

W. S. Gilbert

*Original
Plays, Second
Series*

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

BROKEN HEARTS.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

BROKEN HEARTS.

ACT I.

ACT II.

ACT III.

ENGAGED.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

ENGAGED.

ACT I.

ACT II.

ACT III.

SWEETHEARTS.

CHARACTERS.

SWEETHEARTS.

ACT I.

ACT II.

DAN'L DRUCE, BLACKSMITH.

CHARACTERS.

DAN'L DRUCE, BLACKSMITH.

ACT I.

ACT II.

ACT III.

GRETCHEN.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

GRETCHEN.

ACT I.

ACT II.

ACT III.

ACT IV.

TOM COBB; OR, FORTUNE'S TOY.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

TOM COBB; OR, FORTUNE'S TOY.

ACT I.

ACT II.

ACT III.

THE SORCERER.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

THE SORCERER.

ACT I.

ACT II.

H.M.S. PINAFORE; OR, THE LASS THAT LOVED A SAILOR.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

H.M.S. PINAFORE; OR, THE LASS THAT LOVED A SAILOR.

ACT I.

ACT II.

THE PIRATES OF PENZANCE; OR, THE SLAVE OF DUTY.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

THE PIRATES OF PENZANCE; OR, THE SLAVE OF DUTY.

ACT I.

ACT II.

CHATTO & WINDUS'S

CHEAP POPULAR NOVELS BY THE BEST AUTHORS.

AN ALPHABETICAL CATALOGUE OF BOOKS IN FICTION AND
GENERAL LITERATURE

SOME BOOKS CLASSIFIED IN SERIES.

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THE PICCADILLY NOVELS.

CHEAP EDITIONS OF POPULAR NOVELS.

NEW SERIES OF TWO-SHILLING NOVELS.

BROKEN HEARTS.

[Table of Contents](#)

*AN ENTIRELY ORIGINAL FAIRY PLAY,
IN THREE ACTS.*

*First produced at the Royal Court Theatre, under the
management of MR. HARE, Thursday, 9th December, 1875.*

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

[Table of Contents](#)

PRINCE FLORIAN	MR. W. H. KENDAL.
MOUSTA (<i>a deformed Dwarf</i>)	MR. ANSON.
THE LADY HILDA	MISS M. ROBERTSON. (MRS. KENDAL.)
THE LADY VAVIR (<i>her Sister</i>)	MISS HOLLINGSHEAD.
THE LADY MELUSINE	MISS PLOWDEN.
THE LADY AMANTHIS	MISS RORKE.

SCENE: THE ISLAND OF BROKEN HEARTS.

The action of the piece takes place within twenty four hours.

Costumes—1300-1350.

BROKEN HEARTS.

Table of Contents

ACT I.

Table of Contents

SCENE: *A tropical landscape. In the distance, a calm sea. A natural fountain—a mere thread of water—falls over a rock into a natural basin. An old sun-dial formed of the upper part of a broken pillar, round the shaft of which some creeping flowers are trained, stands on a small mound. The time is within half an hour of sunset.*

MOUSTA, a deformed, ill-favoured dwarf hump-backed and one-eyed, is discovered seated, reading a small black-letter volume.

*Mous. (reads). "To move a mountain." That will serve me not,
Unless, indeed, 'twill teach me how to lift
This cursed mountain from my crippled back!
"To make old young." Humph! I'm but forty-two—
But still, I'll mark that page—the day will come
When I shall find it useful. Ha! what's this?
"To make the crooked straight; to heal the halt;
And clothe unsightly forms with comeliness."
At last! At last!*

Enter VAVIR, who listens in amazement.

*(Reads) "Take scammony and rue,
With henbane gathered in a fat churchyard—
Pound in a mortar with three drops of blood,
Drawn from a serpent's tail at dead of night."*

Yes, yes, that's plain enough! (*reads*) "*Take pigeon's egg*

Wrapped in the skin of a beheaded toad,
And then—" (*sees VAVIR*) Who's there?

Vav. (astonished). Why, Moustas?

Mous. Pardon me,
I'm at my book. I did not hear thy step.

Vav. Thy book hath lines both strange and terrible:
Why Moustas, this is arrant sorcery!
How camest thou with such a fearful thing?

