, you, but not the priest!
 Down the slopes from Svartetind
 flew my hawk, swift as the wind;
 fierce and wild, in bit and saddle,
 hissed through twighlight's wind, the beast,
 and a man rode him a-straddle, — 820
 it was parson, it was priest!
 Parish church stands empty now,
 tight as bolts and bars allow.
 Ugly church, its time has passed;
 mine will gain respect at last.
 There the big, strong preacher stands,
 vestment white, spun from the weavings
 of last winter's melt and leavings; —
 come along now, if you choose;
 parish church has empty pews; 830
 my priest's sermon, though, expands
 through the whole world's many lands!
 Brand Shattered soul, who bade you capture
 me with idol-worship rapture!
 Gerd (*comes inside the garden gate*)
 Idol-worship? What's *that*, rightly? — —
 Idol? Ah, I understand;
 sometimes small and sometimes grand;
 always gilded, coloured brightly.
 Idol! Listen; see that gaby?

 Can you recognise the baby 840
 hands and feet beneath the clothes?

See how fine and coloured brightly
 covers tuck round something tightly,
 something like a child that's sleeping?
 See her start — more wraps she's heaping!
 Idol? — Man, *there's* one of those!

Agnes (*to Brand*)

Have you tears, or prayers remaining?
 Dread's consumed all mine, I fear.

Brand

Agnes, — the suspicion's gaining —
 someone greater sent her here!

850

Gerd

Listen; all the bells are chiming
 up there on the savage waste!
 See what congregation's climbing
 on its way to church in haste!
 Look, a thousand trolls there swarming!
 Our priest drowned them in the sea.
 Look, a thousand dwarfs escaping!
 Until now their graves would be
 sealed by the priest to stop them gaping.
 Sea and grave won't stop them forming;
 cold and wet, but out they're storming; —
 troll-brats, seeming dead, look, scraping
 piles of scree aside bawl loudly.
 Listen: "Ma" and "Pa" they sing!
 Men and women answering;
 local man amongst them aping
 father with his sons now, proudly;
 a wife picks up her son who's dead,
 suckles him to see he's fed; —
 never preened so proudly-hearted
 taking him for christening.
 Things woke up when priest departed.

860

870

Brand

Get thee hence! I see too clear
 far worse visions —

Gerd

Laughter, hear — ?

him there, sitting by the track
 that winds peakward, forth and back;
 every soul that's ever took
 that road up is in his book; —
 heigh, he's got nigh every creature;
 parish church stands empty now,
 tight as bolts and bars allow, —
 off on hawk-back flew the preacher!

880

(jumps over the garden fence and is lost amongst the rocks. Silence)

Agnes (*approaches and says in a low voice*)

Let's be off. It's time we were.

Brand (*stares at her*)

What's our way, though?

(points first to the garden gate, then to the house door)

There? - or there?

Agnes (*recoils appalled*)

Brand, your child, — your —

Brand (*follows her*)

Face the worst!

Was I priest or father first?

Agnes (*recoils further*)

Where it thundered from on high —
in this case, there's no reply!

Brand (*keeps following her*)

But you must; a mother's due;
the last word must rest with *you*.

890

Agnes

I'm your wife; what you've demanded
I shall bow to, as commanded!

Brand (*tries to take her by the arm*)

Take the cup of choice from me! *

Agnes (*retreats behind a tree*)

I should no true mother be!

Brand

That reply is judgement's voice!

Agnes (*vehemently*)

Ask yourself if you've a choice!

Brand

Judgement once again, sustained!

Agnes

Do you trust the Lord God's call?

Brand

Yes! (*grasps her firmly by the hand*)

And now let sentence fall,
life or death, by you maintained!

900

Agnes

Take the path your God ordained! (*pause*)

Brand

Let's be off. It's time we were.

Agnes (*tonelessly*)

What's our way, though?

Brand (*remains silent*)

Agnes (*points to the garden gate*)

There?

Brand (*points to the door of the house*)

No, — there!

Agnes (*lifts the child up high in her arms*)

God, what Thou dare'st ask of me,
I dare offer up to Thee!

Lead me through life's fearsome plight! (*enters the house*)

Brand (*stares before him for a moment, bursts into tears, clasps his hands over his head, flings himself down on the steps and cries*):

Jesus, Jesus, give me light!

ACT 4

(Christmas Eve at the parsonage. It is dark inside the room. An outer door in the back wall; a window to one side, a door on the other)

AGNES, in mourning, stands by the window and stares into the darkness)

Agnes Still no sign yet! Still no sign yet! —
 O, this waiting's past endurance, —
 utter cry on cry, and pine, yet —
 no response, no reassurance! —
 Snowflakes falling thick and fast,
 have, as in a shroud they'd cast,
 roofed the old church where they settle — — *(listens)*
 Hark! The gate, the screech of metal!
 Footsteps; firm and manly stride! *(rushes to open the door)*
 Is that you? Come! Come inside!

10

(BRAND enters, covered with snow, in travelling garb which he discards during what follows)

Agnes *(throws her arms about him)*
 O, you've been away so long!
 Please don't leave me; please don't leave me;
 by myself I can't relieve the
 awful gloom, night's ghostly throng!
 What a night, what days to weather,
 two long days and then last night!

Brand Child, I'm back now, we're together.
 (lights a single candle that casts a faint gleam over the room)
 You are pale.

Agnes A wretched sight.
 I've been yearning, watching, waiting, —
 o, and I've been decorating, — 20
 it's not much, but all I had
 hoarded as a summer fad,
 dressing for the Christmas tree.
 Named it after him, the heath; *
 well, he got it — as a wreath! *(bursts into sobs)*
 Now he's half snowed under — see! —
 down — God! —

Brand Where the churchyard lies.

Agnes O, that word!

Brand Come dry your eyes.

Agnes Yes, I shall, but be forbearing;
 my soul bleeds still from its tearing; 30
 wounds so fresh and raw that they
 drain the strength I have away; —
 o, but things will mend; at least they
 will, if I survive this pain,

you'll not see me weep again.
 Brand Is *that* honouring God's feast-day?
 Agnes No, I know — ; but be forbearing!
 Think, last year so blithe, uncaring,
 this year borne, before my eyes,
 out to — (*shrinks from the word*)
 Brand (*sternly*) Where the churchyard lies! 40
 Agnes (*shrieks*) Not that name!
 Brand Burst lungs asunder
 if you're scared, name it the more!
 Named it *must* be, it must thunder
 like a breaker on the shore!
 Agnes You, too, suffer at the mention,
 more than you yourself allow;
 what it costs shows in the tension,
 in the sweat upon your brow.
 Brand Dewdrops on my brow — mere spatters
 from the fjord, the spray it scatters. 50
 Agnes Are the drops then in your eyes
 melted flakes, too, from the skies?
 No, o no, they're much too warm;
 it's your own breast makes them form!
 Brand Agnes — wife — let us two weather
 what confronts us strong and true,
 join our strengths, advance together,
 foot by foot till we win through. —
 O, I was a man afloat!
 Reefs that breakers lashed with violence, 60
 gulls appalled, reduced to silence,
 hailstones lashed my flimsy boat;
 we lay mid-fjord, billows creaming,
 mast and tackle pitching, screaming,
 sail in tatters torn and streaming
 way to leeward from the peak,
 each nail in my boat one shriek; —
 off the bluffs and off the shoulders
 landslips right and left rained boulders,
 eight men resting oars appear 70
 like eight corpses on a bier.
 O, I grew then, shoulders broader
 at the helm, — *I* gave the order,
 knew some power baptised me, clearly,
 in the call I'd purchased dearly.
 Agnes Easy, facing storm's fierce strife,
 easy, living warfare's life;
 think of me, though — mere by-sitter,
 set in sorrow's sparrow-twitter,
 me, who cannot numb time's tension, 80
 though that be my one desire;

think of me, barred from contention,
 with no glimpse of daring's fire;
 think of me, my scope's dimension
 set at petty tasks, no higher;
 think of me: home-bound and yet
 daren't remember, can't forget!
 Brand Yours but petty tasks you say?
 Never greater than today.
 Hark; I'll tell you what has often
 90 faced me in my time of woe.
 Eye would cloud, the mind would soften,
 thoughts be humbled and brought low;
 it's as though I joyed in keeping
 on with weeping, endless weeping.
 Agnes — then it is I see,
 nearer than I've seen Him, ever, —
 God, who seems so close to me
 I could touch Him altogether.
 And I yearn to cast me leaping
 100 like a foundling to His clasp,
 to be drawn to His safe keeping,
 to His warm, paternal grasp.
 Agnes Brand — o, let Him so remain, —
 as the God you can attain, —
 more the Father, less the Lord!
 Brand I dare not, Agnes; daren't defraud
 God of His own purposes;
 I must see Him great, no less,
 110 heavenly-great — the age commands it,
 its own pettiness demands it.
 O, but *you* can see Him near,
 see Him as a Father dear,
 stoop, and in His bosom lie;
 art thou weary, rest then, rest,
 blithe, restored, depart His breast,
 with His image in your eye
 bring me back the halo's glow
 here, where I must toil below.
 Agnes, such a sharing shows
 120 as the very core of marriage;
 one to fight, be staunch of carriage,
 one to heal all mortal blows; *
 only then, where that is done,
 are the two called rightly one.
 Since you turned your back on life,
 shunned the world to be my wife,
 cast fate's dice and let them scatter,
 this our calling rests on you;
 win or lose, I'll battle through,
 130

smite in day's hot, fierce commotion,
 stand watch when the nights are bleaker, —
 you shall reach me love's full beaker
 with its all-refreshing potion,
 warm beneath breast's armour drape
 folds of tenderness's cape;—
 all that is no petty matter!
 Agnes Any task now whatsoever's
 far beyond my strength's endeavours;
 my wide-branching thoughts combine 140
 and one single thought entwine.
 It all seems a fiction still.
 Leave me to my tears, my grieving,
 help me *thus* to my conceiving
 both myself and duty's will. —
 Brand, last night, while you were gone,
he came right into my room;
 cheeks a-glow with healthy bloom;
 with his skimpy night-shirt on
 trotted forward through the gloom 150
 for the bed where I was lying,
 arms stretched out, a big smile forming;
 called for mummy — but as crying
 to be taken in for warming.
 Yes, I saw that! Shuddered too — !
 Brand Agnes!
 Agnes He was frozen through!
 Must be, cushioned on cold shavings *
 out there in the weather's ravings!
 Brand The corpse may lie beneath the snow;
 the child's been raised to Heaven on high. 160
 Agnes (*recoils*) O, why probe the sore, — o why — ?
 cruel, midst the pangs of woe!
 What you callously just cited
 a mere corpse is child to me.
 Soul and body are united;
 and I can't, as you can, see
 how to separate their role;
 both, for me, make up the whole;
 Alf beneath the snow there sleeping
 is my Alf in Heaven's keeping! 170
 Brand Many a sore must bleed new-riven
 before you're cured of your disease.
 Agnes Yes, but your forbearance, please; —
 I'll be led, I'll not be driven.
 Strengthen me, stand by me, Brand;
 speak as gently as you can.
 You, whose voice hurls thunder down
 at great moments, never ceases,

| | | |
|--|--|-----|
| | when a soul must move its pieces to defend its own life's crown,— * | 180 |
| | have you none of song's sweet mildness that can soften torment's wildness? Not one soothing word to say, one that points towards the day? God, as you have taught me know Him, is, within His stronghold, king; — how dare I approach to show Him small, maternal sorrowing? | |
| Brand | Would it better serve if you turned to the God that once you knew? | 190 |
| Agnes | Never! Not again I say! — Yet it's often I've been drawn, by my longing, to that way where there's light, where day can dawn. "Light the lifting, hard the bearing"; isn't that the proverb's pairing? No, your realm's too great, appalling, everything appals me here, you, your goal, your furrow, calling, all your will, each pathway sheer, | 200 |
| | heights that hang above us yonder, fjord forbidding foot to wander, sorrow, memory, strife, the pall, — only the church here is too small. | |
| Brand (<i>struck</i>) | Church? That thought again in season! Something in the country's air? How too small? | |
| Agnes (<i>shakes her head sadly</i>) | Can I make reason and my intuition share? Is not feeling a condition, like the scent a breeze may bear? | 210 |
| | Where it's from, and where it's going, — I'm content with simply knowing, knowing, with no proof at all — that I find the church too small. | |
| Brand | In the people's dream there's vision. Souls I've met with in profusion have produced the same conclusion; even to her, the crazy, tattered screaming girl up there, it mattered: "Ugly there, because it's small!" | 220 |
| | Nor could <i>she</i> find ways of linking reason and her way of thinking. Hundreds since have raised her call: "the parish church is far too small!" Women's mouths express, unthinking, need for some great building here. — | |

Agnes, — o, I see it clear,
 you 're the woman God elected
 as His angel on my way; —
 though you're blind, yet you can surely 230
 find the way ahead securely
 when at cross-roads I might stray.
 You weren't pixie-lured, deflected; *
 from the first your divination
 fixed on realms of true creation, —
 checked me in the aspiration
 of my Heaven-soaring flight,
 focussed inwardly my sight
 on my innermost vocation. —
 Agnes, you've again expressed 240
 words by lightning force possessed; —
 where I strayed you set me straight,
 cast a light to guide my search;—
 it is small, is our Lord's church; —
 good; it shall be builded great!
 I did not till now conceive the
 whole of what God gave in you;
 therefore I must beg, like you:
 do not leave me, never leave me!
 Agnes I will shake off sorrow's passion, 250
 I shall dry my tears of gloom,
 seals on memory's keep I'll fashion,
 seals befitting for a tomb;
 I shall spread oblivion's sea
 separating it from me;
 sweeping joy's extravagancies
 from my little world of fancies,
 be your wife now, utterly!
 Brand It's a road that climbs, unerring.
 Agnes O, but use no cruel spurring. 260
 Brand There's one greater prompts my mission.
 Agnes One who you yourself, in fact,
 said would not spurn will's volition
 though it lack the means to act. (*turns to go*)
 Brand Where to, Agnes?
 Agnes (*smiles*) The unending
 chores, especially today.
 Think, last Christmas, when you'd say
 I was reckless with my spending.
 Candle-light illuminations,
 greenstuff, pretty decorations, 270
 toys upon the Christmas tree;
 there was song and jollity.
 Brand, there'll be illumination
 this year too, for the occasion;

make things pretty, best we may,
 for the great and gentle day.
 And if God should peep inside,
 He shall see a daughter chastened,
 son made meek and mortified,
 children who have duly hastened
 to accept His wrath need never
 cut them off from joy forever. —
 Can you see a trace of tear?

Brand (*draws her to him, then lets her go*)

Light the lights, child; that's your task!

Agnes (*smiles sadly*) Build your great church — all I ask, —
 see it's up before spring's here! (*goes*)

Brand (*follows her with his eyes*)

Willing, willing in her anguish,
 willing in the torment's flame;
 though her strength, her spirit languish,
 sacrificing all the same.

Lord, lend her Thy strength today; —

take my mission's cup away,
 bitterest of cups — my sending
 Law's grim, ruthless birds of prey
 to descend upon her, rending,
 draining heart's warm flood away.

I've the strength, the constancy;
 lay on me the load, redoubled, —
 but spare her, so sorely troubled!
 (*knock at the door; the MAYOR enters*)

Mayor Your visitor's a beaten man.

Brand Why beaten?

Mayor I've come thus to find you.

Last summer, I need not remind you,
 when your expulsion was my plan,
 I ventured on the prophecy
 you wouldn't best me in our war —

Brand Yes, well?

Mayor Right though I was before,
 I'm not for fighting any more.

Brand Why's that?

Mayor You've the majority.

Brand Have I?

Mayor You know full well, I'd say.
 Folk seek you out from miles away;
 it seems, and it's a recent sighting,
 a spirit's got into the place
 which I, God knows, do not embrace,
 and thereby I conclude it's you
 who are the one we owe it to.
 Look, here's my hand; let's drop the fighting!

| | | |
|-------|---|-----|
| Brand | A war like ours can never stop, even if one side's resistance drop. | |
| Mayor | What else can cause the war to cease, but cordial settlement and peace? I never kick against the pricks; * one's fashioned much like all the rest; when you can feel your foe's knife sticks straight at your heart — you give him best; with just a switch against a lance, give up the field when you've the chance, and if one's just a lone contender, it's reasonable to surrender. | 320 |
| Brand | Two things worth dwelling on here longer; first, when you said I was the stronger; I've the majority. | 330 |
| Mayor | It's vast. | |
| Brand | Yes, now perhaps, but at the last, on that great sacrificial day, — whose cause exerts the greater sway? | |
| Mayor | The sacrificial day? Good grief, that's just the day that never comes. At worst extends to mere relief, means loosened purse-strings, trifling sums; the time's humane and that suffices to stop more lavish sacrifices. And what I find extremely galling is that I'm one of those through whom this thing, humane, enjoyed a boom, the day of sacrifice thus stalling, so, in a way, it could be said I brought it on my own poor head, — at least prepared the rod that's bled the buttocks of my life's endeavour. | 340 |
| Brand | You may be right in that. However, I cannot, for the rest, begin to see how you could dare give in. A man is, flogged or otherwise, created for the role he's in; his goal, for him, is paradise; and though a sea divide the two while Satan's country lies nearby, — could that, then, justify the cry: "Why bother; Hell's near; that'll do"? | 350 |
| Mayor | My answer's both a yea and nay; * man needs, from time to time, a harbour, — and, with no profit from his labour, who'd hold a course that doesn't pay? Fact is, we want our compensations for large or little operations; | 360 |

if victory can't be had by fighting
 one must adopt ways less exciting.
 Brand But black is black and never white!
 Mayor My dear good friend, it's hardly bright
 to call things glacier-white, you know,
 when people yell they're black as snow! 370
 Brand And you, perhaps, join in?
 Mayor I'd say
 I've yelled — well, not quite black but grey.
 The time's humane; folk must agree,
 not go on clashing violently.
 This land is free, keep that in sight;
 here everyone's opinion counts; —
 how dare one versus *all* pronounce
 his verdict on what's black or white? —
 in short, you've the majority;
 so you've got the authority. 380
 Like all the rest, I shall be pledging
 support for you as best I may,
 and hope that no-one starts alleging
 I quit before the end of day.
 Folk reckon — o, I keep in touch —
 my efforts don't amount to much;
they think one big scheme makes more sense
 than growth by annual increments,
 so people aren't so keen, in short,
 to give their mite, now, where they ought, 390
 and with no heart in the proceeding,
 a project's sure of not succeeding. —
 It hurts a lot, believe me, man,
 to drop one's bridge- and road-works plan,
 marsh-drainage, foreshore reclamation,
 and more schemes worth consideration.
 Good Lord, though, what is one to say;
 if you can't win, you must give way;
 wait patiently for turn of tide
 and sensibly just stand aside. 400
 Now, — well, I've lost the folk's good will
 the same way as I built it; still,
 I must find other ways, it's plain,
 to come into my own again.
 Brand But did you use your wily arts
 merely to win the people's hearts?
 Mayor God knows, that wasn't how things stood.
 The common weal's been my objective,
 to serve, that's all, the neighbourhood.
 I'll not deny, though, my perspective 410
 included hope there'd be some pay
 for jobs well done though work-a-day.

