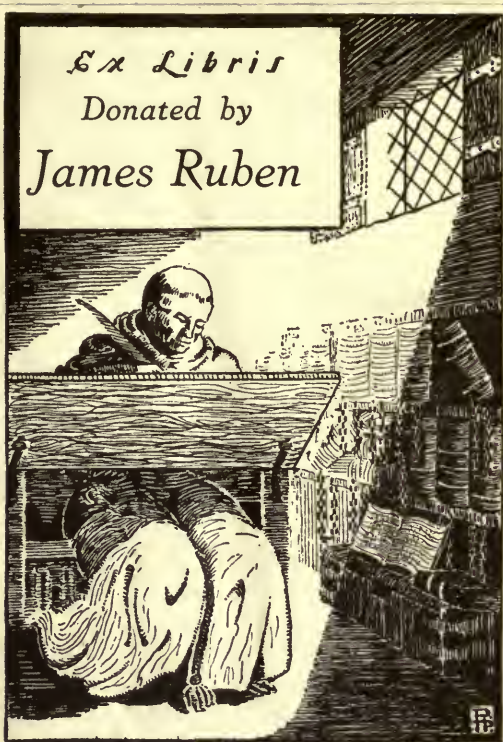




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A HEBREW ANTHOLOGY

A COLLECTION OF POEMS AND DRAMAS INSPIRED BY THE OLD TESTAMENT
AND POST BIBLICAL TRADITION GATHERED FROM WRITINGS OF
ENGLISH POETS, FROM THE ELIZABETHAN PERIOD AND
EARLIER TO THE PRESENT DAY.

EDITED BY
GEORGE ALEXANDER KOHUT

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY
HUDSON MAXIM
Author of "The Science of Poetry"

IN TWO VOLUMES

VOL. II.

SELECTIONS FROM THE DRAMA.

1913
S. BACHARACH
CINCINNATI
U. S. A.



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LUCIFER

LUCIFER

[EXTRACT.]

[The scene of the drama is laid throughout in heaven. The actors are the angels. Lucifer has sent Apollyon to Eden to view the new-made man and woman and to inquire into their state. Apollyon thus describes Eve.]

Search all our angel bands, in beauty well arrayed,
They will but monsters seem, by the dawn-light of a maid.

BEELZEBUB—

It seems you burn in love for this new womankind!

APOLLYON—

My great wing-feather in that amorous flame, I find
I've singed! 'Twas hard indeed to soar up from below,
To sweep, and reach the verge of Angel-borough so;
I parted, but with pain, and three times looked around;
There shines no seraph form in all the ethereal bound
Like hers, whose hanging hair, in golden glory, seems
To rush down from her head in a torrent of sunbeams,
And flow along her back. So clad in light and grace,
Stately she treads, and charms the daylight with her face;
Let pearls and mother o' pearl their claims before her furl,
Her brightness passes far the beauty of a pearl!

BEELZEBUB—

But what can profit man this beauty that must fade
And wither like a flower, and shortly be decayed?

(Lucifer's jealousy of the new race being aroused, he thus addresses his attendant angels:)

Swift spirits, let us stay the chariot of the dawn;
For high enough, in sooth, God's morning star is drawn,—
Yea, driven up high enough! 'Tis time for my great car
To yield before the advent of this double star,
That rises from below, and seeks, in sudden birth,
To tarnish heaven's gold with splendor from the earth!
Embroider no more crowns on Lucifer's attire,
And gild his forehead not with eminent dawn-fire
Of the morning star enrayed, that rapt archangels prize;
For see another blaze in the light of God arise!
The stars grow faint before the eyes of men below;
'Tis night with angels, and the heavens forget to glow.

(The loyal angels, perceiving that a change has come over a number of their order, inquire into its cause.)

Why seem the courteous angel-faces
So red? Why streams the holy light
So red upon our sight,
Through clouds and mists from mournful places?
What vapor dares to blear
The pure, unspotted, clear
And luminous sapphire?
The flame, the blaze, the fire
Of the bright Omnipotence?
Why does the splendid light of God
Glow, deepened to the hue of blood,
That late, in flowing hence,
Gladdened all hearts?

THE CHORUS ANSWERS—

When we, enkindled and uplifted
 By Gabriel's trumpet, in new ways
 Began to chant God's praise,
 The perfume of rose-gardens drifted
 Through paths of Paradise,
 And such a dew and such a spice
 Distilled, that all the flowery grass
 Rejoiced. But Envy soon, alas!
 From the underworld came sneaking.
 A mighty crowd of spirits, pale
 And dumb and wan, came, tale on tale,
 Displeased, some new thing seeking;
 With brows that crushed each scowling
 eye,
 And happy foreheads bent and wrinkled;
 The doves of heaven, here on high,
 Whose innocent pinions sweetly twinkled,
 Are struck with mourning, one and all,
 As though the heavens were far too
 small
 For them, now Adam's been elected,
 And such a crown for man selected.
 This blemish blinds the light of grace,
 And dulls the flaming of God's face.

(Beelzebub, feigning submission to Deity, thus addresses the rebel angels.)

Oh, cease from wailing; rend your
 badges and your robes
 No longer without cause, but make
 your faces bright,
 And let your foreheads flash, O children
 of the light!
 The shrill, sweet throats, that thank
 the Deity with song,
 Behold, and be ashamed that ye have
 mixed so long
 Discords and bastard tones with music
 so divine.

(They appeal from him to Lucifer.)

Forbid it, Lucifer, nor suffer that our
 ranks
 Be mortified so low and sink without
 a crime,
 While man, above us raised, may flash
 and beam sublime
 In the very core of light, from which
 we seraphim

Pass quivering, full of pain, and fade
 like shadows dim.
 We swear, by force, beneath thy glorious
 flag combined,
 To set thee on the throne for Adam
 late designed!
 We swear, with one accord, to stay
 thine arm forever;
 Lift high thy battle-axe! our wounded
 rights deliver!

(Gabriel relates to Michael the effect which the knowledge of the rebellion produced at the throne of God himself.)

I saw God's very gladness with a cloud
 of woe
 O'ershadowed; and there burst a flame
 out of the gloom
 That pierced the eye of light, and hung,
 a brand of doom,
 Ready to fall in rage. I heard the
 mighty cause
 Where Mercy pleaded long with God's
 all-righteous laws;
 Grace, smoothly wise and meek, with
 Justice arguing well.
 I saw the cherubim, who on their faces
 fell,
 And cried out, "Mercy, mercy! God, let
 Justice rest!"
 But even as that shrill sound to His
 great footstool pressed,
 And God seemed almost moved to pardon
 and to smile,
 Up curled the odious smoke of incense
 harsh and vile,
 Burned down below in praise of Lucifer,
 who rode
 With censers and bassoons and many
 a choral ode;
 The heaven withdrew its face from
 such impieties,
 Cursed of God and spirits and all the
 hierarchies.

(The rebel angels form themselves into an army. They fight against Michael and his host and are conquered. The victorious angels sing.)

Blest be the hero's hour,
 Who smote the goddess power,
 And his might, and his light, and
 his standard,

Down toppling like a tower;
His crown was near God's own,
But from his lofty throne,

With his might into night he hath
vanished;

God's name must shine alone.

Outblazed the uproar fell,

When valorous Michaél

With the brand in his hand quenched
the passion

Of spirits that dared rebel.

He holds God's banner now;

With laurels crown his brow!

Peace shall reign here again, and her
forehead

Shall vanquished Discord bow.

Amid the conquering throng

Praises to God belong;

Honor bring to the King of all king-
doms;

He gives us stuff for song.

*(After this, Gabriel enters, bearing
the tidings of man's fall.)*

GABRIEL—

Alas! alas! alas! to adverse fortune
bow!

What do ye here? In vain are songs
of triumph now;

In vain of spoil of arms and gonfalons
ye boast!

MICHAEL—

What hear I, Gabriel?

GABRIEL—

Oh, Adam is fallen and lost!
The father and the stock of all the
human race

Most grievously hath erred, and lies
in piteous case.

*(Michael sends Uriel to drive the
guilty pair out of Eden, and then thus
pronounces the doom of the rebel an-
gels.)*

Ozias, to whose first the very Godhead
gave

The heavy hammer framed of diamond
beaten out,

And chains of ruby, clamps, and teeth
of metal stout,—

Go hence, and take and bind the hellish
host that rage,

Lion and dragon fell, whose banners
dared to wage

War with us thus. Speed swift on
their accursed flight,

And bind them neck and claw, and fet-
ter them with might.

The key which to the gates of their
foul pit was fitted

Is, Azarias, now into thy care com-
mitted;

Go hence, and thrust therein all that
our power defied.

Maceda, take this torch I to your zeal
confide,

And flame the sulphur-pool in the cen-
ter of the world:

There torture Lucifer, and leave his
body curled

In everlasting fire, with many a prince
accursed;

While that of knowledge, by my
Horror, Hunger, Thirst,

Despair without a hope, and Conscience
with her sting,

May measure out their meed of endless
suffering.

JOOST VAN DER VONDEL (1587-1679).

CAIN

CAIN: A MYSTERY

"Now the Serpent was more subtle than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made."—Gen. iii, 1.

PREFACE.

The following scenes are entitled, "A Mystery," in conformity with the ancient title annexed to dramas upon similar subjects, which were styled "Mysteries, or Moralities." The author has by no means taken the same liberties with his subject which were common formerly, as may be seen by any reader curious enough to refer to those very profane productions, whether in English, French, Italian or Spanish. The author has endeavoured to preserve the language adapted to his characters; and where it is (and this is but rarely) taken from actual Scripture, he has made as little alteration, even of words, as the rhythm would permit. The reader will recollect that the book of Genesis does not state that Eve was tempted by a demon, but by "the serpent;" and that only because he was "the most subtle of all the beasts of the field." Whatever interpretation the Rabbins and the Fathers may have put upon this, I take the words as I find them, and reply, with Bishop Watson, upon similar occasions, when the Fathers were quoted to him, as Moderator in the schools of Cambridge, "Behold the Book!"—holding up the Scripture. It is to be recollected that my present subject has nothing to do with the New Testament, to which no reference can be here made without anachronism. With the poems upon similar topics I have not been recently familiar. Since I was twenty, I have never read Milton; but I had read him so frequently before, that this may make little difference. Gesner's Death of Abel I have never read since I was eight years of age, at Aberdeen. The general impression of my recollection

is delight; but of the contents I remember only that Cain's wife was called Mahala, and Abel's Thirza; in the following pages I have called them "Adah" and "Zillah," the earliest female names which occur in Genesis; they were those of Lamech's wives: those of Cain and Abel are not called by their names. Whether, then, a coincidence of subject may have caused the same expression, I know nothing, and care as little.

The reader will please to bear in mind (what few choose to recollect) that there is no allusion to a future state in any of the books of Moses, nor indeed in the Old Testament. For a reason for this extraordinary omission, he may consult Warburton's Divine Legation: whether satisfactory or not, no better has yet been assigned. I have therefore supposed it new to Cain, without, I hope, any perversion of Holy Writ.

With regard to the language of Lucifer, it was difficult for me to make him talk like a clergyman upon the same subjects; but I have done what I could to restrain him without the bounds of spiritual politeness.

If he disclaims having tempted Eve in the shape of the Serpent, it is only because the book of Genesis has not the most distant allusion to anything of the kind, but merely to the Serpent, in his serpentine capacity.

Note.—The reader will perceive that the author has partly adopted in this poem the notion of Cuvier, that the world had been destroyed several times before the creation of man. This speculation, derived from the different strata and the bones of enormous and unknown animals found in them, is not contrary to the Mosaic account, but

rather confirms it; as no human bones have yet been discovered in those strata, although those of many known animals are found near the remains of the unknown. The assertion of Lucifer that the pre-Adamite world was also peopled by rational beings much more intelligent than man, and proportionably powerful to the mammoth, etc., etc., is, of course, a poetical fiction to help him to make out his case.

I ought to add that there is a "tramelogedia" of Alfieri, called Abele.—I have never read that, nor any other of the posthumous works of the writer, except his Life.

DRAMATIS PERSONAE.

MEN.

ADAM.

CAIN.

ABEL.

SPIRITS.

ANGEL OF THE LORD.

LUCIFER.

WOMEN.

EVE.

ADAH.

ZILLAH.

ACT I.

SCENE I.—*The Land without Paradise.—
Time, Sunrise.*

ADAM, EVE, CAIN, ABEL, ADAH, ZILLAH,
offering a sacrifice.

ADAM. God, the Eternal! Infinite!
All-wise!—

Who out of darkness on the deep didst
make

Light on the waters with a word—all
hail

Jehovah, with returning light, all hail!

EVE. God! who didst name the day
and separate

Morning from night, till then divided
never—

Who didst divide the wave from wave,
and call

Part of Thy work the firmament—all
hail!

ABEL. God! who didst call the ele-
ments into

Earth—ocean—air—and fire, and with
the day

And night, and worlds which these illu-
minate,

Or shadow; madest beings to enjoy
them,

And love both them and Thee—all hail!
all hail!

ADAH. God, the Eternal! Parent of
all things!

Who didst create these best and beaute-
ous beings,

To be beloved, more than all, save
Thee—

Let me love Thee and them:—All hail!
all hail!

ZILLAH. O God! who loving, making,
blessing all,

Yet didst permit the Serpent to creep in,
And drive my father forth from Para-
dise,

Keep us from further evil:—Hail! all
hail!

ADAM. Son Cain, my first-born, where-
fore art thou silent?

CAIN. Why should I speak?

ADAM. To pray.

CAIN. Have ye not prayed?

ADAM. We have, most fervently.

CAIN. And loudly: I
have heard you.

ADAM. So will God, I trust.

ABEL. Amen!

ADAM. But thou, my eldest born, art
silent still.

CAIN. 'Tis better I should be so.

ADAM. Wherefore so?

CAIN. I have nought to ask.

ADAM. Nor aught to thank for?

CAIN. No.

ADAM. Dost thou not live?

CAIN. Must I not die?

EVE. Alas!

The fruit of our forbidden tree begins
To fall.

ADAM. And we must gather it again.
O God! why didst Thou plant the tree

of knowledge?

CAIN. And wherefore pluck'd ye not
the tree of life?

Ye might have then defied Him.

ADAM. Oh! my son,
Blaspheme not: these are serpents'
words.

CAIN. Why not?
The snake spoke *truth*; it was the tree
of knowledge;
It *was* the tree of life: knowledge is
good,
And life is good: and how can both
be evil?

EVE. My boy! thou speakest as I
spoke, in sin,
Before thy birth: let me not see re-
new'd

My misery in thine. I have repented.
Let me not see my offspring fall into
The snares beyond the walls of Para-
dise,

Which e'en in Paradise destroyed his
parents.

Content thee with what *is*. Had we been
so,
Thou now hadst been contented.—Oh,
my son!

ADAM. Our orisons completed, let us
hence,
Each to his task of toil—not heavy,
though

Needful: the earth is young, and yields
us kindly
Her fruits with little labour.

EVE. Cain, my son,
Behold thy father cheerful and re-
sign'd,
And do as he doth.

[*Exeunt ADAM and EVE.*]

ZILLAH. Wilt thou not, my brother?

ABEL. Why wilt thou wear this gloom
upon thy brow,
Which can avail thee nothing, save to
rouse

The Eternal anger?

ADAH. My beloved Cain,
Wilt thou frown even on me?

CAIN. No, Adah! no;
I fain would be alone a little while.
Abel, I'm sick at heart; but it will pass.
Precede me, brother—I will follow
shortly.

And you, too, sisters, tarry not behind;
Your gentleness must not be harshly
met:

I'll follow you anon.

ADAH. If not, I will
Return to seek ye here.

ABEL. The peace of God
Be on your spirit, brother!

[*Exeunt ABEL, ZILLAH, and ADAH.*]

CAIN. [*solus*]. And this is
Life!—Toil! and wherefore should I
toil?—because

My father could not keep his place in
Eden!

What had *I* done in this?—I was un-
born:

I sought not to be born; nor love the
state

To which that birth has brought me.
Why did he

Yield to the serpent and the woman? or,
Yielding, why suffer? What was there
in this?

The tree was planted, and why not for
him?

If not, why place him near it, where it
grew,

The fairest in the centre? They have
but

One answer to all questions, "*Twas His
will*

And *He* is good." How know I that?
Because

He is all-powerful, must all-good, too,
follow?

I judge but by the fruits—and they are
bitter—

Which I must feed on for a fault not
mine.

Whom have we here?—A shape like to
the angels,

Yet of a sterner and a sadder aspect
Of spiritual essence: why do I quake?

Why should I fear him more than other
spirits,

Whom I see daily wave their fiery
swords

Before the gates round which I linger
oft,

In twilight's hour, to catch a glimpse of
those

Gardens which are my just inheritance,
Ere the night closes o'er the inhibited
walls

And the immortal trees which overtop
The cherubim-defended battlements?

If I shrink not from these, the fire-
arm'd angels,

Why should I quail from him who now
approaches?

Yet he seems mightier far than them,
nor less

Beauteous, and yet not all as beautiful

As he hath been, and might be: sorrow
seems
Half of his immortality. And is it
So? and can aught grieve save human-
ity?
He cometh.

Enter LUCIFER.

LUCIFER. Mortal!

CAIN. Spirit, who art thou?

LUCIFER. Master of Spirits.

CAIN. And being so, canst thou
Leave them and walk with dust?

LUCIFER. I know the thoughts
Of dust, and feel for it, and with you.

CAIN. How?
You know my thoughts?

LUCIFER. They are the thoughts of all
Worthy of thought;—'tis your immor-
tal part
Which speaks within you.

CAIN. What immortal part?
This has not been reveal'd; the tree of
life
Was withheld from us by my father's
folly
While that of knowledge by my
mother's haste,
Was pluck'd too soon; and all the fruit
is death!

LUCIFER. They have deceived thee;
thou shalt live.

CAIN. I live,
But live to die, and, living, see no
thing
To make death hateful, save an innate
clinging,
A loathsome, and yet all invincible
Instinct of life, which I abhor, as I
Despise myself, yet cannot overcome--
And so I live. Would I had never lived!

LUCIFER. Thou livest, and must live
for ever; think not
The earth, which is thine outward
cov'ring, is
Existence—it will cease, and thou wilt
be
No less than thou art now.

CAIN. No less! and why
No more?

LUCIFER. It may be thou shalt be as
we.

CAIN. And ye?

LUCIFER. Are everlasting.

CAIN. Are ye happy?

LUCIFER. We are mighty.

CAIN. Are ye happy?

LUCIFER. No: art thou?

CAIN. How should I be so? Look on
me!

LUCIFER. Poor clay:
And thou pretendest to be wretched!
Thou!

CAIN. I am:—and thou, with all thy
might, what art thou?

LUCIFER. One who aspired to be what
made thee, and
Would not have made thee what thou
art

CAIN. Ah!
Thou look'st almost a god; and—

LUCIFER. I am none:
And having fail'd to be one, would be
nought
Save what I am. He conquer'd: let Him
reign!

CAIN. Who?

LUCIFER. Thy sire's Maker, and the
earth's.

CAIN. And heaven's,
And all that in them is. So I have
heard

His Seraphs sing; and so my father
saith.

LUCIFER. They say—what they must
sing and say, on pain
Of being that which I am—and thou
art—

Of spirits and of men.

CAIN. And what is that?

LUCIFER. Souls who dare use their im-
mortality—
Souls who dare look the Omnipotent
tyrant in

His everlasting face, and tell Him that
His evil is not good! If He has made,
As He saith—which I know not, nor
believe—

But if He made us—He cannot un-
make;

We are immortal!—nay, He'd *have* us
so,

That He may torture:—let Him. He is
great—

But, in His greatness, no happier than
We in our conflict! Goodness would
not make

Evil; and what else hath He made? But
let Him

Sit on His vast and solitary throne,
 Creating worlds, to make eternity
 Less burthensome to His immense ex-
 istence

And unparticipated solitude;
 Let Him crowd orb on orb: He is alone
 Indefinite, indissoluble tyrant;
 Could He but crush Himself, 'twere the
 best boon

He ever granted: but, let Him reign on,
 And multiply Himself in misery!
 Spirits and men, at least we sympa-
 thize—

And, suffering in concert make our
 pangs,
 Innumerable, more endurable,
 By the unbounded sympathy of all
 With all! But *He!* so wretched in His
 height,
 So restless in His wretchedness, must
 still

Create, and recreate—

CAIN. Thou speak'st to me of things
 which long have swum
 In visions through my thought! I never
 could

Reconcile what I saw with what I heard.
 My father and my mother talk to me
 Of serpents, and of fruits and trees: I
 see

The gates of what they call their Para-
 dise

Guarded by fiery-sworded cherubim,
 Which shut them out, and me: I feel
 the weight

Of daily toil and constant thought: I
 look

Around a world where I seem nothing,
 with

Thoughts which arise within me, as if
 they

Could master all things—but I thought
 alone

This misery was *mine*.—My father is
 Tamed down; my mother has forgot the
 mind

Which made her thirst for knowledge
 at the risk

Of an eternal curse: my brother is

A watching shepherd boy, who offers up
 The firstlings of the flock to Him who
 bids

The earth yield nothing to us without
 sweat;

My sister Zillah sings an earlier hymn

Than the birds' matins; and my Adah,
 my

Own and beloved, she, too, understands
 not

The mind which overwhelms me: never
 till

Now met I aught to sympathize with
 me.

'Tis well—I rather would consort with
 spirits.

LUCIFER. And hadst thou not been fit
 by thine own soul
 For such companionship, I would not
 now

Have stood before thee as I am: a ser-
 pent

Had been enough to charm ye, as be-
 fore.

CAIN. Ah! didst *thou* tempt my
 mother?

LUCIFER. I tempt none,
 Save with the truth: was not the tree,
 the tree

Of knowledge? and was not the tree of
 life

Still fruitful? Did *I* bid her pluck
 them not?

Did *I* plant things prohibited within
 The reach of beings innocent, and curi-
 ous

By their own innocence? I would have
 made ye

Gods: and even He who thrust ye forth,
 so thrust ye

Because "ye should not eat the fruits of
 life,

And become gods as We." Were those
 His words?

CAIN. They were, as I have heard
 from those

In thunder.

LUCIFER. Then who was the demon?
 He who heard them,

Who would not let ye live, or he who
 would

Have made ye live for ever in the joy
 And power of knowledge?

CAIN. Would they had snatch'd both
 The fruits, or neither!

LUCIFER. One is yours already;
 The other may be still.

CAIN. How so?

LUCIFER. By being
 Yourselves, in your resistance. Nothing
 can

Quench the mind, if the mind will be
itself
And centre of surrounding things—'tis
made
To sway.

CAIN. But didst thou tempt my par-
ents?

LUCIFER. I?
Poor clay! what should I tempt them
for, or how?

CAIN. They say the serpent was a
spirit.

LUCIFER. Who
Saith that? It is not written so on
high:

The Proud One will not so far falsify,
Though man's vast fears and little van-
ity

Would make him cast upon the spiritual
nature

His own low failing. The snake *was*
the snake—

No more, and yet not less than those
he tempted,

In nature being earth also—*more in wis-
dom,*

Since he could overcome them, and fore-
knew

The knowledge fatal to their narrow
joys.

Think'st thou I'd take the shape of
things that die?

CAIN. But the thing had a demon?

LUCIFER. He but woke one
In those he spake to with his forky
tongue.

I tell thee that the serpent was no more
Than a mere serpent: ask the cherubim
Who guard the tempting tree. When
thousand ages

Have roll'd o'er your dead ashes, and
your seed's,

The seed of the then world may thus
array

Their earliest fault in fable, and at-
tribute

To me a shape I scorn, as I scorn all
That bows to Him, who made things
but to bend

Before His sullen, sole eternity;
But we who see the truth must speak
it. Thy

Fond parents listen'd to a creeping
thing,

And fell. For what should spirits tempt
them? What

Was there to envy in the narrow bounds
Of Paradise, that spirits who pervade
Space—but I speak to thee of what

thou know'st not,
With all thy tree of knowledge.

CAIN. But thou canst not
Speak aught of knowledge which I

would not know,
And do not thirst to know, and bear a
mind

To know.

LUCIFER. And heart to look on?

CAIN. Be it proved.

LUCIFER. Darest thou look on Death?

CAIN. He has not yet.
Been seen.

LUCIFER. But must be undergone.

CAIN. My father
Says he is something dreadful, and my
mother

Weeps when he is named; and Abel
lifts his eyes

To heaven, and Zillah casts hers to the
earth,

And sighs a prayer; and Adah looks
on me,

And speaks not.

LUCIFER. And thou?

CAIN. Thoughts unspeakable
Crowd in my breast to burning, when I
hear

Of this almighty Death, who is, it seems,
Inevitable. Could I wrestle with him?

I wrestled with the lion, when a boy,
In play, till he ran roaring from my
gripe.

LUCIFER. It has no shape, but will
absorb all things

That bear the form of earth-born being.
CAIN. Ah!

I thought it was a being: who could do
Such evil things to being save a being?

LUCIFER. Ask the Destroyer.

CAIN. Who?

LUCIFER. The Maker—call Him
Which name thou wilt; He makes but
to destroy.

CAIN. I knew not that, yet thought it,
since I heard

Of death: although I know not what
it is,

Yet it seems horrible. I have look'd
out

In the vast desolate night in search of him;
 And when I saw gigantic shadows in
 The umbrage of the walls of Eden,
 chequer'd
 By the far-flashing of the cherubs'
 swords,
 I watch'd for what I thought his coming;
 for
 With fear rose longing in my heart to know
 What 'twas which shook us all—but
 nothing came.
 And then I turn'd my weary eyes from off

Our native and forbidden Paradise,
 Up to the lights above us, in the azure,
 Which are so beautiful: shall they, too,
 die?

LUCIFER. Perhaps—but long outlive
 both thine and thee.

CAIN. I'm glad of that: I would not
 have them die—
 They are so lovely. What is death? I
 fear,

I feel it is a dreadful thing; but what,
 I cannot compass: 'tis denounced
 against us,
 Both them who sinn'd and sinn'd not,
 as an ill—
 What ill?

LUCIFER. To be resolved into the
 earth.

CAIN. But shall I know it?

LUCIFER. As I know not death,
 I cannot answer.

CAIN. Were I quiet earth,
 That were no evil: would I ne'er had
 been
 Aught else but dust!

LUCIFER. That is a grovelling wish,
 Less than thy father's, for he wish'd to
 know.

CAIN. But not to live, or wherefore
 pluck'd he not
 The life-tree?

LUCIFER. He was hinder'd.

CAIN. Deadly error!
 Not to snatch first that fruit: but ere
 he pluck'd
 The knowledge, he was ignorant of
 death.

Alas, I scarcely now know what it is;
 And yet I fear it—fear I know not
 what.

LUCIFER. And I, who know all things,
 fear nothing; see
 What is true knowledge.

CAIN. Wilt thou teach me all?

LUCIFER. Ay, upon one condition.

CAIN. Name it.

LUCIFER. That
 Thou dost fall down and worship me—
 thy Lord.

CAIN. Thou art not the Lord my father worships.

LUCIFER. No.

CAIN. His equal?

LUCIFER. No: I have nought in
 common with him!
 Nor would; I would be aught above—
 beneath—

Aught save a sharer or a servant of
 His power, I dwell apart; but I am
 great:—

Many there are who worship me, and
 more
 Who shall—be thou among the first.

CAIN. I never
 As yet have bow'd unto my father's
 God,

Although my brother Abel oft implores
 That I would join with him in sacrifice:—

Why should I bow to thee?

LUCIFER. Hast thou ne'er bowed
 To Him?

CAIN. Have I not said it?—need I
 say it?

Could not thy mighty knowledge teach
 thee that?

LUCIFER. He who bows not to Him
 has bow'd to me!

CAIN. But I will bend to neither.

LUCIFER. Ne'er the less,
 Thou art my worshipper; not worship-
 ping

Him, makes thee mine the same.

CAIN. And what is that?

LUCIFER. Thou'lt know here—and
 hereafter.

CAIN. Let me but
 Be taught the mystery of my being.

LUCIFER. Follow
 Where I lead thee.

CAIN. But I must retire
 To till the earth—for I had prom-
 ised—

LUCIFER. What?

CAIN. To cull some first-fruits.
 LUCIFER. Why?
 CAIN. To offer up
 With Abel on an altar.
 LUCIFER. Saidst thou not
 Thou ne'er hadst bent to Him who made
 thee?
 CAIN. Yes:—
 But Abel's earnest prayer has wrought
 upon me:
 The offering is more his than mine—
 and Adah—
 LUCIFER. Why dost thou hesitate?
 CAIN. She is my sister.
 Born on the same day, of the same
 womb: and
 She wrung from me, with tears, this
 promise; and
 Rather than see her weep. I would, me-
 thinks,
 Bear all—and worship aught.
 LUCIFER. Then follow me!
 CAIN. I will.

Enter ADAH.

ADAH. My brother, I have come for
 thee;
 It is our hour of rest and joy—and we
 Have less without thee. Thou hast la-
 bour'd not
 This morn; but I have done thy task:
 the fruits
 Are ripe, and glowing as the light which
 ripens:
 Come away.
 CAIN. Seest thou not?
 ADAH. I see an angel:
 We have seen many: will he share our
 hour
 Of rest?—he is welcome.
 CAIN. But he is not like
 The angels we have seen.
 ADAH. Are there, then, others?
 But he is welcome, as they were: they
 deign'd
 To be our guests—will he?
 CAIN [*to LUCIFER*]. Wilt thou?
 LUCIFER. I ask
 Thee to be mine.
 CAIN. I must away with him.
 ADAH. And leave us?
 CAIN. Ay.
 ADAH. And *me*?
 CAIN. Beloved Adah!

ADAH. Let me go with thee.
 LUCIFER. No, she must not.
 ADAH. Who
 Art thou that steppest between heart
 and heart?
 CAIN. He is a god.
 ADAH. How know'st thou?
 CAIN. He speaks like
 A god.
 ADAH. So did the Serpent, and it lied.
 LUCIFER. Thou errest, Adah!—was
 not the tree that
 Of knowledge?
 ADAH. Ay—to our eternal sorrow.
 LUCIFER. And yet that grief is knowl-
 edge—so he lied not:
 And if he did betray you, 'twas with
 truth;
 And truth in its own essence cannot be
 But good.
 ADAH. But all we know of it has
 gather'd
 Evil on ill: expulsion from our home,
 And dread, and toil, and sweat, and
 heaviness;
 Remorse of that which was—and hope
 of that
 Which cometh not. Cain! walk not with
 this spirit.
 Bear with what we have borne, and
 love me—I
 Love thee.
 LUCIFER. More than thy mother, and
 thy sire?
 ADAH. I do. Is that a sin, too?
 LUCIFER. No, not yet:
 It one day will be in your children.
 ADAH. What!
 Must not my daughter love her brother
 Enoch?
 LUCIFER. Not as thou lovest Cain.
 ADAH. Oh, my God!
 Shall they not love, and bring forth
 things that love
 Out of their love? have they not drawn
 their milk
 Out of this bosom? was not he, their
 father,
 Born of the same sole womb, in the
 same hour
 With me? Did we not love each other?
 and
 In multiplying our being multiply
 Things which will love each other as
 we love

Them?—And as I love thee, my Cain!
 go not
 Forth with this spirit; he is not of ours.