Mous. (whispering). An unseen spirit brought it to me
—Ay,

Brought it to *me*. An hour or so ago
I saw a distant boat make for our shores,
The wind was on her bow—she tacked as though
Handled by one well-skilled in such small craft.
Well—on she came—and I awaited her,
Armed with a boat-hook. When within fair hail,
"Sheer off!" I cried; "No stranger touches here!"
But, heedless of my hail, she kept her course,
And, when within a bow-shot of the beach,
Down came her sail, and in she ran to shore!

Vav. (alarmed). Whom did she carry, Moustas?

Mous. Not a soul!
The boat was tenantless! Some unseen power
Had guided her! I overhauled the craft

To find some sign of human agency,
And found—this book.

Vav. (shrinking from it). It is unholy lore!
Oh, burn it, Moustas!

Mous. Burn it? No, not I!
See what I am—dwarfed, twisted, and deformed!
I have a fancy to be tall and straight—
This volume teaches me to have my will.
My only eyeball flashes from its pit
Like a red snake trapped in a sunken snare—
I do not like my eye. As I've but one,
I'd have it large and bright. *This teaches me*
To make it so. My mouth is coarsely cut—
I like a tempting mouth—a mouth that smiles—
A mouth that's smiled upon. *This teaches me*
To make it so. I will not burn this book!

The LADY HILDA has entered during the last line.

Hil. And what would'st *thou* with beauty?

Mous. What would I?
Why, lady, look around; the isle is fair:
Its feathery palms that tower towards the sky,
Its prattling brooks that trickle to the sea,
Its hills and dales, its sea and sky—are fair:
The beasts that dwell upon it, and the birds
That fly above it—even they are fair:
And, beyond all, the ladies who have made
This isle their chosen home are very fair!

And what am I? Why, lady, look at me!
I am the one foul blot upon its face:
I am the one misshapen twisted thing
In this assemblage of rare loveliness:
I am the one accursed discord in
This choir of universal harmony!
Is this, think you, a proud pre-eminence?
Or, rather, is it not a red-hot brand
That stamps its damning impress on one's heart,
And changes man to devil before his time!
(*Sadly.*) Ah! you are mocking me!

Hil. (kindly). I mock thee not.
We maidens all (save one) have dearly loved,
And those we loved have died. We, broken hearts,
Knit by the sympathy of kindred woe,
Have sought this isle far from the ken of man;
And having loved, and having lost our loves,
Stand pledged to love no living thing again.
Thou art our trusted servant and our friend;
The only man of all the world of men
Whom we admit upon our virgin shores.
We know thee, and we trust thee, Moustá—Come,
This thought might soften harder hearts than thine!

Mous. (angrily). And why choose me alone of all
mankind
To serve you in your island loneliness?
Because my limbs, though crooked, are strongly
framed?
Bah, there are tall straight men as strong as I.

Because my heart goes with my fealty?
Why half *my* wage would buy the heart and soul
Of twenty well-proportioned servitors.
Because by reason of my face and form
I do not count as man? Yes! I'm an ape!
A crippled, crumpled, devil-faced baboon,
Who claims a place amid this loveliness
By title of his sheer deformity!
Now, monkey though I be, I am a man
In all but face and form—I've a man's heart,
A man's desire to love—and to be loved—(*HILDA*
seems amused.)
Ay, you may laugh—but those who seek to laugh
May find, methinks, more fitting merriment
In such mad love as deals with sun-dials,
Trees, rocks, and fountains, and such baby game.
My love at least is human in its aim.
It's well you should know this—be on your guard!
[Exit *MOUSTA*.

Hil. In truth, the love that Moustas laughs at tells
How strangely ordered is a woman's heart!
Dost thou remember how, when first we came
To this fair isle, I said, in thoughtless jest,
"As woman's heart must love, and we are women,
So let us choose our loves"—then, looking round,
"This running fountain shall be mine," I cried,
And, kneeling by the brink, then sealed the vow
As all such vows are sealed 'twixt men and women—
And thou, poor child, pleased with the jest, replied,
"I take this dial to be my love for life!"

Vavir, we little thought that in those words
We pledged ourselves to an abiding love
That rivals in its pure intensity
The love that we had banished from our hearts!
Yet so it is. We have so dwelt upon
This idle fancy—keeping it alive
With songs and sighs and vows of constancy,
That we have tricked ourselves into a love
Akin to that which we had all forsworn.
I love this little fountain as my life!

Vav. To me my dial is more, far more, than life;
It is the chronicle of the World's life,
Written by Heaven's own hand. As, rapt in thought,
I watch its silent solemn shadow creep
From hour to hour, and so from day to day,
True as the Sun itself—an awful record
Of Heaven's most perfect and most glorious order—
My love is lost in reverential awe.
Oh I have chosen well in choosing this!
It is a holy thing, that bears a warrant,
Sent from the Source of Life, to tell the Earth
That even Time is hastening to its end!
What is mere world-love to such love as this?