Brand But how?

Mayor Why, can't you guess? With luck
it satisfies a deep-felt need 460
if, to the district's gain indeed,
I build a sort of poor folks' pest-house;
a pest-house, yes, I say, for thence
we're cleared of crime's vile pestilence.
And this same building could, I thought,
fit nicely with a new arrest-house,
so cause and its effects consort,
confined — same bolts, same bars — to dwell
with just a wall between each cell.
And once I'd got it well in hand 470
it's my intention to expand:
same roof, but there's a wing I'd raise
for functions and election days,
for solemn and for light occasion,
with rostra, guest accommodation, —
in short, a handsome social fest-house.

Brand The last most urgent, as you'd style them;
but there's a need that's even greater.

Mayor You mean a lunatic asylum?
O yes, indeed; that need's quite clear. 480
I, too, I started with that notion,
but after consultation later
with others dropped the whole idea;
how would we manage the promotion
of anything so mammoth here?
Asylums such as this indeed,
believe me, cost a tidy sum,
if they're to house all those that come
with proven worthiness and need.
One has to think of time's swift flow, 490
not build just for ourselves, you know; —
it's progress, giant strides withall;
what served last year, this year's too small; —
you must have seen how much inflation's
set in, caused public needs to swell;
it's magic, seven-league boots as well,
the growth of talent, strength, invention,
in any sphere you care to mention.
It's past a joke, providing space
for the successors of our race, 500
themselves, the kids, the wife, relations.
So what I say is this: God's truth!
we'll have to have it out, that tooth!

Brand And should a man run mad, observe,
you've still the great hall in reserve.

Mayor (*delighted*) Why, yes, the room used hardly ever!

A brainwave, Brand, that's really clever!
 If only the building plans go through,
 the madhouse won't have cost a sou,
 we'll have beneath one roof combined, 510
 protected by one flag of proof,
 those elements, in one collection,
 from which our place gets its complexion; —
 we'll have our total pauper crew,
 the juvenile delinquents too,
 and lunatics who've had to do
 without due care and discipline, —
 we'll profit, too, by fitting in
 elections, the speech-making kin;
 we'll have a chamber for debating 520
 how we can meet the parish need, —
 our fest-hall, too, for demonstrating
 concern for our tradition's creed.
 Again, if this affair goes through,
 the mountain-laddies get their due, *
 all they can ask for, within reason,
 to live, in decent style, *their* season.
 Our patch, God knows, is no great size;
 provided, though, this centre rise,
 we might, and it would not surprise, 530
 be known as a well-run enterprise.
 Brand But wherewithal — ?
 Mayor The piece that's lacking,
 in this and every cause the snag;
 the will shuns the collecting bag,
 and if I stand without your backing
 I know I'll have to strike the flag.
 But if you add your word's great weight
 to my idea, then it's plain sailing, —
 and when I've nursed it to full date,
 I'll not forget your kind availing. 540
 Brand In other words, you'd like to buy me?
 Mayor I'd dub my plan in terms less grimey —
 say, an attempt, for both our sakes,
 to fill the gaping split that makes,
 and has made, such a gulf to cross
 between us, to our mutual loss.
 Brand Your choice of time, unfortunately —
 Mayor Ah yes; the grief — quite understood —
 afflicting you and yours just lately;
 but your brave bearing fooled me greatly; 550
 concern, too, for the district's good —
 Brand When sorrow as when joy abounds
 I'm always ready when I'm needed;
 but it's on other valid grounds

that you have not, this time, succeeded.
 Mayor And what ground's that?
 Brand *I mean to build.*
 Mayor What! Build? You pilfer my idea?
 Brand No, not exactly. (*points out of the window*)
 Mayor, see here —
 Mayor There?
 Brand Yes.
 Mayor That big, unsightly shed ?
 That's where the parson's cattle bed! 560
 Brand Not that one, no;— the *small*, unsightly —
 Mayor The church! What — ?
 Brand I shall build it mighty.
 Mayor To hell with that! You won't, you hear?
 No-one shall touch the church, not likely!
 Why, that would scupper my idea!
 My plan's all ready, and it's pressing;
 but yours would ditch my scheme's progressing.
 Two things at once is one too many, —
 so yield — !
 Brand I never yield to any.
 Mayor But here you *must* do! Build my pesthouse 570
 with arresthouse, social festhouse,
 in short, Asylum — who's debating
 about the church dilapidating?
 And why should it collapse just now?
 It's served the past well, after all.
 Brand Then, possibly; now it's too small.
 Mayor But never full, from what *I* saw!
 Brand There's not one single soul could find
 space there to elevate the mind.
 Mayor (*shakes his head in bewilderment*)
 Then that one soul, it seems, quite nicely 580
 proves my Asylum's need precisely. (*changes tack*)
 Well, let the church be then, I say;
 it might be rated, in its way,
 a noble treasure-piece of yore;
 it *is* a noble heirloom treasure; —
 it must not fall at whim or pleasure!
 Yes, if my plan's washed out and crashes,
 I, like a phoenix from the ashes,
 will soar in public estimation!
 I'll stand forth as the champion for 590
 this monument upon our shore!
 A heathen temple once stood here, —
 King Bele reigned then, as reported;
 in time the church was built, supported
 by pious heroes' looted gear.
 Adored in its simplicity,

revered in its antiquity,
 it towered to this day, maintaining —
 Brand But all your proofs of ancient might
 have long been buried out of sight; — 600
 there's not the merest scrap remaining.

Mayor Exactly! It's *so* old, *so* distant,
 that by this time it's non-existent;
 in grandad's day, though, I recall
 there was a hole, still, in the wall!

Brand A hole?

Mayor A barrel's width across.

Brand The wall, though — ?

Mayor Well, that was a loss.

That's why I bluntly say, you see,
 tearing the church down's not an option; —
 it would be shameful, its adoption, 610
 unparalleled barbarity!

And what about the wherewithal?

Do you think people here so reckless
 about expenditure they'd fall
 for each abortive, half-baked, feckless
 proposal, when, with care, a peck less
 could give the place an overhauling
 to save it, in *our* time, from falling?

Well, off you go and sabre-rattle —
 but I'm the one who'll win the battle. 620

Brand I don't intend to cadge abroad
 one penny piece to house my Lord.
 I'll build out of my own resources; —
 my legacy, my all I'll spend
 to the last farthing to this end.
 Are you so bold as to pretend
 to turn my purpose from its courses?

Mayor (*with folded hands*)

Well knock me over with a feather!
 It's rare in towns, this, altogether; —
 and in the village, — here, with us, 630
 where as a rule the purse stays closed
 against each pressing need proposed, —
 you start a flood so generous
 it ripples, sparkles, froth abounding — !

Brand No, Brand, as put it's quite astounding!
 I've long intended to renounce
 my legacy —

Mayor There's been much chatter
 that's indicated some such matter,
 but seemed hot air, by all accounts.
 Who'd want to sacrifice his all
 where there's no gain foreseeable? 640

Still, that's your own affair, that's clear; —
you lead, I'll bring up in the rear.
You get things done, you're the hour's man,
I squirm along as best I can. —
We'll build the church together, Brand!

Brand
Mayor
What? Would you let *your* plan go under?
So help me God, I surely must!
Why, I'd be crazy otherwise.
Whom do the common people trust 650
when one would feed them, fatten, prize,
another milk them, fleece, and plunder?
Yes, I'm all for it, what the hell!
I'm under your proposal's spell,
persuaded, gripped and almost moved;
a lucky fate indeed it proved
that led me to this parsonage;
for I dare think that but for *mine*
you'd scarce have hit on *your* design, —
not brought it to the public stage. 660

Brand
But bear in mind there'll be no keeping
that ancient ruin in its pride!

Mayor (*looks off*) Seen in this double light outside
with snow new-fallen, new moon peeping,
it does look like a heap of rubble.

Brand
What, Mayor?
Mayor Too old, Brand, that's the trouble!
It's quite incomprehensible
I never saw it till today, — 670
the tie-beams twisted every way;
retention's not defensible.
Observe the walls and roof a while,
and where's the architecture, style?
What sort of arch are those, with bosses?
An expert would pronounce them frightful; —
and I should find that verdict rightful!
Those clumps there, on the roof, of mosses, —
not Bele's period nor delightful.
No, piety can go too far! 680
Why, everyone must see that really
this ancient, crumbling ruin's merely
a heap of rubbish — right you are!

Brand
Suppose a massive opposition
spoke out against its demolition — ?

Mayor
If no-one else, *I'll* get it done!
The soonest best; this weekend coming
I'll have the due procedure humming,
the project started on its run.

| | | |
|-------|---|-----|
| | I'll stir things, write, wear down resistance; o yes — you know the Mayor when stirred; and if I can't drum up assistance with demolition from the herd, I'll end, bare-handed, its existence; tear beam from beam, you mark my word. Why, if it means my wife, too, bringing my daughters, all of them, as well, it shall come down, as sure as hell! | 690 |
| Brand | It's quite a different tune you're singing from what you first inclined to use. | 700 |
| Mayor | To be humane is to refuse to kow-tow to one-sided views; and if the poet isn't lying, it's really nice, to quote the muse, that mankind's thoughts have wings to use, — in other words, — thoughts can go flying. — Goodbye! (<i>takes up his hat</i>) Some rounding up to do. | |
| Brand | Some what? | |
| Mayor | Imagine, we — just two — close to the parish boundary, we nabbed some gypsies — devilish crew; — I raised some help to truss and tie; — now they're up north, in custody, just in our bounds; but devil take me if one or two didn't escape me — | 710 |
| Brand | The bell's just rung in peace, good cheer. | |
| Mayor | Then what's that hell-brood doing here? Yet, in a sense, it's in the middle of parish life that they belong — (<i>laughs</i>) Yes, you're involved! Look, here's a riddle; you solve it, if you're feeling strong: there's folk existing thanks to one from whom your own descent has run, yet they exist, come rain or shine, because they're from a different line! | 720 |
| Brand | (<i>shakes his head</i>) O God, there are riddles in profusion one stares at, but to no conclusion. | |
| Mayor | But this one's easy to work out. You will have often heard, no doubt, the gossip aired, some place or other: west-country lad, a humble creature, four times the brain of any preacher; he went a-courting of your mother — | 730 |
| Brand | And — ? | |
| Mayor | Well, a girl so well-connected! She packed him off, of course, rejected, | |

no more than might have been expected.
 What next d'you think the fellow tried?
 Half-mad with sorrow and confusion,
 took up with someone, an infusion
 of gypsy blood; before he died
 he'd swelled the tribe with a profusion
 whose crimes and poverty spread wide. 740
 Yes, one of the bastard trolls he sired
 this place has sure enough acquired
 in memory of his great career —
 Brand And that is — ?
 Mayor Gerd, the gipsy here.
 Brand (*in a low voice*)
 Indeed!
 Mayor (*cheerfully*) Not bad, that riddle, eh?
 His issue lives, see, thanks to one
 from whom your own descent has run;
 because the love that he had borne
 your mother truly bred that spawn. 750
 Brand Mayor, could you name one thing that may
 just help these poor souls to survive?
 Mayor Pooh! Bolts and bars they need, detention.
 In over ears, lost past redemption;
 To free them, that would mean deprive
 Old Nick, who'd pretty soon run short
 if the world won't give him what it ought.
 Brand I thought you had a scheme in view,
 a house where want and need might shelter?
 Mayor No, the proposer then withdrew
 his own proposal helter-skelter. 760
 Brand But still, suppose — ; how good to choose —
 Mayor (*smiling*) It's quite a different tune you're singing
 from what you first inclined to use.
 (*slaps him on the shoulder*)
 Just let the dead stay dead and past;
 be resolute, I say, stand fast.
 Goodbye! I really mustn't tarry;
 I must be off again to carry
 the search on for those escapees.
 We'll meet soon. Merry Christmas! Please, — 770
 your lady wife — my salutation!
 (*he goes*)
 Brand (*after a thoughtful silence*)
 O, there's no end to expiation. —
 So random, intricately set,
 the thousand strands of fate's dark net, —
 guilt, and guilt's fruit so close-connected,
 the one so by its pair infected,
 that he who ponders it for long

sees right grow one with bloody wrong.
(goes to the window and looks out a long while)
 My guiltless lamb, my innocent,
 your loss was of my mother's losing; 780
 a wild, distracted soul was sent
 by Him throned in the firmament
 to bid me cast the dice of choosing; —
 and that fraught soul exists, thus made,
 because my mother's soul had strayed.
 Thus God makes guilt's own crop to be
 the food of a strict equity;
 and hence His visitations rain
 upon the third link in the chain. *
(turns from the window, aghast)
 Yes, God's law haunts this generation! 790
 Its first aim is a strict equation.
 From willing sacrifice we gain
 the means whereby we rise again;
 but this our age belies the word;
 its knowledge of it scares the herd.
(paces up and down the room)
 To pray? - Hmm, pray — a word that slips
 smoothly enough from off the lips, —
 bandied by every class, condition.
 In time of stress they think prayer's role is
 to scream for help to the Holy of Holies, 800
 beg rides on Christ's vast load of grief,
 to lift both hands in raised position, —
 and stand knee-deep in unbelief.
 Ha, if the matter ended there,
 I might join in the general clamour,
 upon the Lord's own portals hammer,
 "fearful in praises", past compare! *.
(stops and quietly considers)
 Yet — when in the worst time of trial,
 in sorrow's fearful hour of dread,
 the child slept that last sleep a-bed, 810
 when mother's kiss upon his head
 brought to his cheek no answering smile;—
 how *was* it then — ? Did I not pray?
 Whence came, then, that sweet ecstasy,
 the flood of song, the melody
 that swept o'er me from far away —
 and bore me up and bore me free?
 Was I then praying? Soothed in prayer?
 Have I communed with God, heart bare?
 And has He heard? Has He bestowed 820
 a glance upon my grief's abode? —
 How can I know! All's barred and closed,

a darkness on me reimposed, —
 no light, no light that I can find — —
 Yes, Agnes, — who can see, though blind — ! (*cries out in anguish*)
 Light, Agnes, — light, if light you can!

(*AGNES opens the door and walks in with the lighted festive candle-holders; a clear radiance is cast over the room*)

Brand Light!

Agnes See the Christmas lights then, Brand.?

Brand (*softly*) Ha, Christmas lights!

Agnes (*sets the candlesticks on the table*) Have I been slow?

Brand No, no!

Agnes How cold it's been allowed
 to get — you're freezing —

Brand (*tensely*) No!

Agnes How proud!

830

Won't ask for light and warmth — I know!
 (*feeds the stove*)

Brand (*paces up and down*)

 Hmm, *won't!*

Agnes (*quietly to herself as she decorates the room*)

 Now here's where this shall stand.

Last year he stretched his little hand
 towards the Christmas-candlelight.
 He was so happy, well and bright;
 reached forward from his little chair
 and asked, was that a sun shone there?
 (*moves the candlestick a fraction*)

There now, the light can come to bear
 upon — upon that place out there.
 He'll see now once the window's clean,
 from where he sleeps a festive scene,
 lie there at peace and peep inside
 a room aglow for Christmas-tide. —
 The pane looks tear-marked, though, and blurred; —
 one moment; we'll soon have it smiling —

840

 (*wipes off the window*)

Brand (*who has been following her movements says quietly to himself*)

 When comes the calm, the reconciling
 of sorrow's sea so deeply stirred?
 And calm it must.

Agnes (*to herself*) There, much improved!

As though the shutter were removed,
 as though the room expanded wide;
 as though that foul, cold earth outside
 turned suddenly a nook for keeping
 the child there sweetly, softly sleeping.

850

Brand What is it, Agnes?

Agnes Hush I say!

Brand (*closer*) Why draw the curtains in that way?