LUCIFER. The sin I speak of is not of
 my making,
 And cannot be a sin in you—whate'er
 It seems in those who will replace ye in
 Mortality.

ADAH. What is the sin which is not
 Sin in itself? Can circumstance make sin
 Or virtue?—if it doth, we are the slaves
 Of—

LUCIFER. Higher things than ye are
 slaves: and higher
 Than them or ye would be so, did they
 not

Prefer an independency of torture
 To the smooth agonies of adulation,
 In hymns and harpings, and self-seeking
 prayers,
 To that which is omnipotence, because
 It is omnipotent, and not from love,
 But terror and self-hope.

ADAH. Omnipotence
 Must be all goodness.

LUCIFER. Was it so in Eden?

ADAH. Fiend! tempt me not with
 beauty; thou art fairer
 Than was the serpent, and as false.

LUCIFER. As true.
 Ask Eve, your mother: bears she not the
 knowledge
 Of good and evil?

ADAH. Oh, my mother! thou
 Hast pluck'd a fruit more fatal to thine
 offspring
 Than to thyself; thou at the least hast
 pass'd
 Thy youth in Paradise, in innocent
 And happy intercourse with happy
 spirits:

But we, thy children, ignorant of Eden,
 Are girt about by demons, who assume
 The words of God, and tempt us with
 our own
 Dissatisfied and curious thoughts—as
 thou
 Wert work'd on by the snake, in thy
 most flush'd
 And heedless, harmless wantonness of
 bliss.

I cannot answer this immortal thing
 Which stands before me: I cannot ab-
 hor him;

I look upon him with a pleasing fear,
 And yet I fly not from him: in his eye
 There is a fastening attraction which
 Fixes my fluttering eyes on his; my
 heart
 Beats quick; he awes me, and yet
 draws me near,
 Nearer and nearer:—Cain—Cain—save
 me from him!

CAIN. What dreads my Adah? This
 is no ill spirit.

ADAH. He is not God—nor God's: I
 have beheld
 The cherubs and the seraphs; he looks
 not
 Like them.

CAIN. But there are spirits loftier
 still—The archangels.

LUCIFER. And still loftier than the
 archangels.

ADAH. Ay—but not blessed.

LUCIFER. If the blessedness
 Consists in slavery—no.

ADAH. I have heard it said,
 The seraphs *love most*, cherubim *know*
most,
 And this should be a cherub—since he
 loves not.

LUCIFER. And if the higher knowl-
 edge quenches love,
 What must *he be* you cannot love when
 known?

Since the all-knowing cherubim love
 least,
 The seraphs' love can be but ignorance:
 That they are not compatible, the doom
 Of thy fond parents, for their daring,
 proves.

Choose betwixt love and knowledge—
 since there is
 No other choice: your sire hath chosen
 already;
 His worship is but fear.

ADAH. Oh, Cain! choose love.

CAIN. For thee, my Adah, I choose
 not—it was
 Born with me—but I love nought else.

ADAH. Our parents?

CAIN. Did they love us when they
 snatch'd from the tree
 That which hath driven us all from Par-
 adise?

ADAH. We were not born then—and
if we had been,
Should we not love them and our chil-
dren, Cain?

CAIN. My little Enoch! and his lisp-
ing sister?
Could I but deem them happy, I would
half
Forget—but, it can never be forgotten
Through thrice a thousand generations!
Never
Shall men love the remembrance of the
man
Who sow'd the seed of evil and man-
kind
In the same hour! They pluck'd the
tree of science
And sin—and, not content with their
own sorrow,
Begot *me—thee*—and all the few that
are,
And all the unnumber'd and innumer-
able
Multitudes, millions, myriads, which
may be,
To inherit agonies accumulated
By ages!—and *I* must be sire of such
things!
Thy beauty and thy love—my love and
joy,
The rapturous moment and the placid
hour,
All we love in our children and each
other,
But lead them and ourselves through
many years
Of sin and pain—or few, but still of
sorrow,
Intercheck'd with an instant of brief
pleasure,
To Death—the unknown! Methinks
the tree of knowledge
Hath not fulfill'd its promise—if they
sinn'd,
At least they ought to have known all
things that are
Of knowledge—and the mystery of
death.
What do they know?—that they are
miserable.
What need of snakes and fruits to teach
us that?

ADAH. I am not wretched, Cain; and
if thou
Wert happy—

CAIN. Be thou happy, then, alone—
I will have nought to do with happiness,
Which humbles me and mine.

ADAH. Alone I could not,
Nor *would* be happy; but with those
around us
I think I could be so, despite of death,
Which, as I know it not, I dread not,
though
It seems an awful shadow—if I may
Judge from what I have heard.

LUCIFER. And thou couldst not
Alone, thou say'st be happy?

ADAH. Alone! Oh, my God!
Who could be happy and alone, or
good?
To me my solitude seems sin; unless
When I think how soon I shall see my
brother,
His brother, and our children, and our
parents.

LUCIFER. Yet thy God is alone; and is
He happy,
Lonely, and good?

ADAH. He is not so; He hath
The angels and the mortals to make
happy,
And thus becomes so in diffusing joy.
What else can joy be, but the spreading
joy?

LUCIFER. Ask of your sire, the exile
fresh from Eden;
Or of his first-born son; ask your own
heart;
It is not tranquil.

ADAH. Alas, no! and you—
Are you of heaven?

LUCIFER. If I am not, inquire
The cause of this all-spreading happi-
ness
(Which you proclaim) of the all-great
and good
Maker of life and living things; it is
His secret, and He keeps it. *We* must
bear,
And some of us resist, and both in vain,
His seraphs say; but it is worth the
trial,
Since better may not be without: there
is
A wisdom in the spirit, which directs
To right, as in the dim blue air the eye
Of you, young mortals, lights at once
upon

The star which watches, welcoming the
morn.

ADAH. It is a beautiful star; I love it
for its beauty.

LUCIFER. And why not adore?

ADAH. Our father
Adores the Invisible only.

LUCIFER. But the symbols
Of the Invisible are the loveliest
Of what is visible; and yon bright star
Is leader of the host of heaven.

ADAH. Our father
Saith that he has beheld the God Him-
self
Who made him and our mother.

LUCIFER. Hast *thou* seen Him?

ADAH. Yes—in His works.

LUCIFER. But in His being?

ADAH. No—
Save in my father, who is God's own
image;

Or in His angels, who are like to thee—
And brighter, yet less beautiful and
powerful

In seeming: as the silent sunny noon,
All light they look upon us; but thou
seem'st

Like an ethereal night, where long white
clouds

Streak the deep purple, and unnumber'd
stars

Spangle the wonderful mysterious vault
With things that look as if they would
be suns;

So beautiful, unnumber'd and endearing,
Not dazzling, and yet drawing us to
them,

They fill my eyes with tears, and so dost
thou.

Thou seem'st unhappy: do not make
us so,

And I will weep for thee.

LUCIFER. Alas! those tears!
Couldst thou but know what oceans will
be shed—

ADAH. By me?

LUCIFER. By all.

ADAH. What all!

LUCIFER. The million millions—
The myriad myriads—the all-peopled
earth—

The unpeopled earth—and the o'er-peopled
Hell,

Of which thy bosom is the germ.

ADAH. O Cain!

This spirit curseth us.

CAIN. Let him say on;
Him will I follow.

ADAH. Whither?

LUCIFER. To a place
Whence he shall come back to thee in
an hour:

But in that hour see things of many
days.

ADAH. How can that be?

LUCIFER. Did not your Maker make
Out of old worlds this new one in few
days?

And cannot I, who aided in this work,
Show in an hour what He hath made in
many,

Or hath destroyed in few?

CAIN. Lead on.

ADAH. Will he,
In sooth, return within an hour?

LUCIFER. He shall.
With us acts are exempt from time, and
we

Can crowd eternity into an hour,
Or stretch an hour into eternity;
We breathe not by a mortal measure-
ment—

But that's a mystery. Cain come on
with me.

ADAH. Will he return?

LUCIFER. Ay, woman! he alone
Of mortals from that place (the first
and last

Who shall return, save One) shall come
back to thee,

To make that silent and expectant world
As populous as this: at present there
Are few inhabitants.

ADAH. Where dwellest thou?

LUCIFER. Throughout all space.
Where should I dwell? Where are
Thy God or Gods—there am I: all
things are

Divided with me; life and death—and
time—

Eternity—and heaven and earth—and
that

Which is not heaven nor earth but peopled
with

Those who once peopled or shall people
both—

These are my realms! So that I do
divide

His, and possess a kingdom which is not
His. If I were not that which I have
said,

Could I stand here? His angels are
within
Your vision.

ADAH. So they were when the fair
serpent
Spoke with our mother first.

LUCIFER. Cain! thou hast heard,
If thou dost long for knowledge, I can
sate

That thirst; nor ask thee to partake of
fruits

Which shall deprive thee of a single
good

The Conqueror has left thee. Follow
me.

CAIN. Spirit, I have said it.

[*Exeunt LUCIFER and CAIN.*]

ADAH [*follows, exclaiming.*] Cain!
My brother! Cain!

ACT II.

SCENE I.—*The Abyss of Space.*

CAIN. I tread on air, and sink not;
yet I fear to sink.

LUCIFER. Have faith in me, and thou
shalt be
Borne on the air, of which I am the
prince.

CAIN. Can I do so without impiety?

LUCIFER. Believe—and sink not!
doubt—and perish! thus

Would run the edict of the other God,
Who names me demon to His angels;
they

Echo the sound to miserable things,
Which, knowing nought beyond their
shallow senses,

Worship the word which strikes their
ear, and deem

Evil or good what is proclaim'd to them
In their abasement. I will have none
such:

Worship or worship not, thou shalt be-
hold

The worlds beyond thy little world, nor
be

Amèrced for doubts beyond thy little
life,

With torture of *my* dooming. There
will come

An hour, when, toss'd upon some wa-
ter-drops,

A man shall say to a man, "Believe in
me,

And walk the waters;" and the man
shall walk

The billows and be safe. *I* will not say,
Believe in *me*, as a conditional creed

To save thee; but fly with me o'er the
gulf

Of space an equal flight, and I will show
What thou dar'st not deny—the history

Of past, and present, and of future
worlds.

CAIN. Oh, god, or demon, or whate'er
thou art,

Is yon our earth?

LUCIFER. Dost thou not recognize
The dust which form'd your father?

CAIN. Can it be?
Yon small blue circle, swinging in far
ether,

With an inferior circlet near it still,
Which looks like that which lit our
earthly night?

Is this our Paradise? Where are its
walls,

And they who guard them?

LUCIFER. Point me out the site
Of Paradise.

CAIN. How should I? As we move
Like sunbeams onward, it grows small
and smaller,

And as it waxes little, and then less,
Gathers a halo round it, like the light

Which shone the roundest of the stars,
when I

Beheld them from the skirts of Para-
dise:

Methinks they both, as we recede from
them,

Appear to join the innumerable stars
Which are around us; and, as we move
on,

Increase their myriads.

LUCIFER. And if there should be
Worlds greater than thine own, inhab-
ited

By greater things, and they themselves
far more

In number than the dust of thy dull
earth,

Though multiplied to animated atoms.
All living, and all doom'd to death, and
wretched,

What wouldst thou think?

CAIN. I should be proud of thought
Which knew such things.

LUCIFER. But if that high thought
were

Link'd to a servile mass of matter, and
Knowing such things, aspiring to such
things,

And science still beyond them, were
chain'd down

To the most gross and petty paltry
wants,

All foul and fulsome, and the very best
Of thine enjoyments a sweet degrada-
tion,

A most enervating and filthy cheat
To lure thee on to the renewal of
Fresh souls and bodies, all foredoom'd
to be

As frail, and few so happy—

CAIN. Spirit! I
Know nought of death, save as a dread-
ful thing

Of which I have heard my parents
speak, as of

A hideous heritage I owe to them
No less than life; a heritage not happy.
If I may judge, till now. But, spirit! if
It be as thou hast said (and I within
Feel the prophetic torture of its truth),
Here let me die: for to give birth to
those

Who can but suffer many years, and die.
Methinks is merely propagating death,
And multiplying murder.

LUCIFER. Thou canst not
All die—there is what must survive.

CAIN. The Other
Spake not of this unto my father, when
He shut him forth from Paradise, with
death

Written upon his forehead. But at least
Let what is mortal of me perish, that
I may be in the rest as angels are.

LUCIFER. I am angelic: wouldst thou
be as I am?

CAIN. I know not what thou art: I
see thy power,

And see thou show'st me things beyond
my power,

Beyond all power of my born faculties,
Although inferior still to my desires
And my conceptions.

LUCIFER. What are they which dwell

So humbly in their pride, as to sojourn
With worms in clay?

CAIN. And what art thou, who dwell-
est

So haughtily in spirit, and canst range
Nature and immortality—and yet
Seem'st sorrowful?

LUCIFER. I seem that which I am;
And therefore do I ask of thee, if thou
Wouldst be immortal?

CAIN. Thou hast said, I must be
Immortal in despite of me. I knew not
This until lately—but since it must be,
Let me, or happy or unhappy, learn
To anticipate my immortality.

LUCIFER. Thou didst before I came
upon thee.

CAIN. How?

LUCIFER. By suffering.

CAIN. And must torture be immortal?

LUCIFER. We and thy sons will try.
But now, behold!

Is it not glorious?

CAIN. Oh, thou beautiful
And unimaginable ether! and
Ye multiplying masses of increased
And still increasing lights! what are
ye? what

Is this blue wilderness of interminable
Air, where ye roll along, as I have seen
The leaves along the limpid streams of
Eden?

Is your course measured for ye? Or do
ye

Sweep on in your unbounded revelry
Through an aerial universe of endless
Expansion—at which my soul aches to
think—

Intoxicated with eternity?

O God! O Gods! or whatsoever ye are!
How beautiful ye are! how beautiful
Your works, or accidents, or whatsoever
They may be! Let me die, as atoms die
(If that they die), or know ye in your
might

And knowledge! My thoughts are not
in this hour

Unworthy what I see, though my dust is.
Spirit! let me expire, or see them near-
er.

LUCIFER. Art thou not nearer? Look
back to thine earth!

CAIN. Where is it? I see nothing
save a mass

Of most innumerable lights.

LUCIFER. Look there!
 CAIN. I cannot see it.
 LUCIFER. Yet it sparkles still.
 CAIN. That!—yonder!
 LUCIFER. Yea.
 CAIN. And wilt thou tell me so?
 Why, I have seen the fire-flies and fire-worms
 Sprinkle the dusky groves and the green banks
 In the dim twilight, brighter than yon world
 Which bears them.
 LUCIFER. Thou hast seen both worms and worlds,
 Each bright and sparkling—what dost think of them?
 CAIN. That they are beautiful in their own sphere,
 And that the night, which makes both beautiful,
 The little shining fire-fly in its flight,
 And the immortal star in its great course,
 Must both be guided.
 LUCIFER. But by whom or what?
 CAIN. Show me.
 LUCIFER. Dar'st thou behold?
 CAIN. How know I what I *dare* behold? As yet thou hast shown nought
 I dare not gaze on further.
 LUCIFER. On, then, with me.
 Wouldst thou behold things mortal or immortal?
 CAIN. Why, what are things?
 LUCIFER. *Both* partly: but what doth sit next thy heart?
 CAIN. The things I see.
 LUCIFER. But what *Sate* nearest it?
 CAIN. The things I have not seen,
 Nor ever shall—the mysteries of death.
 LUCIFER. What, if I show to thee things which have died,
 As I have shown thee much which cannot die?
 CAIN. Do so.
 LUCIFER. Away, then, on our mighty wings.
 CAIN. Oh, how we cleave the blue!
 The stars fade from us!
 The earth! where is my earth? Let me look on it,
 For I was made of it.

LUCIFER. 'Tis now beyond thee,
 Less, in the universe, than thou in it;
 Yet deem not that thou canst escape it:
 thou
 Shalt soon return to earth and all its dust:
 'Tis part of thy eternity, and mine.
 CAIN. Where dost thou lead me?
 LUCIFER. To what was before thee!
 The phantasm of the world; of which thy world
 Is but the wreck.
 CAIN. What! is it not then new?
 LUCIFER. No more than life is; and that was ere thou
 Or *I* were, or the things which seem to us
 Greater than either; many things will have
 No end; and some, which would pretend to have
 Had no beginning, have had one as mean
 As thou; and mightier things have been extinct.
 To make way for much meaner than we can
 Surmise; for *moments* only and the *space*
 Have been and must be all *unchangeable*.
 But changes make not death, except to clay;
 But thou art clay—and canst but comprehend
 That which was clay; and such thou shalt behold.
 CAIN. Clay, spirit! what thou wilt, I can survey.
 LUCIFER. Away, then!
 CAIN. But the lights fade from me fast,
 And some till now grew larger as we approach'd,
 And wore the look of worlds.
 LUCIFER. And such they are.
 CAIN. And Edens in them?
 LUCIFER. It may be.
 CAIN. And men?
 LUCIFER. Yea, or things higher.
 CAIN. Ay? and serpents too?
 LUCIFER. Wouldst thou have men without them? must no reptiles
 Breathe save the erect ones?

CAIN. How the lights recede!
Where fly we?

LUCIFER. To the world of phantoms,
which
Are beings past, and shadows still to
come.

CAIN. But it grows dark, and dark—
the stars are gone!

LUCIFER. And yet thou seest.

CAIN. 'Tis a fearful light!
No sun, no moon, no lights innumerable.
The very blue of the empurpled night
Fades to a dreary twilight, yet I see
Huge dusky masses: but unlike the
worlds

We were approaching, which, begirt
with light,

Seem'd full of life even when their at-
mosphere

Of light gave way, and show'd them
taking shapes

Unequal, of deep valleys and vast moun-
tains;

And some emitting sparks, and some
displaying

Enormous liquid plains, and some begirt
With luminous belts, and floating

moons, which took,
Like them, the features of fair earth:—
instead,

All here seems dark and dreadful.

LUCIFER. But distinct.
Thou seekest to behold death and dead
things?

CAIN. I seek it not; but as I know
there are

Such, and that my sire's sin makes him
and me,

And all that we inherit, liable
To such, I would behold at once, what I
Must one day see perforce.

LUCIFER. Behold!

CAIN. 'Tis darkness.
LUCIFER. And so it shall be ever; but
we will

Unfold its gates!

CAIN. Enormous vapours roll
Apart—what's this?

LUCIFER. Enter!

CAIN. Can I return?

LUCIFER. Return! be sure: how else
should death be peopled?

Its present realm is thin to what it will
be,
Through thee and thine.

CAIN. The clouds still open wide
And wider, and make widening circles
round us.

LUCIFER. Advance!

CAIN. And thou

LUCIFER. Fear not—without me thou
Couldst not have gone beyond thy
world. On! on!

[*They disappear through the clouds.*]

SCENE II.—*Hades.*

Enter LUCIFER and CAIN.

CAIN. How silent and how vast are
these dim worlds!

For they seem more than one, and yet
more peopled

Than the huge brilliant luminous orbs
which swung

So thickly in the upper air, that I
Had deem'd them rather the bright pop-
ulace

Of some all unimaginable Heaven,
Than things to be inhabited themselves,

But that on drawing near them I beheld
Their swelling into palpable immensity

Of matter, which seem'd made for life
to dwell on,

Rather than life itself. But here, all is
So shadowy and so full of twilight, that
It speaks of a day past.

LUCIFER. It is the realm
Of death.—Wouldst have it present?

CAIN. Till I know
That which it really is, I cannot answer.

But if it be as I have heard my father
Deal out in his long homilies, 'tis a
thing—

O God! I dare not think on't! Curs'd
be

He who invented life that leads to
death!

Or the dull mass of life, that, being life,
Could not retain, but needs must forfeit
it—

Even for the innocent!

LUCIFER. Dost thou curse thy father?

CAIN. Curs'd he not me in giving me
my birth?

Curs'd he not me before my birth, in
daring

To pluck the fruit forbidden?

LUCIFER. Thou say'st well:

The curse is mutual 'twixt thy sire and thee—

But for thy sons and brother?

CAIN. Let them share it
With me, their sire and brother! What
else is
Bequeath'd to me? I leave them my
inheritance.

Oh, ye interminable gloomy realms
Of swimming shadows and enormous
shapes,

Some fully shown, some indistinct, and
all

Mighty and melancholy—what are ye?
Live ye, or have ye lived?

LUCIFER. Somewhat of both.

CAIN. Then what is death?

LUCIFER. What? Hath not He who
made ye

Said 'tis another life?

CAIN. Till now He hath
Said nothing, save that all shall die.

LUCIFER. Perhaps
He one day will unfold that further
secret.

CAIN. Happy the day!

LUCIFER. Yes; happy; when unfolded
Through agonies unspeakable, and
clogg'd

With agonies eternal, to innumerable
Yet unborn myriads of unconscious
atoms,

All to be animated for this only!

CAIN. What are these mighty phan-
toms which I see
Floating around me?—They wear not
the form

Of the intelligences I have seen
Round our regretted and unenter'd
Eden,

Nor wear the form of man as I have
view'd it

In Adam's, and in Abel's, and in mine,
Nor in my sister-bride's, nor in my chil-
dren's:

And yet they have an aspect, which,
though not

Of men nor angels, looks like something
which,

If not the last, rose higher than the
first,

Haughty, and high, and beautiful, and
full

Of seeming strength, but of inexplicable

Shape; for I never saw such. They bear
not

The wing of seraph, nor the face of
man,

Nor form of mightiest brute, nor aught
that is

Now breathing; mighty yet and beau-
tiful

As the most beautiful and mighty which
Live, and yet so unlike them, that I
scarce

Can call them living.

LUCIFER. Yet they lived.

CAIN. Where?

LUCIFER. Where

Thou livest.

CAIN. When?

LUCIFER. On what thou callest earth
They did inhabit.

CAIN. Adam is the first.

LUCIFER. Of thine I grant thee—but
too mean to be

The last of these.

CAIN. And what are they?

LUCIFER. That which
Thou shalt be.

CAIN. But what *were* they?

LUCIFER. Living, high,
Intelligent, good, great, and glorious
things,

As much superior unto all thy sire,
Adam, could e'er have been in Eden, as
The sixty-thousandth generation shall
be,

In its dull, damp degeneracy, to
Thee and thy son:—and how weak they
are, judge

By thy own flesh.

CAIN. Ah me! and did *they* perish?

LUCIFER. Yes, from their earth, as
thou wilt fade from thine.

CAIN. But was *mine* theirs?

LUCIFER. It was.

CAIN. But not as now.

It is too little and too lowly to

Sustain such creatures.

LUCIFER. True, it was more glorious.

CAIN. And wherefore did it fall?

LUCIFER. Ask Him who fells.

CAIN. But how?

LUCIFER. By a most crushing and in-
exorable

Destruction and disorder of the ele-
ments,

Which struck a world to chaos, as a
chaos

Subsiding has struck out a world; such
things,

Though rare in time, are frequent in
eternity.—

Pass on, and gaze upon the past.

CAIN. 'Tis awful!

LUCIFER. And true. Behold these
phantoms! they were once
Material, as thou art.

CAIN. And must I be
Like them?

LUCIFER. Let Him who made thee an-
swer that.

I show thee what thy predecessors are,
And what they *were* thou feelest, in de-
gree

Inferior as thy petty feelings and
Thy pettier portion of the immortal
part

Of high intelligence and earthly
strength.

What ye in common have with what
they had

Is life, and what ye *shall* have—death:
the rest

Of your poor attributes is such as suits
Reptiles engender'd out of the subsiding
Slime of a mighty universe, crush'd into
A scarcely-yet shaped planet, peopled
with

Things whose enjoyment was to be in
blindness—

A Paradise of Ignorance, from which
Knowledge was barr'd as poison. But
behold

What these superior beings are or were;
Or, if it irk thee, turn thee back and till
The earth, thy task—I'll waft thee there
in safety.

CAIN. No; I'll stay here.

LUCIFER. How long?

CAIN. For ever! Since

I must one day return here from the
earth,

I rather would remain, I am sick of all
That dust has shown me—let me dwell
in shadows.

LUCIFER. It cannot be: thou now be-
holdest as

A vision that which is reality.

To make thyself fit for this dwelling,
thou

Must pass through what the things thou
seest have pass'd—

The gates of death.

CAIN. By what gate have we enter'd
Even now?

LUCIFER. By mine! But, plighted to
return,

My spirit buoys thee up to breathe in
regions

Where all is breathless save thyself.
Gaze on;

But do not think to dwell here till thine
hour

Is come.

CAIN. And these, too; can they ne'er
repass

To earth again?

LUCIFER. *Their* earth is gone for-
ever—

So changed by its convulsion, they
would not

Be conscious to a single present spot
Of its new scarcely harden'd surface—
'twas—

Oh, what a beautiful world it *was!*

CAIN. And is.

It is not with the earth, though I must
till it,

I feel at war, but that I may not profit
By what it bears of beautiful, untoiling,
Nor gratify my thousand swelling
thoughts

With knowledge, nor allay my thousand
fears

Of death and life.

LUCIFER. What thy world is, thou
seest,

But canst not comprehend the shadow
of

That which it was.

CAIN. And those enormous creatures,
Phantoms inferior in intelligence
(At least so seeming) to the things we
have pass'd,

Resembling somewhat the wild habitants
Of the deep woods of earth, the hugest
which

Roar nightly in the forest, but tenfold
In magnitude and terror; taller than
The cherub-guarded walls of Eden, with
Eyes flashing like the fiery swords which
fence them,

And tusks projecting like the trees
stripp'd of

Their bark and branches—what were they?

LUCIFER. That which
The Mammoth is in thy world; but
these lie

By myriads underneath its surface.

CAIN. But
None on it?

LUCIFER. No: for thy frail race to
war

With them would render the curse on
it useless—

'Twould be destroy'd so early.

CAIN. But why *war*?

LUCIFER. You have forgotten the den-
unciation

Which drove your race from Eden—
war with all things,

And death to all things, and disease to
most things,

And pangs, and bitterness; these were
the fruits

Of the forbidden tree.

CAIN. But animals—

Did they, too, eat of it, that they must
die?

LUCIFER. Your Maker told ye, *they*
were made for you,

As you for Him.—You would not have
their doom

Superior to your own? Had Adam
not

Fallen, all had stood.

CAIN. Alas, the hopeless wretches!

They too must share my sire's fate, like
his sons;

Like them, too, without having shared
the apple;

Like them, too, without the so dear-
bought *knowledge*!

It was a lying tree—for we *know* noth-
ing.

At least it *promised knowledge* at the
price

Of death—but *knowledge* still: but what
knows man?

LUCIFER. It may be death leads to the
highest knowledge;

And being of all things the sole thing
certain.

At least leads to the *surest* science:
therefore

The tree was true, though deadly.

CAIN. These dim realms!

I see them, but I know them not.

LUCIFER. Because
Thy hour is yet afar, and matter can-
not

Comprehend spirit wholly—but 'tis
something

To know there are such realms.

CAIN. We knew already
That there was death.

LUCIFER. But not what was beyond it.

CAIN. Nor know I now.

LUCIFER. Thou knowest that there is
A state, and many states beyond thine
own—

And this thou knewest not this morn.

CAIN. But all
Seems dim and shadowy.

LUCIFER. Be content; it will
Seem clearer to thine immortality.

CAIN. And yon immeasurable liquid
space

Of glorious azure which floats on be-
yond us,

Which looks like water, and which I
should deem

The river which flows out of Paradise
Past my own dwelling, but that it is

bankless

And boundless, and of ethereal hue—

What is it?

LUCIFER. There is still some such on
earth,

Although inferior, and thy children
shall

Dwell near it—'tis the phantasm of an
ocean.

CAIN. 'Tis like another world; a
liquid sun—

And those inordinate creatures sporting
o'er

Its shining surface?

LUCIFER. Are its inhabitants;

The past leviathans.

CAIN. And yon immense

Serpent, which rears his dripping mane
and vasty

Head ten times higher than the haught-
iest cedar

Forth from the abyss, looking as he
could coil

Himself around the orbs we lately
look'd on—

Is he not of the kind which bask'd be-
neath

The tree in Eden?

LUCIFER. Eve, thy mother, best

Can tell what shape of serpent tempted her.

CAIN. This seems too terrible. No doubt the other Had more of beauty.

LUCIFER. Hast thou ne'er beheld him?

CAIN. Many of the same kind (at least so call'd),

But never that precisely which persuaded

The fatal fruit, nor even of the same aspect.

LUCIFER. Your father saw him not?

CAIN. No; 'twas my mother Who tempted him—she tempted by the serpent.

LUCIFER. Good man! whene'er thy wife, or thy sons' wives, Tempt thee or them to aught that's new or strange,

Be sure thou seest first who hath tempted *them*.

CAIN. Thy precept comes too late; there is no more

For serpents to tempt woman to.

LUCIFER. But there Are some things still which woman may tempt man to,

And man tempt woman:—let thy sons look to it!

My counsel is a kind one: for 'tis even Given chiefly at my own expense: 'tis true,

'Twill not be follow'd, so there's little lost.

CAIN. I understand not this.

LUCIFER. The happier thou!— Thy world and thou are still too young! Thou thinkest

Thyself most wicked and unhappy; is it Not so?

CAIN. For crime, I know not, but for pain I have felt much.

LUCIFER. First-born of the first man! Thy present state of sin—and thou art evil—

Of sorrow—and thou sufferest—are both Eden

In all its innocence compared to what *Thou* shortly may'st be; and that state again

In its redoubled wretchedness, a Paradise

To what thy sons' sons' sons, accumulating

In generations like to dust (which they In fact but add to), shall endure and do.—

Now let us back to earth!

CAIN. And wherefore didst thou Lead me here only to inform me this?

LUCIFER. Was not thy quest for knowledge?

CAIN. Yes; as being

The road to happiness.

LUCIFER. If truth be so,

Thou hast it.

CAIN. Then my father's God did well When He prohibited the fatal tree.

LUCIFER. But had done better in not planting it.

But ignorance of evil doth not save From evil; it must still roll on the same, A part of all things.

CAIN. Not of all things. No; I'll not believe it—for I thirst for good.

LUCIFER. And who and what doth not? *Who* covets evil

For its own bitter sake?—*None*—nothing! 'tis

The haven of all life, and lifelessness.

CAIN. Within those glorious orbs which we beheld,

Distant, and dazzling, and innumerable, Ere we came down into this phantom realm,

Ill cannot come: they are too beautiful.

LUCIFER. Thou hast seen them from afar—

CAIN. And what of that?

Distance can but diminish glory—they When nearer, must be more ineffable.

LUCIFER. Approach the things of earth most beautiful,

And judge their beauty near.

CAIN. I have done this— The loveliest thing I know is loveliest nearest.

LUCIFER. Then there must be delusion. —What is that,

Which being nearest to thine eyes is still

More beautiful than beauteous things remote?