Hil. And yet *thou* hast no cause to shun world-love.
When my great sorrow came and I withdrew
To this lone isle with other broken hearts,
Thou, heart-whole and untouched by love of Man,
Yet gavest up the world and all it holds
To bide with me.

Vav. I do not love the world.
My darling sister found her sorrow there—
The world is naught to me. This tiny isle,
But half a league in girth holds all / love.
My world is where thou art—there let me stay
For the few months that yet remain to me!
I think my time on earth will be but brief.

Hil. Hush, hush, Vavir. I will not hear these things.

Vav. My life has been a very happy life,
So free from pain and sorrow of its own
That, but that I have shared my sister's grief,
I had not known what pain and sorrow are—
Yet even this calm rest—this changeless peace,
Saps my poor fragile fabric day by day,
And the first shaft that sorrow aims at it,
May shake its puny structure to the ground!

Hil. Why, what sad silly fancy's this, Vavir?
Thou hast no pain, my child?

Vav. No pain, indeed;
But a calm happiness so strangely still,
It comes not of this world. I am to die
Ere very long. Pray Heaven I be prepared!

Hil. It's well for me and well for both of us
I do not share these foolish fantasies!
Why, silly child, believest thou that Time
Will see the fruit that ripens on those cheeks,
And note the dainty banquet of those lips,

And not preserve such rich and radiant fare,
For his own feasting in his own good time?
Trust the old Epicure!

[Exeunt HILDA and VAVIR together.]

Enter FLORIAN. He comes down, looking around him in admiration.

Flor. All men who say I'm five-and-twenty, lie.
I was born but to-day! An hour ago!
Yes—this must be the World. The distant land
In which I've passed so many years, and which
I, in my puppy-blindness, called "The World,"
Is but its antechamber.

Enter MOUSTA (with book).

Born to-day,
And by a process which is new to me,
My faculties are scarcely wide awake,
But if my memory serves me faithfully,
This twisted thing and I have met before.

Mous. The ladies are at supper. Now's my time
To master, undisturbed by curious eyes,
The ghostly secrets of my spirit book!
Where was I? Oh! (*reads*) "*Take scammony and rue,
With henbane gathered—*"

Flor. (coming behind and taking book from him).
Pardon me—that's mine.

Mous. Oh, Heaven and Earth—a Man! Thou hardy fool,
What dost thou on this isle? (*Draws knife.*) Come, answer me.

Flor. Give me that knife. (*Twists it out of his hand.*)
That's well! Now, what's your will?

Mous. Go—get thee hence at once.

Flor. No, not just yet.
This Paradise—if Rumour tells the truth—
Is ruled by six fair ladies. I prefer
To take my sailing orders from *their* lips.

Mous. Their lips are mine!

Flor. Then you're a lucky dog!

Mous. I am their mouthpiece. By their solemn rules
No man may set his foot upon these shores.
Those rules thy hardihood hath set at naught.
How camest thou, and when?

Flor. I am a Prince,
Prince Florian of Spain. I landed here
From yonder boat—about an hour ago.

Mous. Liar! The boat was empty!

Flor. No, not quite.
I was on board.

Mous. (puzzled). But I was on the beach—

Flor. I know you were—with boat-hook in your hand
To thrust her off. You hailed me angrily:
I had no time to stop and parley then,
So, in the hope that Fate would furnish me
With some more fitting opportunity
To offer you my best apologies,
I kept her head to land, and jumped ashore.
Those best apologies I offer now.

Mous. (alarmed). If you'll believe me, sir, I saw you
not!

Flor. I quite believe you, for I have the power
To make myself invisible at will,
And, having such a power, you'll see at once
That force will serve you nothing.

Mous. (amazed). Say you true?

Flor. Undoubtedly. I've but to wind this veil
(*producing a grey gauze veil with gold tassels*)
About my head, and I'm invisible,
And so remain till I remove it.

Mous. Why,
This is a priceless Talisman, indeed!
Invisible! I'd give one half my life
To be invisible for half-a-day!

Flor. Indeed? And why?

Mous. There is no living thing
But seeks a mate—What birds and beasts may do
Mousta may seek to do—I want to mate!
And whom d’ye think I want? Some kitchen-wench?
One-eyed, hump-backed, and twisted like myself?
I want the purest, fairest form on earth!

