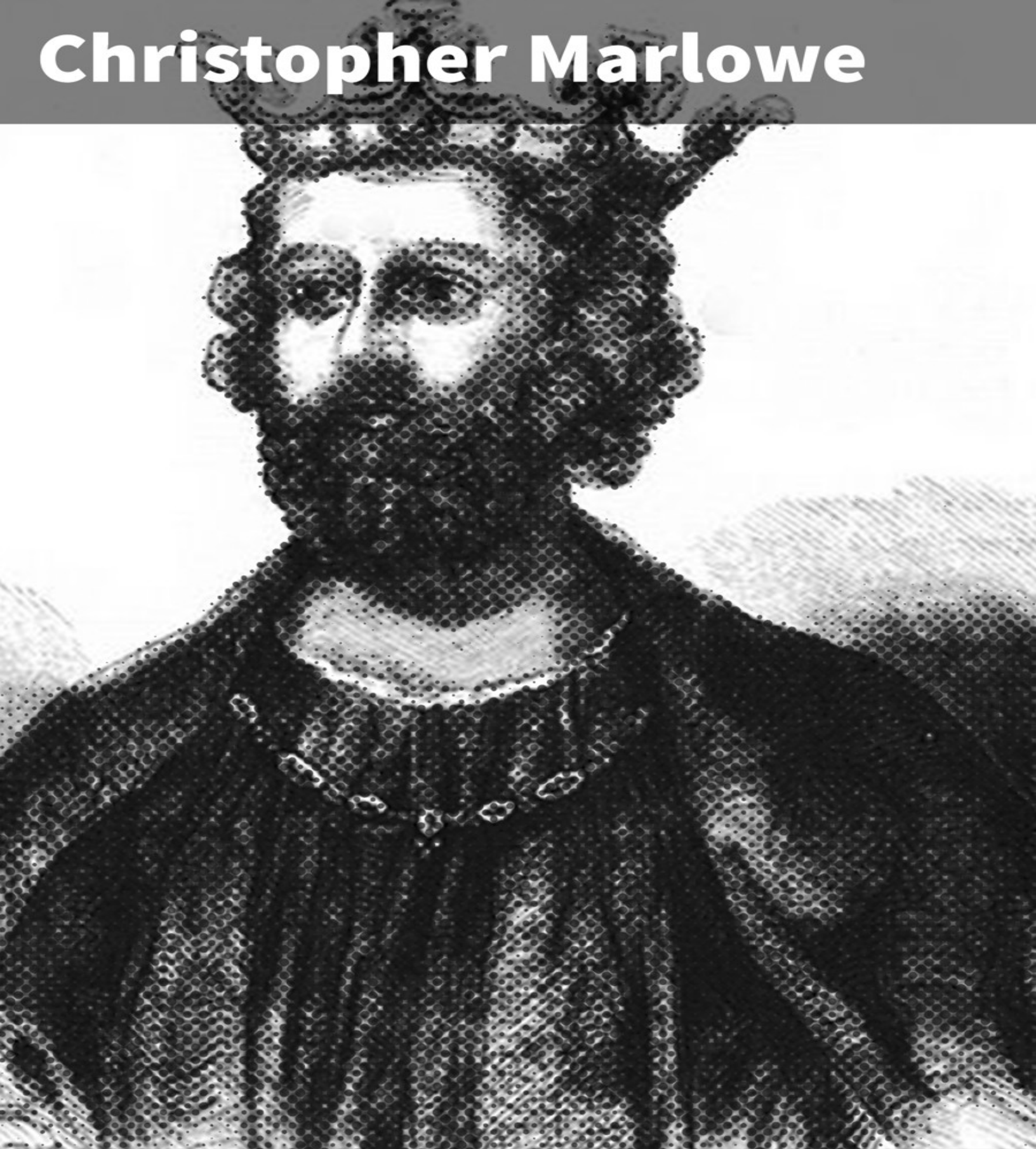


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Edward II

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ACT THE FIRST

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Act the First, Scene I

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[Enter GAVESTON, reading on a letter that was brought him from the KING]

GAVESTON

“My father is deceas’d! Come, Gaveston,
And share the kingdom with thy dearest friend,”
Ah! words that make me surfeit with delight!
What greater bliss can hap to Gaveston 4
Than live and be the favourite of a king!
Sweet prince, I come; these, these thy amorous lines
Might have enforc’d me to have swum from France,
And, like Leander, gasp’d upon the sand, 8
So thou would’st smile, and take me in thine arms.
The sight of London to my exil’d eyes
Is as Elysium to a new-come soul;
Not that I love the city, or the men, 12
But that it harbours him I hold so dear—
The king, upon whose bosom let me die, 1
And with the world be still at enmity.
What need the arctic people love starlight, 16
To whom the sun shines both by day and night?
Farewell base stooping to the lordly peers!
My knee shall bow to none but to the king.
As for the multitude, that are but sparks, 20
Rak’d up in embers of their poverty;—
Tanti; 2 I’ll fawn first on the wind
That glanceth at my lips, and flieth away.