CAIN. My sister Adah.—All the stars of heaven,

The deep blue noon of night, lit by an orb

Which looks a spirit, or a spirit's world—
 The hues of twilight—the sun's gorgeous coming—
 His setting indescribable, which fills
 My eyes with pleasant tears, as I behold
 Him sink, and feel my heart float softly
 with him
 Along that western paradise of clouds—
 The forest shade—the green bough—the
 bird's voice—
 The vesper bird's, which seems to sing
 of love,
 And mingles with the song of cherubim,
 As the day closes over Eden's walls;—
 All these are nothing, to my eyes and
 heart,
 Like Adah's face: I turn from earth
 and heaven
 To gaze on it.
 LUCIFER. 'Tis fair as frail mortality,
 In the first dawn and bloom of young
 creation,
 And earliest embraces of earth's parents
 Can make its offspring; still it is de-
 clusion.
 CAIN. You think so, being not her
 brother.
 LUCIFER. Mortal!
 My brotherhood's with those who have
 no children.
 CAIN. Then thou canst have no fel-
 lowship with us.
 LUCIFER. It may be that thine own
 shall be for me.
 But if thou dost possess a beautiful
 Being beyond all beauty in thine eyes,
 Why art thou wretched?
 CAIN. Why do I exist?
 Why art *thou* wretched? why are all
 things so?
 Even He who made us must be, as the
 maker
 Of things unhappy! To produce de-
 struction
 Can surely never be the task of joy,
 And yet my sire says He's omnipotent:
 Then why is evil—He being good? I
 ask'd
 This question of my father; and he
 said,
 Because this evil only was the path
 To good. Strange good that must arise
 from out
 Its deadly opposite. I lately saw

A lamb stung by a reptile; the poor
 suckling
 Lay foaming on the earth, beneath the
 vain
 And piteous bleating of its restless dam;
 My father pluck'd some herbs, and laid
 them to
 The wound; and by degrees the help-
 less wretch
 Resumed its careless life, and rose to
 drain
 The mother's milk, who o'er it tremu-
 lous
 Stood licking its reviving limbs with
 joy.
 Behold, my son! said Adam, how from
 evil
 Springs good!
 LUCIFER. What didst thou answer?
 CAIN. Nothing, for
 He is my father; but I thought, that
 'twere
 A better portion for the animal
 Never to have been *stung at all*, than to
 Purchase renewal of its little life
 With agonies unutterable, though
 Dispell'd by antidotes.
 LUCIFER. But as thou saidst
 Of all beloved things thou lovest her
 Who shared thy mother's milk, and
 giveth hers
 Unto thy children—
 CAIN. Most assuredly.
 What should I be without her?
 LUCIFER. What am I?
 CAIN. Dost thou love nothing?
 LUCIFER. What does thy God love?
 CAIN. All things, my father says; but
 I confess
 I see it not in their allotment here.
 LUCIFER. And therefore thou canst
 not see if *I* love
 Or no, except some vast and general
 purpose,
 To which particular things must melt
 like snows.
 CAIN. Snows! what are they?
 LUCIFER. Be happier in not knowing
 What thy remoter offspring must en-
 counter;
 But bask beneath the clime which knows
 no winter.
 CAIN. But dost thou not love some-
 thing like thyself?
 LUCIFER. And dost thou love *thyself*?

CAIN. Yes, but love more
What makes my feelings more endur-
able,
And is more than myself, because I
love it.

LUCIFER. Thou lovest it, because 'tis
beautiful,
As was the apple in thy mother's eye;
And when it ceases to be so, thy love
Will cease, like any other appetite.

CAIN. Cease to be beautiful! How can
that be?

LUCIFER. With time.

CAIN. But time has past, and hitherto
Even Adam and my mother both are
fair:

Not fair like Adah and the seraphim—
But very fair.

LUCIFER. All that must pass away
In them and her.

CAIN. I'm sorry for it; but
Cannot conceive my love for her the
less.

And when her beauty disappears, me-
thinks

He who creates all beauty will lose
more

Than me in seeing perish such a work.

LUCIFER. I pity thee, who lovest what
must perish.

CAIN. And I thee, who lov'st nothing.

LUCIFER. And thy brother—
Sits he not near thy heart?

CAIN. Why should he not?

LUCIFER. Thy father loves him well—
so does thy God.

CAIN. And so do I.

LUCIFER. 'Tis well and meekly done.

CAIN. Meekly!

LUCIFER. He is the second born of
flesh,

And is his mother's favourite.

CAIN. Let him keep
Her favour, since the serpent was the
first

To win it.

LUCIFER. And his father's?

CAIN. What is that
To me? should I not love that which
all love?

LUCIFER. And the Jehovah—the indul-
gent Lord,
And bounteous planter of barr'd Para-
dise—

He, too, looks smilingly on Abel.

CAIN. I
Ne'er saw Him, and I know not if He
smiles.

LUCIFER. But you have seen His an-
gels.

CAIN. Rarely.

LUCIFER. But
Sufficiently to see they love your
brother

His sacrifices are acceptable.

CAIN. So be they! wherefore speak
to me of this?

LUCIFER. Because thou hast thought
of this ere now.

CAIN. And if
I *have* thought, why recall a thought
that—

[he pauses, as agitated]—Spirit!

*Here we are in thy world: speak not of
mine.*

Thou hast shown me wonders: thou
hast shown me those

Mighty pre-Adamites who walk'd the
earth

Of which ours is the wreck; thou hast
pointed out

Myriads of starry worlds, of which our
own

Is the dim and remote companion, in
Infinity of life: thou hast shown me
shadows

Of that existence with the dreaded name
Which my sire brought us—Death; thou
hast shown me much—

But not all: show me where Jehovah
dwells,

In His especial Paradise—or *thine*:

Where is it?

LUCIFER. *Here*, and o'er all space.

CAIN. But ye
Have some allotted dwelling—as all
things;

Clay has its earth, and other worlds
their tenants;

All temporary breathing creatures their
Peculiar element; and things which
have

Long ceased to breathe *our* breath, have
theirs, thou say'st;

And the Jehovah and thyself have
thine—

Ye do not dwell together?

LUCIFER. No, we reign
Together: but our dwellings are asun-
der:

CAIN. Would there were only one of ye! Perchance

An unity of purpose might make union
In elements which seem now jarr'd in
storms.

How came ye, being spirits, wise and
infinite,

To separate? Are ye not as brethren in
Your essence, and your nature, and your
glory?

LUCIFER. Art thou not Abel's brother?

CAIN. We are brethren,

And so we shall remain: but were it
not so,

Is spirit like to flesh? can it fall out?
Infinity with Immortality?

Jarring and turning space to misery—
For what?

LUCIFER. To reign.

CAIN. Did ye not tell me that
Ye are both eternal?

LUCIFER. Yea!

CAIN. And what I have seen,
Yon blue immensity, is boundless?

LUCIFER. Ay.

CAIN. And cannot ye both *reign*, then?
—is there not

Enough?—why should ye differ?

LUCIFER. We both reign.

CAIN. But one of you makes evil.

LUCIFER. Which?

CAIN. Thou! for

If thou canst do man good, why dost
thou not?

LUCIFER. And why not He who made?

I made ye not:

Ye are *His* creatures, and not mine.

CAIN. Then leave us

His creatures, as thou say'st we are, or
show me

Thy dwelling, or His dwelling.

LUCIFER. I could show thee

Both; but the time will come thou shalt
see one

Of them for evermore.

CAIN. And why not now?

LUCIFER. Thy human mind hath
scarcely grasp to gather

The little I have shown thee into calm
And clear thought; and thou wouldst

go on aspiring

To the great double Mysteries! the *two*
Principles!

And gaze upon them on their secret
thrones!

Dust! limit thy ambition; for to see
Either of these, would be for thee to
perish!

CAIN. And let me perish, so I see
them!

LUCIFER. There
The son of her who snatch'd the apple
spake!

But thou wouldst only perish, and not
see them;

That sight is for the other state.

CAIN. Of death!

LUCIFER. That is the prelude.

CAIN. Then I dread it less,
Now that I know it leads to something
definite.

LUCIFER. And now I will convey thee
to thy world,

Where thou shalt multiply the race of
Adam,

Eat, drink, toil, tremble, laugh, weep,
sleep, and die.

CAIN. And to what end have I beheld
these things

Which thou hast shown me?

LUCIFER. Didst thou not require
Knowledge? And have I not, in what I
show'd,

Taught thee to know thyself?

CAIN. Alas! I seem

Nothing

LUCIFER. And this should be the hu-
man sum

Of knowledge, to know mortal nature's
nothingness:

Bequeath that science to thy children,
and

'Twill spare them many tortures.

CAIN. Haughty spirit!

Thou speak'st it proudly; but thyself,
though proud,

Hast a superior.

LUCIFER. No! by heaven, which He
Holds, and the abyss, and the immensity
Of worlds and life, which I hold with
Him—No!

I have a victor—true; but no superior.
Homage He has from all—but none
from me:

I battle it against Him, as I battled
In highest heaven. Through all eternity
And the unfathomable gulfs of Hades,
And the interminable realms of space,
And the infinity of endless ages,

All, all, will I dispute! And world by world,
 And star by star, and universe by universe,
 Shall tremble in the balance, till the great
 Conflict shall cease, if ever it shall cease,
 Which it ne'er shall, till He or I be quenched!

And what can quench our immortality,
 Or mutual and irrevocable hate?
 He as a conqueror will call the conquer'd
Evil; but what will be the *good* He gives?

Were I the victor, *His* works would be deem'd
 The only evil ones. And you, ye new
 And scarce-born mortals, what have been His gifts
 To you already, in your little world?

CAIN. But few, and some of those but bitter.

LUCIFER. Back
 With me, then, on thine earth, and try the rest
 Of His celestial boons to you and yours.
 Evil and good are things in their own essence,
 And not made good or evil by the giver;
 But if He gives you good—so call Him; if
 Evil springs from *Him*, do not name it *mine*,
 Till ye know better its true fount; and judge
 Not by words, though of spirits, but the fruits
 Of your existence, such as it must be.
 One *good* gift has the fatal apple given—
 Your *reason*:—let it not be over-sway'd
 By tyrannous threats to force you into faith
 'Gainst all external sense and inward feeling:
 Think and endure—and form an inner world
 In your own bosom—where the outward fails;
 So shall you nearer be the spiritual
 Nature, and war triumphant with your own.

[*They disappear.*]

ACT III.

SCENE I.—*The Earth near Eden, as in Act I.*

Enter CAIN and ADAH.

ADAH. Hush! tread softly, Cain.

CAIN. I will; but wherefore?

ADAH. Our little Enoch sleeps upon
 yon bed

Of leaves, beneath the cypress.

CAIN. Cypress! 'tis

A gloomy tree, which looks as if it
 mourn'd

O'er what it shadows; wherefore didst
 thou choose it

For our child's canopy?

ADAH. Because its branches
 Shut out the sun like night, and there-
 fore seen'd

Fitting to shadow slumber.

CAIN. Ay, the last—

And longest; but no matter—lead me
 to him. [*They go up to the child.*]

How lovely he appears! his little cheeks,
 In their pure incarnation, vying with
 The rose leaves strewn beneath them.

ADAH. And his lips, too,
 How beautifully parted! No; you shall
 not

Kiss him, at least not now: he will
 awake soon—

His hour of mid-day rest is nearly over;
 But it were pity to disturb him till
 'Tis closed.

CAIN. You have said well; I will con-
 tain

My heart till then. He smiles, and
 sleeps!—Sleep on

And smile, thou little, young inheritor
 Of a world scarce less young: sleep on,
 and smile!

Thine are the hours and days when both
 are cheering

And innocent! *thou* hast not pluck'd the
 fruit—

Thou know'st not thou art naked! Must
 the time

Come thou shalt be amerced for sins
 unknown,

Which were not mine nor thine? But
 now sleep on!

His cheeks are reddening into deeper
 smiles,

And shining lids are trembling o'er his
long
Lashes, dark as the cypress which
waves o'er them;
Half open, from beneath them the clear
blue
Laughs out, although in slumber. He
must dream—

Of what? Of Paradise!—Ay! dream
of it,
My disinherited boy! 'Tis but a dream;
For never more thyself, thy sons, nor
fathers,
Shall walk in that forbidden place of
joy!

ADAH. Dear Cain! Nay, do not
whisper o'er our son
Such melancholy yearnings o'er the
past:
Why wilt thou always mourn for Para-
dise?

Can we not make another?

CAIN. Where?

ADAH. Here, or
Where'er thou wilt: where'er thou art
I feel not
The want of this so much-regretted
Eden.
Have I not thee, our boy, our sire and
brother,
And Zillah—our sweet sister, and our
Eve,
To whom we owe so much besides our
birth?

CAIN. Yes—death, too, is amongst the
debts we owe her.

ADAH. Cain! that proud spirit, who
withdrew thee hence,
Hath sadden'd thine still deeper. I had
hoped
The promised wonders which thou hast
beheld,
Visions, thou say'st, of past and present
worlds,

Would have composed thy mind into
the calm
Of a contented knowledge; but I see
Thy guide hath done thee evil: still I
thank him,

And can forgive him all, that he so soon
Hath given thee back to us.

CAIN. So soon?

ADAH. 'Tis scarcely
Two hours since ye departed; two *long*
hours

To *me*, but only *hours* upon the sun.

CAIN. And yet I have approach'd that
sun, and seen

Worlds which he once shone on, and
never more

Shall light; and worlds he never lit:
methought

Years had roll'd o'er my absence.

ADAH. Hardly hours.

CAIN. The mind, then, hath capacity
of time,

And measures it by that which it be-
holds,

Pleasing or painful; little or almighty.

I had beheld the immemorial works
Of endless beings; skirt'd extinguish'd
worlds;

And, gazing on eternity, methought
I had borrow'd more by a few drops of
ages

From its immensity; but now I feel
My littleness again. Well said the
spirit,

That I was nothing!

ADAH. Wherefore said he so?
Jehovah said not that.

CAIN. No; *He* contents Him
With making us the *nothing* which we
are;

And after flattering dust with glimpses
of

Eden and Immortality, resolves
It back to dust again—for what?

ADAH. Thou know'st—
Even for our parents' error.

CAIN. What is that
To us? they sinn'd, then *let them* die!

ADAH. Thou hast not spoken well, nor
is that thought

Thy own, but of the spirit who was with
thee.

Would *I* could die for them, so *they*
might live!

CAIN. Why, so say I—provided that
one victim

Might satiate the insatiable of life,
And that our little rosy sleeper there
Might never taste of death nor human
sorrow,

Nor hand it down to those who spring
from him.

ADAH. How know we that some such
atonement one day

May not redeem our race?

Cain. By sacrificing
The harmless for the guilty? What
atonement
Were there? Why, *we* are innocent:
what have we
Done, that we must be victims for a
deed
Before our birth, or need have vic-
tims to
Atone for this mysterious, nameless
sin—
If it be such a sin to seek for knowl-
edge?

ADAH. Alas! thou sinnest now, my
Cain: thy words
Sound impious in mine ears.

CAIN. Then leave me!
ADAH. Never,
Though thy God left thee.

CAIN. Say, what have we here?

ADAH. Two altars, which our brother
Abel made
During thine absence, whereupon to of-
fer

A sacrifice to God on thy return.

CAIN. And how knew *he* that *I* would
be so ready

With the burnt-offerings, which he
daily brings

With a meek brow, whose base humility
Shows more of fear than worship, as
a bribe

To the Creator?

ADAH. Surely, 'tis well done.

CAIN. One altar may suffice; I have no
offering.

ADAH. The fruits of the earth, the
early beautiful
Blossoms and bud, and bloom of flowers
and fruits,

These are a goodly offering to the Lord,
Given with a gentle and a contrite spirit.

CAIN. I have toil'd, and till'd, and
sweaten in the sun,
According to the curse:—must I do
more?

For what should I be gentle? for a
war

With all the elements ere they will
yield

The bread we eat? For what must I
be grateful?

For being dust, and grovelling in the
dust,

Till I return to dust? If I am noth-
ing—

For nothing shall I be an hypocrite,
And seem well pleased with pain? For
what should I

Be contrite? for my father's sin, al-
ready

Expiate with what we all have under-
gone,

And to be more than expiated by
The ages prophesied, upon our seed.

Little deems our young blooming sleep-
er there,

The germs of an eternal misery
To myriads is within him! Better
'twere

I snatch'd him in his sleep, and dash'd
him 'gainst

The rocks, than let him live to—

ADAH. Oh, my God!

Touch not the child—my child! *thy*
child! O Cain!

CAIN. Fear not! for all the stars, and
all the power

Which sways them, I would not accost
yon infant

With ruder greeting than a father's
kiss.

ADAH. Then why so awful in thy
speech?

CAIN. I said
'Twere better that he ceased to live,
than give

Life to so much of sorrow as he must
Endure, and, harder still, bequeath; but
since

That saying jars you, let us only say—
'Twere better that he never had been
born,

ADAH. Oh, do not say so! Where
were then the joys,

The mother's joys of watching, nour-
ishing,

And loving him? Soft! he awakes.
Sweet Enoch! [*She goes to the*
child.]

O Cain! look on him; see how full of
life,

Of strength, of bloom, of beauty, and
of joy,

How like to me—how like to thee, when
gentle,

For *then* we are *all* alike: is't not so,
Cain?

Mother, and sire, and son, our features
 are
 Reflected in each other; as they are
 In the clear waters, when *they* are
gentle, and
 When *thou* art *gentle*. Love us, then,
 my Cain!

And love thyself for our sakes, for we
 love thee.

Look! how he laughs and stretches out
 his arms,

And opens wide his blue eyes upon
 thine,

To hail his father; while his little form
 Flutters as wing'd with joy. Talk not
 of pain!

The childless cherubs well might envy
 thee

The pleasures of a parent! Bless him,
 Cain!

As yet he hath no words to thank thee,
 but

His heart will, and thine own too.

CAIN. Bless thee, boy!
 If that a mortal blessing may avail
 thee,

To save thee from the serpent's curse!
 ADAH. It shall.

Surely a father's blessing may avert
 A reptile's subtlety.

CAIN. Of that I doubt;
 But bless him ne'er the less.

ADAH. Our brother comes.

CAIN. Thy brother Abel.

Enter ABEL.
 ABEL. Welcome, Cain! My brother,
 The peace of God be on thee!

CAIN. Abel, hail!

ABEL. Our sister tells me that thou
 hast been wandering,

In high communion with a spirit, far
 Beyond our wonted range. Was he of
 those

We have seen and spoken with, like
 to our father?

CAIN. No.

ABEL. Why then commune with him?
 he may be

A foe to the Most High.

CAIN. And friend to man.

Has the Most High been so—if so you
 term Him?

ABEL. *Term Him!*—your words are
 strange today, my brother.

My sister Adah, leave us for awhile—
 We mean to sacrifice.

ADAH. Farewell, my Cain;
 But first embrace thy son. May his
 soft spirit,

And Abel's pious ministry, recall thee
 To peace and holiness!

[Exit ADAH, with her child.]

ABEL. Where hast thou been?

CAIN. I know not.

ABEL. Nor what thou hast seen?

CAIN. The dead,
 The immortal, the unbounded, the om-
 nipotent,

The overpowering mysteries of space—
 The innumerable worlds that were and
 are—

A whirlwind of such overwhelming
 things,

Suns, moons, and earth, upon their
 loud-voiced spheres,

Singing in thunder round me, as have
 made me

Unfit for mortal converse: leave me,
 Abel.

ABEL. Thine eyes are flashing with un-
 natural light,—

Thy cheek is flush'd with an unnatural
 hue,—

Thy words are fraught with an un-
 natural sound:—

What may this mean?

CAIN. It means—I pray thee, leave
 me.

ABEL. Not till we have pray'd and
 sacrificed together.

CAIN. Abel, I pray thee, sacrifice
 alone—

Jehovah loves thee well.

ABEL. Both well, I hope.

CAIN. But thee the better: I care not
 for that.

Thou art fitter for his worship than I
 am:

Revere Him, then—but let it be alone—
 At least without me.

ABEL. Brother, I should ill
 Deserve the name of our great father's
 son,

If, as my elder, I revered thee not,
 And in the worship of our God call'd
 not

On thee to join me, and precede me in
 Our priesthood—'tis thy place.

CAIN. But I have ne'er
 Asserted it.

ABEL. The more my grief; I pray thee
To do so now: thy soul seems labour-
ing in

Some strong delusion; it will calm thee.

CAIN. No;
Nothing can calm me more. *Calm!*
say I? Never

Knew I what calm was in the soul,
although

I have seen the elements still'd. My
Abel, leave me!

Or let me leave thee to thy pious pur-
pose.

ABEL. Neither: we must perform our
task together.

Spurn me not.

CAIN. If it must be so—well, then,
What shall I do!

ABEL. Choose one of those two altars.

CAIN. Choose for me; they to me are
so much turf

And stone.

ABEL. Choose thou!

CAIN. I have chosen.

ABEL. 'Tis the highest,
And suits thee, as the elder. Now pre-
pare

Thine offerings.

CAIN. Where are thine?

ABEL. Behold them here—
The firstlings of the flock, and fat
thereof—

A shepherd's humble offering.

CAIN. I have no flocks;
I am a tiller of the ground, and must
Yield what it yieldeth to my toil—its
fruit;

[*He gathers fruits.*]

Behold them in their various bloom and
ripeness.

[*They dress their altars, and kindle
a flame upon them.*]

ABEL. My brother, as the elder, offer
first

Thy prayer and thanksgiving with sacri-
fice.

CAIN. No—I am new to this; lead
thou the way,

And I will follow—as I may.

ABEL [*kneeling*]. O God!
Who made us, and who breathed the
breath of life

Within our nostrils, who hath blessed
us,

And spared, despite our father's sin, to
make

His children all lost, as they might
have been,

Had not Thy justice been so temper'd
with

The mercy which is Thy delight, as to
Accord a pardon like a Paradise,
Compared with our great crimes: Sole
Lord of light!

Of good, and glory, and eternity;

Without whom all were evil, and with
whom

Nothing can err, except to some good
end

Of Thine omnipotent benevolence—

Inscrutable, but still to be fulfill'd—

Accept from out thy humble first of
shepherds'

First of the first-born flocks—an offer-
ing,

In itself nothing—as what offering can
be

Aught unto Thee?—but yet accept it for
The thanksgiving of him who spreads
it in

The face of Thy high heaven, bowing
his own

Even to the dust, of which he is, in
honour

Of Thee, and of Thy name, for ever—
more!

CAIN [*standing erect during this
speech.*]

Spirit! whate'er or whatsoever Thou
art,

Omnipotent, it may be—and, if good,
Shown in the exemption of Thy deeds
from evil;

Jehovah upon earth! and God in heaven!

And it may be with other names, be-
cause

Thine attributes seem many, as Thy
works:—

If Thou must be propitiated with
prayers,

Take them! If Thou must be induced
with altars,

And soften'd with a sacrifice, receive
them!

Two beings here erect them unto Thee.
If Thou lov'st blood, the shepherd's
shrine, which smokes

On my right hand, hath shed it for
Thy service

In the first of his flock, whose limbs
 now reek
 In sanguinary incense to Thy skies;
 Or if the sweet and blooming fruits of
 earth,
 And milder seasons, which the unstain'd
 turf
 I spread them on now offers in the face
 Of the broad sun which ripen'd them,
 may seem
 Good to Thee, inasmuch as they have
 not
 Suffer'd in limb or life, and rather form
 A sample of Thy works, than supplica-
 tion
 To look on ours! If a shrine without
 victim,
 And altar without gore, may win Thy
 favour,
 Look on it! And for him who dresseth
 it,
 He is—such as Thou mad'st him; and
 seeks nothing
 Which must be won by kneeling: if
 he's evil,
 Strike him! Thou art omnipotent, and
 may'st—
 For what can he oppose? If he be good,
 Strike him, or spare him, as Thou wilt!
 since all
 Rests upon Thee, and good and evil
 seem
 To have no power themselves, save in
 Thy will;
 And whether that be good or ill I know
 not,
 Nor being omnipotent, nor fit to judge
 Omnipotence, but merely to endure
 Its mandate; which thus far I have en-
 dured.

[*The fire upon the altar of ABEL
 kindles into a column of the
 brightest flame, and ascends to
 heaven; while a whirlwind throws
 down the altar of CAIN, and
 scatters the fruits abroad upon
 the earth.*]

ABEL [*kneeling*]. Oh, brother, pray!
 Jehovah's wrath with thee.

CAIN. Why so?

ABEL. The fruits are scatter'd on the
 earth.

CAIN. From earth they came, to earth
 let them return;

Their seed will bear fresh fruit there
 ere the summer;
 Thy burnt flesh-offering prospers bet-
 ter; see
 How heaven licks up the flames, when
 thick with blood!

ABEL. Think not upon my offering's
 acceptance,
 But make another of thine own before
 It is too late.

CAIN. I will build no more altars,
 Nor suffer any—

ABEL [*rising*]. Cain! what meanest
 thou?

CAIN. To cast down yon vile flatterer
 of the clouds,
 The smoky harbinger of thy dull
 prayers—

Thine altar, with its blood of lambs and
 kids,
 Which fed on milk, to be destroy'd
 in blood.

ABEL [*opposing him*]. Thou shalt
 not!—add not impious works to
 impious

Words! let that altar stand—'tis hal-
 low'd now
 By the immortal pleasure of Jehovah,
 In His acceptance of the victims.

CAIN. *His!*
His pleasure! what was his high pleas-
 ure in

The fumes of scorching flesh and smok-
 ing blood,
 To the pain of the bleating mothers,
 which

Still yearn for their dead offspring? or
 the pangs

Of the sad ignorant victims underneath
 Thy pious knife? Give way! this bloody
 record

Shall not stand in the sun, to shame
 creation!

ABEL. Brother, give back! thou shalt
 not touch my altar

With violence: if that thou wilt adopt it
 To try another sacrifice, 'tis thine.

CAIN. Another sacrifice! Give way, or
 else

That sacrifice may be—

ABEL. What mean'st thou?

CAIN. Give—

Give way! thy God loves blood!—then
 look to it:—

Give way, ere He hath *more!*

ABEL. In *His* great name,
I stand between thee and the shrine
which hath
Had His acceptance.

CAIN. If thou lov'st thyself,
Stand back till I have strew'd this turf
along

Its native soil:—else—

ABEL [*opposing him*]. I love God far
more
Than life.

CAIN [*striking him with a brand on
the temples, which he snatches
from the altar*].

Then take thy life unto thy God,
Since He loves lives.

ABEL [*falls*]. What hast thou done,
my brother?

CAIN. Brother!

ABEL. O God! receive Thy servant,
and

Forgive his slayer, for he knew not
what

He did—Cain, give me—give me thy
hand; and tell

Poor Zillah—

CAIN [*after a moment's stupefaction*].
My hand! 'tis all red, and with—

What? [*A long pause.—Looking slowly
round.*] Where am I? alone!

Where's Abel! where
Cain? Can it be that I am he? My
brother,

Awake!—why liest thou so on the
green earth?

'Tis not the hour of slumber:—why so
pale?

What, hast thou!—thou wert full of
life this morn!

Abel! I pray thee, mock me not! I
smote

Too fiercely, but not fatally. Ah, why
Wouldst thou oppose me? This is

mockery,
And only done to daunt me:—'twas a
blow,—

And but a blow. Stir—stir—nay, only
stir!

Why, so—that's well!—thou breath'st!
breathe upon me!

O God! O God!

ABEL [*very faintly*]. What's he who
speaks of God?

CAIN. Thy murderer.

ABEL. Then may God forgive him!
Cain,

Comfort poor Zillah: she has but one
brother

Now. [*ABEL dies.*]

CAIN. And I none!—Who makes me
brotherless?

His eyes are open! then he is not dead!
Death is like sleep; and sleep shuts
down our lids.

His lips, too, are apart; why, then, he
breathes!

And yet I feel it not. His heart!—his
heart!

Let me see, doth it beat? methinks—
No!—no!

This is a vision, else I am become
The native of another and worse world.

The earth swims round me: what is
this?—'tis wet;

[*Puts his hand to his brow, and then
looks at it.*]

And yet there are no dew! 'Tis blood
—my blood—

My brother's and my own; and shed
by me!

Then what have I further to do with
life,

Since I have taken life from my own
flesh?

But he cannot be dead!—Is silence
death?

No; he will wake: then let me watch
by him.

Life cannot be so slight, as to be
quenched

Thus quickly!—He hath spoken to me
since—

What shall I say to him?—My brother!
—No:

He will not answer to that name; for
brethren

Smite not each other. Yet—yet—speak
to me!

Oh for a word more of that gentle
voice,

That I may bear to hear my own again!

Enter ZILLAH.

ZILLAH. I heard a heavy sound; what
can it be?

'Tis Cain; and watching by my hus-
band. What

Dost thou there, brother? Doth he
sleep? Oh, heaven!

What means this paleness, and yon stream?—No, no!

It is not blood; for who would shed his blood?

Abel! what's this?—who hath done this? He moves not;

He breathes not: and his hands drop down from mine

With stony lifelessness? Ah, cruel Cain!

Why can'st thou not in time to save him from

This violence? Whatever hath assail'd him,

Thou wert the stronger, and shouldst have stepp'd in

Between him and aggression! Father!—Eve!—

Adah!—come hither! Death is in the world! [*Exit ZILLAH, calling on her parents, etc.*]

CAIN [*solus*]. And who hath brought him there?—I—who abhor

The name of Death so deeply, that the thought

Empoison'd all my life, before I knew His aspect—I have led him here, and given

My brother to his cold and still embrace,

As if he would not have asserted his Inexorable claim without my aid.

I am awake at last—a dreary dream Had madden'd me;—but *he* shall ne'er awake.

Enter ADAM, EVE, ADAH, and ZILLAH.

ADAM. A voice of woe from Zillah brings me here.—

What do I see?—'Tis true!—My son!—my son!

Woman, behold the serpent's work, and thine! [*To EVE.*]

EVE. Oh! speak not of it now: the serpent's fangs

Are in my heart. My best belovèd, Abel!

Jehovah! this is punishment beyond A mother's sin, to take *him* from me!

ADAM. Who Or what hath done this deed?—Speak, Cain, since thou

Wert present; was it some more hostile angel,

Who walks not with Jehovah? or some wild

Brute of the forest?

EVE. Ah! a livid light Breaks through, as from a thunder-cloud! Yon brand

Massy and bloody, snatch'd from off the altar,

And black with smoke, and red with—ADAM. Speak, my son!

Speak, and assure us, wretched as we are,

That we are not more miserable still. ADAH. Speak, Cain! and say it was not *thou!*

EVE. It was. I see it now—he hangs his guilty head,

And covers his ferocious eyes with hands

Incarnadine.

ADAM. Mother, thou dost him wrong—Cain! clear thee from this horrible accusal,

Which grief wrings from our parent. EVE. Hear, Jehovah!

May the eternal serpent's curse be on him!

For he was fitter for his seed than ours.

May all his days be desolate! May—ADAH. Hold!

Curse him not, mother, for he is thy son—

Curse him not, mother, for he is my brother,

And my betroth'd.

EVE. He hath left thee no brother—Zillah no husband—me *no son!*—for thus

I curse him from my sight for evermore!

All bonds I break between us, as he broke

That of his nature, in yon—O death! death!

Why didst thou not take *me*, who first incurr'd thee?

Why dost thou not so now?

ADAM. Eve! let not this, Thy natural grief, lead to impiety!

A heavy doom was long forespoken to us;

And now that it begins, let it be borne In such sort as may show our God,

that we Are faithful servants to His holy will.