Flor. Upon my word, you aim full high!

Mous. I do!
Why not? Suppose I loved a kitchen-wench,
And told her so?

Flor. A decent kitchen-wench
Would soundly box your ears!

Mous. You’re right—She would;
My Lady can’t do more. As I *must* fail
At least I’ll fail for game worth failing for!
As yet I’ve breathed no word—were I unseen
I could take heart of grace and tell my love!

Flor. (laughing). What would you say?

Mous. Ay, ay, you laugh at me;
But I’ve a wily tongue, and I can woo
Like an Adonis—when I’m in the dark!
A blind girl loved me once—a fair young girl
With gentle face and gentle heart—but blind!

Flor. I’ll swear she was!

Mous. (gently). Ah, mock her not—she died!

Flor. Well, peace be with her—Find me some safe spot,
Where I can pass the night—I'll pay you well.

Mous. Ha! ha!

Flor. Why do you laugh?

Mous. Had I your power
To make myself invisible at will,
I should take up my quarters in the castle
Where all the ladies dwell!

Flor. I'm sure you would,
Unfortunately I'm a gentleman,
And so that course is closed to me—

Mous. Of course!
I did but jest—I beg your pardon, sir.
(*Aside.*) If I could get that veil for one short hour—
Eh, but I've drugs to lull a man to sleep!
If I can tempt this squeamish popinjay
To trust himself to me, the thing is done!
(*Aloud.*) I've a poor cottage—it is close at hand,
Though humble, it is clean and weather-tight:
It will afford you shelter. Then for food
I've some dried fish and eggs and oaten bread
Quite at your service.

Flor. Good.

Mous. (*quickly*). But hide yourself,

Some one approaches!

[*FLORIAN covers his head with veil as VAVIR enters with flowers.*

Flor. (aside to MOUSTA). Who is this fair maid?

Mous. (aside). Lady Vavir. She always comes at eve
To bid “good night” to this old sun-dial!
Keep your ears open, and I’ll warrant you
Yours eyes will open too! (*Aloud.*) Lady Vavir,
I bid you fair good night.

Vav. Good night to you.
[*Exit Mous.*

Flor. In truth a fair young girl!

Vav. Dear sun-dial,
Dost know what day this is?

Flor. (aside). He ought to know,
It comes within the radius of his calling!

Vav. A year to-day, and we two were betrothed—
One happy, happy year!

Flor. (aside). Betrothed, i’ faith!
They’re lovers, then!

Vav. I must devise some gift
To mark this happy day. What shall it be?
I’ll weave a bower of rose and eglantine

To place above thy head at eventide,
When the full moon's abroad. No foolish moon
Shall cast false shadows on thy sleeping face,
Or make thee mutter incoherent tales
Of hours long since gone by or yet to come.
No madcap moon shall mar thy nightly rest,
Or in the mischief of half-witted glee
Awake thy sleeping hours before their time.

Flor. (aside). He doesn't answer—the insensate dolt!

—

And yet such words are warm enough to rouse
A tombstone into life!

Vav. I've brought thee flowers
To deck thy stem. They live their little life,
And then they die; but others follow them—
And thou shalt have thy garland day by day
While I am here to weave it for thee?

Flor. (aside). Well,
This is the oddest wooing! On my word,
A thousand pities that the lady's love
Should be lopsided! Come, arouse thee, dial—
Be eloquent with thanks! I've half a mind
To thank her for thee, in the interests
Of all true horologes!

Vav. I'm content
To sit and deck thee, silent though thou art.
And yet I would thou hadst the gift of speech
For one brief second—time enough to say,

“Vavir, I love thee with my whole, whole heart!”

Flor. (aloud). “Vavir, I love thee with my whole, whole heart!”

Vav. (recoiling, horrified). Who spake?

Flor. ’Twas I—thy dial!

Vav. Oh, terrible!
What shall I do?

Flor. Fair lady—have no fear.

*Vav. “Fair lady”—*It’s a man! My sisters, help!
I am betrayed!

Flor. Have patience for a while—

Vav. Who and what art thou?—speak!

Flor. (aside). What shall I say?
(Aloud.) I am a poor, long-suffering, mortal man,
Whom in the stony substance of thy dial,
A cruel magician holds incarcerate!

Vav. Oh, marvellous!

Flor. And very pitiful!

Vav. Aye, pitiful indeed, poor prisoned soul!
(advancing.)