[Enter three Poor Men]

But how now, what are these? 24

POOR MEN

Such as desire your worship's service.

GAVESTON

What canst thou do?

1ST POOR MAN.

I can ride.

GAVESTON

But I have no horses.—What art thou? 28

2ND POOR MAN

A traveller.

GAVESTON

Let me see: thou would'st do well
To wait at my trencher and tell me lies at dinner time;
And as I like your discoursing, I'll have you.— 32
And what art thou?

3RD POOR MAN

A soldier, that hath serv'd against the Scot.

GAVESTON

Why, there are hospitals for such as you.
I have no war, and therefore, sir, begone. 36

3RD POOR MAN

Farewell, and perish by a soldier's hand,
That would'st reward them with an hospital.

GAVESTON

Ay, ay, these words of his move me as much
As if a goose should play the porcupine, 40
And dart her plumes, thinking to pierce my breast.
But yet it is no pain to speak men fair;
I'll flatter these, and make them live in hope.—
You know that I came lately out of France, [Aside.] 44
And yet I have not view'd my lord the king;
If I speed well, I'll entertain you all.

ALL

We thank your worship.

GAVESTON

I have some business: leave me to myself. 48

ALL

We will wait here about the court.

[Exeunt.]

GAVESTON

Do. These are not men for me:
I must have wanton poets, pleasant wits,

Musicians, that with touching of a string 52
May draw the pliant king which way I please.
Music and poetry is his delight;
Therefore I'll have Italian masks by night,
Sweet speeches, comedies, and pleasing shows; 56
And in the day, when he shall walk abroad,
Like sylvan nymphs my pages shall be clad;
My men, like satyrs grazing on the lawns,
Shall with their goat-feet dance an antic hay. 3 60
Sometime a lovely boy in Dian's shape,
With hair that gilds the water as it glides,
Crownets of pearl about his naked arms,
And in his sportful hands an olive tree, 64
To hide those parts which men delight to see,
Shall bathe him in a spring; and there hard by,
One like Actæon peeping through the grove
Shall by the angry goddess be transform'd, 68
And running in the likeness of an hart
By yelping hounds pull'd down, and seem to die;—
Such things as these best please his majesty,
My lord.—Here comes the king, and the nobles 72
From the parliament. I'll stand aside. [Retires.]

[Enter KING EDWARD, LANCASTER, the Elder MORTIMER,
Young MORTIMER; EDMUND, EARL of KENT; GUY, EARL of
WARWICK, and (Attendants)]

KING EDWARD

Lancaster!

LANCASTER

My lord.

GAVESTON

That Earl of Lancaster do I abhor. [Aside.] 76

KING EDWARD

Will you not grant me this?—In spite of them
I'll have my will; and these two Mortimers,
That cross me thus, shall know I am displeas'd. [Aside.]

ELDER MORTIMER

If you love us, my lord, hate Gaveston. 80

GAVESTON

That villain Mortimer! I'll be his death. [Aside.]

YOUNG MORTIMER

Mine uncle here, this earl, and I myself
Were sworn to your father at his death,
That he should ne'er return into the realm; 84
And know, my lord, ere I will break my oath,
This sword of mine, that should offend your foes,
Shall sleep within the scabbard at thy need,
And underneath thy banners march who will, 88
For Mortimer will hang his armour up.

GAVESTON

Mort Dieu! [Aside.]

KING EDWARD

Well, Mortimer, I'll make thee rue these words.
Beseems it thee to contradict thy king? 92
Frown'st thou thereat, aspiring Lancaster?
The sword shall plane the furrows of thy brows,

And hew these knees that now are grown so stiff.
I will have Gaveston; and you shall know 96
What danger'tis to stand against your king.

GAVESTON

Well done, Ned! [Aside.]

LANCASTER

My lord, why do you thus incense your peers,
That naturally would love and honour you 100
But for that base and obscure Gaveston?
Four earldoms have I, besides Lancaster,—
Derby, Salisbury, Lincoln, Leicester,—
These will I sell, to give my soldiers pay, 104
Ere Gaveston shall stay within the realm;
Therefore, if he be come, expel him straight.

EDMUND, EARL of KENT

Barons and earls, your pride hath made me mute;
But now I'll speak, and to the proof, I hope. 108
I do remember, in my father's days,
Lord Percy of the north, being highly mov'd,
Braved Moubery 4 in presence of the king;
For which, had not his highness lov'd him well, 112
He should have lost his head; but with his look
The undaunted spirit of Percy was appeas'd,
And Moubery and he were reconcil'd:
Yet dare you brave the king unto his face?— 116
Brother, revenge it, and let these their heads
Preach upon poles, for trespass of their tongues.