EVE [*pointing to CAIN*]. *His will!* the will of yon incarnate spirit
 Of death, whom I have brought upon the earth
 To strew it with the dead. May all the curses
 Of life be on him! and his agonies Drive him forth o'er the wilderness, like us
 From Eden, till his children do by him As he did by his brother! May the swords
 And wings of fiery cherubim pursue him By day and night—snakes spring up in his path—
 Earth's fruits be ashes in his mouth—the leaves
 On which he lays his head to sleep be strew'd
 With scorpions! May his dreams be of his victim!
 His waking a continual dread of death! May the clear rivers turn to blood, as he Stoops down to stain them with his raging lip!
 May every element shun or change to him!
 May he live in the pangs which others die with!
 And death itself wax something worse than death
 To him who first acquainted him with man!
 Hence, fratricide! henceforth that word is *Cain*,
 Through all the coming myriads of mankind,
 Who shall abhor thee, though thou wert their sire!
 May the grass wither from thy feet! the woods
 Deny thee shelter! earth a home! the dust
 A grave! the sun his light! and heaven her God. [*Exit EVE.*]
Adam. Cain! get thee forth: we dwell no more together.
 Depart! and leave the dead to me—I am Henceforth alone—we never must meet more.
ADAH. Oh, part not with him thus, my father: do not
 Add thy deep curse to Eve's upon his head!

ADAM. I curse him not: his spirit be his curse. Come, Zillah!
 ZILLAH. I must watch my husband's corse.
 ADAM. We will return again, when he is gone
 Who hath provided for us this dread office.
 Come, Zillah!
 ZILLAH. Yet one kiss on yon pale clay, And those lips once so warm—my heart! my heart!
 [*Exeunt ADAM and ZILLAH weeping.*]
 ADAH. Cain! thou hast heard, we must go forth. I am ready,
 So shall our children be. I will bear Enoch,
 And you his sister. Ere the sun declines
 Let us depart, nor walk the wilderness Under the cloud of night.—Nay, speak to me,
 To *me—thine own.*
 CAIN. Leave me!
 ADAH. Why, all have left thee.
 CAIN. And wherefore lingerest thou? Dost thou not fear
 To dwell with one who hath done this?
 ADAH. I fear
 Nothing except to leave thee, much as I Shrink from the deed which leaves thee brotherless.
 I must not speak of this—it is between thee
 And the great God.
A Voice from within exclaims, Cain!
 Cain!
 ADAH. Hear'st thou that voice?
The Voice within. Cain! Cain!
 ADAH. It soundeth like an angel's tone.

Enter the ANGEL of the LORD.

ANGEL. Where is thy brother Abel?
 CAIN. Am I then
 My brother's keeper?
 ANGEL. Cain! what hast thou done?
 The voice of thy slain brother's blood cries out,
 Even from the ground, unto the Lord!
 —Now art thou
 Cursed from the earth, which open'd late her mouth

To drink thy brother's blood from thy rash hand.

Henceforth, when thou shalt till the ground, it shall not

Yield thee her strength: a fugitive shalt thou

Be from this day, and vagabond on earth!

ADAH. This punishment is more than he can bear.

Behold, thou driv'st him from the face of earth,

And from the face of God shall he be hid

A fugitive and vagabond on earth.

'Twill come to pass, that whoso findeth him

Shall slay him.

CAIN. Would they could! but who are they

Shall slay me? Where are these on the lone earth

As yet unpeopled?

ANGEL. Thou hast slain thy brother, And who shall warrant thee against thy son?

ADAH. Angel of Light! be merciful, nor say

That this poor aching breast now nourishes

A murderer in my boy, and of his father.

ANGEL. Then he would but be what his father is.

Did not the milk of Eve give nutriment To him thou now seest so besmear'd with blood?

The fratricide might well engender paricides.—

But it shall not be so—the Lord thy God

And mine commandeth me to set His seal

On Cain, so that he may go forth in safety.

Who slayeth Cain, a sevenfold vengeance shall

Be taken on his head. Come hither!

CAIN. What

Wouldst thou with me?

ANGEL. To mark upon thy brow Exemption from such deeds as thou hast done.

CAIN. No, let me die!

ANGEL. It must not be.
[*The ANGEL sets the mark on CAIN's brow.*]

CAIN. It burns My brow, but nought to that which is within it.

Is there more? let me meet it as I may.

ANGEL. Stern hast thou been and stubborn from the womb,

As the ground thou must henceforth till; but he

Thou slowest was gentle as the flocks he tended.

CAIN. After the fall too soon was I begotten;

Ere yet my mother's mind subsided from The serpent, and my sire still mourn'd for Eden.

That which I am, I am; I did not seek For life, nor did I make myself; but could I

With my own death redeem him from the dust—

And why not so? Let him return to-day,

And I lie ghastly! so shall be restored By God the life to him He loved; and taken

From me a being I ne'er loved to bear.

ANGEL. Who shall heal murder? what is done is done:

Go forth! fulfil thy days! and be thy deeds

Unlike the last! [*The ANGEL disappears.*]

ADAH. He's gone, let us go forth; I hear our little Enoch cry within Our bower.

CAIN. Ah! little knows he what he weeps for!

And I who have shed blood cannot shed tears!

But the four rivers would not cleanse my soul.*

Think'st thou my boy will bear to look on me?

ADAH. If I thought that he would not, I would—

*Pison, Gihon, Hiddekel and Euphrates.—Gen. ii, 11-14. The "four rivers" which flowed round Eden, and consequently the only waters with which Cain was acquainted upon earth.

CAIN [interrupting her]. No,
No more of threats: we have had too
many of them:

Go to our children; I will follow thee.

ADAH. I will not leave thee lonely
with the dead;
Let us depart together.

CAIN. Oh! thou dead
And everlasting witness! whose un-
sinking
Blood darkens earth and heaven! what
thou *now* art

I know not; but if *thou* seest what *I* am,
I think thou wilt forgive him whom his
God

Can ne'er forgive, nor his own soul.—
Farewell!

I must not, dare not touch what I have
made thee.

I' who sprang from the same womb
with thee, drain'd

The same breast, clasp'd thee often to
my own,

In fondness brotherly and boyish, I
Can never meet thee more, nor even
dare

To do that for thee which thou shouldst
have done

For me—compose thy limbs into their
grave—

The first grave yet dug for mortality.
But who hath dug that grave? Oh,
earth! Oh, earth!

For all the fruits thou hast render'd to
me, I

Give thee back this.—Now for the
wilderness!

[ADAH stoops down and kisses the body
of ABEL.]

ADAH. A dreary and an early doom,
my brother,
Has been thy lot! Of all who mourn
for thee,

I alone must not weep. My office is
Henceforth to 'dry up tears, and not
to shed them;

But yet, of all who mourn, none mourn
like me,

Not only for thyself, but him who
slew thee.

Now, Cain! I will divide thy burden
with thee.

CAIN. Eastward from Eden will we
take our way:

'Tis the most desolate, and suits my
steps.

ADAH. Lead! thou shalt be my guide,
and may our God

Be thine! Now let us carry forth our
children.

CAIN. And he who lieth there was
childless. I

Have dried the fountain of a gentle
race,

Which might have graced his recent
marriage couch,

And might have temper'd this stern-
blood of mine.

Uniting with our children Abel's off-
spring!

O Abel!

ADAH. Peace be with him!

CAIN.

But with *me!*—
[Exeunt.]

LORD BYRON (1788-1824).



HEAVEN AND EARTH

A MYSTERY



HEAVEN AND EARTH:

A MYSTERY

Founded on the following passage in Genesis, Chap. VI.: 'And it came to pass . . . that the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair; and they took them wives of all which they chose.'

'*And woman wailing for her demon lover.*'—COLERIDGE.

DRAMATIS PERSONAE.

Angels—SAMIASA, AZAZIEL, RAPHAEL
THE ARCHANGEL.

Men—NOAH and his sons, IRAD,
JAPHET.

Women—ANAH, AHOLIBAMAH.

Chorus of Spirits of the Earth.—
Chorus of Mortals.

PART I.

SCENE I.—*A woody and mountainous district near Mount Ararat.—Time, Midnight.*

[*Enter ANAH and AHOLIBAMAH.*]

ANAH. Our father sleeps: it is the hour when they Who love us are accustom'd to descend Through the deep clouds o'er rocky Ararat:—

How my heart beats!

AHO. Let us proceed upon Our invocation.

ANAH. But the stars are hidden. I tremble.

AHO. So do I, but not with fear Of aught save their delay.

ANAH. My sister, though I love Azazel more than—oh, too much! What was I going to say? my heart grows impious.

AHO. And where is the impiety of loving Celestial natures?

ANAH. But Aholibamah, I love our God less since his angel loved me: This cannot be of good; and though I know not That I do wrong, I feel a thousand fears

Which are not ominous of right.

AHO. Then wed thee Unto some son of clay, and toil and spin!

There's Japhet loves thee well, hath loved thee long:

Marry, and bring forth dust!

ANAH. I should have loved Azazel not less were he mortal; yet I am glad he is not. I cannot outlive him.

And when I think that his immortal wings

Will one day hover o'er the sepulchre Of the poor child of clay which so adored him,

As he adores the Highest, death be-comes

Less terrible; but yet I pity him:

His grief will be of ages, or at least Mine would be such for him, were I the seraph,

And he the perishable.

AHO. Rather say, That he will single forth some other daughter

Of earth, and love her as he once loved Anah.

ANAH. And if it should be so, and she loved him, Better thus than that he should weep for me.

AHO. If I thought thus of Samiasa's love, All seraph as he is, I'd spurn him from me.

But to our invocation!—'Tis the hour.
ANAÏH. Seraph!

From thy sphere!
Whatever star contain thy glory;
In the eternal depths of heaven
Albeit thou watchest with 'the seven.*'
Though through space infinite and hoary
Before thy bright wings worlds be
driven,

Yet hear!

Oh! think of her who holds thee dear!
And though she nothing is to thee,
Yet think that thou art all to her.
Thou canst not tell,—and never be
Such pangs decreed to aught save
me,—

The bitterness of tears.

Eternity is in thine years,
Unborn, undying beauty in thine eyes;
With me thou canst not sympathize,
Except in love, and there thou must
Acknowledge that more loving dust
Ne'er wept beneath the skies.
Thou walk'st thy many worlds, thou
see'st

The face of him who made thee great,
As he hath made me of the least

Of those cast out from Eden's gate;

Yet, Seraph dear!

Oh hear!

For thou hast loved me, and I would
not die

Until I know what I must die in
knowing,

That thou forgett'st in thine eternity
Her whose heart death could not
keep from o'erflowing

For thee, immortal essence as thou art!
Great is their love who love in sin
and fear;

And such, I feel, are waging in my
heart

A war unworthy: to an Adamite

Forgive, my Seraph! that such
thoughts appear,

For sorrow is our element;

Delight

An Eden kept afar from sight,
Though sometimes with our visions
blent.

**The archangels, said to be seven in
number and to occupy the eighth rank
in the celestial hierarchy.*

The hour is near
Which tells me we are not abandon'd
quite.—

Appear! Appear!

Seraph!

My own Azaziel! be but here,
And leave the stars to their own light.

AHO. Samiasa!

Wheresoe'er

Thou rulest in the upper air—

Or warring with the spirits who
may dare

Dispute with him

Who made all empires, empire; or re-
calling

Some wandering star, which shoots
through the abyss,

Whose tenants dying, while their
world is falling,

Share the dim destiny of clay in this;
Or joining with the inferior cherubim,

Thou deignest to partake their hymn—
Samiasa!

I call thee, I await thee, and I love thee.
Many may worship thee, that will I
not:

If that thy spirit down to mine may
move thee,

Descend and share my lot!

Though I be form'd of clay,

And thou of beams

More bright than those of day

On Eden's streams,

Thine immortality cannot repay

With love more warm than mine

My love. There is a ray

In me, which, though forbidden yet
to shine,

I feel was lighted at thy God's and
thine.

It may be hidden long: death and de-
cay

Our mother Eve bequeath'd us—but
my heart

Defies it: though this life must pass
away,

Is that a cause for thee and me to
part?

Thou art immortal—so am I: I feel—
I feel my immortality o'ersweep

All pains, all tears, all time, all fears,
and peal,

Like the eternal thunders of the deep,
Into my ears this truth—'Thou liv'st
for ever!'

But if it be in joy
 I know not, nor would know;
 That secret rests with the Almighty
 giver,
 Who folds in clouds the founts of bliss
 and woe.
 But thee and me he never can de-
 stroy;
 Change us he may, but not o'erwhelm;
 we are
 Of an eternal essence, and must war
 With him if he will war with us:
 with *thee*
 I can share all things, even im-
 mortal sorrow;
 For thou hast ventured to share life
 with *me*.
 And shall I shrink from thine eter-
 nity?

No! though the serpent's sting
 should pierce me through,
 And thou thyself wert like the serpent,
 coil

Around me still! and I will smile,
 And curse thee not; but hold
 Thee in as warm a fold
 As — but descend, and prove
 A mortal's love

For an immortal. If the skies contain
 More joy than thou canst give and take,
 remain!

ANAH. Sister! sister! I view them
 winging
 Their bright way through the parted
 night.

AHO. The clouds from off their pin-
 ions flinging,
 As though they bore to-morrow's light.

ANAH. But if our father see the
 sight!

AHO. He would but deem it was the
 moon
 Rising unto some sorcerer's tune
 An hour too soon.

ANAH. They come! *he* comes!—
 Azaziell!

AHO. Haste
 To meet them! Oh! for wings to bear
 My spirit, while they hover there,
 To Samiasa's breast!

ANAH. Lo! they have kindled all the
 west,

Like a returning sunset;—lo!
 On Ararat's late secret crest

A mild and many-colour'd bow,
 The remnant of their flashing path,
 Now shines! and now, behold! it hath
 Return'd to night, as rippling foam,
 Which the leviathan hath lash'd
 From his unfathomable home,
 When sporting on the face of the calm
 deep,

Subsides soon after he again hath
 dash'd
 Down, down, to where the ocean's foun-
 tains sleep.

AHO. They have touch'd earth! Sami-
 iasa!

ANAH. My Azaziell!
 [Exeunt.]

SCENE II.

Enter IRAD and JAPHET.

IRAD. Despond not: wherefore wilt
 thou wander thus
 To add thy silence to the silent night,
 And lift thy tearful eye unto the stars?
 They cannot aid thee.

JAPH. But they soothe me—now
 Perhaps she looks upon them as I look.
 Methinks a being that is beautiful
 Becometh more so as it looks on beauty.
 The eternal beauty of undying things.
 Oh, Anah!

IRAD. But she loves thee not.

JAPH. Alas!

IRAD. And proud Aholibamah spurns
 me also.

JAPH. I feel for thee, too.

IRAD. Let her keep her pride,
 Mine hath enabled me to bear her
 scorn;

It may be, time, too, will avenge it.

JAPH. Canst thou
 Find joy in such a thought?

IRAD. Nor joy nor sorrow.
 I loved her well; I would have loved

her better,
 Had love been met with love: as 'tis,
 I leave her

To brighter destinies, if so she deems
 them.

JAPH. What destinies?

IRAD. I have some cause to think
 She loves another.

JAPH. Anah!

IRAD. No; her sister.

JAPH. What other?
 IRAD. That I know not; but her air,
 If not her words, tells me she loves
 another.
 JAPH. Ay, but not Anah: she but
 loves her God.
 IRAD. Whate'er she loveth, so she
 loves thee not,
 What can it profit thee?
 JAPH. True, nothing; but I
 love.
 IRAD. And so did I.
 JAPH. And now thou lov'st not,
 Or think'st thou lov'st not, art thou
 happier?
 IRAD. Yes.
 JAPH. I pity thee.
 IRAD. Me! why?
 JAPH. For being happy,
 Deprived of that which makes my mis-
 ery.
 IRAD. I take thy taunt as part of thy
 distemper,
 And would not feel as thou dost for
 more shekels
 Than all our father's herds would bring,
 if weigh'd
 Against the metal of the sons of Cain—
 The yellow dust they try to barter with
 us,
 As if such useless and discolour'd
 trash,
 The refuse of the earth, could be re-
 ceived
 For milk, and wool, and flesh, and
 fruits, and all
 Our flocks and wilderness afford.—Go,
 Japhet,
 Sigh to the stars, as wolves howl to the
 moon—
 I must back to my rest.
 JAPH. And so would I
 If I could rest.
 IRAD. Thou wilt not to our tents then?
 JAPH. No, Irad; I will to the cavern,
 whose
 Mouth they say opens from the internal
 world
 To let the inner spirits of the earth
 Forth when they walk its surface.
 IRAD. Wherefore so?
 What wouldst thou there?
 JAPH. Soothe further my sad spirit
 With gloom as sad: it is a hopeless
 spot,

And I am hopeless.
 IRAD. But 'tis dangerous;
 Strange sounds and sights have peo-
 pled it with terrors.
 I must go with thee.
 JAPH. Irad, no; believe me
 I feel no evil thought, and fear no evil.
 IRAD. But evil things will be thy foe
 the more
 As not being of them: turn thy steps
 aside,
 Or let mine be with thine.
 JAPH. No, neither, Irad;
 I must proceed alone.
 IRAD. Then peace be with thee!
 [Exit IRAD.]
 JAPH. [solus]. Peace! I have sought
 it where it should be found,
 In love—with love, too, which perhaps
 deserved it;
 And, in its stead, a heaviness of heart,
 A weakness of the spirit,—listless days,
 And nights inexorable to sweet sleep—
 Have come upon me. Peace! what
 peace? the calm
 Of desolation, and the stillness of
 The untrodden forest, only broken by
 The sweeping tempest through its
 groaning boughs;
 Such is the sullen or the fitful state
 Of my mind overworn. The earth's
 grown wicked,
 And many signs and portents have pro-
 claim'd
 A change at hand, and an o'erwhelming
 doom
 To perishable beings. Oh, my Anah!
 When the dread hour denounced shall
 open wide
 The fountains of the deep, how might-
 est thou
 Have lain within this bosom, folded
 from
 The elements; this bosom, which in
 vain
 Hath beat for thee, and then will beat
 more vainly,
 While thine—Oh, God! at least remit
 to her
 Thy wrath! for she is pure amidst the
 failing
 As a star in the clouds, which cannot
 quench,
 Although they obscure it for an hour.
 My Anah!

How would I have adored thee, but thou
wouldst not;
And still would I redeem thee—see thee
live
When ocean is earth's grave, and, unop-
posed
By rock or shallow, the leviathan,
Lord of the shoreless sea and watery
world,
Shall wonder at his boundlessness of
realm.

[*Exit JAPHET.*]

Enter NOAH and SHEM.

NOAH. Where is thy brother Japhet?

SHEM. He went forth,
According to his wont, to meet with
Irak,
He said; but, as I fear, to bend his
steps

Towards Anah's tents, round which he
hovers nightly,

Like a dove round and round its pil-
laged nest;

Or else he walks the wild up to the
cavern

Which opens to the heart of Ararat.

NOAH. What doth he there? It is an
evil spot

Upon an earth all evil; for things worse
Than even wicked men resort there: he
Still loves this daughter of a fated race,
Although he could not wed her if she
loved him,

And that she doth not. Oh, the unhappy
hearts

Of men! that one of my blood, knowing
well

The destiny and evil of these days,

And that the hour approacheth, should
indulge

In such forbidden yearnings! Lead the
way;

He must be sought for!

SHEM. Go not forward, father:
I will seek Japhet.

NOAH. Do not fear for me:
All evil things are powerless on the
man

Selected by Jehovah.—Let us on.

SHEM. To the tents of the father of
the sisters?

NOAH. No; to the cavern of the Cau-
casus.

[*Exeunt NOAH and SHEM.*]

SCENE III.

*The mountains.—A cavern, and the
rocks of Caucasus.*

JAPH. [*solus*]. Ye wilds, that look
eternal; and thou cave,
Which seem'st unfathomable; and ye
mountains,

So varied and so terrible in beauty;
Here, in your rugged majesty of rocks
And toppling trees that twine their roots
with stone

In perpendicular places, where the foot
Of man would tremble, could he reach
them—

Ye look eternal! Yet, in a few days,
Perhaps even hours, ye will be changèd,
rent, yes, hurl'd

Before the mass of waters; and yon
cave,

Which seems to lead into a lower world,
Shall have its depths search'd by the
sweeping wave,

And dolphins gambol in the lion's den!
And man—Oh, men! my fellow-beings!

Who
Shall weep above your universal grave,
Save I? Who shall be left to weep? My
kinsmen,

Alas! what am I better than ye are,
That I must live beyond ye? Where
shall be

The pleasant places where I thought of
Anah,

While I had hope? or the more savage
haunts,

Scarce less beloved, where I despair'd
for her?

And can it be!—Shall yon exulting
peak,

Whose glittering top is like a distant
star,

Lie low beneath the boiling of the deep?
No more to have the morning sun break

forth,
And scatter back the mists in floating
folds

From its tremendous brow? no more
to have

Day's broad orb drop behind its head
at even,

Leaving it with a crown of many hues?
No more to be the beacon of the world,

For angels to alight on, as the spot
Nearest the stars? And can those words
"no more"

Be meant for thee, for all things, save
for us,

And the predestined creeping things re-
served

By my sire to Jehovah's bidding? May
He preserve *them*, and *I* not have the
power

To snatch the loveliest of earth's daugh-
ters from

A doom which even some serpent, with
his mate,

Shall 'scape to save his kind to be pro-
long'd,

To hiss and sting through some emerg-
ing world,

Reeking and dank from out the slime,
whose ooze

Shall slumber o'er the wreck of this
until

The salt morass subside into a sphere
Beneath the sun, and be the monument,
The sole and undistinguish'd sepulchre,
Of yet quick myriads of all life? How
much

Breath will be still'd at once! All-
beauteous world!

So young, so mark'd out for destruc-
tion, I

With a cleft heart look on thee day by
day,

And night by night, thy number'd days
and nights.

I cannot save thee, cannot save even
her

Whose love had made me love thee
more; but as

A portion of thy dust, I cannot think
Upon thy coming doom without a feel-
ing

Such as—Oh God! and canst thou—
[*He pauses.*]

*A rushing sound from the cavern is
heard, and shouts of laughter—
afterwards a Spirit passes.*

JAPH. In the name
Of the Most High, what art thou?

SPIRIT [*laughs*]. Ha! ha! ha!

JAPH. By all that earth holds holiest,
speak!

SPIRIT. [*laughs*]. Ha! ha!

JAPH. By the approaching deluge! by
the earth

Which will be strangled by the ocean!
by

The deep which will lay open all her
fountains!

The heaven which will convert her
clouds to seas,

And the Omnipotent who makes and
crushes!

Thou unknown, terrible, and indistinct,
Yet awful Thing of Shadows, speak to
me!

Why dost thou laugh that horrid laugh?

SPIRIT. Why weep'st thou?

JAPH. For earth and all her children.

SPIRIT. Ha! ha! ha!

[*Spirit vanishes.*]

JAPH. How the fiend mocks the tor-
tures of a world,

The coming desolation of an orb,
On which the sun shall rise and warm
no life!

How the earth sleeps! and all that in
it is

Sleep, too, upon the very eve of death!

Why should they wake to meet it? What
are here,

Which look like death in life, and speak
like things

Born ere this dying world? They come
like clouds!

[*Various Spirits pass from the cavern.*]

SPIRIT. Rejoice!

The abhorred race
Which could not keep in Eden their
high place,

But listen'd to the voice
Of knowledge without power,

Are nigh the hour
Of death!

Not slow, not single, not by sword, nor
sorrow,

Nor years, nor heart-break, nor time's
sapping motion,

Shall they drop off. Behold their last
to-morrow!

Earth shall be ocean!
And no breath,

Save of the winds, be on the unbounded
wave

Angels shall tire their wings, but find
no spot:

Not even a rock from out the liquid
grave

Shall lift its point to save,
Or show the place where strong Despair
hath died,
After long looking o'er the ocean wide
For the expected ebb which cometh
not:

All shall be void,
Destroy'd!

Another element shall be the lord
Of life, and the abhorr'd
Children of dust be quenched; and of
each hue
Of earth nought left but the unbroken
blue;

And of the variegated mountain
Shall nought remain
Unchanged, or of the level plain;
Cedar and pine shall lift their tops
in vain:

All merged within the universal foun-
tain,

Man, earth, and fire, shall die,

And sea and sky

Look vast and lifeless in the eternal eye.
Upon the foam

Who shall erect a home?

JAPH. [*coming forward*]. My sire!

Earth's seed shall not expire;

Only the evil shall be put away

From day.

Avaunt! ye exulting demons of the
waste!

Who howl your hideous joy

When God destroys whom you dare not
destroy;

Hence! haste!

Back to your inner caves!

Until the waves

Shall search you in your secret place,

And drive your sullen race

Forth, to be roll'd upon the tossing
winds,

In restless wretchedness along all
space!

SPIRIT. Son of the saved!

When thou and thine have braved

The wide and warring element;

When the great barrier of the deep is
rent,

Shall thou and thine be good or happy?

—No!

Thy new world and new race shall be
of woe—

Less goodly in their aspect, in their
years

Less than the glorious giants,
who

Yet walk the world in pride,

The Sons of Heaven by many a mortal
bride.

Thine shall be nothing of the past,
save tears.

And art thou not ashamed

Thus to survive,

And eat, and drink, and wive?

With a base heart so far subdued and
tamed,

As even to hear this wide destruction
named,

Without such grief and courage, as
should rather

Bid thee await the world-dissolving
wave,

Than seek a shelter with thy favour'd
father,

And build thy city o'er the drown'd
earth's grave?

Who would outlive their kind,
Except the base and blind?

Mine

Hateth thine

As of a different order in the sphere,
But not our own.

There is not one who hath not left a
throne

Vacant in heaven to dwell in darkness
here,

Rather than see his mates endure alone.

Go, wretch! and give

A life like thine to other wretches—live!
And when the annihilating waters

roar

Above what they have done,
Envy the giant patriarchs then no

more,

And scorn thy sire as the surviving one!
Thyself for being his son!

*Chorus of Spirits issuing from the
cavern.*

Rejoice!

No more the human voice

Shall vex our joys in middle air

With prayer;

No more

Shall they adore;

And we, who ne'er for ages have adored
The prayer-exacting Lord,

To whom the omission of a sacrifice
Is vice;

We, we shall view the deep's salt sources
 pour
 Until one element shall do the work
 Of all in chaos; until they,
 The creatures proud of their poor
 clay,
 Shall perish, and their bleached bones
 shall lurk
 In caves, in dens, in clefts of moun-
 tains, where
 The deep shall follow to their latest
 lair;
 Where even the brutes, in their despair,
 Shall cease to prey on man and on each
 other,
 And the striped tiger shall lie down
 to die
 Beside the lamb, as though he were his
 brother;
 Till all things shall be as they were,
 Silent and uncreated, save the sky:
 While a brief truce
 Is made with Death, who shall for-
 bear
 The little remnant of the past crea-
 tion,
 'To generate new nations for his
 use;
 This remnant, floating o'er the undu-
 lation
 Of the subsiding deluge, from its
 slime,
 When the hot sun hath baked the reek-
 ing soil
 Into a world, shall give again to Time
 New beings—years, diseases, sorrow,
 crime—
 With all companionship of hate and
 toil,
 Until—
 JAPH [*interrupting them*]. The eter-
 nal will
 Shall deign to expound this dream
 Of good and evil; and redeem
 Unto himself all times, all
 things;
 And, gather'd under his al-
 mighty wings,
 Abolish hell!
 And to the expiated Earth
 Restore the beauty of her birth,
 Her Eden in an endless paradise,
 Where man no more can fall as
 once he fell,

And even the very demons shall do
 well!
 SPIRITS. And when shall take effect
 this wondrous spell?
 JAPH. When the Redeemer cometh;
 first in pain,
 And then in glory.
 SPIRIT. Meantime still struggle in the
 mortal chain,
 Till earth wax hoary:
 War with yourselves, and hell, and
 heaven, in vain,
 Until the clouds look gory
 With the blood reeking from each bat-
 tle plain;
 New times, new climes, new arts, new
 men; but still,
 The same old tears, old crimes, and old-
 est ill,
 Shall be amongst your race in different
 forms;
 But the same moral storms
 Shall oversweep the future, as the
 waves
 In a few hours the glorious giants'
 graves*

Chorus of Spirits.

Brethren, rejoice!
 Mortal, farewell!
 Hark! hark! already we can hear the
 voice
 Of growing ocean's gloomy swell;
 The winds, too, plume their piercing
 wings;
 The clouds have nearly fill'd their
 springs;
 The fountains of the great deep shall
 be broken,
 And heaven set wide her windows;†
 while mankind
 View, unacknowledged, each tremen-
 dous token—
 Still, as they were from the beginning,
 blind.

*—*And there were giants in the earth in those days, and after, mighty men, which were of old, men of renown.*—Genesis.

†*The same day were all the fountains of the great deep broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened.*—*Ibid.*

We hear the sound they cannot
hear,
The mustering thunders of the
threatening sphere;
Yet a few hours their coming is
delay'd;
Their flashing banners, folded still on
high,
Yet undisplay'd,
Save to the Spirit's all-pervading eye.
How! how! oh Earth!
Thy death is nearer than thy recent
birth;
Tremble, ye mountains, soon to shrink
below
The ocean's overflow!
The wave shall break upon your cliffs;
and shells,
The little shells, of ocean's least
things be
Depos'd where now the eagle's offspring
dwells—
How shall he shriek o'er the remorse-
less sea!
And call his nestlings up with fruitless
yell,
Unanswer'd, save by the encroaching
swell;—
While man shall long in vain for his
broad wings,
The wings which could not save:—
Where could he rest them, while the
whole space brings
Nought to his eye beyond the deep,
his grave?
Brethren, rejoice!
And loudly lift each superhuman
voice—
All die,
Save the slight remnant of Seth's seed—
The seed of Seth,
Exempt for future Sorrow's sake from
death.
But of the sons of Cain
None shall remain;
And all his goodly daughters
Must lie beneath the desolating
waters;
Or, floating upward, with their long
hair laid
Along the wave, the cruel heaven up-
braid,
Which would not spare
Beings even in death so fair.
It is decreed,

All die!
And to the universal human cry
The universal silence shall succeed!
Fly, brethren, fly!
But still rejoice!
We fell!
They fall!
So perish all
These petty foes of Heaven who shrink
from hell!
*[The Spirits disappear, soaring up-
wards.]*
JAPH. *[solus]*. God hath proclaim'd
the destiny of earth;
My father's ark of safety hath an-
nounced it;
The very demons shriek it from their
caves;
The scroll of Enoch prophesied it long*
In silent books, which, in their silence,
say
More to the mind than thunder to the
ear:
And yet men listen'd not, nor listen;
but
Walk darkling to their doom; which,
though so nigh,
Shakes them no more in their dim dis-
belief,
Than their last cries shall shake the
Almighty purpose.
Or deaf obedient ocean, which fulfills it.
No sign yet hangs its banner in the air;
The clouds are few, and of their wont-
ed texture;
The sun will rise upon the earth's last
day
As on the fourth day of creation, when
God said unto him, "Shine!" and he
broke forth
Into the dawn, which lighted not the
yet
Uniform'd forefather of mankind—but
roused
Before the human orison the earlier
Made and far sweeter voices of the
birds,
Which in the open firmament of heaven
Have wings like angels, and like them
salute

**The book of Enoch, preserved by the
Ethiopians, is said by them to be an-
terior to the flood.*

Heaven first each day before the Adam-
ites:
Their matins now draw nigh—the east
is kindling—
And they will sing! and day will break!
Both near,
So near the awful close! For these
must drop
Their outworn pinions on the deep; and
day,
After the bright course of a few brief
morrrows,—
Ay, day will rise; but upon what?—a
chaos,
Which was ere day; and which, renew'd,
makes time
Nothing! for, without life, what are
the hours?
No more to dust than is eternity
Unto Jehovah, who created both.
Without him, even eternity would be
A void: without man, time, as made
for man,
Dies with man, and is swallow'd in
that deep
Which has no fountain; as his race
will be
Devour'd by that which drowns his in-
fant world.—
What have we here? Shapes of both
earth and air?
No—all of heaven, they are so beautiful.
I cannot trace their features; but their
forms,
How lovelily they move along the side
Of the grey mountain, scattering its
mist!
And after the swart savage spirits,
whose
Infernal immortality pour'd forth
Their impious hymn of triumph, they
shall be
Welcome as Eden. It may be they
come
To tell me the reprieve of our young
world,
For which I have so often pray'd—
They come!
Anah! oh, God! and with her—
Enter SAMIASA, AZAZIEL, ANAH, and
AHOLIBAMAII.
ANAH. Japhet!
SAM. Lo!
A son of Adam!