Flor. "There shalt thou lie," said he, "till some pure
maid
Shall have been constant to thine unseen self
A twelvemonth and a day." That maid art thou!

Vav. Alas! poor man, I fain would set thee free.
Yet I have loved not thee, but this thy tomb!

Flor. Thou canst not separate me from my tomb
Except by loving me. In loving it
Thou lovest me who am bound up with it;
And in so loving me—provided that
Thy love, a twelvemonth old, lasts one day more—
Thou givest me my freedom and my life!
If thou hast loved thy dial thou hast loved me.

Vav. Yes, I have loved my dial!

Flor. But earnestly—
With a surpassing love?

Vav. I cannot say—
I am ill-versed in the degrees of love.
Judge for thyself—When I am weak and ill
My sisters place my couch beside my dial
That I may lay my poor thin hand on it:
It gives me life and strength—I know not why.
Judge for thyself—
When the black winter comes my sisters weep
To see me weep my darling's brief day-life;
And when the bright, long summer days return
They join my joy—because with Light comes Hope,

And Hope is Life—and they would have me live!
Judge for thyself—
At dawn of day I seek my dial alone,
To watch its daily waking into life;
At set of sun I come to it again,
To kiss “good night” upon its fading shade:
Then, with a prayer that I may lay to heart
The lesson of its silent eloquence,
I seek my bed. So speeds my little life.
If this be love, then have I loved indeed!
Judge for thyself. (*Rises.*)

Enter MELUSINE (a small hand-mirror hangs from her waist).

Mel. Vavir, the evening dewes are falling fast;
The night air teems with damp. So, come, dear love,
Return at once with me.

Vav. Oh, Melusine,
I have a secret. (*Aside to dial.*) May I tell it?

Flor. (whispering). Yes.

Mel. A secret?

Vav. Ay, a wondrous secret, too!
My sun-dial hath ears to hear withal—
And eyes to see withal—and a sweet voice,
A gentle, tender voice to woo withal!

Mel. Oh, marvellous! Oh, fortunate Vavir!

To woo—and to be woo'd—and, being woo'd,
To keep her vow intact! I'd give the world
If my loved mirror were endowed with speech!

Flor. Have then thy wish, fair lady!

Mel. Why, who spake?

Vav. Thy mirror spake!

Mel. Oh, day of wonderment!
Who gave thee speech? Art thou enchanted too?

Flor. Ay, that in truth I am, as all must be
On whom those eyes are turned so lovingly!

Mel. A very polished mirror!

Flor. As for that,
We mirrors are as other gallants are—
Teeming with compliment to fair young maids—
But apt to be extremely curt and rude
With old and wrinkled faces. On the whole
We are good gallants as good gallants go!

Mel. And dost thou love me?

Flor. Love thee, gentle maid?
Have I not laughed with thee, and wept with thee,
And ever framed my face in sympathy
With all the changes of thy varying moods?
Hast thou e'er cast thine eyes upon my face
And found me light of heart when thou wast sad?

Or sad when thou wast light of heart?

Mel. No! no!

Most wonderful!

Flor. And yet not wonderful!

I am but one of many. This fair isle

Teems with poor prisoned souls! There's not a tree—

There's not a rock, a brook, a shrub, a stone,

But holds some captive spirit who awaits

The unsought love that is to set him free!

Mel. (to VAVIR). We'll keep this secret safely to ourselves.

If it should get abroad, this little isle

Will barely hold the maidens who will come,

Prepared to pass the spring-time of their lives

In setting free these captives! Come, Vavir,

And we will warn our sisters.

Vav. Fare thee well,

Beloved dial: I go to dream of thee,

Dream thou of me! God send thee Sun. Good night!

[*Exeunt VAVIR and MELUSINE.*]

Flor. Two maids, at once bewitching—and bewitched!

One loves a mirror—well, that's not so strange,

Though she'll grow angry with it ten years hence!

The other loves a dial—a cold stern fact

That surely marks the deadly flight of time!

Wonders will never cease! let none despair—

Old Chronos, enemy of womankind,

Has found a pretty sweetheart, after all!

Enter LADY HILDA, singing and playing on mandolin.

Far from sin—far from sorrow
Let me stay—let me stay!
From the fear of to-morrow
Far away—far away!
I am weary and shaken,
Let me stay—let me stay,
Till in death I awaken
Far away—far away!

[Towards the close of the song, she sinks on her knees as a ray of moonlight falls on her. FLORIAN has watched her eagerly during the song, with every symptom of the profoundest admiration.]