Agnes O, just a dream; now I'm awake.
 Brand Dreams are beset with snares, that take.
 Now close them!
 Agnes (*pleading*) Brand!
 Brand Now close them, tight!
 Agnes O don't be harsh; it isn't right!
 Brand Lock, lock !
 Agnes (*pulls the shutters to*)
 They're bolted now, they're barred. 860
 But God, I'm sure, won't take it hard
 even though I drank at comfort's source
 the space of one short dream —
 Brand Of course!
 He is a judge that's mild, forbearing;
 you're not at odds now, you and He,
 though your devotion may be sharing
 some touches of idolatry.
 Agnes (*bursts into tears*)
 O, where's the end to this commanding?
 My foot's dead weary, — my wings fail.
 Brand Each sacrifice not all-demanding 870
 can, as I've told you, nought avail.
 Agnes It was my all. I've spent my store!
 Brand (*shakes his head*)
 Your sacrifice must lead to more.
 Agnes (*smiles*) Ask! I've the strength of poverty!
 Brand Give!
 Agnes Take! Ah, Brand, nought's left of me!
 Brand You have your grief, your memory, —
 your yearning's sinful flood, to boot —
 Agnes (*in despair*) I have my heart's tormented root!
 Here! Rip it out!
 Brand It counts for nought,
 your sacrifice, cast in the deep, 880
 if for the loss you're still distraught!
 Agnes (*shudders*) Your Master's way is strait and steep.
 Brand For Will there's but one way alone.
 Agnes But Mercy's?
 Brand (*dismissively*) Paved with altar-stone.
 Agnes (*stares blankly and says, deeply disturbed*)
 It gapes, now, like a vast abyss,
 the scripture that I could nowise
 have plumbed before.
 Brand What text was this?
 Agnes Whoso shall see Jehovah dies! *
 Brand (*throws his arms about her and presses her close*)
 Conceal yourself! Don't see Him! - o,
 close, close your eyes up —
 Agnes Shall I?

| | | |
|---------------------------------|--|-----|
| Brand (<i>lets her go</i>) | No! | 890 |
| Agnes | You're suffering, Brand. | |
| Brand | I love you so. | |
| Agnes | Your love is hard. | |
| Brand | Too hard, indeed? | |
| Agnes | Don't ask; I follow where you lead. | |
| Brand | Do you believe that I would take you regardless from your dance and games, — that I would for a whimsy make you submit to sacrifice's claims? Woe to us both; too great and dear would prove the sacrifice made here. I dare demand, since you're my wife, | 900 |
| Agnes | your <i>all</i> , the call requires your life. | |
| Agnes | Demand; but do not leave me! | |
| Brand | Well; — I need some peace, a quiet spell. The great church, that I've undertaken — | |
| Agnes | It's ruined, that small church of mine. | |
| Brand | If it contained your idol's shrine, it needed to be ravaged, shaken. <i>(embraces her in anguish)</i> All peace be with you, — and through you, with me, with what concerns me too. <i>(makes for the side door)</i> | |
| Agnes | Brand, may I move, — a touch I mean, — the window shutters ugly screen? Not more? A crack? Brand, may I? | 910 |
| Brand (<i>in the doorway</i>) | No. <i>(goes into his room)</i> | |
| Agnes | Barred and bolted — bolts denying the oblivion I crave! Bars to grieving, seals to sighing, locks to Heaven and the grave! I must leave; it's suffocation, this ordeal by isolation. Leave? But where? Look not, all-seeing eyes of sternness down on me! | 920 |
| | Can I, from this parish fleeing, take my bosom's wealth with me? Could I fly, were I not will-less, from my terror's empty stillness? <i>(listens at the door to Brand's room)</i> Reads aloud; even if I tried, my poor voice won't reach his ear. There's no help, no counsel, cheer! Yuletide's God is occupied listening to the truly wealthy, rich in children, happy, healthy, | 930 |
| | thank, play, dance to melodies. Yuletide is joy's time and His. | |

Me He does not see, or bother
 with a lone, imploring mother.
(approaches the window cautiously)
 Shall I set the shutters peeping,
 so the clear, abundant light
 drives the shuddering fear of night
 from the darkness where he's sleeping? —
 No, he's not down there, my baby!
 Children's time is Christmas-tide;— 940
 he's allowed to come inside; —
 stands now reaching out in vain
 for his mother's window, maybe,
 wants to tap upon the pane.—
 Did I hear a cry from you?
 Alf, there's nothing I can do!
 Windows locked; locked by your father. —
 Alf, I dare not open now!
 You're a good boy, anyhow;
 we've not ever crossed him. Rather 950
 fly, — o, fly to Heaven's regions;
 there it's bright, there's joy undying,
 children playing in their legions.
 But don't let them see you crying, —
 don't say you were locked outside
 when you tapped — by Daddy too.
 Hard to grasp, for tots like you,
 what we grown-ups have to do.
 Say, he grieved, — yes, say he sighed;
 tell them it was *he* supplied 960
 pretty leaves to make a wreath.
 That's his, see? Made out of heath.
(listens, reflects a little while and shakes her head)
 O, I dream! It's more than merely
 panes and shutters that divide.
 First, refining fire must tear the
 old walls down on every side,
 shatter vaults, break bars asunder,
 make cell-hinges shriek like thunder,
 burst the great lock open wide!
 Much, there's much more to be done 970
 here, before we two are one. —
 I must work, work uncomplaining,
 to fill up the call's abyss;
 I must steel myself, will straining. —
 But a festive day is this.
 Since last year, what changes, sadly — !
 Hush, — we'll celebrate it gladly;
 I shall bring forth all my treasure, —
 though how priceless it may be

since my joy's catastrophe 980
 only a mother's soul can measure.

(she kneels down by the chest of drawers, opens a drawer and takes out various items. At the same instant BRAND opens the door and is about to speak to her, but when he observes what she is doing, restrains himself and remains where he is. AGNES does not see him)

Brand *(quietly)* Grave-obsessed, she seeks the same
 refuge in the churchyard game.

Agnes Here's the shawl. The cloak, with pin,
 that the child was christened in. —

Here's the robe, too, in the pile. —

(holds it up, looks at it and laughs)

Lord, how sweet, a chubby joy!

Lovely child, my little boy,

in the pew there on the aisle. —

Here's the jumper he was wearing, 990

here's the scarf we took along

on his very first-time airing.

Far too big for him, too long,

soon too small — he grew apace —;

that shall have a special place. —

Mittens, stockings — what small feet! —

and his new silk cap to keep

warmth in from the cold's chill breath — ;

never used, still clean and neat. —

O, the comfy travelling dress 1000

snug and light as a caress

for the journey when he'd sleep;

when I'd packed those in the press,

I was weary unto death.

Brand *(clenches his fists in pain)*

Dear God —! I can't undermine

her idolatry's last shrine!

Choose another, if need be.

Agnes This is marked; — a tear, from me? —

O the wealth here! Pearled with weeping,

wrung with anguish, sorrow's steeping, 1010

lustrous from the pangs of will,

sacred! Robe fit for a king

that he wore at christening!

O, how wealthy I am still!

(A loud rapping at the door; AGNES turns with a cry and at that moment sees BRAND. The door is wrenched open and a WOMAN, clad in tatters, comes rushing in with a child in her arms)

Woman *(sees the child's clothing and cries out to Agnes)*

You're a mother, share your store!

Agnes You are tenfold richly blest!

Woman Ha, you're just like all the rest;

full of words and nothing more!

Brand (*approaches*) Tell me what you want — be brief.

Woman Not you, you're a priest! I'm going. 1020
 Outside's better, where it's blowing,
 than a sermon on offending;
 rather skip all that by ending
 drowned and rotting on a reef,
 than to face the man in black
 pointing out the bonfire track.
 Can I help it, give a damn,
 that I've grown the thing I am!

Brand (*quietly*) Features, and that voice I hear
 chill me with forboding fear! 1030

Agnes Warm yourself and rest — you're pining.
 If the baby needs some food — —

Woman Places where it's nice and shining,
 they're not for the gipsy brood.
 Our folk, we have got the highway,
 forest, mountain, moor and byway; —
 we must travel, we must wander;
 house and home's for you lot yonder.
 I'll be off now, like a shot;
 they're out after me, to hound me! 1040
 Mayor and law-and-order lot,
 they'd arrest me if they found me.
 Here you'll not be bothered.

Brand Where?
 Woman Here, roofed in with walls that fetter?
 No thanks; winter's night-time air
 helps us two to breathe the better!
 But a rag to wrap the baby!
 His big brother, lousy gaby,
 sneaked off like a thief there, taking
 its one covering at a stroke. 1050
 Look at it — half-naked, shaking,
 blue with cold from frost that's making
 everything outside there smoke.

Brand Woman, set your baby free
 from your path's wild destiny.
 Let him be relieved, upraised;
 for the brand can be erased.

Woman Well, you know about it all!
 No-one's worked that miracle, —
 no-one will, however long! 1060
 War on you that's dared ignore him!
 Reckon how his mother bore him?
 On a ditch's edge, to rising
 sounds of gambling, drink and song.
 Slushy mire was his baptising,
 he was crossed with charcoal handy,

freshened with a swig of brandy; —
 as he slipped his mother, why,
 there were cursing folk stood by; —
 know who they were? — God preserve us; —
 baby's dad — and other servers! 1070

Brand Agnes!
 Agnes Yes?
 Brand Your duty's clear.
 Agnes (*in horror*)

Brand! *That* woman! Never fear!
 Woman Give me! Give it all to me!
 Cast-off rag, silk finery!
 Nothing is too poor, too fine,
 so it ease this child of mine.
 Soon his soul will slip away;
 but he'll die thawed-out I say!

Brand (*to Agnes*) Now the choice is loudly rung! 1080
 Woman You've got plenty for *your* young;
 won't you help mine by supplying
 rags to live in, shroud for dying?
 Brand Isn't that the warning tongue
 of admonition that is crying?
 Woman Give!
 Agnes It's sacrilege run wild!
 Sin against our poor, dead child!
 Brand But his death's of no avail
 if the threshold ends the trail.
 Agnes (*crushed*)

Thy will be done. Heart's very root 1090
 I shall trample underfoot.
 Woman, come and take from me; —
 share my superfluity —
 Woman Give it me!
 Brand *Share?* — Agnes; share?
 Agnes (*with passionate vehemence*)

Sooner die than be stripped bare
 of it all! I'm in your clutch,
 yielding foot by foot! O'er tasked!
Half will do, that's all she asked!
 Brand Was the *whole* you bought in such
 plenty for your own, too much? 1100
 Agnes (*gives*) Woman, take the cloak and pin
 that my son was christened in.
 Here's a frock, shawl, wool to wear;
 good against the night-time air;
 here's the cap of silk to hold
 warmth in, he'll not feel the cold;
 take it, each last article —
 Woman Give me — !

Brand Agnes, was that *all*?

Agnes (*gives more*)
 Here's the robe fit for a king
 that he wore at christening. 1110

Woman So! it's empty now, I see.
 Can't be off too soon for me!
 Wrap him on the steps out here; —
 then I'm off with all this gear! (*goes*)

Agnes (*locked in a violent internal struggle; finally she asks him*)
 Tell me, Brand, can yet more killing
 fresh demands be made again?

Brand Tell me first, if you were *willing*,
 when you faced the giving's pain.

Agnes No!

Brand Your gift was cast away.
 The demands on you still weigh. 1120
 (*makes to leave*)

Agnes (*remains silent until he is near the door, then she cries out*)
 Brand!

Brand What is it?

Agnes I've been lying, —
 See, I'm humbled; I'm complying.
 You'd no inkling, could not know
 other than I'd let all go.

Brand Well?

Agnes (*takes a folded baby bonnet from her bosom*)
 There's one thing I concealed.

Brand The bonnet?

Agnes Yes, still wet with weeping,
 chill where dying sweat congealed, —
 safe, since, in my bosom's keeping.

Brand Keep the gods to whom you yield. (*moves to go*)

Agnes Wait!

Brand What is it?

Agnes O, you're heaping — ! 1130
 (*holds the bonnet out to him*)

Brand (*approaches and asks, without taking it*)
 Freely?

Agnes Freely!

Brand Give it me.
 She's still on the steps I see. (*goes out*)

Agnes Stripped, stripped bare, — and by that token
 my last bond with dust is broken!
 (*stands motionless for a moment; gradually the expression on her face
 changes to strong, radiant joy. BRAND comes back; she rushes joyfully to
 meet him, throws her arms round his neck and cries*)
 I am free! Brand, I am free!

Brand Agnes!

Agnes Now the shadows flee!

All the terrors that have battered
 at my heart, foul dreams of night,
 lie in the abyss now, scattered!
 Will has triumphed in the fight! 1140
 All the mist has blown away,
 clouds swept off in disarray;
 through the night, beyond death's looming
 I can glimpse dawn's rosy blooming.
 Churchyard! Churchyard! Never more
 can the word set me to weeping.
 Naming it will prove no sore; —
 now the child's in heaven's keeping!
 Brand Agnes! Yes! You've triumphed now!
 Agnes Triumphed now, — yes, that is so, — 1150
 triumphed o'er the grave and woe!
 O, look up to heaven — see how
 Alf stands by the throne, so near,
 radiant as he was before,
 reaching out towards us here?
 If I had a thousand tongues,
 had the courage, strength and lungs,
 there's not one I'd volunteer
 to demand him back once more.
 O, how rich God is and wise 1160
 in the means He can devise!
 The child's sacrifice, that crime,
 saved my sinful soul in time;
 he was born but to be lost;
 I, to bear what victory cost! —
 Thank you for the guidance given;
 for my sake you've staunchly striven;
 O, I've sensed your heart bewail.
 Now *you* stand in choice's vale;
 on *you* now the load must fall 1170
 of its *All or Nothing* call!
 Brand Riddles, of your own contriving; —
 they've all passed, the pangs of striving!
 Agnes Do you fail to recognise:
 "He who sees Jehovah dies"?.
 Brand (*recoils*) Woe is me, what light you're lighting! —
 No! a thousand times, not true!
 Mine are strong hands, made for fighting;
 leave me? That you'll never do!
 All things here on earth may shatter; 1180
 I can let my gains go scatter, —
 o, but never, never you!
 Agnes Choose; you're at the road's division!
 Quench my bosom's inner lighting,
 stem the welling Christmas vision; —

give me back my idol's vesture; —
 she's still there, just make a gesture, —
 let me go, if I'm so minded,
 back to days quite heaven-blinded,
 thrust me back into the mire 1190
 where till now my sins were dire —
 you are master; you are free;
 stronger, stronger far than me;
 clip my wings, repress soul's zeal,
 clog with leaden weight my heel,
 bind me, thrust me down once more
 in the depths whence I was saved, —
 let me live the life once craved,
 in the murk where once I squirmed!
 If you will this, are confirmed, 1200
 I'm your wife still, as before; —
 choose; you're at the road's division!
 Brand Woe, were that indeed my mission!
 O, but distanced from it all,
 from all memories sorrow-blighted,
 life you'll find, and light united!
 Agnes Don't forget it's here you're plighted
 by your sacrifice — and call!
 Nor the thousand souls your zeal
 has been called upon to heal, — 1210
 those the Lord God bade you lead
 home, to where salvation bides.
 Choose; you're where the road divides!
 Brand There's no choice for me indeed.
 Agnes (*throws her arms around his neck*)
 Thanks for that! — a choice inspired!
 You have staunchly led the tired!
 Heavy clouds hang overhead, —
 keep good watch beside my bed.
 Brand Now your work-day's over! Sleep.
 Agnes Over, and night's tapers peep. 1220
 Victory wasted all my strength;
 I've grown faint, and weak at length;
 o, but praising God is light! *
 Brand, goodnight!
 Brand Goodnight!
 Agnes Goodnight!
 Thank you, thanks. Now I shall sleep. (*goes*)
 Brand (*clenches his hands to his bosom*)
 Soul, be steadfast till it's ended! *
 Triumph's won when all's expended.
 All you've gained, through sacrifice; — *
 loss is true possession's price! *

ACT 5

(A year and a half later. The new church stands completed and decorated for the consecration. The river runs close by. It is early on a misty morning) (The SEXTON is busy hanging up garlands outside the church; a little later the SCHOOLMASTER arrives)

Schoolmaster You're getting on I see.

Sexton Time's pressing.

Here, give a hand; these are for dressing
between the posts to hedge the route.

Schoolmaster Down at the manse they're busy building
a column, ring on top to boot —

Sexton That's right, that's right!

Schoolmaster What *is* that feature?

Sexton Some plaque, in honour of the preacher;
the preacher's name picked out in gilding.

Schoolmaster My word, and what a fuss it's making!

Folk streaming in from miles away;
the fjord's all white with sail today.

10

Sexton Yes, now the common folk are waking;
during the previous parson's life,
no question then of splits and strife;
your neighbour slept, you slept as well; —
what best to choose I couldn't tell.

Schoolmaster Life, sexton, life!

Sexton But you and I —
this liveliness has passed us by;
how's that?

Schoolmaster Well, it so happened we
worked hard while others slept away;
and when they woke, we slept, you see, —
no longer needed, had our day.

20

Sexton And yet you said that life was best.

Schoolmaster So both the priest and dean professed;
I wouldn't wish, myself, to differ, —
remember, though, that's only if the
whole folk's in question, all the rest.

A different code, though, *we* obey
from what goes current hereabout;
we are the district's officers;

30

you see, we must control affairs,
church discipline and education,
not get mixed up in agitation, —
so party politics are out.

Sexton The priest's in knee-deep, even so.

Schoolmaster Just where he shouldn't be, he shouldn't.
Superiors — and I speak of facts —
take umbrage at the way he acts;
if they'd dared face folk — but they couldn't —

they would have dropped him long ago. 40
 But he sniffs danger, much too sprightly;
 he knows what binds a faction tightly.
 He builds a church. And all are smitten
 quite blind when something's doing, bitten.
What's to be done weighs not an ounce;
 the *getting* done, that's all that counts — ;
 we all, the flock, and those that lead,
 could well be called a "doing" breed.

Sexton Of course, you've sat in Parliament,
 must know the folk's, the country's bent; 50
 but some chap passing through, who'd spoken
 soon after people here had woken, *
 he said, where once we'd all just drowsed,
 we'd turned out promising — when roused.

Schoolmaster Our folk is promising indeed, —
 a folk whose promise-rate's surprising, —
 a folk so rapid in its rising
 that all profess the promise-creed.

Sexton One thing I've often speculated;
 now tell me, since you're educated — 60
 this people's promise thing, what is it?

Schoolmaster A people's promise, my dear sexton?
 Too vast a topic for this visit;
 but it's a thing they all get fixed on,
 by virtue of some notion, some —
 well, something great, whose time must come —
 in the people's future, *nota bene*.

Sexton Thanks; one thing straight, then, one of many;
 but one thing more there is I *do*
 need help with, and right quickly, too. 70

Schoolmaster Speak up.

Sexton When is it due to come,
 this so-called future, then?

Schoolmaster Not so.
 It never comes.

Sexton What never?

Schoolmaster No.
 That's as it should be, rightly rated,
 since, when it comes, it's been translated
 to present, can't be future still.

Sexton That's right — remember that I will;
 to that there can be no gainsaying.
 But when's a promise due for paying?

