# THE SERPENT PLAY: A DIVINE PASTORAL

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The Serpent Play: A Divine Pastoral by Thomas Gordon Hake

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# SERPENT PLAY

## A DIVINE PASTORAL

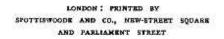
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## THOMAS GORDON HAKE, 1807-1895-



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### DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

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#### HUMAN CHARACTERS.

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CCELIS, the Soul-Seeker. VORAGINE, a Warrior. VIVIA, the Sister of Calis. VOLUPSA, the Sister of Voragine. HAYUS, a Privit of Kausis. Messenger.

#### DIVINE CHARACTERS.

PSYCHE, the Soul. KAUSIS, the Destroyer.

#### OTHER PERSONS.

PANDOLPH, the Brother of Calis. BEATRICE, the Wife of Paudolph. Actors. Spectators.

SCENE : The Ophidian Hills

### ACT I.

#### PROSCENIUM. — The Gates which lead to the Paradise of Calis.

#### CŒLIS, 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 unhoped 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.

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#### CŒLIS.

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.

#### CŒLIS,

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.

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#### MESSENCER.

I only can obey.

PROS.

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#### THE SERPENT PLAY.

#### COELIS, alone.

Be ever distant from this blessed seat His ruthless bloodhounds, Conquest and Defeat I 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 1 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.