AZA. What doth the earth-born here,
While all his race are slumbering?
JAPH. Angel! what
Dost thou on earth when thou shouldst
be on high?
AZA. Know'st thou not, or forgett'st
thou, that a part
Of our great function is to guard thine
earth?
JAPH. But all good angels have for-
saken earth,
Which is condemn'd; nay, even the evil
fly
The approaching chaos. Anah! Anah!
my
In vain, and long, and still to be, be-
loved!
Why walk'st thou with this spirit, in
those hours
When no good spirit longer lights be-
low?
ANAH. Japhet, I cannot answer thee;
yet, yet
Forgive me—
JAPH. May the Heaven, which soon
no more
Will pardon, do so! for thou art great-
ly tempted.
AHO. Back to thy tents, insulting son
of Noah!
We know thee not.
JAPH. The hour may come when thou
May'st know me better; and thy sister
know
Me still the same which I have ever
been.
SAM. Son of the patriarch, who hath
ever been
Upright before his God, whate'er thy
gifts,
And thy words seem of sorrow, mix'd
with wrath,
How have Azaziel, or myself, brought
on thee
Wrong?
JAPH. Wrong! the greatest of all
wrongs; but thou
Say'st well; though she be dust, I did
not, could not,
Deserve her. Farewell, Anah! I have
said
That word so often! but now say it,
ne'er
To be repeated. Angel! or whate'er

Thou art, or must be soon, hast thou
the power

To save this beautiful—*these* beautiful
Children of Cain?

AZA. From what?

JAPH. And is it so,

That ye, too, know not? Angels! an-
gels! ye

Have shared man's sin, and, it may be,
now must

Partake his punishment; or, at the least,
My sorrow.

SAM. Sorrow! I ne'er thought till
now

To hear an Adamite speak riddles to
me.

JAPH. And hath not the Most High
expounded them?

Then ye are lost, as they are lost.

AHO. So be it!

If they love as they are loved, they will
not shrink

More to be mortal, than I would to dare
An immortality of agonies

With Samiasa!

ANAH. Sister! sister! speak not

Thus.

AZA. Fearest thou, my Anah?

ANAH. Yes, for thee:

I would resign the greater remnant of
This little life of mine, before one hour

Of thine eternity should know a pang.

JAPH. It is for *him*, then! for the
seraph thou

Hast left me! That is nothing, if thou
hast not

Left thy God, too! for unions like to
these,

Between a mortal and an immortal,
cannot

Be happy or be hallow'd. We are sent
Upon the earth to toil and die; and
they

Are made to minister on high unto
The Highest: but if he can *save* thee,
soon

The hour will come in which celestial
aid

Alone can do so.

ANAH. Ah! he speaks of death.

SAM. Of death to *us!* and those who
are with us!

But that the man seems full of sor-
row, I

Could smile.

JAPH. I grieve not for myself, nor
fear;

I am safe, not for my own deserts, but
those

Of a well-doing sire, who hath been
found

Righteous enough to save his children.
Would

His power was greater of redemption!
or

That by exchanging my own life for
hers,

Who could alone have made mine hap-
py, she,

The last and loveliest of Cain's race,
could share

The ark which shall receive a remnant
of

The seed of Seth!

AHO. And dost thou think that we,
With Cain's, the eldest born of Adam's,
blood

Warm in our veins,—strong Cain! who
was begotten

In Paradise,—would mingle with Seth's
children?

Seth, the last offspring of old Adam's
dotage?

No, not to save all earth, were earth in
peril!

Our race hath always dwelt apart from
thine

From the beginning, and shall do so
ever.

JAPH. I did not speak to thee, Aholi-
bamah!

Too much of the forefather whom thou
vauntest

Has come down in that haughty blood
which springs

From him who shed the first, and that
a brother's!

But thou, my Anah! let me call thee
mine,

Albeit thou art not, 'tis a word I can-
not

Part with, although I must from thee,
my Anah.

Thou who dost rather make me dream
that Abel

Had left a daughter, whose pure, pious
race

Survived in thee, so much unlike thou
art

The rest of the stern Cainites, save in beauty,
For all of them are fairest in their favour—

AHO. [*interrupting him*]. And wouldst thou have her like our father's foe

In mind, in soul? If *I* partook thy thought,
And dream'd that aught of *Abel* was in *her*!—

Get thee hence, son of Noah; thou makest strife.

JAPH. Offspring of Cain, thy father did so!

AHO. But He slew not Seth: and what hast thou to do
With other deeds between his God and him?

JAPH. Thou speakest well; his God hath judged him, and I had not named his deed, but that thyself
Didst seem to glory in him, nor to shrink
From what he had done.

AHO. He was our fathers' father; The eldest born of man, the strongest, bravest,
And most enduring:—Shall I blush for him
From whom we had our being? Look upon
Our race; behold their stature and their beauty,
Their courage, strength, and length of days—

JAPH. They are number'd.

AHO. Be it so! but while yet their hours endure,
I glory in my brethren and our fathers.

JAPH. My sire and race but glory in their God,
Anah! and thou?—

ANAH. Whate'er our God decrees, The God of Seth as Cain, I must obey,
And will endeavour patiently to obey.
But could I dare to pray in his dread hour
Of universal vengeance (if such should be),

It would not be to live, alone exempt
Of all my house. My sister! oh, my sister!

What were the world, or other worlds, or all

The brightest future, without the sweet past—

Thy love—my father's—all the life, and all

The things which sprang up with me, like the stars,

Making my dim existence radiant with Soft lights which were not mine? Aholibamah!

Oh! if there should be mercy—seek it, find it:

I abhor death, because that thou must die.

AHO. What, hath this dreamer, with his father's ark,

The bugbear he hath built to scare the world,

Shaken *my* sister? Are *we* not the loved

Of seraphs? and if we were not, must we

Cling to a son of Noah for our lives? Rather than thus—But the enthusiast dreams

The worst of dreams, the fantasies engender'd

By hopeless love and heated vigils. Who Shall shake these solid mountains, this firm earth,

And bid those clouds and waters take a shape

Distinct from that which we and all our sires

Have seen them wear on their eternal way?

Who shall do this?

JAPH. He whose one word produced them.

AHO. Who *heard* that word?

JAPH. The universe, which leap'd To life before it. Ah! smilest thou still in scorn?

Turn to thy seraphs: if they attest it not,

They are none.

SAM. Aholibamah, own thy God!

AHO. I have ever hail'd our Maker, Samiasa,

As thine, and mine: a God of love, not sorrow.

JAPH. Alas! what else is love but sorrow? Even

He who made earth in love had soon
to grieve

Above its first and best inhabitants.

AHO. 'Tis said so.

JAPH. It is even so.

Enter NOAH and SHEM.

NOAH. Japhet! What

Dost thou here with these children of
the wicked?

Dread'st thou not to partake their com-
ing doom?

JAPH. Father, it cannot be a sin to
seek

To save an earth-born being; and be-
hold,

These are not of the sinful, since they
have

The fellowship of angels.

NOAH. These are they, then,

Who leave the throne of God, to take
them wives

From out the race of Cain; the sons
of heaven,

Who seek earth's daughters for their
beauty?

AZA. Patriarch!

Thou hast said it.

NOAH. Woe, woe, woe to such com-
munion!

Has not God made a barrier between
earth

And heaven, and limited each, kind to
kind?

SAM. Was not man made in high Je-
hovah's image?

Did God not love what he had made?
And what

Do we but imitate and emulate

His love unto created love?

NOAH. I am

But man, and was not made to judge
mankind,

Far less the sons of God; but as our
God

Has deign'd to commune with me, and
reveal

His judgments, I reply, that the descent
Of seraphs from their everlasting seat

Unto a perishable and perishing,
Even on the very *eve of perishing*,

world,

Cannot be good.

AZA. What! though it were to save?

NOAH. Not ye in all your glory can
redeem

What He who made you glorious hath
condemned.

Were your immortal mission safety,
'twould

Be general, not for two, though beauti-
ful;

And beautiful they are, but not the less
Condemn'd.

JAPH. Oh, father! say it not.

NOAH. Son! son!

If that thou wouldst avoid their doom,
forget

That they exist: they soon shall cease
to be,

While thou shalt be the sire of a new
world,

And better.

JAPH. Let me die with *this*, and *them!*

NOAH. Thou *shouldst* for such a
thought, but shalt not; he

Who *can*, redeems thee.

SAM. And why him and thee,
More than what he, thy son, prefers
to both?

NOAH. Ask him who made thee
greater than myself

And mine, but not less subject to his
own

Almightiness. And lo! his mildest and
Least to be tempted messenger appears!

Enter RAPHAEL the Archangel.

RAPH. Spirits!

Whose seat is near the throne,

What do ye here?

Is thus a seraph's duty to be shown,

Now that the hour is near

When earth must be alone?

Return!

Adore and burn,

In glorious homage with the elected
"seven."

Your place is heaven.

SAM. Raphael!

The first and fairest of the sons of God,
How long hath this been law,

That earth by angels must be left un-
trod?

Earth! which oft saw
Jehovah's footsteps not disdain her sod!

The world he loved, and made

For love; and oft have we obey'd

His frequent mission with delighted
pinions:

Adoring him in his least works
display'd;
Watching this youngest star of his do-
minions;
And, as the latest birth of his great
word,
Eager to keep it worthy of our
Lord.

Why is thy brow severe?
And wherefore speak'st thou of destruc-
tion near?

RAPH. Had Samiassa and Azazel been
In their true place, with the angelic
choir,

Written in fire
They would have seen
Jehovah's late decree,
And not inquired their Maker's breath
of me:

But ignorance must ever be
A part of sin;
And even the spirits' knowledge shall
grow less

As they wax proud within;
For Blindness is the first-born of Ex-
cess.

When all good angels left the world,
ye stay'd,
Stung with strange passions, and de-
based

By mortal feelings for a mortal maid:
But ye are pardon'd thus far, and re-
placed

With your pure equals. Hence! away!
away!

Or stay,
And lose eternity by that delay!
AZA. And thou! if earth be thus for-
bidden

In the decree
To us until this moment hidden,
Dost thou not err as we
In being here?

RAPH. I came to call ye back to your
fit sphere,
In the great name and at the word
of God.

Dear, dearest in themselves, and scarce
less dear

That which I came to do: till now we
trod

Together the eternal space; together
Let us still walk the stars. True,
earth must die!

Her race, return'd into her womb, must
wither,

And much which she inherits: but
oh! why
Cannot this earth be made, or be
destroy'd,

Without involving ever some vast
void
In the immortal ranks? immortal still
In their immeasurable forfeiture.

Our brother Satan fell; his burning
will

Rather than longer worship dared en-
dure!

But ye who still are pure!
Seraphs! less mighty than that mighti-
est one,

Think how he was undone!
And think if tempting man can com-
pensate

For heaven desired too late?

Long have I warr'd,

Long must I war

With him who deem'd it hard

To be created, and to acknowledge
him

Who midst the cherubim

Made him as suns to a dependent
star,

Leaving the archangels at his right
hand dim.

I loved him—beautiful he was: oh,
heaven!

Save *his* who made, what beauty and
what power

Was ever like to Satan's! Would the
hour

In which he fell could ever be for-
given!

The wish is impious: but, oh ye!
Yet undestroy'd, be warn'd! Eternity

With him, or with his God, is in your
choice:

He hath not tempted you; he cannot
tempt

The angels, from his further snares
exempt:

But man hath listen'd to his voice,
And ye to woman's—beautiful she is,
The serpent's voice less subtle than her
kiss.

The snake but vanquish'd dust: but she
will draw

A second host from heaven, to break
heaven's law.

Yet, yet, oh fly!
 Ye cannot die;
 But they
 Shall pass away,
 While ye shall fill with shrieks the
 upper sky
 For perishable clay,
 Whose memory in your immortality
 Shall long outlast the sun which gave
 them day.
 Think how your essence differeth from
 theirs
 In all but suffering! why partake
 The agony to which they must be
 heirs—
 Born to be plough'd with years, and
 sown with cares,
 And reap'd by Death, lord of the hu-
 man soil?
 Even had their days been left to toil,
 their path
 Through time to dust, unshorten'd by
 God's wrath,
 Still they are Evil's prey and Sor-
 row's spoil.
 AHO. Let them fly!
 I hear the voice which says that all
 must die,
 Sooner than our white-bearded patri-
 archs died;
 And that on high
 An ocean is prepared,
 While from below
 The deep shall rise to meet heaven's
 overflow.
 Few shall be spared,
 It seems; and, of that few, the race of
 Cain
 Must lift their eyes to Adam's God in
 vain.
 Sister! since it is so,
 And the eternal Lord
 In vain would be implored
 For the remission of our hour of
 woe,
 Let us resign even what we have
 adored,
 And meet the wave, as we would meet
 the sword,
 If not unmoved, yet undismay'd,
 And wailing less for us than those who
 shall
 Survive in mortal or immortal thrall,
 And, when the fatal waters are al-
 lay'd,

Weep for the myriads who can weep no
 more.
 Fly, seraphs! to your own eternal shore,
 Where winds nor howl nor waters roar.
 Our portion is to die,
 And yours to live for ever:
 But which is best, a dead eternity.
 Or living, is but known to the great
 Giver.
 Obey him, as we shall obey;
 I would not keep this life of mine in
 clay
 An hour beyond his will;
 Nor see ye lose a portion of his grace,
 For all the mercy which Seth's race
 Find still.
 Fly!
 And as your pinions bear ye back to
 heaven,
 Think that my love still mounts with
 thee on high,
 Samiasa!
 And if I look up with a tearless eye,
 'Tis that an angel's bride disdains to
 weep,—
 Farewell! Now rise, inexorable deep!
 ANAH. And must we die?
 And must I lose thee too,
 Azazel?
 Oh, my heart! my heart!
 Thy prophecies were
 true!
 And yet thou wert so happy
 too!
 The blow, though not unlook'd for, falls
 as new:
 But yet depart!
 Ah! why?
 Yet let me not retain thee—fly!
 My pangs can be but brief; but thine
 would be
 Eternal, if repulsed from heaven for
 me.
 Too much already hast thou
 deign'd
 To one of Adam's race!
 Our doom is sorrow: not to us alone,
 But to the spirits who have not dis-
 dain'd
 To love us, cometh anguish with dis-
 grace.
 The first who taught us knowledge
 hath been hurl'd
 From his once archangelic throne
 Into some unknown world:

And thou, Azazel! No—
 Thou shalt not suffer woe
 For me. Away! nor weep!
 Thou canst not weep; but yet
 May'st suffer more, not weeping;
 then forget

Her, whom the surges of the all-
 strangling deep

Can bring no pang like this. Fly!
 fly!

Being gone, 'twill be less difficult to die.
 JAPH. Oh, say not so!

Father! and thou, archangel, thou!
 Surely celestial mercy lurks below

That pure severe serenity of brow;
 Let them not meet this sea without a
 shore,

Save in our ark, or let me be no
 more!

NOAH. Peace! child of passion,
 peace!

If not within thy heart, yet with thy
 tongue

Do God no wrong!

Live as he wills it—die, when he or-
 dains,

A righteous death, unlike the seed of
 Cain's.

Cease, or be sorrowful in silence;
 cease

To weary Heaven's ear with thy self-
 ish plaint.

Wouldst thou have God commit a
 sin for thee?

Such would be it

To alter his intent

For a mere mortal sorrow. Be a man!
 And bear what Adam's race must bear,
 and can:

JAPH. Ay, father! but when they are
 gone,

And we are all alone,

Floating upon the azure desert, and
 The depth beneath us hides our own
 dear land,

And dearer, silent friends and breth-
 ren all

Buried in its immeasurable breast,
 Who, who, our tears, our shrieks, shall
 then command?

Can we in desolation's peace have
 rest?

Oh God! be thou a God, and spare
 Yet while 'tis time!

Renew not Adam's fall:
 Mankind were then but twain,
 But they are numerous now as are the
 waves

And the tremendous rain,
 Whose drops shall be less thick than
 would their graves,

Were graves permitted to the seed of
 Cain.

NOAH. Silence, vain boy! each word
 of thine's a crime,

Angel! forgive this stripling's fond de-
 spair.

RAPH. Seraphs! these mortals speak
 in passion: Ye!

Who are, or should be, passionless and
 pure,

May now return with me.

SAM. It may not be:

We have chosen, and will endure.

JAPH. Say'st thou?

AZA. He hath said it, and I
 say, Amen!

JAPH. Again!

Then from this hour,

Shorn as ye are of all celestial
 power,

And aliens from your God,
 Farewell!

JAPH. Alas! where shall they
 dwell?

Hark, hark! Deep sounds, and deeper
 still,

Are howling from the mountain's
 bosom:

There's not a breath of wind upon the
 hill,

Yet quivers every leaf, and drops each
 blossom,

Earth groans as if beneath a heavy load.

NOAH. Hark, hark! the sea-birds cry!
 In clouds they overspread the lurid
 sky,

And hover round the mountain, where
 before

Never a white wing, wetted by the
 wave,

Yet dared to soar,

Even when the waters wax'd too fierce
 to brave.

Soon it shall be their only shore,
 And then, no more!

JAPH. The sun! the sun!
 He riseth, but his better light is gone;

And a black circle, bound
His glaring disk around,
Proclaims earth's last of summer days
hath shone!

The clouds return into the hues of
night,
Save where their brazen-colour'd edges
streak
The verge where brighter morns were
wont to break.

NOAH. And lo! yon flash of light,
The distant thunder's harbinger, ap-
pears!

It cometh! hence away!
Leave to the elements their evil prey!
Hence to where our all-hallow'd ark
uprears

Its safe and wreckless sides!

JAPH. O, father, stay!
Leave not my Anah to the swallowing
tides.

NOAH. Must we not leave all life to
such? Begone!

JAPH. Not I.
NOAH. Then die

With them!

How darest thou look on that prophetic
sky,

And seek to save what all things now
condemn,

In overwhelming unison
With just Jehovah's wrath!

JAPH. Can rage and justice join in
the same path?

NOAH. Blasphemer! darest thou mur-
mur even now!

RAPH. Patriarch, be still a father!
smooth thy brow:

Thy son, despite his folly, shall not
sink:

He knows not what he says, yet shall
not drink

With sobs the salt foam of the swell-
ing waters

But be when passion passeth, good as
thou,

Nor perish like heaven's children with
man's daughters.

AHO. The tempest cometh; heaven
and earth unite

For the annihilation of all life.

Unequal is the strife

Between our strength and the Eternal
Might!

SAM. But ours is with thee: we will
bear ye far

To some untroubled star,
Where thou and Anah shall partake our
lot:

And if thou dost not weep for thy
lost earth,
Our forfeit heaven shall also be for-
got.

ANAH. Oh! my dear father's tents;
my place of birth,
And mountains, land, and woods! when
ye are not,

Who shall dry up my tears?

AZA. Thy spirit-lord,
Fear not; though we are shut from
heaven,

Yet much is ours, whence we cannot
be driven.

RAPH. Rebel! thy words are wicked,
as thy deeds

Shall henceforth be but weak: the
flaming sword,

Which chased the first-born out of
Paradise,

Still flashes in the angelic hands.

AZA. It cannot slay us: threaten dust
with death,

And talk of weapons unto that which
bleeds.

What are thy swords in our immortal
eyes?

RAPH. The moment cometh to ap-
prove thy strength;

And learn at length
How vain to war with what thy God

commands:
Thy former force was in thy faith.

Enter Mortals, flying for refuge.

Chorus of Mortals.

The heavens and earth are mingling—
God! oh God!

What have we done? Yet spare!
Hark! even the forest beasts howl forth
their prayer!

The dragon crawls from out his den,
To herd, in terror, innocent with
men;

And the birds scream their agony
through air.

Yet, yet, Jehovah! yet withdraw thy
rod

Of wrath, and pity thine own world's
despair!

Hear not man only, but all nature
plead!

RAPH. Farewell, thou earth! ye
wretched sons of clay,
I cannot, must not, aid you. 'Tis de-
creed! [Exit RAPHAEL.]

JAPH. Some clouds sweep on as vul-
tures for their prey,
While others, fix'd as rocks, await the
word
At which their wrathful vials shall be
pour'd.

No azure more shall robe the firma-
ment,
Nor spangled stars be glorious: Death
hath risen:

In the sun's place a pale and ghastly
glare
Hath wound itself around the dying
air.

AZA. Come, Anah! quit this chaos-
founded prison,

To which the elements again repair,
To turn it into what it was: beneath
The shelter of these wings thou shalt
be safe,

As was the eagle's nestling once within
Its mother's.— Let the coming chaos
chafe

With all its elements! Heed not their
din!

A brighter world than this, where thou
shalt breathe

Ethereal life, will we explore:

These darken'd clouds are not the only
skies.

[AZAZIEL and SAMIASA fly off and dis-
appear with ANAH and AHOLIBAMAH.]

JAPH. They are gone! They have dis-
appear'd amidst the roar

Of the forsaken world; and never more,
Whether they live, or die with all
earth's life,

Now near its last, can aught restore
Anah unto these eyes.

Chorus of Mortals.

Oh son of Noah! mercy on thy kind!
What! wilt thou leave us all—all—all
behind

While safe amidst the elemental strife,
Thou sitt'st within thy guarded ark?

*A Mother [offering her infant to
JAPHET].*

Oh let this child embark!

I brought him forth in woe,

But thought it joy

To see him to my bosom clinging so.

Why was he born?

What hath he done—

My unwean'd son—

To move Jehovah's wrath or scorn?

What is there in this milk of mine, that
death

Should stir all heaven and earth up
to destroy

My boy,

And roll the waters o'er his placid
breath?

Save him, thou seed of Seth!

Or cursèd be—with him who made

Thee and thy race, for which we are be-
tray'd!

JAPH. Peace! 'tis no hour for curses,
but for prayer!

Chorus of Mortals.

For prayer!!!

And where

Shall prayer ascend,

When the swoln clouds unto the moun-
tains bend

And burst,

And gushing oceans every barrier rend,
Until the very deserts know no
thirst?

Accursèd

Be he who made thee and thy sire!

We deem our curses vain; we must ex-
pire;

But as we know the worst,

Why should our hymn be raised, our
knees be bent

Before the implacable Omnipotent.

Since we must fall the same?

If he hath made earth, let it be his
shame,

To make a world for torture.—Lo!
they come,

The loathsome waters, in their rage!
And with their roar make wholesome
nature dumb!

The forests' trees (coeval with the
hour

When Paradise upsprung,

Ere Eve gave Adam knowledge for
her dower,

Or Adam his first hymn of slavery
sung),

So massy, vast, yet green in their
old age,

Are overtopp'd,

Their summer blossoms by the surges
lopp'd,

Which rise, and rise, and rise.

Vainly we look up to the lowering
skies—

They meet the seas,
And shut out God from our beseeching
eyes.

Fly, son of Noah, fly! and take thine
ease,

In thine allotted ocean-tent;
And view, all floating o'er the element,
The corpses of the world of thy young
days:

Then to Jehovah raise

Thy song of praise!

A MORTAL. Blessed are the dead

Who die in the Lord!

And though the waters be o'er earth
outspread,

Yet, as *his* word,

Be the decree adored!

He gave me life—he taketh but

The breath which is his own:

And though these eyes should be for
ever shut,

Nor longer this weak voice before his
throne

Be heard in supplicating tone,
Still blessèd be the Lord,

For what is past,

For that which is:

For all are his,

From first to last—

Time—space—eternity—life—death—

The vast known and immeasurable
unknown.

He made, and can unmake;

And shall I, for a little gasp of breath,
Blaspheme and groan?

No; let me die, as I have lived, in
faith,

Nor quiver, though the universe may
quake!

Chorus of Mortals.

Where shall we fly?

Not to the mountains high;

For now their torrents rush, with double
roar,

To meet the ocean, which, advancing
still,

Already grasps each drowning hill,
Nor leaves an unsearch'd cave.

Enter a WOMAN.

WOMAN. Oh, save me, save!

Our valley is no more: .

My father and my father's tent,

My brethren and my brethren's herds,
The pleasant trees that o'er our noon-

day bent,

And sent forth evening songs from
sweetest birds,

The little rivulet which freshen'd all
Our pastures green,

No more are to be seen.

When to the mountain-cliff I climb'd
this morn,

I turn'd to bless the spot,

And not a leaf appear'd about to fall;—
And now they are not!

Why was I born?

JAPH. To die! in youth to die!

And happier in that doom,

Than to behold the universal tomb,

Which I

Am thus condemn'd to weep above in
vain.

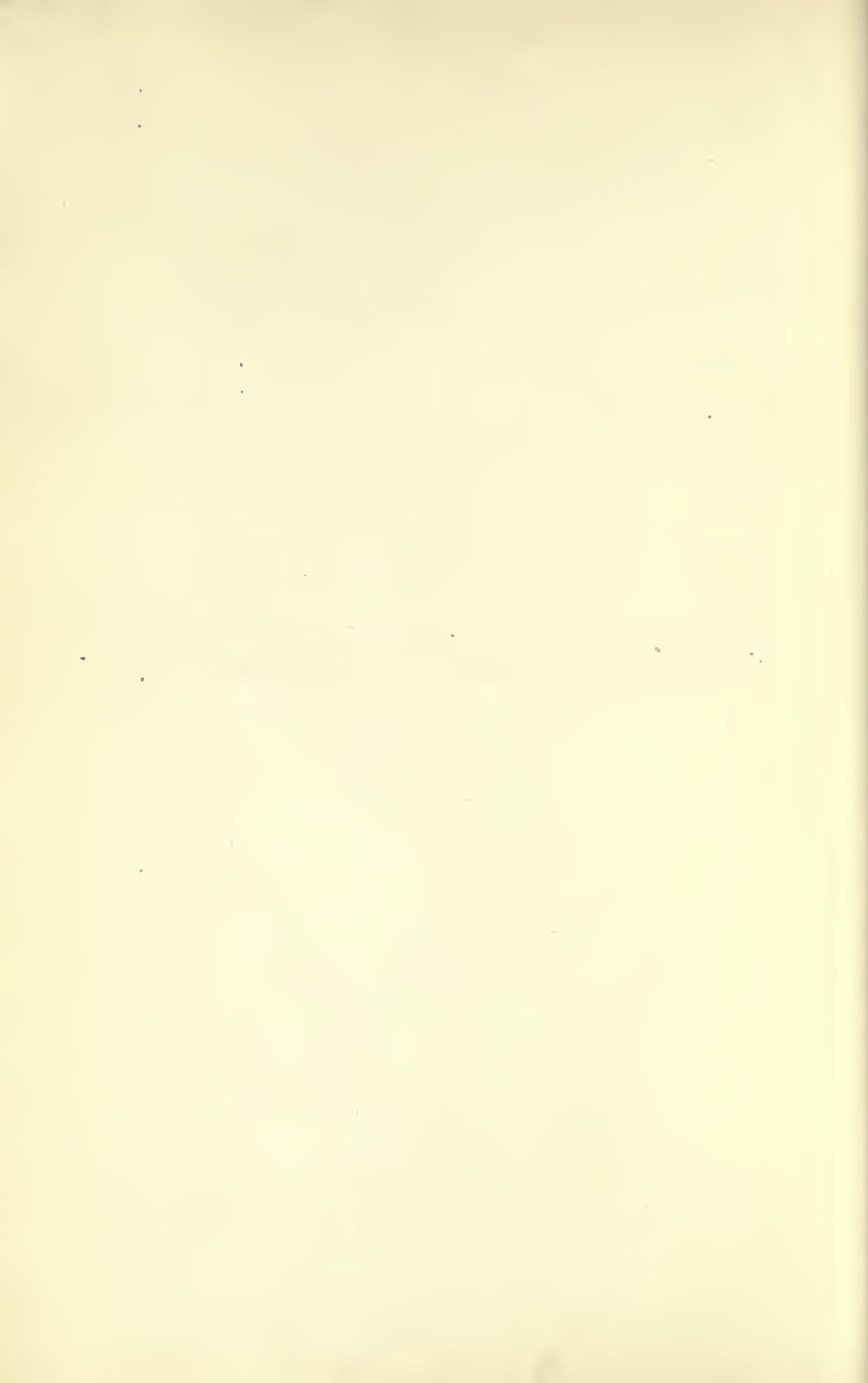
Why, when all perish, why must I re-
main?

*[The waters rise; Men fly in every di-
rection: many are overtaken by the
waves; the Chorus of Mortals dis-
perses in search of safety up the
mountains: JAPHET remains upon a
rock, while the Ark floats towards
him in the distance.]*

LORD BYRON (1788-1824).



MOSES IN THE BULRUSHES



MOSES IN THE BULRUSHES

A SACRED DRAMA.

Let me assert eternal Providence,
And justify the ways of God to man.

—*Paradise Lost.*

PERSONS OF THE DRAMA.

HEBREW WOMEN.

JOCHEBED, mother of Moses.

MIRIAM, his sister.

EGYPTIANS.

THE PRINCESS, King Pharaoh's daughter.

MELITA, and other attendants.

Scene—On the banks of the Nile.

(This subject is taken from the second chapter of the Book of Exodus.)

PART I.

JOCHEBED, MIRIAM.

Joch. Why was my pray'r accepted?
why did heaven
In anger hear me, when I ask'd a son?
Ye dames of Egypt! ye triumphant
mothers!

You no imperial tyrant marks for ruin;
You are not doom'd to see the babes
you bore,

The babes you fondly nurture, bleed before you!

You taste the transport of a mother's love,

Without a mother's anguish! wretched Israel!

Can I forbear to mourn the different lot

Of thy sad daughters!—Why did God's own hand

Rescue his chosen race by Joseph's care?

Joseph! th' elected instrument of heaven,

Decreed to save illustrious Abraham's sons,

What time the famine rag'd in Canaan's land.

Israel, who then was spar'd, must perish now!

Thou great mysterious Pow'r, who hast involv'd

Thy wise decrees in darkness, to perplex

The pride of human wisdom, to confound

The daring scrutiny, and prove, the faith

Of thy presuming creatures! hear me now:

O vindicate thy honour, clear this doubt,

Teach me to trace this maze of Providence:

Why save the fathers, if the sons must perish?