Schoolmaster I've just this moment said in fact 80
 a promise is a future pact;
 due in the future.

Sexton Right; that's true, —
 but tell me, when's this future due?

Schoolmaster (*under his breath*)

A sexton for you! *

(*aloud*) My dear friend,

I'll run right through it, end to end —
the future *cannot* come because
it's over when it's come, of course.

Sexton Thanks!

Schoolmaster Behind each term there'll stand
something that seems like sleight of hand,
though quite straightforward in its way,
at least for someone who can cope
with two-times table, let us hope.
At bottom, *promising* is *lying*,
though still respected by that token;
like pie-crusts, promises get broken —
they're bound to be, though, when one's mind
is of the sharp logician kind.
Well, time this promise-kite went flying.
Now tell me — ?

90

Sexton Sshh!

Schoolmaster What is it?

Sexton Stay!

Schoolmaster My word, can I hear someone play
the organ? 100

Sexton Him; I might have guessed.

Schoolmaster What? Parson?

Sexton That's it.

Schoolmaster Well I'm blest, —
he must have made an early start!

Sexton I hardly think he spent last night,
in pillow-pressing, for his part.

Schoolmaster What?

Sexton Things have never turned out right.

He's eaten up with grief for her
since he became a widower;
he hides the sorrow, that is true,
but now and then it still breaks through;
as though his heart, when he's like that,
is a too-full and leaky vat; —
that's why he plays — each note, hark, wild
as though he wept for wife and child.

110

Schoolmaster As though they talked, if truth were told —

Sexton As if one suffered, one consoled. —

Schoolmaster Hmm, — if only one could dare be moved!

Sexton If one weren't in Administration.

Schoolmaster If only one's position proved
less binding a consideration!

120

Sexton If one dared pass book, pen and seal
on to the devil, for a start.

Schoolmaster Could give up trying to be smart;
if only, sexton, one dared *feel!*

Sexton Let's feel, my friend! — there's no-one coming!

Schoolmaster It can't be seemly to go plumbing
the depths the average person reaches.
A man can't be — the parson preaches — *
two things at once, for so life teaches;
may want to but can't through and through 130
be human and official too;
one should — in all respects — prepare
to be the image of our Mayor.

Sexton Why be like him?

Schoolmaster You must recall
the great fire at the mayor's own place,
the archives and the headlong race
to save them?

Sexton Yes — one evening-fall.

Schoolmaster A stormy eve, the Mayor strove then;
it seemed he had the strength of ten; —
the Fiend, though, laughed away inside; 140
his wife, the moment she espied
him wailed: "Oh save your soul my dear —
the Fiend's out for your life, as well!"
Then through the blaze the Mayor, he cried:
"My soul? O, that can go to hell, —
just help me get these archives clear!"
You see, he's through and through a Mayor,
in soul and body, hide and hair,
that's why I'm sure he'll battle through
to where his efforts get their due. 150

Sexton And where is that?

Schoolmaster Need I explain?
The paradise good mayors attain.

Sexton My learned friend!

Schoolmaster What now?

Sexton I've heard,
I fancy, behind every word,
hints of the mess in which we wallow;
and mess it is, too, in effect;
it shows in general disrespect
for use and wont once reverend.

Schoolmaster What's mouldered shall to dust descend;
what's rotten feeds new things that follow; — 160
the age's lungs are eaten hollow,
and if the muck's not coughed up clear, —
it's coffin for the corpse, I fear.
Yes, it's a mess, here, all agree it,
we need no telescope to see it.
The day on which the old church fell,

it was as though it took as well
 all that our lives, till then, struck root
 and fibre in, and thrived to boot.
 Sexton There came upon the crowd a stillness. 170
 It had cried out: Tear down! Tear down!
 But it soon died away, the shrillness,
 and many blushed and wore a frown,
 watched shame-faced, stood in consternation,
 when the old parish house of prayer
 had to come down in earnest there, —
 for many it was violation.
 Schoolmaster But most thought that a thousand ties
 still linked them with old sanctities 180
 so long as the new pile created
 had not been duly consecrated;
 that's why they, racked with fear and worry,
 observed the progress here, the hurry,
 and flinched from facing the great day
 when the torn flag is put away,
 when fresh, new colours flutter clear; —
 yes, as the steeple rose and rose,
 the folk turned paler, more morose, —
 and now, — well now the time is here.
 Sexton (*pointing into the wings*)
 Just see that crowd! A great invasion 190
 of grown-ups, kids.
 Schoolmaster In thousands too.—
 How calm it is!
 Sexton Yet there's a moaning
 the sea moans when a squall is due.
 Schoolmaster It is the people's heart that's groaning; —
 as though they sense, with consternation,
 the magnitude of the occasion;
 as though a writ from court of law
 bade change the God they knew before.
 Now where's that priest? Feel low, inside. —
 I wish I'd got a place to hide! 200
 Sexton Me too! Me too!
 Schoolmaster At times like these,
 one's struck by one's profundities;
 below each depth, new depth by turns;
 one wills, one weakens, and one yearns!
 Sexton My friend!
 Schoolmaster Yes?
 Sexton Hmm!
 Schoolmaster Come! — no concealing!
 Sexton I really do believe we're *feeling*!
 Schoolmaster What's that! Not I!

Sexton No more am I!
 One witness can't convict a fly! *

Schoolmaster We two are men, not silly lasses.
 Good day! My young await their classes. (*goes*) 210

Sexton Just had a vision, like a fool;
 but now I'm sensible and cool,
 tight as a clasp-book, as per rule.
 To work; — there's none here as it stands,
 and the Devil makes work for idle hands.
 (*hurries off the other side*)

*(The organ, which has been playing quietly during the foregoing, suddenly swells strongly
and ends on a piercing discord. Soon afterwards BRAND emerges)*

Brand No! I cannot make its singing
 sound a tone that's full and ringing.
 Organ song becomes a scream;
 walls, vaults, arches breed depression,
 seem to crush me, their oppression 220
 seems a wooden barrier spread
 to constrict the music's stream,
 as the coffin cramps the dead.
 I've tried all that's in my reach;
 but the organ's lost its speech.
 I've upraised its voice in prayer;
 but it came back, cracked and husky,
 like a bell that's flawed and rusty,
 in dull groans of sheer despair.
 It's as though the Lord God stood 230
 throned on high within the choir,
 spurned the prayer in wrathful mood,
 thrust it from Him in His ire! —
 God's house shall be builded great;
 so I promised, confidently;
 level, clear, eliminate,
 was my vow, improvidently;
 now the work's in finished state.
 People cross themselves as one,
 shriek: "how great now that it's done! —" 240
 Is theirs better, their perception, —
 or is mine the one exception?
 Is it great? This house of prayer,
 is it all that I desired?
 Has the visionary flare
 that begot it there expired?
 Does it match the soul-inspired
 temple-image I could see
 arched above earth's misery? —
 Hmm, were Agnes here today 250
 it would not have gone this way;
 she could see great things in small,

drive away my doubt's dark pall,
 she embraced both heaven and earth,
 canopied the world-tree's girth. *
(notices the preparations for the festival)
 Fresh green wreaths, the banner floats;
 school choir, practicing its notes;
 the manse is nearly full, I'm told;
 everybody wants to greet me; —
 they've set up my name in gold! 260
 Give me light, God, — or secrete me
 fathoms deep in earth and mould! —
 One hour left before convention;
 Parson centre of attention;
 Parson's name on every lip!
 I know where your thoughts are turning,
 I can feel your words here burning;
 trollish lauds and praises tear
 like a chill wind at my hair!
 Would, o would that I could slip 270
 sheer oblivion's cloak on, hide me,
 to some wild beast's lair confide me!

Mayor *(enters in full uniform and greets him, beaming with satisfaction)*

So here's the great day come at last,
 the Sabbath to the weekday six;
 now we can lower sail and fix
 our Sunday flag high on the mast,
 drift gently in the likelihood
 that everything is very good. *
 Congratulations, noble sir,
 whose fame will set the land astir! 280
 Congratulations! I'm elated,
 though greatly moved, too, in addition.
 But you — ?

Brand I feel I'm suffocated.
 Mayor No, we must change that disposition.
 Now you must preach and make it thunder; —
 give it 'em straight between the eyes.
 The acoustics! — a surprise
 to all I've spoken to — they wonder
 to hear it —

Brand Well?
 Mayor The Dean, entirely
 bowled over, even he praised it highly. 290
 The noble styling well deserved it!
 And the true power there innate
 in the proportions —

Brand You observed it?
 Mayor Observed what?
 Brand That it does seem great?

Mayor Not merely *seems* so, — no, it *is*,
 on far or close analysis.

Brand But *is* it? Truly? Do you rate —?

Mayor Why, damn and blast, of course it's great, —
 for folk so far up North, *too* great.
 In other lands, I'm well aware, 300
 one brings a larger scale to bear;
 but here, with us poor souls who dwell
 on barren crags and worn-out grazing,
 the strip between the fjord and fell, —
 here it's so great that it's amazing!

Brand Exactly so, and we have traded
 an old lie merely for a new.

Mayor What's that?

Brand The folk have been persuaded
 to switch from mouldering relic to
 the soaring spire that's modern too. 310
 Before, they bawled "how venerable!"
 but now they chorus " Look! How great,
 the earth does not contain its mate!"

Mayor My friend, as strongly as I'm able
 I'd deprecate as overdone
 the taste that wants a greater one.

Brand But it must be borne home to all
 that as it stands this church is small;
 to keep that hidden would be lying.

Mayor No, listen, — send such notions flying! 320
 What is the point of wanting killed
 something you've toiled so hard to build?
 The folk are genuinely contented;
 they think all's rich and rare, what's more,
 that they've not seen the like before; —
 o, let them think so, don't prevent it!
 Why should we prod at these poor devils
 and bother them with torchlight revels
 when no-one cares about the light?
 It all boils down to faith, forthright. 330
 It makes no matter, either way,
 if the church were just a kennel, say,
 so long as folk still estimate
 that it's superlatively great.

Brand The self-same creed, it's universal!

Mayor This is our gala, for the rest;
 each soul is, in a way, our guest;
 it would be quite a strange reversal
 not to present things at their best.
 And for your own sake most of all 340
 it would be ill-advised to mention
 the sore point of its being small.

Brand Why's that? Explain.

Mayor Now, pay attention.
 First, our committee has suggested
 a silver cup be given you,
 but the inscription just won't do
 if the church's size can be contested;
 the song, too, that has been composed, —
 the speech, for which I've been proposed,
 they're out of place, too, they are finished 350
 if the work's stature is diminished.
 And so you see, you must submit
 and make the best you can of it.

Brand I see what's often hurt my eyes, —
 a feast of liars in praise of lies.

Mayor Why bless my soul, my dear good friend; —
 strong words indeed; where will it end!
 But, to round off this taste debate,
 I have my second case to state; —
 if that was silver, this one's gold; 360
 you know that you are much respected,
 are fortune's pet if truth were told;
 in short, — a knighthood's soon expected!
 You'll wear the order's cross today
 upon your breast right proudly, trust me.

Brand Another cross already crushed me;
 take *that* from me whoever may.

Mayor What's this? Are you not moved then, justly,
 by such an honour done you — aren't you?
 You are a puzzle, that I grant you! 370
 But think, for God's sake, all the same —

Brand (*stamps*) This whole debate's an empty game; —
 I leave as wise as when I came;
 you've not picked up a single thread
 of what's behind the words I said.
 It's not the greatness one can claim
 to gauge in feet and yards I mean,
 but that which radiates unseen,
 that fires and freezes, soul-redeeming, *
 that beckons us to linger, dreaming, — 380
 inspires us, like a starry night,
 that, that — just go! You weary me; —
 go tell the rest, explain our wrangle —
 (*goes up towards the church*)

Mayor (*to himself*) Now who on earth could sort this tangle
 and make some sense? This greatness he
 says radiates away unseen,
 not gauged in feet and yards? — I mean!
 Like starry night? Was that his phrasing?
 The priest been at the punch? — amazing! (*goes*)

Brand (*comes downstage*)

O never have I walked as lonely 390
 on savage moors as I walk here;
 each question they return as mere
 faint echoes, quacks and twitters only.

(looks after the Mayor)

I'd gladly bruise him with my heel! *
 Each time I urge his vision rise
 above mere cheating and mere lies,
 he spews his foul soul to reveal
 its rottenness before my eyes! —

O Agnes, why did you give way?

It wearies me, this game we play, 400
 where no-one wins, there's no surrender. —
 Yes, he is doomed, the lone contender.

Dean (*enters*) My children! O my flock — o dear!

O, do forgive me, I'm forgetting —
 dear colleague. it's the festive setting, —
 the sermon on the brain, I fear;
 rehearsed it yesterday, but here
 it still sticks in the throat, won't clear.

Enough of *that*. My thanks to you, 410
 who broke the ice so bravely, who
 ploughed through the talk, the great to-do,
 who rased the place whose day had ended
 and built what's great and new and splendid!

Brand Far from it still.

Dean What's that, dear friend?

The consecration's not the end?

Brand New houses must new tenants find,
 a soul re-born, a new-cleansed mind.

Dean *This* will, without a great to-do.

So fine a vault, well-panelled too,
 so light a space will, that's for sure, 420
 persuade the folk *they're* cleansed and pure.

And that delightful resonance
 that twins each word the parson's said
 must by one hundred percent enhance
 our congregation's faith, per head.

Results that even bigger nations
 could never, by my calculations,
 have equalled, much less better shown. —

All this is owed to you alone;
 so, from a colleague, please accept 430
 a deep-felt "thanks" which, I suspect,

will soon be followed up at table
 on this, your great red-letter day,
 by many a speech in winged array
 from budding deans, all young and able. —

Brand But, my dear Brand, you're pale I see — !
My courage long deserted me.
Dean Quite natural; — so much to see to,
and no support to half-way meet you.
But now the worst is over for us, 440
and a quite splendid day's before us.
Don't be down-hearted; all goes well!
Folk in their thousands come to swell,
from distant parts, this great revival. —
Just ask yourself, — who is your rival
in eloquence and fluency?
Your colleagues in sodality
show open-armed their approbation,
the bosom of the congregation
is filled with fervent obligation! 450
The work, so happily concluded!
The splendid trimmings, too, included!
Text for the day, — how lofty, great!
And then that spread in there's first-rate!
Down at the manse I've been observing
the fatted calf just right for serving.
Indeed, my friend, a splendid beast.
Must have been hard, to say the least,
to find so choice a joint around
when times like these are so severe, 460
and meat costs nine marks to the pound.
But that can wait, quite evidently.
Another errand brought me here.
Brand Talk on; stab, rend me, slash and shear!
Dean My business, friend, proceeds more gently.
But brief — our time is short, I fear.
There's just one, single point, quite small,
that from to-day needs your correction,
but won't prove burdensome at all.
You've guessed, I fancy, the connection, — 470
well, more or less guessed what my suit is?
Relates to your official duties.
Now hitherto it's seemed you don't
set weight enough on use and wont;
and use and wont comes first and foremost,
though not the thing perhaps to score most.
Lord knows, I wouldn't be your chider;
one's young, of course, and one is new;
one comes from the big town and you
can't know the country as insider. 480
But now, my friend, you ought, directly,
to treat the matter more correctly.
Now, in the past you've cared too much
about each person's special need;

an error, frankly, gross indeed.
 Let them be weighed *en masse*; as such
 raked up together in one row;
 there's none will blame you, that I know.

Brand Explain yourself!

Dean Then please attend.
 You've built now, for a common end, 490
 a church. It is the garment for
 the spirit of both peace and law;
 the State perceives in faith alone
 the force that best can raise the tone, —
 the fort wherein its safety's lain, —
 in short, its moral leading-rein.
 The State's hard up, you may be sure;
 wants value for expenditure.
 Good Christian means good citizen.
 D' you think it spends out for the sake 500
 of God and godly just to make
 itself a heap of trouble, then?
 No, sir, the State's by no means mad;
 mankind's condition soon turns bad
 unless the State, with firm persistence,
 keeps half an eye on that existence.
 The State, though, only gains that end
 through its officialdom, my friend,
 and that means, in this case, its preachers.

Brand Each word a pearl! Speak!

Dean Little features 510
 in what remains. Now, you've erected
 this church here in the State's own favour,
 in consequence they're close connected,
 support for State, and your behaviour.
 It's in that light I look ahead
 to the fête here in an hour's time,
 it's in that light the bells will chime,
 in that, the deed of gift be read.
 But with it goes an obligation
 deserving close consideration — 520

Brand God, that I never did intend!

Dean But now it is too late, my friend —

Brand Too late? We'll see in just a while!