Flor. Oh, Heaven enlighten me—is this fair thing
A soul of Earth—a being, born of woman,
Conscious of sin and destined to decay?
Oh, Good and Ill, how share ye such a spoil!
Can this pure form, instinct with Heaven's own light,
Clothed in the majesty of innocence,
Have aught in common with the vapid toy
We break and cast aside? Oh, sordid Earth,
Praise Heaven that leaves this angel yet unclaimed.
Oh, heart of mine—oh, wilful, wayward heart,
Bow down in homage—thou art caught and caged!

[During these lines HILDA, seated by the fountain, has been playing with its water, and kissing her wet hands.]

Hil. The sun has set—the fierce hot thirsty sun
Who, like a greedy vampire as he is,
Drinks my love's life-blood till it pines away,
And dwindles to a thread. The moon's abroad—
She is not jealous of my fountain love;
She sheds her gentle light upon our tryst
And decks my love with diamonds of her own!

Flor. (aside). Poor, senseless fount! To have thy home
in Heaven
And not to know it!

Hil. Shall I tell thee how
I came to give my poor bruised heart to thee?
Or art thou of those churlish lovers who
Can brook no love that is not born of them?
Why, then, I am unworthy in thine eyes,
For I have loved, as women love but once!
He was a prince—a brave, God-fearing knight—
The very pink and bloom of Chivalry,
Proud as a war-horse—fair as the dawn of day—
Staunch as a Woman—tender as a Man!
He knew not that I loved him. Who was I
That he should mark the flushing of *my* face,
Amid a thousand maids whose stricken hearts
Danced to their lips, as he, my prince, rode by?
One sullen winter day—dark as his doom,
He left his home to seek a distant land.
A weary while I wept—months passed away,
And yet no tidings came. Then tales were told
Of ships o'erwhelmed by boisterous wintry seas;

And rough men prayed, and maidens wept aloud,
For he was loved of all! Then came the news;
At first in shuddering whispers, one by one—
Then babbled by ten thousand clamorous tongues—
The cold fierce sea had robbed me of my love!
My star—my light—my life—my Florian!

Flor. (aside). Oh, senseless dullard—to have turned
away
From Heaven's own threshold at thine own free will!

Hil. I wept no more.
Tears are the balm of sorrow—not of woe.
I fled my home—
A gentle sister whose poor little life
Lives on the love I bear it, fled with me;
So, hand in hand, we wandered through the world
Till, in this haven of pure peace and rest,
We found safe sanctuary from our woe.

Flor. (aloud). Who would not die to be so mourned by
thee?

[HILDA expresses alarm and intense surprise.]
Fear nothing. I who speak am but a voice—
The murmur of the waters, shaped to words
By the all-potent alchemy of Love!

Hil. Oh, foolish maid—this is some madcap dream!

Flor. No dream indeed—or if it be, dream on!

Hil. Canst thou then hear the words I speak to thee?

Flor. Ay, that I can—and every word I hear
Adds fuel to my love!

Hil. Oh, wonderful!
Hast thou the power to love?

Flor. Indeed I have!

Hil. And is thy love akin to mine?

Flor. It is
So near akin that, as it comes of thine,
And lives on thine, so, without thine, it dies!

Hil. If my poor love
Hath called thine into life—so is my love
In duty bound to thine—its kith and kin!

Flor. But if the rumours of thy Florian's death
Should prove, as rumours often prove, untrue?
If he should be alive—loving thee well—
Eager to tell his love to thee—what then?

Hil. (*sadly*). Thou jealous fount, what untold miracle
Would bear the tidings to this lonely isle?

Flor. Say that in wandering through the unknown
world
Chance led Prince Florian to these shores, and he,
Flushed with the radiance of thy loveliness,
Stood manifest before thine eyes—what then?

Hil. Oh, Heaven, what then! Joy kills as sorrow kills.

I dare not think what then! Let it suffice
That I have given thee all—that I am thine
For ever and for aye!

*Enter MOUSTA unperceived; he places himself so that
the dial conceals him from Florian and Hilda.*

Flor.“Ever and aye”
Are fragile flowers that fade before the breath
Of an old love long lost!

*Hil.*Oh, gentle voice,
Born of the falling water—have no fear—
In Heaven’s sight I pledge myself to thee—
What love is in me, that I give to thee—
What love thou hast to give, I take from thee—
Kiss thou my hands—(*holding her hands for the
water to
fall on*)—henceforth we twain are one!