GUY, EARL of WARWICK

O, our heads!

KING EDWARD

Ay, yours; and therefore I would wish you grant— 120

GUY, EARL of WARWICK

Bridle thy anger, gentle Mortimer.

YOUNG MORTIMER

I cannot, nor I will not; I must speak.—
Cousin, our hands I hope shall fence our heads,
And strike off his that makes you threaten us. 124
Come, uncle, let us leave the brain-sick king,
And henceforth parley with our naked swords.

ELDER MORTIMER

Wiltshire hath men enough to save our heads.

GUY, EARL of WARWICK

All Warwickshire will love him for my sake. 5 128

LANCASTER

And northward Gaveston hath many friends.—
Adieu, my lord; and either change your mind,
Or look to see the throne, where you should sit,
To float in blood; and at thy wanton head, 132
The glozing 6 head of thy base minion thrown.

[Exeunt (all except KING EDWARD, KENT, GAVESTON and Attendants)]

KING EDWARD

I cannot brook these haughty menaces.
Am I a king, and must be overrul'd?—
Brother, display my ensigns in the field; 136
I'll bandy 7 with the barons and the earls,
And either die or live with Gaveston.

GAVESTON

I can no longer keep me from my lord. [Comes forward.]

KING EDWARD

What, Gaveston! welcome!—Kiss not my hand— 140

Embrace me, Gaveston, as I do thee.

Why should'st thou kneel? Know'st thou not who I am?
Thy friend, thyself, another Gaveston!
Not Hylas was more mourn'd of Hercules, 144
Than thou hast been of me since thy exile.

GAVESTON

And since I went from hence, no soul in hell
Hath felt more torment than poor Gaveston.

KING EDWARD

I know it.—Brother, welcome home my friend. 148
Now let the treacherous Mortimers conspire,
And that high-minded Earl of Lancaster:
I have my wish, in that I joy thy sight;
And sooner shall the sea o'erwhelm my land, 152
Than bear the ship that shall transport thee hence.

I here create thee Lord High Chamberlain,
Chief Secretary to the state and me,
Earl of Cornwall, King and Lord of Man. 156

GAVESTON

My lord, these titles far exceed my worth.

EDMUND, EARL of KENT

Brother, the least of these may well suffice
For one of greater birth than Gaveston.

KING EDWARD

Cease, brother, for I cannot brook these words. 160
Thy worth, sweet friend, is far above my gifts,
Therefore, to equal it, receive my heart.
If for these dignities thou be envied,
I'll give thee more; for, but to honour thee, 164
Is Edward pleas'd with kingly regiment. 8
Fear'st 9 thou thy person? Thou shalt have a guard.
Wantest thou gold? Go to my treasury.
Wouldst thou be lov'd and fear'd? Receive my seal; 168
Save or condemn, and in our name command
Whatso thy mind affects, or fancy likes.

GAVESTON

It shall suffice me to enjoy your love,
Which whiles I have, I think myself as great 172
As CÆsar riding in the Roman street,
With captive kings at his triumphant car.

[Enter the BISHOP of COVENTRY]

KING EDWARD

Whither goes my lord of Coventry so fast?

BISHOP OF COVENTRY

To celebrate your father's exequies. 176

But is that wicked Gaveston return'd?

KING EDWARD

Ay, priest, and lives to be reveng'd on thee,

That wert the only cause of his exile.

GAVESTON

'Tis true; and but for reverence of these robes, 180

Thou should'st not plod one foot beyond this place.

BISHOP OF COVENTRY

I did no more than I was bound to do;

And, Gaveston, unless thou be reclaim'd,

As then I did incense the parliament, 184

So will I now, and thou shalt back to France.

GAVESTON

Saving your reverence, you must pardon me.

KING EDWARD

Throw off his golden mitre, rend his stole,

And in the channel 10 christen him anew. 188

EDMUND, EARL of KENT

Ah, brother, lay not violent hands on him!

For he'll complain unto the see of Rome.

GAVESTON

Let him complain unto the see of hell;
I'll be reveng'd on him for my exile. 192

KING EDWARD

No, spare his life, but seize upon his goods.
Be thou lord bishop and receive his rents,
And make him serve thee as thy chaplain.
I give him thee—here, use him as thou wilt. 196

GAVESTON

He shall to prison, and there die in bolts.

KING EDWARD

Ay, to the Tower, the Fleet, or where thou wilt.

BISHOP OF COVENTRY

For this offence, be thou accurst of God!

KING EDWARD

Who's there? Convey this priest to the Tower. 200

BISHOP OF COVENTRY

True, true.

KING EDWARD

But in the meantime, Gaveston, away,
And take possession of his house and goods.
Come, follow me, and thou shalt have my guard 204
To see it done, and bring thee safe again.