Dean Calm down. I almost have to smile!
 What's here to cause the fuss you're making?
 Yours is no wicked undertaking!
 The care of each man's soul well fits
 with service to the State — no trouble;
 to serve two masters' claims, though double, *
 you'll manage if you use your wits. 530
 You're not a priest just to reclaim

Tom, Dick or Harry from Hell's flame,
 but that the parish — whole, no less —
 partake of grace's bounteousness;
 but, parish saved, it's plainly true
 each person shares salvation too.
 You might not guess: the State's pragmatic,
 precisely half-way democratic;
 hates freedom like a plague from Hell,
 yet likes equality full well; 540
 but that equality's not won
 till all unevenness is levelled, —
 and that's a thing you've never done!
 You on the contrary have revelled
 in pushing views, wide of the mark,
 on something previously kept dark.
 Limb of the church, man used to be,
 now he's a personality;
 and *that* change does the State no favour;
 that's why it was so long a labour 550
 to rake in levies as directed,
 and other social-tax excises;
 church is no more the hat expected
 to fit all heads, of any sizes.
 Brand O what a vista opens here!
 Dean Just don't despair; no good comes by it;
 though chaos reigns, I'll not deny it,
 and leaves a dreadful mess to clear.
 But where there's life, they say, there's hope;
 this gift, this consecrated church, gives scope, 560
 fresh obligations; you must work
 to serve the state's aims through the church.
 There's need for rule in everything,
 unless one wants a scattering
 of forces, like a colt unbroken
 that bursts through fences, hedgerow lines
 and custom's myriad boundary-signs.
 All order-systems have proclaimed
one law, however it's been named.
 In art, the school serves by that token, 570
 and with our military, all
 must keep in step, as I recall.
 Yes, that's the system, my dear friend!
 That's is the State's projected end.
 Forced marching, that it finds too tough;
 but marking time, that's not enough; —
 one standard pace for all's the stuff,
 one standard stride, for all the same —
 see, that's the system's final aim!
 Brand Gutters for eagles; — for the goose, 580

Dean a dizzy flight, sky-high, when loose!
 Man, God be praised, is not a beast; —
 but if we draw on fiction, fable,
 we'd best try scripture out, at least.
 Fits all occasions; crammed, a feast,
 from Genesis to Revelation,
 such stirring parables they table.
 I'll just a passing reference make
 to that scheme of the Tower of Babel. *
 How long did those good people take? 590
 And why? A simple explanation;
 they broke formation, if you please,
 they kept each one the tongue he spoke,
 they pulled uneven in the yoke, —
 in short, turned personalities.
 That's half the double-kernelled sense
 the fable's shell holds for us all, —
 the single man has no defence,
 divided, rides towards a fall. *
 Whom God would in life's struggle worst 600
 He makes an individual first.
 The Latin formulation went:
 the gods first robbed him of his wits; *
 but mad, self-centred, either fits,
 and so each loner must confront
 the self-same fate, in the event,
 as came to pass when David sent
 Uriah solo to the front. *
 Brand Quite possibly; what follows, though? 610
 To me death is no overthrow.
 Have you whole-heartedly believed
 those builders there would have achieved
 the Babel-pinnacle designed
 to reach to Heaven if they'd combined
 to share one language and one mind?
 Dean Reach Heaven? No, that's the point concisely,
 that no-one reaches Heaven precisely.
That is the second piece of kernel
 that's hidden in the fable's shell:
 all other buildings fail as well 620
 that rival Heaven's stars eternal.
 Brand But Jacob's ladder reached to Heaven; *
 soul's aspiration reaches Heaven.
 Dean In *that* sense, yes! Good Lord, point ceded!
 On that there's not a word more needed.
 Of course, Heaven *is* the due reward
 of faith, of prayer, the life unflawed.
 But life is one thing, faith's another;
 mixed up, then each will harm the other; —

six days one plays one's active part, 630
 the seventh's for moving of the heart;
 a church with seven-day admission
 means goodbye Sunday and tradition.
 You thin the savour of the Word *
 if it's not sensibly conferred;
 because religion, art as well,
 must not fade to a nasty smell.
 It's safe for your ideal to be
 viewed from the pulpit's sanctuary,—
 but shed it with your robes, have done 640
 as you step out into the sun.
 I've said in all things there's a law
 enjoining rigid demarcation;
 it's just by way of explanation
 on *this* head that I spoke before.
 Brand I know one thing — I'm left despising
 the State's soul-compartmentalising.
 Dean Why, friend, you'll pigeon-hole quite neatly, —
 though in a higher grade completely, —
 you must progress —
 Brand That won't transpire 650
 from my wallowing in filth and mire.
 Dean The humble man shall be exalted; *
 Whate'er befall, *that* can't be faulted.
 Brand He who would serve his God must die!
 Dean God save us; could you think there dwell
 within my mind such notions? —
 Brand Well!
 Blood must be shed! Amen say I!
 A skeleton is all that suits
 your sickly, pallid life-pursuits!
 Dean I simply can't, as God's my witness, 660
 bleed a mere cat, still less bleed you;
 I've thought it, though, no breach of fitness
 to leave the door a bit ajar
 to the road by which I've travelled far.
 Brand And do you know what you've demanded?
 That at the cock-crow of the State *
 my life's ideal up to this date
 must be denied now, as commanded!
 Dean Denied, my friend? Commanded? Who? 670
 I've simply pointed out what's due;
 I'd have you keep to yourself, ingest
 what's of no use to all the rest.
 Or keep it all, as you see right, —
 but sealed, hermetically tight;
 soar, dream, in Heaven's name, inwardly
 but not for all the world to see;

look, self inflicted pain's the price
for one who's stubborn, shuns advice.

Brand Yes, hope of profit, dread of pain,
they are your forehead's mark of Cain; 680
it shrieks that your too-worldly part
slew the pure Abel in your heart.

Dean (*to himself*) Bless me. He's getting personal, *
he goes too far!

(*aloud*) I don't at all
wish to prolong this strife, but end
by asking you to comprehend
that, to get on, you must remind you
what land you live in, and what day,
for no-one snatches triumph's bay
unless the times are right behind you. 690

The artists, poets of the nation —
do *they* spurn social obligation?
Our warriors, look! Our men are able
to see the whetted sword's a fable!
And why? Because a law bids heed
with full respect your country's need.
Each man must tame his special features,
not join with nature's over-reachers,
but hide, merged with his fellow-creatures.
The time's humane — the Mayor's defined it. 700

If you'd just take it as you find it
you could achieve great eminence.
But corners must be planed and polished,
and side-shoots pruned away, abolished;
you must be smooth, like others yonder,
not choose your own sweet way to wander,
if the work's to have real permanence.

Brand Away, away!

Dean I shall indeed;
a man like you will, some time, need
to find a better working-frame; 710
but if contentment is your aim,
in great things as in small, it's clear
you must assume the current gear.
It is the corporal, stick in hand,
must beat the step into his band;
our ideal leader, after all,
is, hereabouts, a corporal.
As the corporal leads his church parade
by sections and formation-wise,
so must the priest lead his parade 720
by parishes to Paradise.
It's simple; as faith's ground and source
you'll wield authority, of course;

and, since that's built on doctrine, find
 it can be grasped by faith that's blind;
 and how the faith should be expressed
 is learnt from law and ritual best.
 And so, my brother, do not worry;
 employ the time to think, don't hurry;
 don't fuss, explore the situation! — 730

I must be off for more research
 on how best pitch my voice in church;
 one isn't used to resonance,
 so rare a local circumstance.
 Goodbye, goodbye; today's oration
 I base on man's ambivalence,
 God's image that needs dusting off. —
 But now the time has come, I sense,
 for light refreshment — time to quaff! (*he goes*)

Brand (*stands in thought for a moment, as if turned to stone*)
 I've given my call my everything, — 740
 God's call I thought it, blind, unswerving;
 till this coarse, vulgar trumpeting
 revealed the spirit I've been serving.
 But no, not yet! They're not succeeding.
 That churchyard's watered with my bleeding;
 my light, my life, lie buried there; —
 but not my soul, *that* they'll not snare!

It's dreadful to stand thus alone, —
 see nothing round me but the dead;
 it's dreadful, to be offered stone * 750
 when I so hunger after bread.

What truths, what dreadful truths he uttered, —
 and yet what hollowness revealed.
 O'er *me* God's dove has never fluttered; *
 has never, to my grief, descended. —
 If only one in faith came hence
 to give me peace and confidence!

(*EINAR, pale and wasted, dressed in black, comes along the road and stops at the sight of
 Brand*)

Brand (*calls out*) You, Einar?

Einar Yes, that is the case.

Brand Just as I thirsted all alone
 for one whose breast's not wood or stone! 760
 O come, o come to my embrace!

Einar No need; I've found my resting-place.

Brand You bear a grudge, then, still resent me
 for what occurred when last —

Einar Not true.

No fault of yours. You I appraise
 a mere blind tool the Lord God sent me
 when wild I strayed on worldly ways! *

Brand (*recoils*) What tongue is this?

Einar The tongue of peace, —
the tongue that's learnt when one is torn
from sin's deep sleep to wake reborn. 770

Brand Remarkable! I'd heard it said
you'd chosen quite a different line
to follow —

Einar I had been misled
by arrogance, self-pride, self-preference.
The gods the world is wont to reverence,
the talent that's reputed mine,
my singing voice, were vain affairs
that drew me into Satan's snares.
But God be praised, His love ran deep;
he did not leave His weakling sheep; 780
he tended me when there was need.

Brand But how?

Einar I'd fallen far indeed.

Brand You fell? To what?

Einar To gambling, play;
He gave me a taste for cards and gaming —
Brand And this you call the Lord's own framing?
Einar It was the first step to salvation.
He took my health — the next privation,
my talent, that completely went;
my love of gaiety, all spent;
and I to hospital was sent, — 790

long lay there sick, a bed of flame, —
imagining that huge flies came
in hordes, and every room the same, —
discharged at length, joined by consent
some sisters, three of them, enlisted
in Heaven's service; and assisted
by a student of divinity,
who set me from the world's yoke free, *
from nets of sin loosed me abroad, *
made me a child of our dear Lord. 800

Brand Indeed.

Einar Ways differ, need not tally;
one takes the hillside, one the valley.

Brand But then?

Einar But then? The subsequence?
Well, then I preached full abstinence;
but that career can sometimes carry
too great a tincture of temptation;
I therefore seized a new vocation
and travel now as missionary —

Brand Where?

Einar Negroland's my destination.

But best we break there — I must go; 810
my time is precious —

Brand Rest a spell.
We're celebrating —

Einar Thanks, but no;
my place is where the black souls dwell.
Goodbye! (*makes to go*)

Brand No half-remembered features
to prompt a question, stop you leaving?

Einar Whose features?

Brand Her's who would be grieving
the gulf between this time and last —

Einar I follow now; you mean what passed
between — yes, that young female creature's
who held me captive in lust's toil 820
before faith washed away my soil.
Yes, how are things with her in life?

Brand A year on, she'd become my wife.

Einar That does not signify; I flatter
myself my mind's elsewhere addressed;
important things, they're all that matter.

Brand Our married life was richly blest —
joy, grief; the child that passed away.

Einar That does not signify.

Brand Ah, yes;
more of a loan than gift he'd been, 830
and we shall meet again some day.
But then she left me comfortless;
both graves are there, look, showing green.

Einar That does not signify —

Brand That too?

Einar With such things I have nought to do,
It's *how* she died I want to know.

Brand In hopes of dawn's resplendent glow,
with heart's full treasure safely stored,
her will, right to the end, unflawed; —
with gratitude for what life gave 840
and took, she went into the grave.

Einar All vanity, and stuff presumed;
how showed the faith wherein she trod?

Brand Unwavering.

Einar In whom?

Brand In God!

Einar Ah, just in Him; then she is doomed. *

Brand What's that you say?

Einar Foredoomed — I'm sorry.

Brand (*calmly*) You scoundrel, go!

Einar You'll be Hell's quarry,
Hell's Lord will claw you too, you'll see; —

Brand like her, you'll die eternally.
 You, wretch, consign her to Hell's fire! 850

Einar You've wallowed lately in sin's mire —
 No blot or stain adheres to me;
 I've been washed clean by faith, you see; *
 each spot rubbed off entirely
 on the scrubbing board of sanctity;
 I've washed my Adam's fig-leaf clean
 with caution's copper-stick; I've been
 made white as any alb, I hope,
 through use of prayer's strong washing-soap.

Brand Fi!

Einar Fi again! Here's brimstone, man! 860
 I catch a glimpse of devil's horn.
 I am an ear of Heaven's corn,
 you but the chaff to judgement's fan. (*goes*) *

Brand (*gazes after him for a moment; suddenly his eyes light up and he bursts out*):
 That's the very man I needed!
 All links are burst, I'm unimpeded;
 my own banner shall escort me,
 even though none may support me.

Mayor (*enters hastily*)

Hurry, Pastor! — in effect the
 whole procession's formed correctly,
 ready to move off directly — 870

Brand Let them start.

Mayor Not wait for you?
 Do go home, and hurry, too!
 People just won't wait much longer;
 and the jostling's getting stronger,
 like a spring flood they rampage
 flocking to the parsonage,
 yell "We want the parson here!".
 Hark; another yell for "Parson!"
 Hurry up, or else they'll fasten
 on something inhumane I fear! 880

Brand I'll not hide my countenance
 in your crowds and swelling ranks;
 here I stay.

Mayor Sheer lunacy!

Brand *Your* way's too confined for me.

Mayor More confined, of course, the longer
 the jostling goes on getting stronger.
 Look, my word, it's tempest-pitch.
 Dean and priests, officials too
 nearly jostled in the ditch — ;
 come then, come my friend, please do; 890
 make the scourge of influence tell!
 Ha, too late, the hedge is parting;

the procession's gone to hell!
(the crowd streams in and in wild disorder bursts its way through the procession in the direction of the church)

Voices Priest!

Others *(point up at the church steps where BRAND is standing and shout):*

Look!

Still Others Give the word for starting!

Dean *(hemmed in by the crush)*

Mayor, restrain this exhibition!

Mayor No respect for my position!

Schoolmaster *(to Brand)* Speak, and let them be imbued
 with a light to curb their mood!
 Must this enterprise be marred
 after all our toiling hard? 900

Brand O, the people's dull stagnation's
 being scoured by the tide. —
 Men, you're where the roads divide!
 Pledge yourselves to change, decide, —
 clear the old abominations —
 that this temple may soar high
 as it should, and shall, say I!

Officials Parson's cross!

Priests Mad, pretty nigh!

Brand Yes, I *was* mad, in conceiving
 you as in some way believing 910
 Him who asks for spirit, truth! *

I was mad, too, when I thought
 I had linked Him to your sort
 by cheap huckster-tricks forsooth!
 Our old church was small, I knew it;
 so I thought, through cowardice:
 double it, — that must suffice;
 five-fold more, — that ought to do it!

O, but I had failed to see
All or Nothing it must be. 920

Compromise's road I blundered; —
 but today God spoke to me.
 At this moment, o'er this house,
 doom's shrill trumpet-blast has thundered; —
 and I listened, tremulous, —
 crushed, like David facing Nathan, — *
 battered, anguished-tossed, dismayed — ;
 all my doubts have now been laid.
 The spirit of compromise is Satan!

Crowd *(with increasing restiveness)*

Down with those who've made us blind! 930
 Sucked the marrow from our bone!

Brand It's a foul fiend of your own
 slipped the blind-fold on your mind.

You have huckstered your resources,
 you have cleft yourselves in twain;
 that's why aimlessness enforces
 emptiness's utter pain.
 What's your need of church now? Vain
 show, it's show that casts the spell, —
 sound of organ, sound of bell, — 940
 wish to be transfixed by thrilling
 fervours of high rhetoric,
 wherein whispering, lispings, trilling,
 booming, heckling play their part,
 following all the rules of art!

Dean (*softly*) That's meant for the Mayor's old trick.

Mayor (*likewise*) Dig, there, at the Dean's vague vapours.

Brand Solemn worship lit with tapers —
 all you want is the display.
 Then it's home again to numbness, 950
 home to toil and moil in dumbness,
 soul clad in its working breeches
 like your carcase, — the good book's riches
 stuffed into a chest to stay
 till the following sabbath day!

O, I dreamt far otherwise,
 draining the cup of sacrifice!

My church was a vast projection
 arching high for the protection
 not of faith alone and doctrine 960
 but to span the whole of living,
 birthright of the Lord's own giving, —
 spanning daily life's unrest,
 evening's leisure time, night's grumbles,
 youth's full-blooded, lusty zest,
 all that, rich or poor, the breast
 holds by right no power humbles.

River, foaming as it tumbles,
 foss that in its crevice rumbles,
 bass-notes from a storm that's looming, 970
 voices when the sea is fuming,
 should as well melt souls, convert them,
 as the folk-songs that divert them,
 and the organ with its booming.

Sweep the work done here aside!
 Great in that it greatly lied;
 tumbledown already — yes!
 as befits your spinelessness.

You would choke all new creation
 with your labour-demarcation; 980
 you, for six days in the week,
 haul God's flag down from the peak,

and it's only one in seven
sees it flying towards heaven!

Voices from the Crowd
Lead us! There's rough weather breeding.
We'll win through if you are leading!

Dean
Heed him not, his faith's not true,
not as Christians would have claimed it!

Brand
There's the flaw, and you've just named it, —
flaw in both of us, one weakness, 990
flaw in every man's completeness!
Souls have faith, and souls alone;
point *one* man who is a soul!
Point me one who has not thrown
the best part of him to waste
in his groping, scurrying haste!
Pleasure's wild and wanton sweetness,
piping's all-beguiling noise,
make you deaf to life's true joys;
only when you've lost soul's spark 1000
will you dance before the Ark! *
When a crazed and crippled nation's
drained the cup's last distillations, —
heigh!, that's time for expectations,
time for prayers and supplications.
First you blur your God-stamped features,
sink to a bare, forked, bestial state —
then apply at Mercy's gate,
seeking God — as sickly creatures!
Then His realm needs must be crumbling. 1010
What's His business with souls stumbling
round His foot-stool, old and mumbling?
Has He not proclaimed it so: —
only when the heart's aflow
with fresh blood can you expect
to be made His heirs-elect!
Childlike you shall gain admission *
to God's kingdom, not by guile.
Men and women, seek permission, —
childhood's bloom the one condition, 1020
enter life's great church in style!

Mayor
Open up!

Crowd (*cries out in dismay*)
Not that one! No!

Brand
The Church is boundless, never ending.
Pastures green compose the floor,
sea and fjord and upland moor;
only Heaven's vault ascending
makes it great and keeps it so.
All your tasks may enter there,
raise a din without a care;

work on weekly chores permitted 1030
 yet no sacrilege committed.
 It shall cover *all*, as bark
 clads the tree's essential being;
 life and faith shall blend, agreeing.
 It shall make the daily chore
one with teaching and the law.
 There your daily round shall weigh
 with flights along the Milky Way,
 Christmas trees where children play,
 David's dance before the Ark! 1040

(a storm sweeps though the crowd; some recoil; most cluster closely round BRAND)
 Thousands of voices Light, where we in darkness trod; —
one means: *life* — and serving God!

Dean Woe! he's running off our cattle!
 Mayor, Clerk, Bailiff, Sexton — battle!

Mayor (*voice lowered*) Dammit, stop that loudmouth prattle!
 Like a red rag to a bull.
 Let him spout his bellyful.

