

SCENE I.-The Queen's Lodging at St. Andrew's.

In Act IV of Algernon Charles Swinburne's tragedy "Chastelard," the Queen, surrounded by her entourage at St. Andrew's, contends with the implications of mercy, justice, and reputation as she grapples with the decision of Chastelard's fate. Swinburne crafts a complex psychological and emotional landscape in which the Queen, pressured by her advisors and her own conscience, navigates the treacherous waters of royal authority and personal affection.

The act opens with the Queen in dialogue with her ladies-in-waiting, expressing her torment over the impending execution of Chastelard and her frustration with her inability to show clemency without endangering her own position and the stability of the realm. The Queen's inner conflict is palpable as she asserts her wish to pardon Chastelard, despite acknowledging the risks to her reputation and authority. Her conversation with Mary Hamilton reveals the Queen's doubts about her own judgment and the harshness with which she feels obliged to rule.

As the discussions unfold, the Queen's vacillation between mercy and the maintenance of her royal dignity becomes apparent. She resents the constraints imposed by her role, which force her into decisions that conflict with her personal desires. The emphasis on dialogue and inner turmoil in this act highlights Swinburne's focus on the emotional complexities of leadership and the painful sacrifices demanded by power.

In an emotionally charged exchange with Murray, her brother, the Queen reveals the depth of her dilemma. She seeks a resolution that would spare Chastelard yet preserve her honor, but Murray's reluctance and the weight of political expediency darken her hopes. The Queen's interactions with Darnley further complicate matters, as her

attempts to manipulate the situation reveal the limitations of her influence and the personal cost of her royal duties.

The act concludes with the Queen's increasingly desperate efforts to save Chastelard without compromising her royal standing. The portrayal of her solitude and alienation amid the court's political machinations underscores the isolation inherent in her position. Swinburne's depiction of the Queen's struggle offers a poignant exploration of the burdens of leadership, the cruelty of political necessity, and the tragic consequences of love entangled with power.