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*A Masque of Dead Florentines: Wherein Some of Death's Choicest Pieces, and the Great Game That He Played Therewith, Are Fruitfully Set Forth [Maurice Henry Hewlett] on www.nxgvision.com \*FREE\* shipping on qualifying offers.*

Hewlett's morality-play, if one chooses to call it so, is a brilliant conception, bringing together as it does, the august shades of the men and women of the Renaissance. The First Part opens with an invocation? With the lapse of time it is likely that this thin oblong quarto will lose value either in the eyes of the collector or the lover of poetry for its own sake. Then the three ladies of old time dance and recede from sight while the Chorus recites their worth and the renown of their lovers ; whereupon Giotto, Corso Donati, Farinata, Buondelmonte, Guido Cavalcante and the Lady Ficcarda Donati appear. Lastly comes Fra Beato Angelico, the scene closing with Chorus giving voice to approval of his lovely life and quiet end. Sinionetta now makes moan over the dead days of her youth, and her lover Giuliano, with others of the house of Medici pass over the stage with Lorenzo, greatest of them all, upon whom the Three Reproaches habited as bent old women heap their curses for his misdeeds. We now see Cosimo di Medici, hard upon whose footsteps follows Savonarola with the man who most loved and hated him ; and last comes Botticelli whose lament is taken up by the Chorus with a sinister dirge of its own. Then the Sun shines out and Luca della Robbia speaks in his own praise which is fully justified by the ever-discerning Chorus. Quatrains are now respectively recited by Macchiavelli, Cellini and Pulci, and the burden of Florence, her destiny and doom, sums itself up in a final invocation of Michael Angelo. So passes the glory of the City of Lilies. One was scornful as a maid In her bravery fresh arrayed: Gentles, you and Death and I Have a friendly fall to try. He is masterful and plays Steadily; looks not for praise. Your head is high, High as mine "but by and bye? The rain stands in pools; over all is the sighing of a great wind. A fitful sunshine comes and goes. Yet we count us happier Than are they whose keener star Shone about them while they stayed Here with us ; and when they strayed Forbore Death their names to hide: We are they who quietly died. Here begins that crimson line, Greater none, nor more divine. God woke my love by death: Woe, the dead poet! Say, wouldst thou know his heart? His heart was riven: To God one half, to Beatrice half was given. Till all kindreds should leap when he smiled, Or panting run whither he led At the spell of his treacherous merit. What paling of virginal bosoms, What prayerful, and tearful, and sooth Uprising of strength, that thy blossoms Should bud in that clamorous hour? But Song set his delicate feet In the way of the World and the mire ; Song tasted the fruit of desire. So Song held revel, and loud Sang he with passionate cries: And his raiment was golden and proud. Thus the cup of his wrath was complete. She looks patiently before her, with good courage. But I may thank him now that I am dead. He has a laurel-wreath, and bears a little crystal twin wherein is his own heart. Chorus The Chorus tells of his consolation. The low slow laugh when Southern love is fed Was longer mine: I cloyed him, he is dead. And of the sweet? Yes, thou art dead, Boccaccio! And she, thy confident fair That set her gleaming teeth To the rind of thy fruits, laid bare Her white throat soft as death To warm to thy amorous breath. She let down the pride of her hair, A flood and tangle of gold. Scarlet her lips, but the white of her globed breasts is untold! The three Ladies dance a stately solemn measure, to this versing: High-born, stately, queens, we pass Treading daintily the grass. Beatrice I was nine when I was wooed, Never word my poet could. Laura Wedded wife was I, my poet Won my looks but could not know it. Ours the grace and theirs the treasure. Let the ghostly ladies pass Like the mist on springing grass. I shed no tears. Laura Children bore I to my lord As thy years ; I sighed no word. Not my husband pleased me. Shadows of us haunt the grass. The three Ladies pass away; but the Chorus, looking still upon their poets, says this: Of the Great Three. O glory, that could give such seeing birth. Who is this dreamer with his dreams at call, And happy morning face, and wholesome breath? Who this lean vagrant, choking down his gall As he should grudge to void it upon Death? There came a sister soon, meek Sister Death. I hush her, dead. Chorus One doth make what one doth mar ; One brings peace, another war. A company of four Shades comes next. Farinata in his armour, with a naked sword ; Farinata The fire that rages in me outburns Hell ; I am the pride of Florence? Guido My way was best. From lip to lip I past, from grove to grove: He carries a lily in one hand. On his shoulder burns a star. Fra Beato The mystic flame-enwrap

Jerusalem Was set before me like a clouded gem. I trod the ways of Florence: Chorus Of lovely life. In thee the ardent striver Found placid requiem ; In thee, the still contriver, In thee, the honest liver. Hope of wings fretty with fire. Of eyes looking out to the deep Heart of the azure, and higher â€” Yearning to creep Into the folds of the mantle of God, Haply to sleep. The ram descends and veils the scene. The end of the first part. Enters the Herald, a young boy in a short GreekisJi cloak and Phrygian cap. Then, when the world was young and saw in rhyme And colour move all Nature. Then every maid held godhead, every flower A sacrament, the fever and old dread Of living â€” ecstasy! The boy is a shade, And the cup he quaffs Is down to the lees: He is a youth in soft raiment, reading in a Hebrew book. Had I that fair sort that I coveted? Art short solace gave my spirit. Power contented not my merit. Life itself me wearied. The living tire to death: Chorus O foolish Wise! As sheep in the rain. Blind as the Worm that beguiled The Mother of Caijt. Then comes La Siitionetta, as a virgin of lovely sorrow- ful countenance, in a white robe. Round her loins is a black snake that carries his tail ever in his mouth. She bears a chaplet of yew ; and is attended by seven young maids in mourning weeds. The Seven The willow must bend to the breeze! Oh, the land swept black by the shower. The lash and the rain! Then come the house of Medici. He carries a broken shaft in his hand. Following him are seven lads sons of princes dressed in sables. And then Lorenzo as a king crowned with thorns and holding a leaden sceptre. Lorenzo I am that Medici, swart, keen, and wanton, That spent all Florence on the thin-lipt phantom Of lust so dry it never could be fed: At last, unshrived, still burning, I fell dead. Woe to brown Fisa!

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