Brand (*to the crowd*) Leave this place! God's bountiful,
 Can't exist in this surrounding;
 His realm's beauty, peace abounding. 1050
(turns the key in the church door and takes the key in his hand)
 I'm no longer, here, the priest.
 This my gift I'm now retrieving; —
 no-one from *my* hand's receiving
 keys for your own brand of feast. (*throws them into the river*)
 Sneak inside, you slaves of dust, —
 by the trap-door if you must;
 creep — your backs will bend — bow low;
 let your poisoned sighings flow
 in the stifling dark, impure
 as a weak consumptive's wheeze! 1060

Mayor (*low-voiced and relieved*)
 Cost him his knighthood, that's for sure!

Dean (*likewise*) *He'll* not get a diocese!

Brand Come, you young ones — hale and brisk;
 let a gust of fresh air whisk
 the dust from this foul spot away.
 March on my triumphal way!
 You must all awake some day,
 some time must, ennobled, rise,
 break the pact with compromise; —
 shed the bonds of wretchedness; 1070
 of half-heartedness that's blighting; —
 let foes feel your gauntlet smiting;
 war unto the death, no less!

Mayor Stop! I'll read the Riot Act!
 Brand Read! I've broken off our pact.

Crowd Show the way then! We shall follow!

Brand Over frozen height and hollow!
 Through the land we shall go faring,
 unloose every soul-ensnaring
 trap the folk are trammelled by, — 1080
 raise up, free and purify, —
 crush sloth's remnants, be live creatures,
 real as men and real as preachers,
 mint anew that stamp's design, *
 make this land one vaulted shrine.

(the crowd, amongst them the SEXTON and SCHOOLMASTER, swarm around him. BRAND is hoisted on their shoulders)

Many Voices Great the moment! Great the brightening,
 day lit up by vision's lightning!

(The mass of the people sweeps up through the valley; a few remain behind)

Dean *(to those who are leaving)*
 O ye blind ones, o what will ye!
 See you not the Satan skill he
 used, concealed, in all he said? 1090

Mayor Hey! Turn back and don't be silly;
 it's for mill-ponds you were bred.
 Stop, good people, — you'll be wrecked! —
 Hmm, the hounds show no respect!

Dean Think upon your house and home!
 Voices from the Crowd There's a greater house will come! *

Mayor Think of farms and fields you've tended;
 think of sheep, your cattle calved!

Voices Manna as a dew descended *
 when the chosen people starved! 1100

Dean They lament, the wives you leave!
 Voices *(distant)* We'll not know those who deceive! *

Dean "Papa's gone" each child acquaints us!

Whole body Either with us or against us! *

Dean *(follows them with his eyes for a moment, hands folded, and says, dejectedly)*
 Herdless, bowed with deprivation,
 shepherd to this congregation,
 and without the shirt left on him!

Mayor *(shaking his fist after Brand)*
 He'll be sorry! Shame upon him!
 Soon the victory's ours, though, Dean!

Dean *(ready to weep)* Victory? Our side's been depleted — ! 1110

Mayor Yes, but we're not yet defeated,
 that is, if I know my flock! *(follows on)*

Dean Where's he off to, up that rock? —
 Going with them — well I never!
 Ha, morale's as good as ever.
 I'll be up there too, I'm ready, —
 pen the flock from straying farther!
 Saddle me my steed or, rather — —

get me a hill-trained mare that's steady!
(he goes)

(Up by the highest of the local herders' huts. The landscape rises in the background and changes to a great, bare upland. It is raining. BRAND, followed by the crowd, — men, women and children — comes up over the slopes)

| | | |
|----------------------|---|------|
| Brand | Look onward; see, there victory sweeps! | 1120 |
| | There lies the parish, in the deeps, and peak to peak there hangs a pall of weather with its cloudy shawl. Forget the murk wherein you'd nod ; soar free, soar high, ye men of God! | |
| Man 1 | Wait, wait; my poor old dad's dead beat. | |
| Man 2 | Two days, and I've had nought to eat — | |
| Several | Yes, still our hunger, quench our thirst! | |
| Brand | Keep on and cross the mountain first! | |
| Schoolmaster | Which path, then? | |
| Brand | All paths fit the role, provided they're towards the goal. Let's go this way — | 1130 |
| Man 1 | No, that's too sheer; we'll not get through before night's here! | |
| Sexton | The ice-church lies up that way, too. | |
| Brand | The steeper way's the short way through. | |
| Woman 1 | My baby's sick! | |
| Woman 2 | My foot is sore! | |
| Woman 3 | Where can I get a drink, what's more? | |
| Schoolmaster | Look to the crowd, priest; going under. | |
| Several Voices | Priest, work a miracle! A wonder! | |
| Brand | O, thralldom's branded your behaviour; you want the pay before the labour. Rise, shed your deadly sloth, you slaves, — if not, then back into your graves! | 1140 |
| Schoolmaster | He's right; first face the strife full force; we'll get our wages in due course! | |
| Brand | And shall, as sure as there's a God who's watched each mortal step we trod! | |
| Many Voices | A prophet! Look, a prophecy! | |
| Several in the Crowd | Here, priest — how hot will the fighting be? | |
| Others | Will it be long? A lot of bleeding? | 1150 |
| Man 1 | Priest, is it courage we'll be needing? | |
| Schoolmaster | <i>(low voiced)</i> Can I be certain of surviving? | |
| Man 2 | What's <i>my</i> share when this triumph's won? | |
| Woman | No danger I shall lose my son? | |
| Sexton | Will Thursday see an end to striving? | |
| Brand | <i>(looks round the mob in bewilderment)</i> What do you ask? What kind of plighting? | |
| Sexton | First off — how long shall we be fighting; — | |

then say what losses there will be,
 and last — our prize with victory!
 Brand You ask me *that*?
 Schoolmaster Why, yes; down yonder 1160
 we had no time to weigh and ponder.
 Brand (*indignantly*) But now you'll have your chance!
 Crowd (*bunching more closely*) Speak! Speak!
 Brand How long will last the strife we seek?
 It lasts until life's final ending,
 till you've fulfilled your sacrifice,
 broken your pact with compromise, —
 till you're possessed of wills unbending,
 till all weak indecisions fall
 to the summons: Nothing if not All!
 And losses? All idolatries, 1170
 each cherished but half-hearted vision,
 each bright gold chain of serf-submission,
 all of your pillowed apathies!
 And victory's prize? Will's purity,
 faith's soaring flight, soul's unity, —
 that readiness prepared to brave,
 exultingly, death and the grave, —
 a crown of thorns on each man's brow, —
 see, those shall be your prizes now!
 Crowd (*amid furious shouting*)
 Deceived, deceived! Betrayed! We're cheated! 1180
 Brand I have not from one word retreated.
 Individuals You promised triumph for the taking; —
 it's sacrifices now we're making!
 Brand I promised victory, that's true, —
 and swear it shall be won through you.
 But each man at the vanguard's head
 must fall there in his noble cause;
 and if he dare not, let him shed
 his weapon while the war gives pause. 1190
 It's doomed in action is the banner
 defended in half-hearted manner;
 and if self-sacrificing chills you, —
 you are marked before the bullet kills you.
 Crowd The nerve, demanding we should pawn
 our lives for offspring not yet born!
 Brand Our road to Canaan will have made us *
 cross sacrifice's wilderness.
 Triumph in death! All, all I press
 into God's service, His crusaders!
 Sexton Well, here's a pretty mess, I grant you! 1200
 The district's put us under ban —
 Schoolmaster Go back down there? — We never can.
 Sexton And onward, onward — who would want to?

Various Voices Put him to death!

Schoolmaster That's no improvement;
we need a leader for the movement.

Woman (*pointing back down the track, scared*)
Here comes the Dean!

Schoolmaster Don't be stampeded!

Dean (*enters, followed by some stragglers*)
My children! O my flock, my sheep!
Let the old shepherd's voice be heeded!

Schoolmaster (*to the crowd*)
No home to go to when required;
best make our way across the steep.

1210

Dean How could you have such grief inspired,
have dealt my breast wounds so severe!

Brand You've wounded souls year after year!

Dean Pay him no heed! He's merely feeding
you empty promises.

Several Hear, hear!

Dean But we are kind; show grace exceeding
where we have found remorse sincere.
O, look into your hearts at last
and see the hell-black spell he's cast
wherewith to lure this gathering here!

1220

Many He lured us, yes; that's clear as clear!

Dean And think, reflect; what can you do,
a poor flock, born to isolation?
You, chosen for some great occasion?
What, loose the prisoners — is that you? *
You have your little daily chore;
it's evil, anything that's more. *

Can *your* arms matter in the fray?

You guard your hut as best you may!

Are hawks and eagles your affair?

1230

What's your concern with wolf and bear?

You just become the top dog's prey, —
my children, O my sheep, beware!

Crowd That's honest truth, alas, that's so!

Sexton But when we left from down below,
we closed our huts and locked the door;
it isn't home now, any more.

Schoolmaster No, he has opened people's eyes,
has shown up flaws, corruption, lies;
the community's no longer drowsing;
the life once our accepted yoke
turned death for the awakened folk.

1240

Dean O, it'll pass, trust me, this rousing.
The dear old grooves are there and ready,
if you'll just for a while go steady.
I warrant, soon the congregation

will miss the old, calm dispensation.

Brand Choose, men and women!

Some Voices Let's go back!

Others Too late, too late; the mountain track!

Mayor (*bustles in*) O, what a stroke of luck I found you! 1250

Women Now don't be cross, sir, there's a dear.

Mayor Not now I won't, not now; come here!
A better time dawns all around you; —
if only you will see things right
you'll all be rich men by tonight!

Several How's that to be?

Mayor There's fish galore;
a shoal's in, all the fjord can hold!

Crowd What's that?

Mayor Now get yourselves together!
Shun frost and sleet, the mountain weather.
No shoal's come in like this before; — 1260
now, friends, there dawns an age of gold
on *our* stretch of this northern shore!

Brand The Lord's own voice, or his — now choose!

Mayor It's common sense you need to use!

Dean O, here a miracle's been wrought;
a sign of the most heavenly sort!
I've dreamt it many a time, bless me,
but thought it night-mare fantasy; —
it's clear which way now is directed —

Brand Your selves are lost once you've defected! 1270

Several There's fish?

Mayor Galore, and right amongst us!

Dean That's bread and cash for wives and youngsters!

Mayor So this is not the time to be
wasting your strength on strife, you see,
especially with a super-power
that makes the Dean himself here cower.
You've other targets in your focus
than high-falutin hocus-pocus.
Our Lord can manage well alone;
it's strong, is Heaven's vaulted zone. 1280
Shun other people's mischief-making —
and hurry! — sea-wealth for the taking;
a down-to-earth, straightforward deal
that doesn't call for blood or steel;
that brings material wealth past pricing
and won't demand self-sacrificing.

Brand It's sacrifice, God's very claim,
that's writ above the clouds in flame!

Dean Come any day you care to name
if sacrifice is the attraction; — 1290
for instance, Sunday I'm in action; —

then, 'pon my word now —

Mayor (*breaking in*) Let it be!

Sexton (*quietly to the Dean*) Shall I still keep my old position?

Schoolmaster (*likewise*) D'you think they'll take my school from me?

Dean (*quietly*) You crack their stubborn opposition,
then mercy's certain to be shown!

Mayor Now move; before your chance has flown!

Sexton The boats, if you've got any sense!

Some Voices The priest, though — ?

Sexton Blow him — he's demented.

Schoolmaster As in an open book presented 1300
you see our Lord's clear ordinance.

Mayor Just ditch the priest; that's fair enough;
he's fooled you with his yarns and stuff —

Several He lied to us!

Dean His faith's too free;
and think, — no honours, his degree!

Some What has he got?

Mayor A measly pass!

Sexton That's so, as we well see, alas!

Dean Made his old mother wait, misused her;
the very sacrament refused her!

Mayor He killed his child — as good, at least! 1310

Sexton His wife as well.

Women For shame, the beast!

Dean Bad son, bad father and bad spouse; —
was Christian man more scandalous?

Many Voices He tore our dear old church down too!

Others He double-locked us from the new!

Yet Others Set us adrift on planks, to drown!

Mayor He stole my mad-house scheme, the clown!

Brand I see the mark on each man's brow. *
I see where these will end up now.

Whole Mob (*howling*) Don't listen! Drive the brand of hell 1320
away from here — stones, knives as well!

(*BRAND is driven by the stoning out into the wilderness. His pursuers eventually turn back*)

Dean My children! O my flock, my sheep!
Return now to your fireside;
repent, and sight thus clarified,
behold the benefits you reap!
We know the Lord our God is good; *
he does not ask for guiltless blood; — *
our government's mild disposition
is near-unrivalled, in addition;
officials, magistrate and Mayor 1330
won't make things awkward for you there, —
I'm loving, too, no different from
our current liberal Christendom; —
your betters' lives, and yours, shall be

as one in peace and jollity.
 Mayor But if there's aught amiss, be sure
 we must administer the cure.
 As soon as things calm down a bit
 we'll have a working party sit
 to see, when all has been explored, 1340
 how light and faith might be restored.
 It should consist of several preachers
 — whom we, the Dean and I, propose, —
 then, as it please you after those,
 of sextons, if you like, and teachers,
 with other people from these parts, —
 so you can rest with easy hearts.
 Dean Yes, we shall see your burdens lightened,
 as you, today, have surely brightened
 your poor, old shepherd's grief withal. 1350
 Let all take courage from the thought
 that here a miracle's been wrought.
 Farewell; good luck, then, with your haul!
 Sexton There's Christian loving-kindness for you!
 Schoolmaster They go their modest ways before you.
 Woman So nice, and with such kindly faces.
 Others So down-to-earth, no airs and graces.
 Sexton They don't demand the life of you.
 Schoolmaster *These people know a thing or two! **
(the crowd streams down the hill)
 Dean (*to the Mayor*) Ah, that'll raise the tone a fraction. 1360
 A wholesale change is happening;
 for, thank the Lord, there's such a thing
 as bears the title of reaction.
 Mayor My doing, that this pantomime
 was smothered straight away, at birth.
 Dean Ah, but the miracle's the prime —
 Mayor What miracle?
 Dean The shoal, the firth.
 Mayor (*snorts*) That's, as you might expect, a lie!
 Dean Indeed? A falsehood?
 Mayor I let fly
 with the first nonsense tongue could fake; — 1370
 can that be blamed, when what's at stake
 is something vital?
 Dean No indeed;
 quite justifiable in need.
 Mayor Moreover, let a day go by,
 when folk have pulled themselves together,
 what difference will it make, then, whether
 we won by dint of truth or lie?
 Dean I'm not a stickler, I admit. *
(looks out over the waste)

But that is Brand there, isn't it,
 trudging along —

Mayor No doubt of it! 1380
 A lonely warrior, on the road!

Dean No, wait; there's someone else just showed, —
 but far behind!

Mayor Gerd, one observes!
 Chap gets the following he deserves.

Dean (*jocularly*) Well, when his sacrificing's done,
 he'll rate an epitaph, — here's one:
 "Brand lies at rest; his conquest small;
 one soul — and she was mad — that's all!"

Mayor (*rubbing his nose*)
 Though thinking back on things, you know,
 the people's verdict seemed to show 1390
 some inhumaneness, even so.

Dean (*shrugs*) Vox populi vox dei. Let's go!
 (*they go*)

(*Deep inside the great plateau. The storm is gathering and driving heavy clouds over
 the snowfield; black peaks and crags emerge here and there and are veiled again by the
 mist*)

(*BRAND, bloody and battered, approaches across the upland*)

Brand (*halts and looks behind him*) Thousands joined me in the valley;
 for the heights not *one* dare rally.
 Through each heart there speaks the yearning
 for a greater, finer age;
 on each soul descends a burning
 summons, noble war to wage.
 O, but sacrifice, that's fearful;
 will takes cover, scared and tearful; — 1400
one died for all once on a time, —
 now cowardice is not a crime!
 (*sinks down on a stone and looks about warily*)
 Time and oft have I felt daunted;
 horror rippled through my hair
 when I went, as children dare,
 to the howl of dog, in utter
 darkness to the room that's haunted.
 But I checked the heart's scared beating,
 I consoled myself, repeating:
 out there shines a flood of light, 1410
 here the dark's not dusk or night, —
 just the window-masking shutter.
 And I thought day's lucid light,
 summer's radiance, clear and vaunted,
 must flood through the door's arch, flaunted
 fair and lovely to my sight,

through the room that's dark and haunted.

O, what bitter self-deception.

Pitch-black night was my reception, —
and out there, men ill-accorded, 1420

scattered thin by fjord and bay,
hugged their memories, souls defrauded,
hoarding, as the king once hoarded
year by year his Snefrid's clay, *
moved a scrap of shroud away,
listened where the heart is seated,
fed on crumbs of hope depleted,
fancied *now* blood's vivid rose
from that lifeless corpse still glows.

Like him, *no-one* felt commanded 1430
to give the tomb what it demanded.

None amongst them seems to know:
corpses aren't dreamt back to living,
corpses must to dust proceed,
the corpse's only task is giving
nourishment to new-sown seed. —

Night, sheer night, — and night again
over women, children, men!

O that I might, armed with flame,
spare them death-bed's straw and shame. (*leaps up*) * 1440

Black the visions I see thunder
like the death-ride through the night. *
Stoutly clad against storm's hazards,
this our time bold action craves,
urges swords be swung, not staves,
urges thighs wear emptied scabbards. —

I see kinsmen rush to fight, — *

I see brothers cringing under
magic's hat to hide from sight. *

And there's yet still more I see, — 1450
wretchedness's agony, —

women whimper, menfolk bawl,
ears made deaf to each demand, —
see, they scratch their brow to scrawl
"We're the poor folk from the strand,
pennies from God's mint, that's all".

They turn pale at warfare's clamour,
trust to self-made indecision. —

Rainbow o'er the May lea springing, *
flag, where are you. Who can see? 1460

Where can those three colours be, —
those that chafed at masthead, swinging
to the gale of anthem-singing,
till a king, a man of vision,
slashed a tongue into the banner?

You employed the tongue to boast;
 if the dragon's fang won't rend,
 why the banner's gaping end? —
 The people's cry could have subsided;
 the king's axe could have abided; 1470
 the flag of peace, four-square, advises
 full as well a ship capsizes,
 grounding helpless on the coast!