MIR. Ah me, my mother! whence these floods of grief?

Joch. My son! my son! I cannot speak the rest;

Ye who have sons can only know my fondness

Ye who have lost them, or who fear to lose,

Can only know my pangs! none else can guess them.

A mother's sorrows cannot be conceiv'd

But by a mother—would I were not one!

MIR. With earnest pray'rs thou didst request this son,

And heaven has granted him.

Joch. O sad estate

Of human wretchedness; so weak is man,

So ignorant and blind, that did not God
Sometimes withhold in mercy what we ask,

We should be ruin'd at our own request.

Too well thou know'st, my child, the stern decree

Of Egypt's cruel king, hard-hearted Pharaoh;

That every male, of Hebrew mother born,

Must die! Oh! do I live to tell it thee!
Must die a bloody death! My child, my son,

My youngest born, my darling must be slain!

MIR. The helpless innocent! and must he die?

JOCH. No; if a mother's tears, a mother's prayers,

A mother's fond precautions can prevail,

He shall not die. I have a thought, my Miriam,

And sure the God of mercies who inspir'd,

Will bless the secret purpose of my soul,

To save his precious life.

MIR. Hop'st thou that Pharaoh—

JOCH. I have no hope in Pharaoh, much in God;

Much in the Rock of Ages.

MIR. Think, O think,

What perils thou already hast incur'd,

And shun the greater which may yet remain,

Three months, three dangerous months thou hast preserv'd

Thy infant's life, and in thy house conceal'd him!

JOCH. Oh! let the tyrant know,
And feel what he inflicts! Yes, hear me, heaven!

Send thy right aiming thunderbolts—
but hush,

My impious murmurs! is it not thy will;

Thou, infinite in mercy? Thou permit'st

The seeming evil for some latent good.

Yes, I will laud thy grace, and bless thy goodness

For what I have, and not arraign thy wisdom

For what I fear to lose. O, I will bless thee

That Aaron will be spar'd; that my first born

Lives safe and undisturbed! that he was giv'n me.

Before this impious persecution rag'd!

MIR. And yet who knows, but the fell tyrant's rage

May reach his precious life.

JOCH. I fear for him.

For thee, for all. A doating parent lives

In many lives; through many a nerve she feels;

From child to child the quick affections spread,

Forever wand'ring, yet forever fix'd.

Nor does division weaken, nor the force

Of constant operation e'er exhaust Parental love. All other passions

change With changing circumstances; rise or fall,

Dependent on their object; claim returns;

Live on reciprocation, and expire Unfed by hope. A mother's fondness

reigns Without a rival, and without an end.

MIR. But say what heav'n inspires to save thy son?

JOCH. Since the dear fatal morn which gave him birth,

I have revolv'd in my distracted mind Each means to save his life: and

many a thought Which fondness prompted, prudence

has oppos'd As perilous and rash. With these poor

hands I've fram'd a little ark of slender

reeds; With pitch and slime I have secur'd

the sides. In this frail cradle I intend to lay

My little helpless infant, and expose him

Upon the banks of the Nile.

MIR. 'Tis full of danger.

Joch. 'Tis danger to expose, and death to keep him.

MIR. Yet, oh! reflect. Should the fierce crocodile,
The native and the tyrant of the Nile,
Seize the defenceless infant!

Joch. Oh forbear!
Spare my fond heart. Yet not the crocodile,
Nor all the deadly monsters of the deep,

To me are half so terrible as Pharaoh,
That heathen king, that royal murderer!

MIR. Should he escape, which yet I dare not hope,
Each sea-born monster, yet the winds and waves
He cannot 'scape.

Joch. Know, God is everywhere;
Not to one narrow, partial spot confin'd:

No, not to chosen Israel: he extends
Through all the vast infinitude of space:

At his command the furious tempests rise—

The blasting of the breath of his displeasure,

He tells the world of waters when to roar;

And, at his bidding, winds and seas are calm:

In him, not in an arm of flesh, I trust;
In him, whose promise never yet has fail'd,

I place my confidence.

MIR. What must I do?
Command thy daughter; for thy words have wak'd

An holy boldness in my youthful breast.

Joch. Go then, my Miriam, go, and take the infant.

Buried in harmless slumbers there he lies:

Let me not see him—spare my heart that pang.

Yet sure, one little look may be indulg'd,

And I may feast my fondness with his smiles,

And snatch one last, last kiss.—No more my heart;

That rapture would be fatal—I should keep him.

I could not doom to death the babe I clasp'd

Did ever mother kill her sleeping boy?
I dare not hazard it—The task be thine.

Oh! do not wake my child; remove him softly;

And gently lay him on the river's brink.

MIR. Did those magicians, whom the sons of Egypt

Consult and think all-potent, join their skill

And was it great as Egypt's sons believe;

Yet all their secret wizard arts combin'd,

To save this little ark of bulrushes,
Thus fearfully expos'd, could not effect it.

Their spells, their incantations, and dire charms

Could not preserve it.

Joch. Know this ark is charm'd
With incantations Pharaoh ne'er employ'd;

With spells, which impious Egypt never knew:

With invocations to the living God,
I twisted every slender reed together,
And with a pray'r did every ozier weave.

MIR. I go.

Joch. Yet e'er thou go'st, observe me well;

When thou hast laid him in his wat'ry bed,

O leave him not: but at a distance wait,

And mark what Heaven's high will determines for him.

Lay him among the flags on yonder beach,

Just where the royal gardens meet the Nile.

I dare not follow him, Suspicion's eye
Would note my wild demeanor! Miriam, yes,

The mother's fondness would betray the child.

Farewell! God of my fathers. Oh, protect him!

PART II.

Enter MIRIAM after having deposited the child.

MIR. YES, I have laid him in his wat'ry bed,
His wat'ry grave, I fear!—I tremble still;

It was a cruel task—still I must weep!
But ah, my mother! who shall sooth thy griefs!

The flags and sea-weeds will awhile sustain
Their precious load; but it must sink ere long!

Sweet babe, farewell! Yet think not I will leave thee:

No, I will watch thee till the greedy waves

Devour thy little bark: I'll sit me down,

And sing to thee, sweet babe; thou can'st not hear

But 'twill amuse me, while I watch thy fate.

[She sits down on a bank, and sings.]

SONG.

I.

THOU, who canst make the feeble strong,

O God of Israel, hear my song!
Not mine such notes as Egypt's daughters raise;

'Tis thee, O God of Hosts, I strive to praise.

II.

Ye winds, the servants of the Lord,
Ye waves, obedient to his word,

Oh spare the babe committed to your trust;

And Israel shall confess the Lord is just!

III.

Though doom'd to find an early grave,

This infant, Lord, thy power can save,

And he, whose death's decreed by Pharaoh's hand,

May rise a prophet to redeem the land.
[She rises and looks out.]

What female form bends thitherward her steps?

Of royal port she seems; perhaps some friend,

Rais'd by the guardian care of bounteous Heaven,
To prop the falling house of Levi.—
Soft!

I'll listen unperceiv'd; these trees will hide me.

[She stands behind.]

Enter the PRINCESS OF EGYPT, attended by a train of ladies.

PRIN. No farther, virgins, here I mean to rest.

To taste the pleasant coolness of the breeze;

Perhaps to bathe in this translucent stream

Did not our holy law* enjoin th' ab-lution

Frequent and regular, it still were needful

To mitigate the fervours of our clime.

Melita, stay—the rest at distance wait.
[They all go out, except one.]

The PRINCESS looks out.

Sure, or I much mistake, or I perceive

Upon the sedgy margin of the Nile
A chest; entangled in the reeds it seems:

Discern'st thou aught?

MEL. Something, but what I know not.

PRIN. Go and examine what this sight may mean. *[Exit maid.]*

MIRIAM *behind.*

O blest, beyond my hopes! he is discover'd;

My brother will be sav'd!—who is the stranger?

Ah! 'tis the princess, cruel Pharaoh's daughter.

If she resemble her inhuman sire,
She must be cruel too; yet fame reports her

Most merciful and mild.—Great Lord of all,

*The ancient Egyptians used to wash their bodies four times every twenty-four hours.

By whose good Spirit bounteous
thoughts are given
And deeds of love perform'd—be gra-
cious now,
And touch her soul with mercy!

Re-enter MELITA.

PRIN. Well, Melita!
Hast thou discover'd what the vessel
is?

MEL. Oh, princess, I have seen the
strangest sight!
Within the vessel lies a sleeping babe,
A fairer infant have I never seen!

PRIN. Who knows but some un-
happy Hebrew woman
Has thus expos'd her infant, to evade
The stern decree of my too cruel sire.
Unhappy mothers! oft my heart has
bled

In secret anguish o'er your slaughter'd
sons,
Powerless to save, yet hating to de-
stroy.

MEL. Should this be so, my princess
knows the danger.

PRIN. No danger should deter from
acts of mercy.

MIRIAM behind.

A thousand blessings on her princely
head;

PRIN. Too much the sons of Ja-
cob have endur'd
From Royal Pharaoh's unrelenting
hate;

Too much our house has crush'd their
alien race.

Is't not enough that cruel task-mas-
ters

Grind them by hard oppression? not
enough

That iron bondage bows their spirits
down?

Is't not enough my sire his greatness
owes,

His palaces, his fanes magnificent,
Those structures which the world with
wonder views,

To much insulted Israel's patient race?
To them his growing cities owe their
splendour

Their toils fair Rameses and Pythom
built;

And shall we fill the measure of our
crimes,

And crown our guilt with murder? and
shall I

Sanction the sin I hate? forbid it,
Mercy!

MEL. I know thy royal father fears
the strength
Of this still growing race, who flourish
more

The more they are oppress'd: he
dreads their numbers.

PRIN. Apis forbid! Pharaoh afraid
of Israel!

Yet should this outcast race, this hap-
less people

Ere grow to such a formidable great-
ness,

(Which all the gods avert whom Egypt
worship)

This infant's life can never serve their
cause,

Nor can his single death prevent their
greatness.

MEL. Trust not to that vain hope.
By weakest means

And most unlikely instrument, full oft
Are great events produc'd. This res-
cued child

Perhaps may live to serve his upstart
race

More than an host.

PRIN. How ill it does beseem
Thy tender years and gentle woman-
hood,

To steel thy breast to Pity's sacred
touch!

So weak, so unprotected is our sex,
So constantly expos'd, so very helpless,
That did not Heaven itself enjoin com-
passion,

Yet human policy should make us kind,
Lest in the rapid turn of Fortune's
wheel,

We live to need the pity we refuse.
Yes, I will save him—Mercy, thou hast
conquered!

Lead on—and from the rushes we'll
remove

The feeble ark which cradles this poor
babe.

[*The PRINCESS and her maid go out.*

MIRIAM comes forward.]

How poor were words to speak my
boundless joy!
The princess will protect him; bless
her, Heaven!

[*She looks out after the princess, and
describes her action.*]

With what impatient steps she seeks
the shore!

Now she approaches where the ark is
laid!

With what compassion, with what an-
gel sweetness,

She bends to look upon the infant's
face!

She takes his little hand in hers—he
wakes—

She smiles upon him—hark, alas! he
cries;

Weep on, sweet babe! weep on, till
thou hast touch'd

Each chord of pity, waken'd every
sense

Of melting sympathy, and stolen her
soul!

She takes him in her arms—O lovely
princess!

How goodness heightens beauty! now
she clasps him

With fondness to her heart, she gives
him now

With tender caution to her damsel's
arms:

She points her to the palace, and again
This way the princess bends her gra-
cious steps;

The virgin train retire and bear the
child.

Re-enter the PRINCESS.

PRIN. Did ever innocence and infant
beauty

Plead with such dumb but powerful
eloquence?

If I, a stranger, feel these soft emo-
tions,

What must the mother who expos'd
him feel!

Go, fetch a woman of the Hebrew
race,

That she may nurse the babe: and, by
her garb,

Lo, such a one is here!

MIR. Princess, all hail!
Forgive the bold intrusion of thy
servant,

Who stands a charm'd spectator of thy
goodness.

PRIN. I have redeem'd an infant
from the waves,

Whom I intend to nurture as mine
own.

MIR. My transports will betray me!
[*aside.*] Gen'rous Princess!

PRIN. Know'st thou a matron of the
Hebrew race

To whom I may confide him?

MIR. Well I know
A prudent matron of the house of

Levi;

Her name Jochebed, is the wife of
Amram;

Of gentle manners, fam'd throughout
her tribe

For soft humanity; full well I know
That she will rear him with a moth-
er's love.

[*Aside.*] Oh, truly spoke! a mother's
love indeed!

To her despairing arms I mean to
give

This precious trust: the nurse shall be
the mother!

PRIN. With speed conduct this
matron to the palace.

Yes, I will raise him up to princely
greatness,

And he shall be my son; I'll have him
train'd

By choicest sages, in the deepest lore
Of Egypt's sapient son;—his name be

Moses,
For I have drawn him from the peril-
ous flood.

[*They go out. She kneels.*]
Thou Great unseen! who causest

gentle deeds,

And smil'st on what thou causest;
thus I bless thee.

That thou did'st deign consult the ten-
der make

Of yielding human hearts, when thou
ordain'dst

Humanity a virtue! did'st not make it
A rigorous exercise to counteract

Some strong desire within; to war and
fight

Against the powers of Nature; but
did'st bend
The nat'ral bias of the soul to mercy:
Then mad'st that mercy duty! Gracious
Power!
Mad'st the keen rapture exquisite as
right;
Beyond the joys of sense; as pleasure
sweet,
As reason vigorous, and as instinct
strong!

PART III.

Enter JOCHEBED.

I've almost reach'd the place—with
cautious steps
I must approach the spot where he is
laid,
Lest from the royal gardens any 'spy
me:
—Poor babe! ere this the pressing calls
of hunger
Have broke thy short repose; the chill-
ing waves,
Ere this have drench'd thy little
shiv'ring limbs.
What must my babe have suffer'd!—
No one sees me!
But soft, does no one listen!—Ah!
how hard,
How very hard for fondness to be pru-
dent!
Now is the moment to embrace and
feed him, [*She looks out*]
Where's Miriam? she has left her little
charge,
Perhaps through fear; perhaps she
was detected.
How wild is thought! how terrible is
conjecture!
A mother's fondness frames a thou-
sand fears,
With thrilling nerve feels every real
ill,
And shapes imagin'd miseries into be-
ing.
[*She looks towards the river.*]
Ah me! where is he? soul-distracting
sight!
He is not there—he's lost, he's gone,
he's drown'd!

Toss'd by each beating surge my infant
floats.
Cold, cold, and wat'ry is thy grave, my
child!
O no—I see the ark—transporting sight!
[*She goes towards it.*]
I have it here—Alas, the ark is empty!
The casket's left, the precious gem is
gone!
You spar'd him, pitying spirits of the
deep!
But vain your mercy; some insatiate
beast,
And I shall never, never see my boy!
spar'd—
And I shall never, never see my boy!

Enter MIRIAM.

JOCH. Come and lament with me
thy brother's loss!
MIR. Come and adore with me the
God of Jacob!
JOCH. Miriam—the child is dead!
MIR. He lives! he lives!
JOCH. Impossible—Oh, do not mock
my grief!
See'st thou that empty vessel?
MIR. From that vessel
Th' Egyptian princess took him.
JOCH. Pharaoh's daughter?
Then still he will be slain: a bloodier
death
Will terminate his woes.
MIR. His life is safe;
For know, she means to rear him as
her own.
JOCH. [*Falls on her knees in rapture.*]
To God, the Lord, the glory be
ascrib'd!
O magnify'd forever be thy might
Who mock'st all human forethought!
who o'er-rulest
The hearts of all sinners to perform
thy work,
Defeating their own purpose! who
canst plant
Unlook'd-for mercy in a heathen's
heart,
And from the depth of evil bring forth
good? [*She rises.*]
MIR. O blest event, beyond our
warmest hopes!
JOCH. What! shall my son be nur-
tur'd in a court,

In princely grandeur bred? taught
every art
And ev'ry wond'rous science Egypt
knows?
Yet ah! I tremble Miriam; should he
learn,
With Egypt's polish'd arts her baneful
faith!

O worse exchange for death! yes,
should he learn
In yon proud palace to disown *His*
hand
Who thus has sav'd him: should he
e'er embrace
(As sure he will, if bred in Pharaoh's
court)
The gross idolatries which Egypt
owns,
Her graven images, her brutish gods,
Then shall I wish he had not been pre-
serv'd
To shame his fathers and deny his
faith.

MIR. Then to dispel thy fears and
crown thy joy,
Hear farther wonders—Know, the
gen'rous princess
To thine own care thy darling child
commits.

JOCH. Speak, while my joy will give
me leave to listen!

MIR. By her commission'd, thou be-
hold'st me here,
To seek a matron of the Hebrew
race
To nurse him: thou, my mother, art
that matron

I said I knew thee well; that thou
would'st rear him,
E'en with a mother's fondness; she
who bare him
(I told the princess) would not love
him more.

JOCH. Fountain of Mercy! whose
pervading eye
Can look within and read what passes
there,

Accept my thoughts for thanks! I
have no words.

My soul, o'erfraught with gratitude,
rejects

The aid of language—Lord! behold my
heart.

MIR. Yes, thou shalt pour into his
infant mind

The purest precepts of the purest
faith.

JOCH. O! I will fill his tender soul
with virtue,
And warm his bosom with devotion's
flame!

Aid me, celestial Spirit! with thy
grace,
And be my labours with thy influence
crown'd!

Without it they were vain. Then,
then, my Miriam,

When he is furnish'd 'gainst the evil
day,

With God's whole armour,* girt with
sacred truth,

And as a breastplate wearing right-
eousness,

Arm'd with the Spirit of God, the
shield of faith,

And with the helmet of salvation
crown'd,

Inur'd to watching and dispos'd to
prayer;

Then may I send him to a dangerous
court,

And safely trust him in a perilous
world,

Too full of tempting snares and fond
delusions!

MIR. May bounteous Heav'n thy pi-
ous cares reward!

JOCH. O Amram! O my husband!
when thou com'st,

Wearied at night, to rest thee from
the toils

Impos'd by haughty Pharaoh, what a
tale

Have I to tell thee! Yes: thy dar-
ling son

Was lost, and is restor'd; was dead,
and lives!

MIR. How joyful shall we spend the
live-long night

In praises to Jehovah; who thus
mocks

All human foresight, and converts the
means

Of seeming ruin into great deliverance!

JOCH. Had not my child been
doom'd to such strange perils

As a fond mother trembles to recall,
He had not been preserv'd.

MIR. And mark still farther;

**Thess., chap. v.; Ephes., chap. vi.*

Had he been sav'd by any other hand,
He had been still expos'd to equal
ruin.

Joch. Then let us join to bless the
hand of Heaven,
That this poor outcast of the house of
Israel,

Condemn'd to die by Pharaoh, kept in
secret

By my advent'rous fondness; then ex-
pos'd

E'en by that very fondness which con-
ceal'd him,

Is now, to fill the wondrous round of
mercy,

Preserv'd from perishing by Pharaoh's
daughter,

Sav'd by the very hand which sought
to crush him.

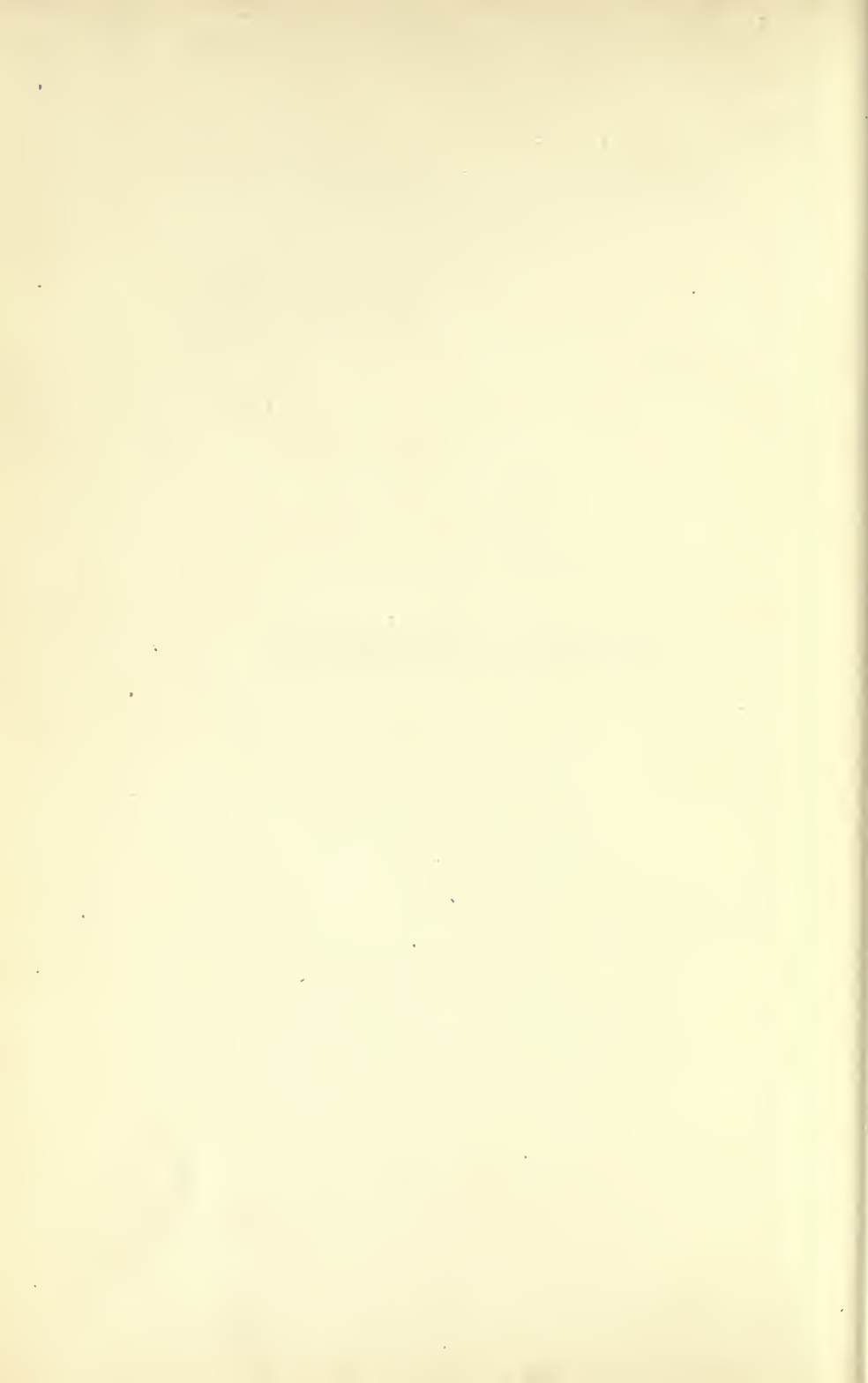
Wise and unsearchable are all thy
ways.

Thou God of Mercies—Lead me to my
child.

HANNAH MORE (1745-1833).



SAMSON AGONISTES



SAMSON AGONISTES

A DRAMATIC POEM.

THE PERSONS.

SAMSON.

MANOAH, the father of Samson.

DALILA, his wife.

HARAPHA of Gath.

Public Officer.

Messenger.

Chorus of Danites.

THE ARGUMENT.

Samson made captive, blind, and now in the prison at Gaza, there to labour as in a common work-house, on a festival day, in the general cessation from labour comes forth into the open air, to a place nigh, somewhat retired, there to sit awhile and bemoan his condition. Where he happens at length to be visited by certain friends and equals of his tribe, which make the Chorus, who seek to comfort him what they can; then by his old father Manoah, who endeavors the like, and withal tells him his purpose to procure his liberty by ransom; lastly, that this feast was proclaimed by the Philistines as a day of thanksgiving for their deliverance from the hands of Samson, which yet more troubles him. Manoah then departs to prosecute his endeavour with the Philistine lords for Samson's redemption; who, in the meanwhile, is visited by other persons; and lastly by a public officer to require his

**Although brief extracts from this drama appear on pp. 143, 150, 151, it has been thought proper to include the poem in full, rather than mar the beauty of the whole by omitting the parts already quoted.—EDITOR.*

coming to the feast before the lords and people, to play and show his strength in their presence; he at first refuses, dismissing the public officer with absolute denial to come; at length, persuaded inwardly that this was from God, he yields to go along with him, who came now the second time with great threatenings to fetch him; the Chorus yet remaining on the place, Manoah returns full of joyful hope, to procure ere long his son's deliverance: in the midst of which discourse a Hebrew comes in haste, confusedly at first, and afterwards more distinctly relates the catastrophe, what Samson had done to the Philistines, and by accident to himself; wherewith the tragedy ends.

The Scene before the Prison in Gaza.

SAMSON.

A little onward lend thy guiding hand
To these dark steps, a little farther on:
For yonder bank hath choice of sun or
shade.
There I am wont to sit, when any
chance
Relieves me from my task of servile
toil,
Daily in the common prison else in-
join'd me.
Where I a prisoner chain'd scarce freely
draw
The air imprison'd also, close and
damp,
Unwholesome draught: but here I feel
amends,
The breath of heaven fresh blowing,
pure and sweet,

With day-spring born; here leave me to
 respire.
 This day a solemn feast the people hold
 To Dagon, their sea-idol, and forbid
 Laborious works; unwillingly this rest
 Their superstition yields me; hence with
 leave
 Retiring from the popular noise, I seek
 This unfrequented place to find some
 ease,
 Ease to the body some, none to the
 mind
 From restless thoughts that like a dead-
 ly swarm
 Of hornets armed, no sooner found
 alone,
 But rush upon me thronging, and pre-
 sent
 Times past, what once I was, and what
 am now.
 O wherefore was my birth from heaven
 foretold
 Twice by an angel, who at last in sight
 Of both my parents all in flames as-
 cended
 From off the altar, where an offering
 burn'd,
 As in a fiery column charioting
 His godlike presence, and from some
 great act
 Or benefit reveal'd to Abraham's race?
 Why was my breeding order'd and pre-
 scrib'd
 As of a person separate to God,
 Design'd for great exploits; if I must
 die
 Betray'd, captiv'd, and both my eyes
 put out,
 Made of my enemies the scorn and
 gaze;
 To grind in brazen fetters under task
 With this heaven-gifted strength? O
 glorious strength
 Put to the labour of a beast, debas'd
 Lower than bondslave! Promise was
 that I
 Should Israel from Philistian yoke de-
 liver:
 Ask for this great deliverer now, and
 find him
 Eyeless in Gaza at the mill with slaves,
 Himself in bonds under Philistian yoke;
 Yet stay; let me not rashly call in doubt
 Divine prediction; what if all foretold

Had been fulfill'd but through mine
 own default
 Whom have I to complain of but my-
 self?
 Who this high gift of strength com-
 mitted to me,
 In what part lodg'd, how easily bereft
 me,
 Under the seal of silence could not
 keep,
 But weakly to a woman must reveal it,
 O'ercome with importunity and tears.
 O impotence of mind, in body strong!
 But what is strength without a double
 share
 Of wisdom, vast, unwieldy, burden-
 some,
 Proudly secure, yet liable to fall
 By weakest subtleties, not made to rule.
 But to subserve where wisdom bears
 command
 God, when he gave me strength, to show
 withal
 How slight the gift was, hung it in
 my hair.
 But peace, I must not quarrel with the
 will
 Of highest dispensation, which herein
 Haply had ends above my reach to
 know:
 Suffices that to me strength is my bane,
 And proves the source of all my mis-
 eries;
 So many, and so huge, that each apart
 Would ask a life to wail, but chief of
 all,
 O loss of sight, of thee I most com-
 plain!
 Blind among enemies, O worse than
 chains,
 Dungeon, or beggary, or decrepid age!
 Light, the prime work of God to me
 is extinct,
 And all her various objects of delight
 Annull'd, which might in part my grief
 have eased,
 Inferior to the vilest now become
 Of man or worm; the vilest here excel
 me,
 They creep, yet see, I dark in light
 expos'd
 To daily fraud, contempt, abuse, and
 wrong,

Within doors, or without, still as a
 fool,
 In power of others, never in my own;
 Scarce half I seem to live, dead more
 than half.
 O dark, dark, dark, amid the blaze of
 noon,
 Irrecoverably dark, total eclipse
 Without all hope of day!
 O first created Beam, and thou great
 Word,
 Let there be light, and light was over
 all;
 Why am I thus bereav'd thy prime de-
 cree?
 The sun to me is dark
 And silent as the moon.
 When she deserts the night
 Hid in her vacant interlunar cave.
 Since light so necessary is to life,
 And almost life itself, if it be true
 That light is in the soul,
 She all in every part; why was the
 sight
 To such a tender ball as th' eye con-
 fin'd,
 So obvious and so easy to be quench'd?
 And not as feeling through all parts
 diffus'd,
 That she might look at will through
 every pore?
 Then had I not been thus exil'd from
 light,
 As in the land of darkness yet in light;
 To live a life half dead, a living death.
 And buried; but O yet more miserable!
 Myself my sepulchre, a moving grave,
 Buried, yet not exempt
 By privilege of death and burial
 From worst of other evils, pains and
 wrongs,
 But made hereby obnoxious more
 To all the miseries of life,
 Life in captivity
 Among inhuman foes.
 But who are these? for with joint pace
 I hear
 The tread of many feet steering this
 way;
 Perhaps my enemies who come to stare
 At my affliction, and perhaps t' insult.
 Their daily practice to afflict me more.

CHORUS.

This, this is he; softly awhile!
 Let us not break in upon him:
 O change beyond report, thought, or
 belief!
 See how he lies at random, carelessly
 diffus'd,
 With languish'd head unpropp'd,
 As one past hope, abandon'd,
 And by himself given 'over;
 In slavish habit, ill-fitted weeds
 O'er-worn and soil'd;
 Or do my eyes misrepresent? Can this
 be he,
 That heroic, that renown'd,
 Irresistible Samson? whom unarm'd
 No strength of man, or fiercest wild
 beast could withstand;
 Who tore the lion, as the lion tears the
 kid,
 Ran on imbattled armies clad in iron;
 And weaponless himself
 Made arms ridiculous, unless the forg-
 ery
 Of brazen shield and spear, the ham-
 mer'd cuirass,
 Chalybean temper'd steel, and frock of
 mail,
 Adamantean proof;
 But safest he who stood aloof,
 When insupportably his foot advanc'd,
 In scorn of their proud arms and war-
 like tools,
 Spurn'd them to death by troops. The
 bold Ascalonite
 Fled from his lion ramp, old warriors
 turn'd
 Their plated backs under his heel;
 Or grov'ling soil'd their crested helmets
 in the dust
 Then with what trivial weapon came
 to hand,
 The jaw of a dead ass, his sword of
 bone.
 A thousand foreskins fell, the flower
 of Palestine.
 In Ramath-lechi famous to this day.
 Then by main force pull'd up, and on
 his shoulders bore
 The gates of Azza, post, and massy bar,
 Up to the hill by Hebron, seat of
 giants old,
 No journey of a Sabbath-day, and
 loaded so;

Like whom the Gentiles feign to bear
up heaven.
Which shall I first bewail.
Thy bondage or lost sight,
Prison within prison
Inseparably dark?
Thou art become (O worst imprison-
ment!)

