

**THE SERPENT PLAY:
A DIVINE
PASTORAL**

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The Serpent Play: A Divine Pastoral by Thomas Gordon Hake

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A DIVINE PASTORAL

BY
THOMAS GORDON HAKE, 1807-1895



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THE SERPENT PLAY

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

HUMAN CHARACTERS.

CEELIS, *the Soul-Seeker.*
VORAGINE, *a Warrior.*
VIVIA, *the Sister of Celis.*
VOLUPSA, *the Sister of Voragine.*
HAYUS, *a Priest of Kausis.*
Messenger.

DIVINE CHARACTERS.

PSYCHE, *the Soul.*
KAUSIS, *the Destroyer.*

OTHER PERSONS.

PANDOLPH, *the Brother of Celis.*
BEATRICE, *the Wife of Pandolph.*
Actors.
Spectators.

SCENE : *The Ophidian Hills*

ACT I.

PROSCENIUM.—*The Gates which lead to the Paradise
of Cælis.*

CÆLIS, Messenger.

MESSENGER.

Scarce need you private tidings, for the war
Is its own chronicler : the Ophidian streams
Are thick with blood, here clinging to the bank
In clots like the red fungus, there in floods
Down-bearing through the gulleys to the town
Its grim advices. In the spattered dust
Lie stretched the fallen corpses of the foe
Like a hewn forest. Rampant victory
Appals the leaders, and the priests have fled
Their sanctuary. Hayus only stays
To meet us with unhopèd for terms of peace.
His foresight, keen as vision, has o'erruled
The councils: they accept the conquering Cross
That roots out Serpent-worship from the world.

CELIS.

A sanguinary peace then ends the war.
Would I had gone to learn the people's wants ;
To yield them even more than they desired :
Then had they risen higher than their creed,
Now their sole refuge.

MESSENGER.

So it might have been,
Had you first striven to cleanse the common faith
Of its idolatry. In days scarce gone
Well we remember how our villagers
Obeyed your word, at which the worship dropped.
But little trust in friends have jealous foes :
They know we have already doomed their creed
In setting ours aside.

CELIS.

Why is it crushed
When by example 'twas so sure to fall ?
Our aims are now degraded, 'tis too late
To remedy the wrong : yet from this time
May Voragine show mercy to their souls,
Not flash the Cross before them to impose
Belief that adds new torture to their wounds.
Say this from me.

MESSENGER.

I only can obey.

CELIS, *alone.*

Be ever distant from this blessed seat
His ruthless bloodhounds, Conquest and Defeat !
Can these, that even the reptile rite debase,
An old religion by a new replace ?
Alas ! if one so must the other fall,
For what is new is never natural
In this contented home our people find
The lull of peace; not so my shaken mind !
But shall I murmur when so many cares
In nature's uncomplaining heart abide ?
These horrors on her fall, and she forbears !
She chides not ; she has none to chide.
Yet may we see a shudder underlie
Her smile, that masks no base hypocrisy
But inner depths of goodness so conceals
That ages must elapse ere she herself reveals.
We worshipped her in every tree that grew,
Once deemed each rustling leaf her secret knew :
The juicy fruits, to golden goblets swelled,
Which to our lips the stooping branches held,
We deemed her conscious gift. But time outwore
The freshness that her new creation bore ;
And thought sank deeper into things outside,
While they themselves sublimely deified.
God journeyed onward like a mighty wind,
But left the Soul that governs all behind,
Even from the sun-flame to the tended flower
That dies not out, though lasting but an hour.