Yet worse times; worse visions, frightening,
 pierce the future's night with lightning!
 Britain's coal-clouds spread their gloom
 on our land, foul, black and legion,
 smudging fresh green vegetation,
 spreading vile contamination
 on the fair shoots where is splashes, — 1480
 stealing daylight from our region ,
 drizzling down as did the ashes,
 once that ancient city's doom. — *

Hence our race's foul decline;
 through the winding mine-seam falters
 the hushed song of dripping waters;
 small, smug, toiling folk combine,
 free the ore trapped in those quarters,
 walk hunched up in soul and spine,
 glare with dwarfish, greedy eye * 1490
 for the gold's bright, gleaming lie.
 Not a soul that shrieks, no smiling,
 brothers' fall leaves no heart broken,
 by *their* fall no lion's woken; —
 one mob, hammering, minting, filing; —
 spokesman for the light — there's none,
 this our race transformed to one
 that forgets Will's obligation
 is not ended by privation.

Yet worse times, worse visions, frightening, 1500
 pierce the future's night with lightning.
 Cunning's wolf-howl menaces *
 doctrine's sun on earth henceforth;
 cries for help assail the North,
 call the fjord-wide muster forth;
 surly, cold, the dwarf will hiss, —
 that it's no concern of *his*.

Let *great* peoples do the glowing;
 let the *others* meet what's owing,
 there's no call for *our* blood's flowing, — 1510
 we are small, our weak resources
 bar us from Truth's trial of forces,
 we can't sacrifice the nation
 for our scrap of world-salvation.

Not for us the cup was drained,
 not for us the crown of thorn
 bit into His brow, fangs tearing,
 nor the lance the Roman trained,
 that the dead man's side be torn,
 not for *our* sake did the shearing 1520
 nails through hands and feet go searing.
 We are small, and so we tarried,
 though the muster summoned us!
 Not for us the cross was carried!
 Strap-lash, strap-lash, nothing bolder,
 Wandering-Jew-lash, made to smoulder *
 purple on the doomed man's shoulder,
 that's the Passion-scrap for *us*!

(throws himself down in the snow and covers his face; after a while he looks up)

Have I dreamt? Have I now woken?
 All one grey of cloud unbroken. 1530
 Were those visions sick before
 that I've witnessed — nothing more?
 Is the image lost, decayed
 wherein mankind's soul was made?
 Is our Author's plan negated — ?

(listening)

Ha, a rising wind created!

The Invisible Choir *(soughing through the storm)*

Never, never can you play Him, —
 for of flesh you have been wrought; *
 do His service or betray Him,
 equally you count for nought! 1540

Brand *(repeats the words and says softly)*

So, alas, I think, too, nearly!
 Did He in the choir not clearly
 thrust aside my plea severely?
 Take my every possession,
 block all ways to light's accession,
 let me struggle on, committed,
 yet my downfall then permitted!

Choir *(sounds more loudly over him)*

You, poor worm, can never play Him, —
 Death's fell chalice you have drained;
 follow Him or else betray Him, 1550
 equally your deed's disdained!

Brand *(quietly)* Agnes, Alf, — days of elation,
 life of peace and life of rest,
 I exchanged for lamentation,
 pierced in sacrifice *my* breast —
 yet slew no dragon for the nation.

Chorus *(gentle and seductive)*

Never, dreamer, can you play Him,

your inheritance is nought;
 all you gave can not repay Him; —
 you are for your earth-life wrought! 1560

Brand (*bursts into silent tears*)
 Agnes, Alf, come back; for here,
 on this peak I sit alone,
 chilled by north winds to the bone,
 prey to phantoms dank and drear — !
*(he looks up, a spreading patch opens and expands in the mist; a female FORM
 stands there, dressed in light colours, with a cape over her shoulders. It is AGNES.)*
 Form (*smiles and reaches out her arms to him*)
 Brand, I'm back with you once more!

Brand (*starts up in bewilderment*) Agnes! Agnes! What is drifting — ?
 Form All a fevered dream before.
 Now the pestilence is lifting!

Brand Agnes! Agnes! (*makes to rush towards her*)
 Form (*screams*) Keep your distance!
 See the gulf between us here! 1570
 Here's a waterfall that's sheer! (*gently*)
 Yours is not some dream-existence,
 you're not plagued with visions here.
 You have been so ill, my love, —
 drunk of madness's harsh brew,
 dreamt your wife was gone from you. —
 Brand You're alive! Praise Heaven above — !
 Form (*hastily*) Hush, we'll talk of that, don't worry!
 Come now, come — for we must hurry.
 Brand O, but Alf?
 Form *He* too, not dead. 1580
 Brand Living?
 Form Cheeks a healthy red!
 You've imagined all your grief;
 all your strife, mere false belief.
 Alf's your mother's pride and joy;
 she's well, he's a fine, big boy;
 village church, that's standing, still;
 can come down, if that's your will; —
 folk down yonder plod their ways,
 toil as in the good old days.
 Brand Good?
 Form Yes — things went peacefully. 1590
 Brand Peaceful!
 Form Quick, Brand; come with me!
 Brand Ah, I'm dreaming!
 Form Now no longer.
 But you must be nursed, grow stronger.
 Brand I am strong.
 Form Not yet, alack;
 nightmare dreams still draw you back.

| | | |
|----------------------------------|---|------|
| | Mind befogged again, you'll slide from your wife's, your baby's side, sanity once more be shaken, — if the cure's not undertaken. | |
| Brand | O, provide it! | |
| Form | That's for you, — | 1600 |
| | <i>that</i> there's no-one else can do. | |
| Brand | Name it then! | |
| Form | Our old physician who has read so many books, — wise, however deep one looks, — traced your sickness to its cause. Every pallid, ugly vision stemmed from one three-worded clause. You must mark them for excision, scratch them from your recollection, from the tablets of the law. | |
| | <i>They</i> caused pestilence to fall like a crazy, whirlwind flaw; — purge them, if you'd purge infection from your soul, the plague you bore. Speak them. | 1610 |
| Brand | "All or Nothing ". | |
| Form | | |
| Brand (<i>recoils</i>) | All — ? | |
| | Is that true? | |
| Form | As I am living, and, as one day, you must die! | |
| Brand | Pity us! The unforgiving sword's still drawn as formerly. * | |
| Form | Brand, be kind; my clasp is warm; hold me in your mighty arm; — let us seek soft summer's clime. | 1620 |
| Brand | Plague shan't strike a second time! | |
| Form | Strike it will, though, Brand, I vow. | |
| Brand (<i>shakes his head</i>) | That's been put behind me now. No wild horrors, nightmare-bred — life's, life's dreams now lie ahead! | |
| Form | Life's? | |
| Brand | Come with me, Agnes! | |
| Form | Stay! | |
| | what's your will, Brand? | |
| Brand | <i>Must</i> holds sway; <i>live</i> , what's been but <i>dreamt</i> by me; | 1630 |
| | <i>act</i> what's still but <i>fantasy</i> . | |
| Form | Ha, impossible! That train, where did it lead? | |
| Brand | And shall again! | |
| Form | Horror's dream-ride, murky, chilling, will you ride it waking, willing? | |

Brand Waking, willing.
 Form Our child — you're set?
 Brand Let the child go.
 Form Brand!
 Brand I must!
 Agnes Tear me bleeding from the net?
 Scourge with sacrificial lust,
 be the death of me — ?

Brand I must! 1640
 Form Plunge in night all trace of lightness,
 shut out day-time's gleaming brightness,
 never pluck life's perfect ripeness,
 never waft on song, so gently?
 I remember, o such plenty!

Brand But I must. Don't waste your prayer.
 Form How did sacrificing fare?
 All your high hopes ill repaid you;
 all men scourged you, all betrayed you!

Brand I don't toil for my own gain; 1650
 nor for my own victory strain.
 Form For a folk brought up to mining!
 Brand One man's light casts wide its shining.
 Form Doomed though, in its progeny!
 Brand One man's will sets many free.
 Form *One*, with rod of flame — be wise! — *
 drove mankind from Paradise!
 Set a gulf before the portal; —
 you'll not ever leap *that* sill!

Brand *Longing's* road is open still! 1660
 Form (*disappears in a clap of thunder. The mist swirls where it had stood, and there is the sound of a shrill, piercing scream as from someone fleeing from the spot*)
 You're no use on earth! Die, mortal!

Brand (*stands for a moment as though stunned*)
 Off it hurtled through the reek, —
 great fierce wings that did not linger,
 like a hawk across the peak.
 Its demand, a little finger,
 my whole hand its looked-for prize — ! *
 Ha, the soul of Compromise!

Gerd (*enters with a rifle*) Seen the hawk here? Did you spy him?
 Brand Yes, my girl; this time I saw him.
 Gerd Quick, which way did he go flying? — 1670
 we must chase him, we must draw him!

Brand There's no weapon that can bite him;
 sometimes it might seem he's fled,
 heart shot full with mortal lead, —
 but, your death-blow aimed to smite him, —
 he's behind you, just as spry,
 mocking, tempting, just as sly.

Gerd Look, I stole this reindeer gun,
loaded, steel and silver too. *
See, I'm not the crazy one
that they say I am! 1680

Brand (*making to leave*) Aim true!

Gerd Priest, you're limping, lame of foot.
How did that befall?

Brand Folk bayed me.

Gerd Red, as from heart's very root,
is your forehead now!

Brand Folk flayed me.

Gerd Your voice sang once, I remember, —
now it's leaf-rasp in November!

Brand One and all, they —

Gerd What?

Brand Betrayed me.

Gerd (*looks at him wide-eyed*)
Ha, — I recognise you then!
First I took you for the preacher; — 1690
fie on him and every teacher!
You're the greatest amongst men.

Brand I half thought so, foolish creature.

Gerd Let me see your hands more closely.

Brand See my hands?

Gerd There's nails been ripping!
There's your hair, look — blood's been dripping; —
there's your brow, right cruelly torn,
You have borne the cross's tree!
My dad told me as a lass
long ago it came to pass, 1700
far from here, some other's spawn; —
reckon he was fooling me;—
yes, for you're the Saviour born!

Brand Get thee hence! *

Gerd Shall I before thy
feet fall down and worship then?

Brand Hence!

Gerd But waste it was to pour *thy*
blood that could redeem all men!

Brand O, there's no spar can save whole
my most wretched shipwrecked soul!

Gerd Here's the rifle! Slay them all — ! 1710

Brand (*shakes his head*) One must strive to meet one's fall.

Gerd But not you; you lead, you must!
In your hand there's nail-marks scrawling; —
you're the chosen one we trust.

Brand I'm the lowest worm that's crawling.

Gerd (*looks up; the clouds are clearing*)
Do you know where you stand?

Brand (*stares round him*) I stand
 first foot on the stair I'm scaling;
 sore the foot, the heights expand.

Gerd (*wilder*) Answer me! See where you stand?

Brand Yes, I see the mist's unveiling. 1720

Gerd Svartetind's unveiling, why
 there it points right to the sky.

Brand (*looks up*) Svartetind? The ice-church?

Gerd Ay!
 You've turned church-goer today!

Brand Would that I were miles away! —
 O, how fervent is my longing
 after peace, and sun that's gentle,
 calm that's churchlike, sacramental,
 summer's realm where life is thronging. (*bursts into tears*)
 Jesus, I have called Thy name; 1730
 Thy embrace, though, never came;
 often would Thy name escape me,
 like some old word-anodyne;
 let me, of salvation's wrap,
 be permitted one poor scrap,
 wet with true contrition's wine — !

Gerd (*pale*) Why, what's this? You weep full sore,
 warm, so that your cheeks are steaming, —
 warm, so that the ice-shroud's streaming
 melted drops from peak and mountain — 1740
 warm, it melts the memory's fountain,
 sets the inner grief there teeming, —
 warm, so that the vestments slide
 down the glacier-priest's steep side — ! (*trembles*)
 Man, why wept you not before?

Brand (*his face bright, radiant as though rejuvenated*)
 Ice-bound was the path through law, —
 then there came the summer thaw!
 I once sought to be a writing -
 tablet fit for God's inditing; —
 from to-day, my life shall be 1750
 one rich, pliant poesy.
 The crust breaks. I can weep today,
 I can kneel now, — I can pray! (*sinks to his knees*)

Gerd (*glances up and says in a low and wary voice*)
 There he sits, the ugly thing!
 That's him casts his shadowing,
 spreads his feathered wings to fly,
 flogs the nearby mountain heights.
 Now deliverance is nigh, —
 that is, if the silver bites.
 (*throws the rifle against her cheek and fires. A hollow boom, as of rolling thunder, sounds
 high up off the mountain wall*)

Brand (*starts up*) What on — ?

Gerd Had him in my sights! 1760

Look, I've hit him; — see him glide
and fall, his screams, hark, echo wide!
Thousands of his feathers drifting
down from where the ridge is rifting; —
look how white he's grown, and grand — !
Heigh, still rolls for where we stand!

Brand (*collapses*) Yes, each son of man's akin, —
doomed to die for mankind's sin.

Gerd Heaven's tent is spreading wide
tenfold more now, since he died. 1770

See him roll there, see him tumbling —
no more dread, thank heaven above!
why, he's white as any dove — ! (*shrieks in terror*)
Ugh, this awful, awful rumbling! (*throws herself down in the snow*)

Brand (*shrinks beneath the plunging avalanche and directs his words upwards*)

Tell me, God, in death's abyss; —
is no fleck of hoped-for bliss *
earned by man's will, *quantum satis* — ?

(*The avalanche buries him; the entire valley fills*)

A Voice (*calls out through the thunderous din*)

He is *deus caritatis*!

NOTES

Notes to Act 1

- 30 *Seven English for the one Norwegian mile in the text.*
- 39 *Mat. 14:25 – ‘... and Peter ... said, Lord ... bid me come unto thee on the water ... And he walked on the sea ... But when he saw the wind boisterous ... he cried, saying, Lord save me. And ... Jesus caught him, and said ... O thou of little faith ...’.*
- 68 *Mat. 12:48 – ‘But [Jesus] answered ... who is my mother, and who are my brethren?’*
- 72 *Ps. 16:11 – ‘Then wilt thou show me the path of life.’*
- 97 *Mat. 7:13 – ‘... broad is the way that leadeth to destruction ...’*
- 265 *Egir, lord of the seas. By the riddling conventions of the Poetic Edda, his ship becomes his steed.*
- 341 *The ‘new brood’ of stern Puritanism current in Norway; Ibsen’s sister, Hedvig, was considerably influenced by it.*
- 342 *Eccl. 1:2 – ‘vanity of vanities, saith the preacher ... all is vanity’*
- 344 *Esth. 4:1 – ‘Mordecai rent his clothes and put on sackcloth, with ashes.’*
- 362 *Bacchant: devotee of the god of wine and ecstasy; like Silenus (below), used as an example of total dedication as against mere sordid self-indulgence.*
- 364 *Silenus, tutor to Dionysus, depicted as intoxicated yet revered for his wisdom.*
- 372 *i.e. for taking communion.*
- 418 *The first of a number of references reasonably attributable to Ibsen’s sightseeing in Rome. One of the frescos by Perugino in the Sistine Chapel depicts St. Peter, the first Pope, receiving from Christ the two keys of secular and spiritual authority.*
- 433 *The Sistine Chapel work, by Michelangelo, shows a very young and muscular Christ in Judgement.*
- 435 *Ex. 3:1 – ‘Now Moses ... led the flock to the mountain of Horeb. And the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush; ... and behold ... the bush was not consumed.’*
- 439 *Josh. 10:12 – ‘Then spake Joshua to the Lord and he said in the sight of Israel, Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon.’*

- 447 *Mat. 12:20 – ‘... smoking flax shall he [Christ] not quench, till he send forth judgement unto victory.’ Ibsen’s bible has ‘... smoking snuff ...’*
- 459 *Mat. 6:19 – ‘... treasure upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt.’ Ibsen substitutes ‘worm’.*
- 467 *Gen. 9:13 – ‘I do set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be a token of a covenant ... between me ... and every living creature of all flesh.’ Ibsen may also be drawing on Norse mythology, wherein a rainbow is the bridge, Bifrost, over which slain heroes gallop to enter Valhalla. But given the present context, Ibsen may again be responding to a stimulus provided by the Sistine Chapel; in Michelangelo’s representation of the Creation of Adam, the outstretched arms, hands and fingers of Adam and of God together form an almost complete arc which, in Ibsen’s terms here, do indeed strive to connect flesh and the source of the spirit.*
- 470 *Rome would have provided ample opportunity for seeing such sculptural fragments – in, for instance, the Vatican museums.*
- 554 *The veil in the temple served to conceal the Holy of Holies; by its rending at the moment of Christ’s death was signified the tearing aside of the veils of ignorance, indifference and sinfulness that had obscured and distorted man’s comprehension of divine purpose. Brand’s appropriation of the concept implies an exalted view of his own mission.*
- 560 *‘Harlot’ appears in Ibsen’s bible though not in the A.V.*
- 640 *Luke 6:45 – ‘... the good man ... brings forth that which is good, and the evil man ... that which is evil.’ Brand, by his distinction between ‘base’ (slet) and ‘evil’ (ondt), seems to emphasise yet again his respect for wholehearted commitment, even if it be to evil, as against inert acceptance of one’s imperfections.*
- 664 *‘Our age’ – one of the most difficult words to translate is ‘slægt’. It can mean: kind (as in mankind), kindred, kinship, lineage, race, family, generation, age, times.*
- 667 *Ibsen’s ‘odelsmænd’ means freeholders of land by right of birth.*

Notes of Act 2

- s.d. Mayor, an elected local administrator, combining some of the function of bailiff and, on a very modest scale, our Mayor. We have no exact equivalent. Sexton, not so much grave-digger as verger, responsible for the general care of the church, including, as his Norwegian title of ‘klokker’ suggests, the ringing of the bells.*
- 37 *Joh. 6:5 – for the feeding of the five thousand. The Mayor, though ready*