The dungeon of thyself; thy soul
(Which men enjoying sight oft without
cause complain)

Imprison'd now indeed,
In real darkness of the body dwells,
Shut up from outward light
T' incorp'rate with gloomy night,
For inward light, alas!
Puts forth no visual beam.
O mirror of our fickle state,
Since man on earth unparallel'd!
The rarer thy example stands,
By how much from the top of won-
d'rous glory,
Strongest of mortal men,
To lowest pitch of abject fortune thou
art fallen!

For him I reckon not in high estate
Whom long descent of birth
Or the sphere of fortune raises;
But thee whose strength, while virtue
was her mate,
Might have subdued the earth,
Universally crown'd with highest
praises.

SAMSON.

I hear the sound of words, their sense
the air
Dissolves unjointed ere it reach my ear.

CHORUS.

He speaks, let us draw nigh. Matchless
in might,
The glory late of Israel, now the grief;
We come thy friends and neighbours
not unknown
From Eshtaol and Zora's fruitful vale,
To visit or bewail thee, or if better,
Counsel or consolation we may bring,
Salve to thy sores; apt words have
power to 'suage
The tumours of a troubled mind,
And are as balm to fester'd wounds.

SAMSON.

Your coming, friends, revives me, for I
learn
Now of my own experience, not by talk,
How counterfeit a coin they are who
friends
Bear in their superscription, (of the
most
I would be understood,) in prosp'rous
days
They swarm, but in adverse withdraw
their head,
Not to be found though sought. Ye
see, O friends,
How many evils have enclos'd me
round;
Yet that which was the worst now least
afflicts me,
Blindness, for had I sight, confus'd
with shame,
How could I once look up, or heave the
head,
Who like a foolish pilot have ship-
wreck'd
My vessel trusted to me from above,
Gloriously rigg'd; and for a word, a
tear,
Fool, have divulg'd the secret gift of
God
To a deceitful woman? tell me, friends,
Am I not sung and proverb'd for a fool
In every street? do they not say, how
well
Are come upon him his deserts? yet
why?
Immeasurable strength they might be-
hold
In me, of wisdom nothing more than
mean:
This with the other should, at least,
have pair'd,
These two, proportion'd ill, drove me
transverse.

CHORUS.

Tax not divine disposal; wisest men
Have err'd, and by bad women been
deceiv'd;
And shall again, pretend they ne'er so
wise.
Deject not then so overmuch thy self,
Who hast of sorrow thy full load be-
sides;

Yet truth to say, I oft have heard men wonder
Why thou shouldst wed Philistian women rather
Than of thy own tribe fairer, or as fair,
At least of thy own nation, and as noble.

SAMSON.

The first I saw at Timna, and she pleas'd
Me, not my parents, that I sought to wed
The daughter of an infidel; they knew not
That what I motion'd was of God; I knew
From intimate impulse, and therefore urg'd
The marriage on; that by occasion hence
I might begin Israel's deliverance,
The work to which I was divinely call'd.
She proving false, the next I took to wife
(O that I never had! fond wish too late,)
Was in the vale of Sorec, Dalila,
That specious monster, my accomplish'd snare.
I thought it lawful from my former act,
And the same end: still watching to oppress
Israel's oppressors: of what now I suffer
She was not the prime cause, but I myself,
Who vanquish'd with a peal of words
(O weakness!)
Gave up my fort of silence to a woman.

CHORUS.

In seeking just occasion to provoke
The Philistine, thy country's enemy,
Thou never wast remiss, I bear thee witness:
Yet Israel still serves with all his sons.

SAMSON.

That fault I take not on me, but transfer

On Israel's governors, and heads of tribes,

Who seeing those great acts, which God had done

Singly by me against their conqueror,
Acknowledg'd not, or not at all consider'd

Deliverance offer'd: I on the other side
Us'd no ambition to commend my deeds,
The deeds themselves, though mute,
spoke loud the doer;

But they persisted deaf and would not seem

To count them things worth notice, till at length

Their lords the Philistines with gather'd powers

Enter'd Judea seeking me, who then
Safe to the rock of Etham was retir'd,
Not flying, but fore-casting in what place

To set upon them, what advantag'd best.
Meanwhile the men of Judah, to prevent

The harass of their land, beset me round;

I willingly on some conditions came
Into their hands, and they as gladly yield me

To the uncircumcised a welcome prey,
Bound with two cords: but cords to me were threads

Touch'd with the flame; on their whole host I flew

Unarm'd, and with a trivial weapon fell'd

Their choicest youth; they only liv'd who fled.

Had Judah that day join'd, or one whole tribe,

They had by this possess'd the towers of Gath,

And lorded over them whom now they serve;

But what more oft in nations grown corrupt

And by their vices brought to servitude,
Than to love bondage more than liberty,
Bondage with ease than strenuous liberty;

And to despise, or envy, or suspect
Whom God hath of his special favour rais'd

As their deliverer; if he aught begin,

How frequent to desert him, and at last
To heap ingratitude on worthiest deeds?

CHORUS.

Thy words to my remembrance bring
How Succoth and the fort of Penuel
Their great deliverer contemn'd,
The matchless Gideon in pursuit
Of Madian and her vanquish'd kings:
And how ingrateful Ephraim
Had dealt with Jephtha, who by argu-
ment,
Not worse than by his shield and spear,
Defended Israel from the Ammonite
Had not his prowess quell'd their pride
In that sore battle, when so many died
Without reprieve adjudg'd to death,
For want of well pronouncing Shibbo-
leth.

SAMSON.

Of such examples add me to the roll.
Me easily indeed mine may neglect,
But God's propos'd deliverance not so.

CHORUS.

Just are the ways of God,
And justifiable to men:
Unless there be who think not God at
all;
If any be, they walk obscure;
For of such doctrine never was there
school,
But the heart of the fool,
And no man therein doctor but himself.
Yet more there be who doubt his
ways not just,
As to his own edicts found contradict-
ing,
Then give the reins to wand'ring
thought,
Regardless of his glory's diminution;
Till by their own perplexities involv'd
They ravel more, still less resolv'd,
But never find self-satisfying solution.
As if they would confine th' Intermin-
able,
And tie him to his own prescript,
Who made our laws to bind us, not
himself,
And hath full right t' exempt

Whomso it pleases him by choice
From national obstruction, without taint
Of sin or legal debt:

For with his own laws he can best dis-
pense.

He would not else who never wanted
means,

Nor in respect of th' enemy just cause
To set his people free,
Have prompted this heroic Nazarite;
Against his vow of strictest purity
To seek in marriage that salacious
bride,
Unclean, unchaste.

Down reason then, at least vain rea-
sonings down,

Though reason here aver
That moral verdict quits her of un-
clean;

Unchaste was subsequent, her stain not
his.

But see, here comes thy reverend sire
With careful steps, locks white as
down.

Old Manoaah: advise
Forthwith how thou ought'st to receive
him.

SAMSON.

Ah me, another inward grief awak'd
With mention of that name renews th'
assault.

MANOAH.

Brethren and men of Dan, for such ye
seem
Though in this uncouth place: if old
respect
As I suppose, towards your once gloried
friend,
My son now captive, hither hath in-
form'd
Your younger feet, while mine cast back
with age
Came lagging after; say if he be here.

CHORUS.

As signal now in low dejected state,
As erst in highest, behold him where he
lies.

MANOAH.

O miserable change! is this the man,
 That invincible Samson, far renown'd,
 The dread of Israel's foes, who with a
 strength
 Equivalent to angels walk'd their
 streets,
 None offering fight; who single com-
 batant
 Duell'd their armies rank'd in proud
 array,
 Himself an army, now unequal match
 To save himself against a coward arm'd
 At one spear's length. O ever failing
 trust
 In mortal strength! and oh what not
 in man
 Deceivable and vain! Nay what thing
 good
 Pray'd for, but often proves our wo,
 our bane?
 I pray'd for children, and thought bar-
 renness
 In wedlock a reproach; I gain'd a son,
 And such a son as all men hail'd me
 happy:
 Who would be now a father in my-
 stead?
 O wherefore did God grant me my re-
 quest,
 And as a blessing with such pomp
 adorn'd?
 Why are his gifts desirable, to tempt
 Our earnest prayers, then given with
 solemn hand
 As graces draw a scorpion's tail behind?
 For this did th' angels twice descend?
 for this
 Ordain'd thy nurture holy, as of a plant
 Select, and sacred, glorious, for awhile
 The miracle of men; then in an hour
 Insar'd, assaulted, overcome, led
 bound,
 Thy foes' derision, captive, poor, and
 blind,
 Into a dungeon thrust, to work with
 slaves?
 Alas! methinks whom God hath chosen
 once
 To worthiest deeds, if he through frailty
 err,
 He should not so o'erwhelm, as a thrall
 Subject him to such foul indignities,

Be it but for honour's sake of former
 deeds.

SAMSON.

Appoint not heavenly disposition,
 father;
 Nothing of all these evils hath befallen
 me
 But justly; I myself have brought them
 on,
 Sole author I, sole cause; if aught seem
 vile,
 As vile hath been my folly, who have
 profan'd
 The mystery of God given me under
 pledge
 Of vow, and have betray'd it to a
 woman,
 A Canaanite, my faithless enemy.
 This well I knew, nor was at all sur-
 pris'd,
 But warn'd by oft experience; did not
 she
 Of Timna first betray me, and reveal
 The secret wrested from me in her
 height
 Of nuptial love profess'd, carrying it
 straight
 To them who had corrupted her, my
 spies,
 And rivals? In this other was there
 found
 More faith, who also in her prime of
 love,
 Spousal embraces, vitiated with gold,
 Though offer'd only, by the scent con-
 ceiv'd
 Her spurious first-born; treason against
 me?
 Thrice she assay'd with flatt'ring pray-
 ers and sighs,
 And amorous reproaches, to win from
 me
 My capital secret, in what part my
 strength
 Lay stor'd, in what part summ'd, that
 she might know;
 Thrice I deluded her, and turn'd to
 sport
 Her importunity, each time perceiving
 How openly, and with what impudence
 She purpos'd to betray me, and (which
 was worse

Than undissembled hate) with what contempt
 She sought to make me traitor to myself;
 Yet the fourth time, when mustering all her wiles,
 With blandish'd parleys, feminine assaults,
 Tongue-batteries, she surceas'd not day nor night
 To storm me, over-watch'd, and wearied out
 At times when men seek most repose and rest,
 I yielded, and unlock'd her all my heart,
 Who with a grain of manhood well resolv'd
 Might easily have shook off all her snares:
 But foul effeminacy held me yok'd
 Her bond slave; O indignity, O blot
 To honour and religion; servile mind
 Rewarded well with servile punishment!
 The base degree to which I now am fallen,
 These rags, this grinding is not yet so base
 As was my former servitude; ignoble,
 Unmanly, ignominious, infamous,
 True slavery, and that blindness worse than this,
 That saw not how degenerately I serv'd.

MANOAH.

I cannot praise thy marriage choices, son,
 Rather approv'd them not; but thou didst plead
 Divine impulsion, prompting how thou might'st
 Find some occasion to infest our foes.
 I state not that; this I am sure, our foes
 Found soon occasion thereby to make thee
 Their captive, and their triumph; thou the sooner
 Temptation found'st, or over-potent charms
 To violate the secret trust of silence
 Deposited within thee; which to have kept
 Tacit, was in thy power; true; and thou bear'st

Enough, and more, the burden of that fault;
 Bitterly hast thou paid, and still art paying
 That rigid score. A worse thing yet remains,
 This day the Philistines a popular feast
 Here celebrate in Gaza; and proclaim
 Great pomp, and sacrifice, and praises loud
 To Dagon, as their god who hath deliver'd
 Thee, Samson, bound and blind into their hands,
 Them out of thine, who slew'st them many a slain.
 So Dagon shall be magnified, and God,
 Besides whom is no god, compar'd with idols,
 Disglorified, blasphem'd, and had in scorn
 By the idolatrous rout amidst their wine;
 Which to have come to pass by means of thee,
 Samson, of all thy sufferings think the heaviest.
 Of all reproach the most with shame that ever
 Could have befallen thee and thy father's house.

SAMSON.

Father, I do acknowledge and confess
 That I this honour, I this pomp have brought
 To Dagon, and advanc'd his praises high
 Among the Heathen round; to God have brought
 Dishonour, obloquy, and op'd the mouths
 Of idolists, and atheists; have brought scandal
 To Israel, diffidence of God, and doubt
 In feeble hearts, propense enough before
 To waver, or fall off and join with idols;
 Which is my chief affliction, shame, and sorrow,
 The anguish of my soul, that suffers not
 Mine eye to harbour sleep, or thoughts to rest.

This only hope relieves me, that the
strife
With me hath end; all the contest is
now
'Twixt God and Dagon; Dagon hath
presum'd,
Me overthrown, to enter lists with God,
His deity comparing and preferring
Before the God of Abraham. He, be
sure,
Will not connive, or linger, thus pro-
vok'd,
But will arise and his great name assert:
Dagon must stoop, and shall ere long
receive
Such a discomfit, as shall quite despoil
him
Of all these boasted trophies won on me,
And with confusion blank his worship-
pers.

MANOAH.

With cause this hope relieves me, and
these words
I as a prophecy receive; For God,
Nothing more certain, will not long
defer
To vindicate the glory of his name
Against all competition, nor will long
Indure it doubtful whether God be
Lord,
Or Dagon. But for thee what shall be
done?
Thou must not in the meanwhile here
forget
Lie in this miserable loathsome plight
Neglected. I already have made way
To some Philistian lords, with whom to
treat
About thy ransom; well they may by
this
Have satisfied their utmost of revenge
By pains and slaveries, worse than
death inflicted
On thee, who now no more canst do
them harm.

SAMSON.

Spare that proposal, father, spare the
trouble
Of that solicitation; let me here,
As I deserve, pay on my punishment;
And expiate, if possible, my crime,

Shameful garrulity. To have reveal'd
Secrets of men, the secrets of a friend,
How heinous had the fact been, how
deserving
Contempt and scorn of all, to be ex-
cluded
All friendship, and avoided as a blab,
The mark of fool set on his front?
But I
God's counsel have not kept, his holy
secret
Presumptuously have publish'd, im-
piously,
Weakly at least, and shamefully: a sin
That Gentiles in their parables condemn
To their abyss and horrid pains con-
fin'd.

MANOAH.

Be penitent and for thy fault contrite,
But act not in thy own affliction, son;
Repent the sin, but if the punishment
Thou canst avoid, self-preservation
bids;
Or th' execution leave to high disposal,
And let another hand, not thine, exact
Thy penal forfeit from thyself; perhaps
God will relent, and quit thee all his
debt;
Who ever more approves and more
accepts
(Best pleas'd with humble and filial
submission)
Him who imploring mercy sues for life,
Than who self rigorous chooses death
as due;
Which argues over-just, and self-
displeas'd
For self-offence more than for God
offended.
Reject not then what offer'd means;
who knows
But God hath set before us, to return
thee
Home to thy country and his sacred
house,
Where thou mayst bring thy offerings
to avert
His further ire, with prayers and vows
renew'd?

SAMSON.

His pardon I implore; but as for life,

To what end should I seek it? when in
 strength
 All mortals I excell'd, and great in
 hopes
 With youthful courage and magnani-
 mous thoughts
 Of birth from heaven foretold and high
 exploits,
 Full of divine instinct, after some proof
 Of acts indeed heroic, far beyond
 The sons of Anak, famous now and
 blaz'd,
 Fearless of danger, like a petty god
 I walk'd about admir'd of all, and
 dreaded
 On hostile ground, none daring my af-
 front.
 Then swoln with pride into the snare I
 fell
 Of fair fallacious looks, venereal trains,
 Soften'd with pleasure and voluptuous
 life;
 At length to lay my head and hallow'd
 pledge
 Of all my strength in the lascivious lap
 Of a deceitful concubine, who shore
 me,
 Like a tame wether, all my precious
 fleece,
 Then turn'd me out ridiculous, despoil'd,
 Shaven and disarm'd among mine ene-
 mies.

CHORUS.

Desire of wine and all delicious drinks,
 Which many a famous warrior over-
 turns,
 Thou couldst repress, nor did the danc-
 ing ruby,
 Sparkling, out pour'd the flavour or the
 smell,
 Or taste that cheers the hearts of gods
 and men,
 Allure thee from the cool crystalline
 stream.

SAMSON.

Wherever fountain or fresh current
 flow'd
 Against the eastern ray, translucent,
 pure,
 With touch ethereal of heaven's fiery
 rod,

I drank, from the clear milky juice a-
 laying
 Thirst, and refresh'd; nor envied them
 the grape
 Whose heads that turbulent liquor fills
 with fumes.

CHORUS.

O madness, to think use of strongest
 wines
 And strongest drinks our chief support
 of health,
 When God with these forbidden made
 choice to rear
 His mighty champion, strong above
 compare,
 Whose drink was only from the liquid
 brook.

SAMSON.

But what avail'd this temp'rance, not
 complete
 Against another object more enticing?
 What boots it at one gate to make de-
 fence,
 And at another to let in the foe,
 Effeminately vanquish'd? by which
 means,
 Now blind, dishearten'd, sham'd, dis-
 honour'd, quell'd,
 To what can I be useful, wherein serve
 My nation, and the work from heaven
 impos'd,
 But to sit idle on the household hearth,
 A burdensome drone; to visitants a
 gaze,
 Or pitied object, these redundant locks
 Robustuous to no purpose clust'ring
 down,
 Vain monument of strength; till length
 of years
 And sedentary numbness craze my
 limbs
 To a contemptible old age obscure;
 Here rather let me drudge and earn
 my bread,
 Till vermin or the draff of servile food
 Consume me, and oft invocated death
 Hasten the welcome end of all my
 pains.

MANOAH.

Wilt thou then serve the Philistines
with that gift
Which was expressly given thee to annoy them?
Better at home lie bed-rid, not only idle,
Inglorious, unemploy'd, with age out-
worn.
But God who caus'd a fountain at thy
prayer
From the dry ground to spring, thy
thirst t' allay
After the brunt of battle, can as easy
Cause light again within thy eyes to
spring,
Wherewith to serve him better than
thou hast;
And I persuade me so; why else this
strength
Miraculous yet remaining in those
locks?
His might continues in thee not for
naught,
Nor shall his wondrous gifts be frus-
trate thus.

SAMSON.

All otherwise to me my thoughts por-
tend,
That these dark orbs no more shall
treat with light,
Nor th' other light of life continue long,
But yield to double darkness nigh at
hand:
So much I feel my genial spirits droop,
My hopes all flat, nature within me
seems
In all her functions weary of herself,
My race of glory run, and race of
shame,
And I shall shortly be with them that
rest.

MANOAH.

Believe not these suggestions which
proceed
From anguish of the mind and humours
black
That mingle with thy fancy. I, how-
ever,

Must not omit a father's timely care
To prosecute the means of thy deliver-
ance
By ransom, or how else: meanwhile be
calm,
And healing words from these thy
friends admit.

SAMSON.

O that torment should not be confin'd
To the body's wounds and sores,
With maladies innumerable
In heart, head, breast and reins;
But must secret passage find
To th' inmost mind,
There exercise all his fierce accidents,
And on her purest spirits prey,
As on entrails, joints and limbs,
With answerable pains but more in-
tense,
Though void of corporal sense.
My griefs not only pain me
As a ling'ring disease,
But finding no redress ferment and
rage.
Nor less than wounds immedicable
Rankle, and fester, and gangrene
To black mortification.
Thoughts, my tormentors arm'd with
deadly stings
Mangle my apprehensive tenderest
parts,
Exasperate, exulcerate, and raise
Dire inflammation, which no cooling
herb
Or medicinal liquor can assuage,
Nor breath of vernal air from snowy
Alp.
Sleep hath forsook and given me o'er
To death's benumbing opium as my
only cure:
Thence faintings, swoonings of despair,
And sense of heaven's desertion.
I was his nursling once and choice
delight,
His destin'd from the womb,
Promis'd by heavenly message twice
descending:
Under his special eye
Abstemious I grew up and thriv'd
amain,
He led me on to mightiest deeds
Above the nerve of mortal arm
Against th' uncircumcis'd, our enemies,

But now hath cast me off as never
 known,
 And to those cruel enemies,
 Whom I by his appointment had pro-
 vok'd,
 Left me all helpleſs with th' irreparable
 loſs
 Of ſight, reſerved alive to be repeated
 The ſubject of their cruelty or ſcorn.
 Nor am I in the liſt of them that hope;
 Hopeleſs are all my evils, all remedileſs;
 This one prayer yet remains, might I be
 heard,
 No long petition, ſpeedy death,
 The cloſe of all my miſeries, and the
 balm.

CHORUS.

Many are the ſayings of the wiſe,
 In ancient and in modern books inroll'd,
 Extolling patience as the trueſt forti-
 tude;
 And to the bearing well of all calami-
 ties,
 All chances incident to man's frail life,
 Conſolatories writ
 With ſtudied argument and much per-
 ſuaſion ſought,
 Lenient of grief and anxious thought:
 But with th' afflicted in his pangs their
 ſound
 Little prevails, or rather ſeems a tune
 Harſh, and of diſſonant mood from his
 complaint,
 Unless he feel within
 Some ſource of conſolation from
 above,
 Secret reſreſhings, that repair his
 ſtrength,
 And fainting ſpirits uphold.
 God of our fathers, what is man!
 That thou tow'rdſ him with hand ſo
 various,
 Or might I ſay contrarious,
 Temper'ſt thy providence through his
 ſhort courſe.
 Not evenly as thou rul'ſt
 Th' angelic orders and inferior crea-
 tures mute,
 Irrational and brute.
 Nor do I name of men the common
 rout,
 That wand'ring looſe about
 Grow up and periſh, as the ſummer fly,

Heads without name no more remem-
 ber'd
 But ſuch as thou haſt ſolemnly elected,
 With gifts and graces eminently adorn'd
 To ſome great work, thy glory,
 And people's ſafety, which in part they
 effect:
 Yet toward theſe thus dignified, thou
 oft,
 Amidſt their height of noon,
 Chang'ſt thy countenance, and thy hand
 with no regard
 Of higheſt favours paſt
 From thee on them, or them to thee of
 ſervice.
 Nor only doſt degrade them, or remit
 To life obſcur'd, which were a fair diſ-
 miſſion,
 But throw'ſt them lower than thou didſt
 exalt them high,
 Unſeemly falls in human eye,
 Too grievous for the trespas or omiſ-
 ſion;
 Oft leav'ſt them to the hoſtile ſword
 Of heathen and profane, their carcaſſes
 To dogs and fowls a prey, or elſe cap-
 tiv'd;
 Or to th' unjuſt tribunals, under change
 of times
 And condemnation of th' ungrateful
 multitude.
 If theſe they 'ſcape, perhaps in poverty
 With ſickneſs and diſeaſe thou bow'ſt
 them down
 Painful diſeaſes and deform'd,
 In crude old age:
 Though not diſordinate, yet cauſeleſs
 ſuff'ring
 The puniſhment of diſſolute days; in
 fine,
 Juſt or unjuſt, alike ſeem miſerable,
 For oft alike both come to evil end.
 So deal not with this once thy
 glorious champion,
 The image of thy ſtrength, and mighty
 miniſter.
 What do I beg? how haſt thou dealt
 already?
 Behold him in this ſtate calamitous, and
 turn
 His labours, for thou canſt, to peaceful
 end.
 But who is this, what thing of ſea or
 land?

Female of sex it seems,
That so bedeck'd, ornate, and gay,
Comes this way sailing
Like a stately ship
Of Tarsus, bound for th' isles
Of Javan or Gadire,
With all her bravery on, and tackle
trim,
Sails fill'd, and streamers waving,
Court'd by all the winds that hold them
play,
An amber scent of odorous perfume
Her harbinger, a damsel train behind;
Some rich Philistian matron she may
seem,
And now at nearer view, no other cer-
tain
Than Dalila, thy wife.

SAMSON.

My wife, my trait'ress, let her not come
near me.

CHORUS.

Yet on she moves, now stands, and eyes
thee fix'd,
About t' have spoke, but now, with head
declin'd,
Like a fair flower surcharg'd with dew,
she weeps,
And words address'd seem into tears
dissolved,
Wetting the borders of her silken veil:
But now again she makes address to
speak.

DALILA.

With doubtful feet and wavering reso-
lution
I came, still dreading thy displeasure,
Samson,
Which to have merited, without excuse,
I cannot but acknowledge; yet if tears
May expiate (though the fact more
evil drew
In the perverse event than I foresaw)
My penance hath not slacken'd, though
my pardon
No way assur'd. But conjugal affection
Prevailing over fear, and timorous
doubt,

Hath led me on, desirous to behold
Once more thy face, and know of thy
estate,
If aught in my ability may serve
To lighten what thou suffer'st, and ap-
pease
Thy mind with what amends is in my
power,
Though late, yet in some part to recom-
pense
My rash but more unfortunate misdeed.

SAMSON.

Out, out, hyæna; these are thy wonted
arts
And arts of every woman false like
thee,
To break all faith, all vows, deceive,
betray,
Then as repentant to submit, beseech,
And reconciliation move with feign'd
remorse,
Confess, and promise wonders in her
change,
Not truly penitent, but chief to try
Her husband, how far urg'd his patience
bears,
His virtue or weakness which way to
assail:
Then with more cautious and instructed
skill
Again transgresses, and again submits;
That wisest and best men full oft be-
guil'd
With goodness principled not to reject
The penitent, but ever to forgive,
Are drawn to wear out miserable days,
Intangled with a pois'nous bosom snake,
If not by quick destruction soon cut off
As I by thee, to ages an example.

DALILA.

Yet hear me, Samson; not that I en-
deavour
To lessen or extenuate my offence,
But that on th' other side if it be
weigh'd
By itself, with aggravations not sur-
charg'd,
Or else with just allowance counter-
pois'd,
I may, if possible, thy pardon find

The easier towards me, or thy hatred
less.

First granting, as I do, it was a weak-
ness

In me, but incident to all our sex,

Curiosity, inquisitive, importune

Of secrets, then with like infirmity

To publish them, both common female
faults :

Was it not weakness also to make
known

For importunity, that is for naught,
Wherein consisted all thy strength and
safety?

To what I did thou show'dst me first
the way,

But I to enemies reveal'd, and should
not.

Nor shouldst thou have trusted that to
woman's frailty :

Ere I to thee, thou to thyself was cruel.
Let weakness then with weakness come
to parle

So near related, or the same of kind,
Thine forgive mine; that men may
censure thine

The gentler, if severely thou exact not
More strength from me, than in thyself
was found.

And what if love, which thou inter-
pret'st hate,

The jealousy of love, powerful of sway
In human hearts, nor less in mine
tow'rds thee,

Caus'd what I did? I saw thee mutable
Of fancy, fear'd lest one day thou
wouldst leave me

As her at Timna, sought by all means
therefore

How to endear, and hold thee to me
firmest :

No better way I saw than by impor-
tuning

To learn thy secrets, get into my power
The key of strength and safety: thou
wilt say,

Why then reveal'd? I was assur'd by
those

Who tempted me, that nothing was de-
sign'd

Against thee but safe custody, and hold:
That made for me; I knew that liberty
Would draw thee forth to perilous en-
terprises,

While I at home sat full of cares and
fears,

Wailing thy absence in my widow'd bed;
Here I should still enjoy thee day and
night

Mine and love's prisoner, not the Philis-
tines',

Whole to myself, unhazarded abroad,
Fearless at home of partners in my love.
These reasons in love's law have pass'd
for good,

Though fond and reasonless to some
perhaps :

And love hath oft, well meaning,
wrought much woe,

Yet always pity or pardon hath obtain'd.

Be not unlike all others, not austere
As thou art strong, inflexible as steel.

If thou in strength all mortals dost
exceed,

In uncompassionate anger do not so.

SAMSON.

How cunningly the sorceress displays
Her own transgressions, to upbraid me
mine?

That malice not repentance brought
thee hither,

By this appears; I gave, thou say'st, th'
example,

I led the way; bitter reproach, but true;
I to myself was false ere thou to me;

Such pardon therefore as I give my
folly,

Take to thy wicked deed; which when
thou see'st

Impartial, self-severe, inexorable,
Thou wilt renounce thy seeking, and
much rather

Confess it feign'd; weakness is thy ex-
cuse,

And I believe it, weakness to resist
Philistian gold: if weakness may ex-
cuse,

What murderer, what traitor, parricide,
Incestuous, sacrilegious, but may plead
it?

All wickedness is weakness: that plea,
therefore,

With God or man will gain thee no
remission.

But love constrain'd thee; call it furious
rage

To satisfy thy lust; love seeks to have
 love;
 My love how couldst thou hope, who
 took'st the way
 To raise in me inexorable hate,
 Knowing, as needs I must, by thee be-
 tray'd?
 In vain thou striv'st to cover shame
 with shame,
 Or by evasions thy crime uncover'st
 more.

DALILA.

Since thou determin'st weakness for no
 plea
 In man or woman, though to thy own
 condemning,
 Hear what assaults I had, what snares
 besides,
 What sieges girt me round, ere I con-
 sented;
 Which might have aw'd the best resolv'd
 of men,
 The constantest, to have yielded without
 blame.
 It was not gold, as to my charge thou
 lay'st,
 That wrought with me: thou know'st
 the magistrates
 And princes of my country came in
 person,
 Solicited, commanded, threaten'd, urged,
 Adjur'd by all the bonds of civil duty
 And of religion, press'd how just it was,
 How honourable, how glorious to entrap
 A common enemy, who had destroy'd
 Such numbers of our nation: and the
 priest
 Was not behind but ever at my ear,
 Preaching how meritorious with the
 gods
 It would be to ensnare an irreligious
 Dishonourer of Dagon: what had I
 T' oppose against such powerful argu-
 ments?
 Only my love of thee held long debate,
 And combated in silence all these rea-
 sons
 With hard contest: at length that
 grounded maxim,
 So rife and celebrated in the mouths
 Of wisest men, that to the public good
 Private respects must yield, with grave
 authority

Took full possession of me and pre-
 vail'd;
 Virtue, as I thought, truth, duty so
 enjoining.

SAMSON.

I thought where all thy circling wiles
 would end;
 In feign'd religion, smooth hypocrisy.
 But had thy love, still odiously pre-
 tended,
 Been as it ought, sincere, it would have
 taught thee
 Far other reasonings, brought forth
 other deeds.
 I, before all the daughters of my tribe
 And of my nation, chose thee from
 among
 My enemies, lov'd thee, as too well thou
 knew'st,
 Too well, unbosom'd all my secrets to
 thee,
 Not out of levity, but over-power'd
 By thy request, who could deny thee
 nothing.
 Yet now am judg'd an enemy. Why
 then
 Didst thou at first receive me for thy
 husband,
 Then, as since then, thy country's foe
 profess'd?
 Being once a wife, for me thou wast to
 leave
 Parents and country; nor was I their
 subject,
 Nor under their protection but my own.
 Thou mine, not theirs: if aught against
 my life
 Thy country sought of thee, it sought
 unjustly,
 Against the law of nature, law of na-
 tions;
 No more thy country but an impious
 crew
 Of men conspiring to uphold their state
 By worse than hostile deeds, violating
 the ends
 For which our country is a name so
 dear;
 Not therefore to be obey'd. But zeal
 mov'd thee
 To please thy gods thou didst it; gods
 unable

T' acquit themselves and prosecute their
foes
But by ungodly deeds; the contradiction
Of their own deity, gods cannot be;
Less therefore to be pleased, obey'd, or
fear'd,
These false pretexts and varnish'd
colours failing,
Bare in thy guilt how foul must thou
appear?