- with scriptural quotations, is rarely sensitive in the use of them. He casts himself here in the role of Jesus, elsewhere of God.*
- 58 *Ex 32:33 – ‘Whosoever has sinned against me, him will I blot out of my book.’ This is God’s response to His people’s worshipping of the golden calf in the desert of Sinai. In contrast to the Mayor, Brand’s use of the scriptures is accurate, apposite, and deadly serious.*
- 62 *Job. 1:21 – ‘The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away.’*
- 70 *Ps. 40:2 – ‘He hath brought me up ... out of the miry clay.’*
- 143 *Mat. 7:26 – ‘... and a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand ...’. ‘Mud’ is Ibsen’s own version.*
- 174 *Professor Ystad informs me that small pebbles in bags have been found in Bronze Age tombs. They are mentioned in Icelandic sagas as being the means to conjure up magical powers.*
- 178 *Ps. 28:7 – ‘The Lord is my strength and my shield.’*
- 222 *Ibsen’s ‘eftermål’ (literally ‘after-voice’) refers to posthumous reputation, a concept of immense importance in the value-system embodied in Norse saga and mythology.*
- 230 *Literally: where does the burden of responsibility (ansvarsvægten) originate for the portion that one inherits (arvelod) from one’s family line (slægt)? The frequency with which Brand uses these terms betrays his obsession with the problem they define. I have been as consistent as I can in their translation.*
- 232 *i.e. Judgement Day.*
- 253 *Mat. 16:25 – ‘For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it.’*
- 326 *Rev. 3:16 – ‘I would thou wert hot or cold ... because thou art lukewarm ... I will spue thee out ... ‘*
- 341 *For the expulsion from the Garden, see Genesis 3:1–*
- 354 *Knight (ridder), a term perhaps borrowed from Kierkegaard’s Fear and Trembling, where he describes Abraham as a Knight of Faith, denoting a kind of moral heroism that defies normal comprehension.*
- 384 *Gen. 9:1 – ‘And God said: be fruitful and multiply, and replenish the earth.’*
- 402 *Mat. 26:38 – ‘[Jesus said] My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death.’*
- 135

- 411 *Perhaps a reference to Prometheus, doomed to be attacked by a vulture for his audacity.*
- 627 *Rom. 8:11 – ‘His spirit that dwelleth in you.’*
- 629 *Gen. 1:26 – ‘And God said, Let us make man in our image.’*
- 634 *Perhaps an echo of Mat. 25:14 – the parable of the steward called to account for the talents entrusted to him.*
- 670 *Job. 1:21 – ‘Naked came I out of my mother’s womb and naked shall I return thither.’*
- 682 *Job. 42:6 – ‘... repent in dust and ashes.’ Brand implies that his mother who shows no sign of repentance, must, unlike Job, die amid her moral squalor.*
- 692 *Rom. 8:13 – ‘For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die.’*
- 706 *Crushing to death between war-shields, a form of execution that recurs in the sagas.*
- 710 *Phil. 3:7 – ‘What things were gain to me, those I counted lost for Christ.’ Ibsen repeats the biblical term of gain (winning) and loss (tap) at the end of Act 4.*
- 761 *2 Cor. 3:3 – ‘For as much as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ... written not in tablets of stone, but in fleshly tables of the heart ...’ See Act 5 1572.*
- 796 *Another Kierkegaardian echo.*
- 797 *Brand echoes Christ’s parable of the sower (Mat. 13:4) where some seeds ‘fell by the wayside’ and were devoured by the fowls.*

Notes to Act 3

- 27 *Ibsen came across a similarly situated parsonage during his walking tour in the Sogne district in 1862.*
- 81 *The sentiment of 1 Joh. 4:20 – ‘If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar, for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God?’*
- 97 *Mat. 26:39 – for Christ’s pleading on the Mount of Olives.*
- 106-7 *Rev. 2:10 – ‘Be thou faithful unto death and I will give thee a crown of life.’*

- 120 *Rev. 20:12 – ‘... the dead were judged ... according to their works.’*
- 164 *Rom. 5:19 – ‘For as by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.’*
- 170 *A Latin tag (‘as required’) said to have been remembered from Ibsen’s days as apothecary’s assistant in Grimstad. The reader has to adopt Ibsen’s pronunciation of the Latin.*
- 180 *Mat. 7:13 – ‘Enter ye at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction.’*
- 208 *A synthesis of Gen. 8:10 (Noah’s dove) and Mat. 3:16 – ‘And Jesus, when he was baptised, went up out of the water: and lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the spirit of God descending like a dove ... and lo, a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.’*
- 220 *For the Lord’s curse on the serpent, Gen. 3:15 – ‘[woman’s] seed shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.’*
- 269 *Prov. 20:23 – ‘Divers weights are an abomination unto the Lord; and a false balance is not good.’*
- 275 *Gen. 3:24 – ‘... [God] placed at the east end of the Garden of Eden cherubim and a flaming sword.’*
- 329 *Rom. 6:23 – ‘... for the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life.’*
- 332 *The horror involved in Abraham’s intended sacrifice of Isaac; see Note Act 2 354.*
- 433 *Eccl. 3:1 – ‘To everything there is a season, and a time for every purpose under heaven.’*
- 435 *Mark. 12:42 – ‘And there came a certain poor widow, and she threw in two mites, ...’ Another instance of the Mayor’s insensitivity.*
- 442 *Bele, a legendary king in the Sogne district.*
- 448 *Viking raids to the southwest – on the monastery at Lindisfarne for instance – began towards the end of the eighth century A.D.*
- 455 *Possibly King Magnus.*
- 592 *The linking of death and victory, one of the leading concepts in Brand, is central to Ibsen’s concept of tragedy at large. It forms the theme of a number of poems written before and after Brand: conventionally in Helge*

- Hunningsbane (1851), more profoundly in To The Survivors (1860) and Without Name (1869) – and arguably it underlies many of the later prose plays. The paradox manifestly derives from Ibsen’s steeping in both Norse saga and mythology and the Bible.*
- 689 *Rom. 8:13 – ‘For if ye live after the flesh ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.’*
- 690 *Brand’s sense of divine mission elicits another synthesis from diverse sources: Acts. 1 and 2 where Jesus commands his disciples to become His witnesses ‘to the uttermost parts of the earth’ and God fills them with the gift of tongues on the day of Pentecost; and Rev. 1:16 ‘... out of His mouth went a sharp sword’ and 2:16 ‘I [The Lord] will fight against them with the sword of my mouth’; Deut. 32:22 – ‘... for a fire is kindled in mine [God’s] anger [against his people]’*
- 694 *2 Kings 20:1 – ‘And the Prophet Isaiah ... said unto him, thus saith the Lord, set thine house in order; for thou shalt die.’*
- 755 *i.e. like one of the Titans or Giants who stormed the stronghold of the Olympians.*
- 893 *Luke. 22:42 – ‘Father ... remove this cup from me.’*

Notes of Act 4

- 24 *‘heath’ – a hardy shrub of the heather family.*
- 122-3 and 133-6 *In these passages Ibsen combines biblical references with the imagery of pagan Norse mythology. Agnes is to be shield-maid to the warrior-hero Brand in Valhalla, providing him refreshment and healing his wounds at the close of each day’s fighting.*
- 157 *Wood shavings placed in the coffin for the corpse to lie on.*
- 180 *Agnes combines the imagery of chess (defending the king) with that of Rev. 2:10 – ‘Be faithful unto death and I will give thee the crown of life.’*
- 233 *‘Pixie’ for Ibsen’s ‘blue-light’ – i.e. the light generated by marsh-gas; our Jack-o’-lantern, will-o’-the-wisp.*
- 321 *Acts 9:5 – ‘And the Lord said [to Saul], I am Jesus, whom thou persecutest: it is hard of thee to kick against the pricks.’ The Mayor, as usual, reduces scripture (the conversion of Paul) to commonplace.*
- 359 *A frivolous justification for temporising made out of Christ’s interdiction against the swearing of oaths in the Sermon on the Mount, Mat. 5:37 – ‘... But let thy communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: ...’*

- 525 *The Mayor's flippant term for the national-romantic enthusiasts of the time.*
- 789 *Ex. 20:24 – 'I the Lord thy God and a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation ...'*
- 807 *The quotation, marked as such in the text, is from the Ex. 15:11 – 'Who is like unto thee, O Lord, ... glorious in holiness, fearful in praises ...'*
- 888 *Ex. 33:20 – 'And the Lord said unto Moses, thou shalt not see my face: for there shall no man see me, and live.'*
- 1223 *i.e. not fearful c.f. 807.*
- 1226 *Mat. 10:22 – '... But he that endureth to the end shall be saved.'*
- 1227 *Mat. 16:25 – 'For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it.'*
- 1228-9 *Here Brand picks up and elaborates on Agnes's reference (Act 2 710) to Phil. 3:7 – 'But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ.'*

Notes of Act 5

- 52 *The awakening refers to the resurgence of a sense of Norwegian cultural identity and energy that followed Norway's political independence from Denmark in 1814. The new life emerging from what Ibsen and others saw as a four-hundred-year state of torpor invited comparison with the ancient myth of the supernaturally long winter that followed the destruction of the Norse gods – the twilight of the gods – which was, in turn, succeeded by the creation of a new world, Gimle. Ibsen frequently invites the comparison.*
- 84 *Sextons had the reputation of being slow on the uptake.*
- 128 *Mat. 6:24 – 'No man can serve two masters ... Ye cannot serve God and Mammon.'*
- 208 *One of the commandments communicated by Moses (Deut. 17:6): 'At the mouth of one witness he shall not be put to death'. Jesus himself invokes the principle (Joh. 8:16-8): '... my judgement is true: for I am not alone, but I and the father that sent me. It is also written in your law that the testimony of two men is true. I am the one that bear witness of myself and the Father that sent me beareth witness of me.'*
- 255 *A reference to Yggdrasil, the tree that sustained the universe.*
- 278 *Gen. 1:31 – 'And God saw everything that he had made, and, behold, it was very good.' The Mayor's insensitivity again.*
- 139

- 379 *Rev. 3:15 – ‘Because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out.’*
- 394 *Gen. 3:15 – ‘It [mankind] shall bruise thy [the serpent’s] head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.’*
- 529 *Mat. 6:24 – ‘No man can serve two masters.’*
- 589 *For the tower of Babel, Gen. 11:4.*
- 599 *Prov. 16:18 – ‘... an haughty spirit goeth before a fall.’*
- 603 *He knows the tag ‘Quem Jupiter vult perdere, dementat prius’ – whom Jupiter would destroy, he first drives mad.*
- 608 *2 Sam. 11:3 – ‘And [Daniel] wrote in a letter, saying, Set ye Uriah in the forefront of the hottest battle and retire ye from him that he be smitten and die.’ David had taken Uriah’s wife to be his mistress.*
- 622 *Gen. 28:12-13 – ‘And Jacob dreamed, and behold a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven.*
- 634 *2 Cor. 2:14 – ‘For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ.’*
- 652 *Mat. 23:12*
- 666 *Mat. 26:75 – ‘And Peter remembered the word of Jesus. Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice.’*
- 683 *Brand changes in his last sentence from the formal ‘De’ form of address to the more familiar, here contemptuous, ‘du’.*
- 750 *Mat. 7:9 – ‘Of what man is there of you, who, if his own son ask bread, will give him a stone?’*
- 754 *Mat. 3:16-17 – [After Jesus’ baptism by John] ‘... and lo the heavens were opened ..., and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him: And lo, a voice from heaven saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.’*
- 767 *Isa. 53:6 – ‘All we like sheep have gone astray.’ I have tried to retain what I can of Einar’s alliteration, which closely follows that of the Norwegian bible at this point.*
- 798 *Lev. 26:13 – ‘I have broken the bonds of your yoke, and made you go upright.*
- 799 *Ps. 29:15 – ‘The Lord ... shall pluck my feet out of the net.’*

- 845 *Einar may consider Agnes doomed for not believing in Jesus as well as in God. Joh. 3:16-18 – ‘For God ... gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him [i.e. as well as in God] should not perish, but have everlasting life ... He that believeth not [on him] is condemned already.’ An alternative interpretation, attractive perhaps in the light of what immediately follows, is that he means that belief in Satan is required.*
- 853 *Einar’s fatuousness shows itself in his absurd elaboration of Ps. 51:4 – ‘Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquities ...’*
- 863 *Mat. 3:12 – ‘[Jesus] whose fan is in his hand, and he will ... gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.’*
- 911 *Joh. 4:24 – ‘They that worship [God] must worship him in spirit and in truth.’*
- 926 *For the story of God’s reproof to David, delivered by the prophet Nathan, for his treachery towards Uriah, see II Sam. 6:12-14.*
- 1001 *Sam. 6:12-14 – ‘[David] brought up the ark of God ... into the city of David ... and David danced before the Lord with all his might ...’*
- 1017 *Mat. 18:13 – ‘Except ye ... become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.’*
- 1084 *Gen. 1:26 – ‘Let us make man in our image’.*
- 1096 *Ps.23:6: ‘... and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.’*
- 1099 *Ex. 16:4 – for the rain of manna sent by God to feed the Israelites.*
- 1102 *Ps. 101:47 – ‘I will not know the wicked person ... he that telleth lies shall not tarry in my sight.’*
- 1104 *Mat. 12:30 – ‘He that is not with me is against me.’*
- 1196 *Canaan, the land promised to Abraham by God. For the wanderings of the Israelites in the wilderness en route, Gen. 12:5.*
- 1225 *Ps. 146:7 – ‘The Lord looseth the prisoners.’*
- 1227 *Mat. 5:37 – ‘But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatever is more than these cometh of evil’ – an injunction against the swearing of oaths.*
- 1318 *Gen. 4:15 – The Lord set a mark upon Cain and doomed him to a vagabond life of fruitless toil.*

- 1326 *Ps. 100:5 – ‘For the Lord is good.’*
- 1327 *Deut. 19:10 for the Lord’s commandment as delivered by Moses: ‘... that innocent blood be not shed in my land.’*
- 1359 *Literally ‘Know more than their Our Father’ i.e. the Lord’s Prayer.*
- 1378 *Literally ‘I am not a rigorist’, in theology one who believes that in all doubtful matters of conscience the strictest course is always to be followed. Hedvig, Ibsen’s sister, was influenced by the sect.*
- 1424 *Snefrid was the beloved wife of King Harald Fairhair whose body he could not bring himself to inter. After three years of obsessive preoccupation with imagined signs of life, the King was persuaded by a counsellor that so beautiful a body deserved a change of clothing. The moving of the corpse instantly revealed the actualities of decay and the King, cured of his obsession, ordered its immediate burial and resumed his responsibilities towards his kingdom. The story serves Ibsen as a powerful image of a Norwegian society still floundering in its past.*
- 1440 *To die in one’s bed was, by the standards of Norse saga and myth, a disgrace.*
- 1442 *The ride of slain warriors endeavouring to reach Valhalla before dawn.*
- 1447 *The kinsmen were the Danes who had in 1864 come under renewed attack from the Prussians over the long-disputed territory of Slesvig; the brothers were the other members of the so-called Scandinavian brotherhood, the joint kingdom of Sweden and Norway. They had, through their politicians, and especially through their student bodies, promised support for the Danes should they be attacked, but in the event the Danes were left to fight and to be defeated, alone. Ibsen, once a fervent supporter of the Scandinavian concept, expressed his disillusionment in one of the bitterest poems he was ever to write, *Grounds for Confidence*, conceived during his journey to Italy.*
- 1448 *The magic hat, which figures in folk tales, it was thought to convey invisibility on the wearer.*
- 1459ff *On May 17th 1814, at Eidsvoll, Norway proclaimed its independence from Denmark but was immediately constrained by Great Power diplomacy to accept union with Sweden in a joint kingdom. Norwegian restlessness under the initially authoritarian regime of King Carl Johan expressed itself in a demand for a specifically Norwegian flag which was finally satisfied when Carl Johan’s liberal successor, Oscar, permitted the Norwegian navy to use a flag whose leading edge was fashioned into three peaks suggestive of the open jaws and protruding tongue of a dragon, a reminder of Norway’s heroic Viking past. The boasting refers back to*

- 1447.
- 1470 *King's axe — the axe with which he slashed the banner (above).*
- 1483 *Pompeii.*
- 1490 *In Norse mythology the dwarfs were deformed creatures who lived underground in caves and mines. They were credited with great technical skills, especially as makers of weapons and of gold jewellery for the gods. It was believed that miners encountered them in the mines. Ibsen uses them here, stripped of their romantic glamour, to highlight the spiritual degeneracy into which his people had, in his view, sunk through industrialisation.*
- 1502 *Fenrir, offspring of Loki, was a gigantic wolf that in the final battle between the giants and gods swallowed up Odin but was slain by Odin's son. One of Fenrir's offspring pursued and caught the sun and, by devouring it, initiated the terrible winter night that lasted for many years, during which time human beings behaved like wolves themselves.*
- 1526 *The wandering Jew who struck Jesus on His way to the Cross.*
- 1538 *Joh. 3:5-6 — 'Jesus answered ... Except a man be born of water and of the spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.'*
- 1619 *In Rome, Ibsen could not have avoided seeing, on top of the Castello St. Angelo overlooking the Tiber, an 18th century sculpture representing an angel returning its drawn sword to its scabbard. It commemorates the appearance of a favourable vision said to have appeared to a penitential procession beseeching relief from the plague with which God had visited the city.*
- 1656 *i.e. the guardian angel who expelled Adam and Eve.*
- 1666 *A familiar idea in Norwegian: something like 'ask an inch and take an ell.'*
- 1679 *A silver bullet, traditionally believed to be the only effective weapon against a supernatural foe.*
- 1704 *The setting, and the terms used by Gerd, evoke echoes of Christ's temptation by the devil Mat. 4:8 'The devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and showeth him all the kingdoms of the world ... And saith unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down, and worship me. Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan ...'*
- 1776 *'Fleck' is the best I can do with Ibsen's word 'fnug' which can, it seems, mean a flake, speck, scrap, feather, thus fusing the ambivalent imagery of*

the destructive avalanche of snow and the feathered dove which proclaimed God's loving approbation of Jesus at his baptism.