DALILA.

In argument with men a woman ever
Goes by the worse, whatever be her
cause.

SAMSON.

For want of words no doubt, or lack
of breath;
Witness when I was worried with thy
peals.

DALILA.

I was, a fool, too rash, and quite mis-
taken
In what I thought would have succeeded
best.
Let me obtain forgiveness of thee,
Samson,
Afford me place to show what recom-
pense
Tow'rds thee I intend for what I have
misdone,
Misguided; only what remains past cure
Bear not too sensibly, nor still insist
To afflict thyself in vain: though sight
be lost,
Life yet hath many solaces, enjoy'd,
Where other senses want not their de-
lights,
At home, in leisure and domestic ease,
Exempt from many a care and chance
to which
Eye-sight exposes daily men abroad.
I to the lords will intercede, not doubt-
ing
Their favourable ear, that I may fetch
thee
From forth this loathsome prison-house,
to abide
With me, where my redoubled love and
care

With nursing diligence, to me glad
office,
May ever tend about thee to old age
With all things grateful cheer'd, and so
supplied,
That what by me thou hast lost thou
least shall miss.

SAMSON.

No, no, of my condition take no care,
It fits not; thou and I long since are
twain;
Nor think me so unwary or accurs'd,
To bring my feet again into the snare
Where once I have been caught; I know
thy trains,
Though dearly to my cost, thy gins, and
toils;
Thy fair enchanted cup, and warbling
charms
No more on me have power, their force
is null'd,
So much of adder's wisdom I have
learn'd
To fence my ear against thy sorceries.
If in my flower of youth and strength,
when all men
Lov'd, honour'd, fear'd me, thou alone
couldst hate me,
Thy husband, slight me, sell me, and
forego me;
How wouldst thou use me now, blind,
and thereby
Deceivable, in most things as a child
Helpless, thence easily contemn'd, and
scorn'd,
And last neglected? How wouldst thou
insult,
When I must live uxorious to thy will
In perfect thralldom, how again betray
me,
Bearing my words and doings to the
lords
To gloss upon, and censuring, frown or
smile?
This jail I count the house of liberty
To thine, whose doors my feet shall
never enter.

DALILA.

Let me approach at least, and touch thy
hand.

SAMSON.

Not for thy life, lest fierce remembrance wake
 My sudden rage to tear thee joint by joint.
 At distance I forgive thee, go with that;
 Bewail thy falsehood, and the pious works
 It hath brought forth to make thee memorable
 Among illustrious women, faithful wives:
 Cherish thy hasten'd widowhood with the gold
 Of matrimonial treason: so farewell.

DALILA.

I see thou art implacable, more deaf
 To prayers than winds and seas, yet winds to seas
 Are reconcil'd at length, and sea to shore;
 Thy anger, unappeasable, still rages,
 Eternal tempest never to be calm'd.
 Why do I humble thus myself, and suing
 For peace, reap nothing but repulse and hate?
 Bid go with evil omen and the brand
 Of infamy upon my name denounc'd?
 To mix with thy concerns I desist
 Henceforth, nor too much disapprove my own.
 Fame, if not double fac'd is double mouth'd,
 And with contrary blast proclaims most deeds;
 On both his wings, one black, the other white,
 Bears greatest names in his wild airy flight.
 My name perhaps among the circumcis'd
 In Dan, in Judah, and the bordering tribes,
 To all posterity may stand defam'd,
 With malediction mention'd, and the blot
 Of falsehood most unconjugal traduc'd.
 But in my country, where I most desire,
 In Ecron, Gaza, Asdod, and in Gath,
 I shall be nam'd among the famousest
 Of women, sung at solemn festivals.
 Living and dead recorded, who to save

Her country from a fierce destroyer, chose
 Above the faith of wedlock-bands, my tomb
 With odours visited, and annual flowers;
 Not less renown'd than in mount Ephraim
 Jael, who with inhospitable guile
 Smote Sisera sleeping, through the temples nail'd,
 Nor shall I count it heinous to enjoy
 The public marks of honour and reward
 Confer'd upon me, for the piety
 Which to my country I was judg'd to have shown
 At this who ever envies or repines,
 I leave him to his lot, and like my own.

CHORUS.

She's gone, a manifest serpent by her sting
 Discover'd in the end, till now conceal'd.

SAMSON.

So let her go, God sent her to debase me,
 And aggravate my folly, who committed
 To such a viper his most sacred trust
 Of secrecy, my safety and my life.

CHORUS.

Yet beauty, though injurious, hath strange power,
 After offence returning, to regain
 Love once possess'd nor can be easily
 Repuls'd without much inward passion felt
 And secret sting of amorous remorse.

SAMSON.

Love quarrels oft in pleasing concord end,
 Not wedlock-treach'ry endangering life.

CHORUS.

It is not virtue, wisdom, valour, wit,
 Strength, comeliness of shape, or amplest merit
 That woman's love can win or long inherit;

But what it is, hard is to say,
Harder to hit,
(Which way soever men refer it.)
Much like thy riddle, Samson, in one
day,
Or seven, though one should musing
sit.

If any of these or all, the Timnian
bride
Had not so soon preferr'd
Thy paranymp, worthless to thee com-
par'd

Successor in thy bed,
Nor but so loosely disallied
Their nuptials, not this last so treacher-
ously

Had shorn the fatal harvest of thy head.
Is it for that such outward ornament
Was lavish'd on their sex, that inward
gifts

Were left for haste unfinish'd, judg-
ment scant,

Capacity not rais'd to apprehend
Or value what is best

In choice, but ofttest to affect the
wrong?

Or was too much of self-love mix'd,
Of constancy no root infix'd,
That either they love nothing, or not
long?

Whate'er it be to wisest men and best,
Seeming at first all heavenly under
virgin veil,

Soft, modest, meek, demure,
Once join'd, the contrary she proves, a
thorn

Intestine, far within defensive arms
A cleaving mischief, in his way to virtue
Adverse and turbulent, or by her
charms

Draws him awry enslav'd
With dotage, and his sense deprav'd
To folly and shameful deeds which
ruin ends.

What pilot so expert but needs must
wreck

Embark'd with such a steersmate at the
helm?

Favour'd of heaven who finds
One virtuous rarely found,
That in domestic good combines:
Happy that house! his way to peace is
smooth.

But virtue which breaks through all
opposition,

And all temptation can remove,
Most shines and most is acceptable
above.

Therefore God's universal law
Gave to the man despotic power
Over his female in due awe,
Not from that right to part an hour,
Smile she or lour:
So shall he least confusion draw
On his whole life, not sway'd
By female usurpation, or dismay'd.
But had we best retire, I see a storm?

SAMSON.

Fair days have oft contracted wind and
rain.

CHORUS.

But this another kind of tempest brings.

SAMSON.

Be less abstruse, my riddling days are
past.

CHORUS.

Look now for no enchanting voice, nor
fear

The bait of honied words; a rougher
tongue

Draws hitherwards, I know him by his
stride,

The giant Harapha of Gath, his look
Haughty as is his pile high-built and
proud.

Comes he in peace? what wind hath
blown him hither

I less conjecture than when first I saw
The sumptuous Dalila floating this way:
His habit carries peace, his brow de-
fiance.

SAMSON.

Or peace or not, alike to me he comes.

CHORUS.

His fraught we soon shall know, he
now arrives.

HARAPHA.

I come not, Samson, to condole thy
chance

As these perhaps, yet wish it had not
 been,
 Though for no friendly intent. I am
 of Gath:
 Men call me Harapha, of stock re-
 nown'd
 As Og or Anak and the Emims old
 That Kiriathaim held, thou know'st me
 now
 If thou at all art known. Much I have
 heard
 Of thy prodigious might and feats per-
 form'd
 Incredible to me, in this displeas'd
 That I was never present on the place
 Of those encounters, where we might
 have tried
 Each other's force in camp or listed
 field:
 And now am come to see of whom
 such noise
 Hath walk'd about, and each limb to
 survey,
 If thy appearance answer loud report.

SAMSON.

The way to know were not to see but
 taste.

HARAPHA.

Dost thou already single me? I thought
 Gyves and the mill had tam'd thee. O
 that fortune
 Had brought me to the field, where
 thou art fam'd
 To have wrought such wonders with
 an ass's jaw;
 I should have forc'd thee soon wish
 other arms,
 Or left thy carcass where the ass lay
 thrown:
 So had the glory of prowess been re-
 cover'd
 To Palestine, won by a Philistine
 From the unforeskin'd race, of whom
 thou bear'st
 The highest name for valiant acts; that
 honour
 Certain to have won by mortal duel
 from thee,
 I lose, prevented by thy eyes put out.

SAMSON.

Boast not of what thou would'st have
 done, but do
 What then thou wouldst, thou seest it
 in thy hand.

HARAPHA.

To combat with a blind man I disdain,
 And thou hast need much washing to
 be touch'd.

SAMSON.

Such usage as your honourable lords
 Afford me, assassinated and betray'd,
 Who durst not with their whole united
 powers
 In fight withstand me single and un-
 arm'd,
 Nor in the house with chamber am-
 bushes
 Close-banded durst attack me, no not
 sleeping,
 Till they had hir'd a woman with their
 gold
 Breaking her marriage faith to circum-
 vent me.
 Therefore without feign'd shifts let be
 assign'd
 Some narrow place enclos'd where sight
 may give thee,
 Or rather flight, no great advantage on
 me;
 Then put on all thy gorgeous arms, thy
 helmet
 And brigandine of brass, thy broad
 habergeon,
 Vant-brass and greaves, and gauntlet,
 add thy spear,
 A weaver's beam, and seven-times-
 folded shield,
 I only with an oaken staff will meet
 thee
 And raise such outcries on thy clatter'd
 iron,
 Which long shall not withhold me from
 thy head,
 That in a little time while breath re-
 mains thee,
 Thou oft shalt wish thyself at Gath to
 boast
 Again in safety what thou wouldst have
 done

To Samson, but shalt never see Gath
more.

HARAPHA.

Thou durst not thus disparage glorious
arms
Which greatest heroes have in battle
worn,
Their ornament and safety, had not
spells
And black enchantments, some ma-
gician's art
Armed thee, or charmed thee strong
which thou from heaven
Feign'dst at thy birth was given thee in
thy hair,
Where strength can least abide, though
all thy hairs
Were bristles, rang'd like those that
ridge the back
Of chaf'd wild boars, or ruffled porcu-
pines.

SAMSON.

I know no spells, use no forbidden arts:
My trust is in the living God, who gave
me
At my nativity this strength, diffus'd
No less through all my sinews, joints
and bones,
Than thine, while I preserv'd these locks
unshorn,
The pledge of my unviolated vow.
For proof hereof, if Dagon be thy god,
Go to his temple, invoke his aid
With solemnest devotion, spread before
him
How highly it concerns his glory now
To frustrate and dissolve these magic
spells,
Which I to be the power of Israel's
God
Avow, and challenge Dagon to the test,
Offering to combat thee his champion
bold
With th' utmost of his godhead se-
conded:
Then thou shalt see, or rather to thy
sorrow
Soon feel, whose God is strongest, thine
or mine.

HARAPHA.

Presume not on thy God, whate'er he be,
Thee he regards not, owns not, hath
cut off
Quite from his people, and deliver'd up
Into thy enemies' hand, permitted them
To put out both thine eyes, and fetter'd
send thee
Into the common prison, there to grind.
Among the slaves and asses, thy com-
rades,
As good for nothing else, no better
service
With those thy boist'rous locks, no
worthy match
For valour to assail, nor by the sword
Of noble warrior, so to stain his honour,
But by the barber's razor best subdued.

SAMSON.

All these indignities, for such they are
From thine, these evils I deserve and
more,
Acknowledge them from God inflicted
on me
Justly, yet despair not of his final par-
don.
Whose ear is ever open, and his eye
Gracious to re-admit the suppliant;
In confidence whereof I once again
Defy thee to the trial of mortal fight,
By combat to decide whose god is God.
Thine, or whom I with Israel's sons
adore.

HARAPHA.

Fair honour that thou dost thy God, in
trusting
He will accept thee to defend his cause,
A murderer, a révolter, and a robber.

SAMSON.

Tongue-doughty Giant, how dost thou
prove me these?

HARAPHA.

Is not thy nation subject to our lords?
Their magistrates confess'd it, when
they took thee

As a league-breaker, and deliver'd
bound
Into our hands: for hadst thou not
committed
Notorious murder on those thirty men
At Ascalon, who never did thee harm,
Then like a robber stripp'dst them of
their robes?
The Philistines, when thou hadst broke
the league,
Went up with armèd powers thee only
seeking,
To others did no violence nor spoil.

SAMSON.

Among the daughters of the Philistines
I chose a wife, which argued me no
foe;
And in your city held my nuptial feast:
But your ill-meaning politician lords,
Under pretence of bridal friends and
guests,
Appointed to await me thirty spies,
Who threat'ning cruel death constrain'd
the bride
To writing from me and tell to them my
secret,
That solv'd the riddle which I had pro-
pos'd
When I perceiv'd all set on enmity,
As on thy enemies, wherever chanc'd
I us'd hostility, and took their spoil
To pay my underminers in their coin.
My nation was subjected to your lords.
It was the force of conquest; force with
force
Is well ejected, when the conquer'd can.
But I a private person, whom my
country,
As a league-breaker, gave up bound,
presum'd
Single rebellion and did hostile acts;
I was no private but a person rais'd
With strength sufficient and command
from Heav'n
To free my country; if their servile
minds
Me their deliverer sent would not re-
ceive,
But to their masters gave me up for
naught,
Th' unworthier they; whence to this
day they serve,

I was to do my part from heaven
assign'd,
And had perform'd it if my known
offence
Had not disabled me, not all your force:
These shifts refuted, answer thy ap-
pellant,
Though by his blindness maim'd for
high attempts,
Who now defies thee thrice to single
fight,
As a petty enterprize, of small enforce.

HARAPHA.

With thee a man condemn'd, a slave
enroll'd,
Due by the law to capital punishment?
To fight with thee no man of arms will
deign.

SAMSON.

Cam'st thou for this, vain boaster, to
survey me,
To descant on my strength, and give
thy verdict?
Come nearer, part not hence so slight
inform'd;
But take good heed my hand survey not
thee.

HARAPHA.

O Baal-zebul! can my ears unus'd
Hear these dishonours, and not render
death?

SAMSON.

No man withholds thee, nothing from
thy hand
Fear I incurable; bring up thy van,
My heels are fetter'd, but my fist is free.

HARAPHA.

This insolence other kind of answer fits.

SAMSON.

Go, baffled coward, lest I run upon thee,
Though in these chains, bulk without
spirit vast,
And with one buffet lay thy structure
low,

Or swing thee in the air, then dash
thee down
To the hazard of thy brains and shat-
ter'd sides.

HARAPHA.

By Astaroth, ere long thou shalt lament
These braveries in irons loaden on thee.

CHORUS.

His giantship is gone somewhat crest-
fallen,
Stalking with less unconscionable
strides,
And lower looks, but in a sultry chafe.

SAMSON.

I dread him not, nor all his giant-brood
Though fame divulge him Father of five
sons,
All of gigantic size, Goliah chief.

CHORUS.

He will directly to the lords, I fear,
And with malicious counsel stir them up
Some way or other yet further to
afflict thee.

SAMSON.

He must allege some cause, and offer'd
fight
Will not dare mention, lest a question
rise
Whether he durst accept the offer or
not,
And that he durst not plain enough ap-
pear'd.
Much more affliction than already felt
They can not well impose, nor I sustain,
If they intend advantage of my labours,
The work of many hands which earns
my keeping
With no small profit daily to my own-
ers.
But come what will, my deadliest foe
will prove
My speediest friend, by death to rid me
hence.
The worst that he can give, to me the
best.

Yet so it may fall out, because their end
Is hate, not help to me, it may with mine
Draw their own ruin who attempt the
deed.

CHORUS.

O how comely it is, and how reviving
For the spirits of just men long op-
press'd,
When God into the hands of their de-
liverer
Puts invincible might
To quell the mighty of the earth, th'
oppressor,
The brute and boist'rous force of vio-
lent men
Hardy and industrious to support
Tyrannic power, but raging to pursue
The righteous, and all such as honour
truth:
He all their ammunition
And feats of war defeats
With plain heroic magnitude of mind,
And celestial vigour arm'd,
Their armouries and magazines con-
temns,
Renders them useless, while
With winged expedition
Swift as the lightning glance he exe-
cutes
His errand on the wicked, who sur-
pris'd
Lose their defence distracted and
amazed.
But patience is more oft the exercise
Of saints, the trial of their fortitude,
Making them each his own deliverer,
And victor over all
That tyranny or fortune can inflict,
Either of these is in thy lot,
Samson, with might indued
Above the sons of men; but sight be-
reav'd
May chance to number thee with those
Whom patience finally must crown.
This idol's day hath been to thee no
day of rest,
Labouring thy mind
More than the working day thy hands.
And yet perhaps more trouble is behind,
For I descry this way
Some other tending, in his hand
A sceptre or quaint staff he bears,
Comes on amain, speed in his look.

By his habit I discern him now
A public officer, and now at hand.
His message will be short and voluble.

OFFICER.

Hebrews, the pris'ner Samson here I
seek.

CHORUS.

His manacles remark him, there he sits.

OFFICER.

Samson, to thee our lords thus bid me
say:

This day to Dagon is a solemn feast,
With sacrifices, triumph, pomp, and
games;

Thy strength they know surpassing
human rate,
And now some public proof thereof
require

To honour this great feast, and great
assembly;

Rise therefore, with all speed and come
along,

Where I will see thee hearten'd and
fresh clad

To appear as fits before th' illustrious
lords.

SAMSON.

Thou know'st I am an Hebrew, there-
fore tell them,

Our law forbids at their religious rites
My presence; for that cause I cannot
come.

OFFICER.

This answer, be assur'd, will not con-
tent them.

SAMSON.

Have they not sword-players, and every
sort

Of gymnic artists, wrestlers, riders,
runners,

Jugglers and dancers, antics, mum-
mers, mimics,

But they must pick me out with shackles
tir'd,

And over-labour'd at their public mill,
To make them sport with blind activity?
Do they not seek occasion of new quar-
rels

On my refusal to distress me more,
Or make a game of my calamities?
Return the way thou cam'st, I will not
come.

OFFICER.

Regard thyself, this will offend them
highly.

SAMSON.

Myself! my conscience and internal
peace,

Can they think me so broken, so de-
bas'd

With corporal servitude, that my mind
ever

Will condescend to such absurd com-
mands?

Although their drudge, to be their fool
or jester,

And in my midst of sorrow and heart
grief

To show them feats, and play before
their god,

The worst of all indignities, yet on me
Join'd with extreme contempt? I will
not come.

OFFICER.

My message was impos'd on me with
speed,

Brooks no delay: is this thy resolution?

SAMSON.

So take it with what speed thy message
needs.

OFFICER.

I am sorry what this stoutness will
produce.

SAMSON.

Perhaps thou shalt have cause to sorrow
indeed.

CHORUS.

Consider, Samson; matters now are
strain'd
Up to the height, whether to hold or
break;
He's gone, and who knows how he may
report
Thy words by adding fuel to the flame?
Expect another message more imperi-
ous,
More loudly thund'ring than thou well
wilt bear.

SAMSON.

Shall I abuse this consecrated gift
Of strength, again returning with my
hair
After my great transgression, so requite
Favour renew'd, and add a greater sin
By prostituting holy things to idols;
A Nazarite in place abominable,
Vaunting my strength in honour to their
Dagon?
Besides how vile, contemptible, ridicu-
lous,
What act more execrably unclean, pro-
fane?

CHORUS.

Yet with this strength thou serv'st the
Philistines,
Idolatrous, uncircumcis'd, unclean.

SAMSON.

Not in their idol-worship, but by labour
Honest and lawful to deserve my food
Of those who have me in their civil
power.

CHORUS.

Where the heart joins not, outward acts
defile not.

SAMSON.

Where outward force constrains, the
sentence holds.
But who constrains me to the temple of
Dagon,
Not dragging? the Philistian lords
command.

Commands are no constraints. If I
obey them,
I do it freely, vent'ring to displease
God for the fear of man, and man
prefer,
Set God behind: which in his jealousy
Shall never, unrepented, find forgive-
ness.
Yet that he may dispense with me or
thee
Present in temples at idolatrous rites
For some important cause, thou need'st
not doubt.

CHORUS.

How thou wilt here come off surmounts
my reach.

SAMSON.

Be of good courage, I begin to feel
Some rousing motions in me which dis-
pose
To something extraordinary my
thoughts.
I with this messenger will go along,
Nothing to do, be sure, that may dis-
honour
Our law, or stain my vow of Nazarite.
If there be aught of presage in the
mind,
This day will be remarkable in my life
By some great act, or of my days the
last.

CHORUS.

In time thou hast resolv'd, the man
returns.

OFFICER.

Samson, this second message from our
lords
To thee I am bid say: Art thou our
slave,
Our captive, at the public mill our
drudge,
And dar'st thou at our sending and
command
Dispute thy coming? come without de-
lay;
Or we shall find such engines to assail
And hamper thee, as thou shalt come of
force,

Though thou wert firmlier fasten'd than
a rock.

SAMSON.

I could be well content to try their art,
Which to no few of them would prove
pernicious,

Yet knowing their advantages too many,
Because they shall not trail me through
their streets

Like a wild beast, I am content to go,
Masters' commands come with a power
resistless

To such as owe them absolute subjec-
tion;

And for a life who will not change his
purpose?

(So mutable are all the ways of men,)
Yet this be sure, in nothing to comply
Scandalous or forbidden in our law.

OFFICER.

I praise thy resolution: doff these
links;

By this compliance thou wilt win the
lords

To favour, and perhaps to set thee free.

SAMSON.

Brethren, farewell; your company along
I will not wish, lest it perhaps offend
them

To see me girt with friends; and how
the sight

Of me as of a common enemy,
So dreaded once, may now exasperate
them

I know not: lords are lordliest in their
wine;

And the well-feasted priest then soonest
fir'd

With zeal, if aught religion seem con-
cern'd;

No less the people on their holy days
Impetuous, insolent, unquenchable;

Happen what may, of me expect to hear
Nothing dishonourable, impure, un-
worthy

Our God, our law, my nation, or myself,
The last of me or no I cannot warrant.

CHORUS.

Go, and the Holy One
Of Israel be thy guide
To what may serve his glory best, and
spread his name

Great among the heathen round;
Send thee the angel of thy birth to
stand

Fast by thy side, who from thy father's
field,

Rode up in flames after this message
told

Of thy conception, and be now a shield
Of fire; that Spirit that first rushed on
thee

In the camp of Dan

Be efficacious in thee now at need;

For never was from heaven imparted

Measure of strength so great to mortal
seed,

As in thy wondrous actions hath been
seen.

But wherefore comes old Manoah in
such haste

With youthful steps? much livelier than
erewhile

He seems; supposing here to find his
son,

Or of him bringing to us some glad
news?

MANOAH.

Peace with you, brethren; my induce-
ment hither

Was not at present here to find my son.
By order of the lords new parted hence
To come and play before them at their
feast.

I heard all as I came, the city rings,

And numbers thither flock, I had no
will,

Lest I should see him forc'd to things
unseemly.

But that which mov'd my coming now,
was chiefly

To give ye part with me what hope I
have

With good success to work his liberty.

CHORUS.

That hope would much rejoice us to
partake

With thee; say, reverend Sire we thirst
to hear.

MANOAH.

I have attempted one by one the lords
Either at home, or through the high
street passing,
With supplication prone and father's
tears,
To accept of ransom for my son their
pris'ner.
Some much averse I found and wond-
rous harsh,
Contemptuous proud, set on revenge and
spite;
That part most reverenc'd Dagon and
his priests:
Others more moderate seeming, but
their aim
Private reward, for which both God and
state
They easily would set to sail; a third
More generous far and civil, who con-
fess'd
They had enough reveng'd, having re-
duc'd
Their foe to miserv beneath their fears,
The rest was magnanimity to remit,
If some convenient ransom were pre-
pos'd.
What noise or shout was that? it tore
the sky.

CHORUS.

Doubtless the people shouting to behold
Their once great dread, captive, and
blind before them,
Or at some proof of strength before
them shown.

MANOAH.

His ransom, if my whole inheritance
May compass it, shall willingly be paid
And number'd down: much rather I
shall choose
To live the poorest in my tribe, than
richest,
And he in that calamitous prison left.
No, I am fix'd not to part hence without
him.
For his redemption all my patrimony
If need be, I am ready to forego

And quit: not wanting him, I shall want
nothing.

CHORUS.

Fathers are wont to lay up for their
sons.
Thou for thy son art bent to lay out all;
Sons wont to nurse their parents in old
age,
Thou in old age car'st how to nurse
thy son
Made older than thy age through eye-
sight last.

MANOAH.

It shall be my delight to tend his eyes,
And view him sitting in the house, en-
nobled
With all those high exploits by him
achiev'd,
And on his shoulders waving down
those locks,
That of a nation arm'd the strength
contain'd:
And I persuade me God had not per-
mitted
His strength again to grow up with his
hair
Garrison'd round about him like a camp
Of faithful soldiery were not his pur-
pose
To use him further yet in some great
service,
Not to sit idle with so great a gift
Useless, and thence ridiculous about
him.
And since his strength with eye-sight
was not lost,
God will restore his eye-sight to his
strength.

CHORUS.

Thy' hopes are not ill-founded, nor
seem vain
Of his delivery, and thy joy thereon
Conceiv'd agreeable to a father's love,
In both, which we, as next, participate.

MANOAH.

I know your friendly minds and—O
what noise?

Mercy of heaven, what hideous noise
was that?

Horribly loud, unlike the former shout.

CHORUS.

Noise call you it or universal groan,
As if the whole inhabitation perish'd!
Blood, death, and deathful deeds are in
that noise,

Ruin, destruction at the utmost point.

MANOAH.

Of ruin indeed, methought I heard the
noise,

Oh it continues, they have slain my son.

CHORUS.

Thy son is rather slaying them, that
outcry
From slaughter of one foe could not
ascend.

MANOAH.

Some dismal accident it needs must be;
What shall we do, stay here or run and
see?

CHORUS.

Best keep together here, lest running
thither

We unawares run into danger's mouth.
This evil on the Philistines is fallen;
From whom could else a general cry
be heard?

The sufferers then will scarce molest us
here,

From other hands we need not much
to fear,

What if his eye-sight (for to Israel's
God

Nothing is hard) by miracle restor'd,
He now be dealing dole among his foes,
And over heaps of slaughter'd walk
his way?

MANOAH.

That were a joy presumptuous to be
thought.

CHORUS.

Yet God hath wrought things as in-
credible
For his people of old; what hinders
now?

MANOAH.

He can I know, but doubt to think he
will;

Yet hope would fain subscribe, and
tempts belief.

A little stay will bring some notice
hither.

CHORUS.

Of good or bad so great, of bad the
sooner;

For evil news rides post, while good
news baits.

And to our wish I see one hither speed-
ing,

An Hebrew, as I guess, and of our
tribe.

MESSENGER.

O whither shall I run, or which way
fly

The sight of this so horrid spectacle,
Which erst my eyes beheld and yet be-
hold?

For dire imagination still pursues me.
But providence or instinct of nature
seems,

Or reason though disturb'd, and scarce
consulted,

To have guided me aright, I know not
how,

To thee first reverend Manoah, and to
these

My countrymen, whom here I knew re-
maining,

As at some distance from the place
of horror,

So in the sad event too much con-
cern'd.

MANOAH.

The accident was loud, and here before
thee

With rueful cry, yet what it was we
hear not:
No preface needs, thou seest we long
to know.

MESSENGER.

It would burst forth, but I recover
breath
And sense distract, to know well what
I utter.

MANOAH.

Tell us the sum, the circumstance de-
fer.

MESSENGER.

Gaza yet stands, but all her sons are
fallen,
All in a moment overwhelm'd and
fallen.

MANOAH.

Sad, but thou know'st to Israelites not
saddest
The desolation of a hostile city.

MESSENGER.

Feed on that first, there may in grief
be surfeit.

MANOAH.

Relate by whom.

MESSENGER.

By Samson.

MANOAH.

That still lessens
The sorrow and converts it nigh to joy.

MESSENGER.

Ah, Manoah. I refrain too suddenly
To utter what will come at last too
soon;
Lest evil tidings with too rude irrup-
tion

Hitting thy agèd ear should piercé too
deep.

MANOAH.

Suspense in news is torture, speak them
out.

MESSENGER.

Take then the worst in brief, Samson
is dead.

MANOAH.

The worst indeed, O all my hope's de-
feated

To free him hence! but death who sets
all free

Hath paid his ransom now and full
discharge.

What windy joy this day had I con-
ceiv'd

Hopeful of his delivery, which now
proves

Abortive as the first-born bloom of
spring

Nipp'd with the lagging rear of win-
ter's frost!

Yet ere I give the reins to grief, say
first,

How died he; death to life is crown or
shame

All by him fell thou say'st, by whom
fell he,

What glorious hand gave Samson his
death wound?

MESSENGER.

Unwounded of his enemies he fell.

MANOAH.

Wearied with slaughter then or how?
Explain.

MESSENGER.

By his own hands.

MANOAH.

Self-violence! what cause
Brought him so soon at variance with
himself
Among his foès?

MESSENGER.

Inevitable cause
 At once both to destroy and be de-
 stroy'd;
 The edifice, where all were met to see
 him,
 Upon their heads and on his own he
 pull'd.

MANOAH.

O lastly over-strong against thyself!
 A dreadful way, thou took'st to thy re-
 venge.
 More than enough we know; but while
 things yet
 Are in confusion, give us if thou
 canst,
 Eye-witness of what first or last was
 done,
 Relation more particular and distinct.

MESSENGER.

Occasions drew me early to this city,
 And as the gates I enter'd with sunrise,
 The morning trumpets festival pro-
 claim'd
 Through each high street: little I had
 despatch'd,
 When all abroad was rumour'd that this
 day
 Samson should be brought forth, to
 show the people
 Proof of his mighty strength in feats
 and games;
 I sorrow'd at his captive state, but
 minded
 Not to be absent at that spectacle.
 The building was a spacious theatre
 Half-round on two main pillars vaulted
 high,
 With seats where all the lords and each
 degree
 Of sort, might sit in order to behold;
 The other side was open, where the
 throng
 On banks and scaffolds under sky
 might stand;
 He among these aloof obscurely stood.
 The feast and noon grew high, and
 sacrifice
 Had fill'd their hearts with mirth, high
 cheer and wine,

When to their sports they turn'd. Im-
 mediately
 Was Samson as a public servant
 brought,
 In their state livery clad; before him
 pipes
 And timbrels, on each side went armed
 guards,
 Both horse and foot, before him and
 behind
 Archers, and slingers, cataphracts and
 spears.
 At sight of him the people with a shout
 Rifted the air, clamouring their god
 with praise,
 Who had made their dreadful enemy
 their thrall.
 He, patient but undaunted, where they
 led him,
 Came to the place, and what was set
 before him,
 Which without help of eye might be
 assay'd
 To heave, pull, draw, or break, he still
 perform'd,
 All with incredible, stupendous force:
 None daring to appear antagonist.
 At length for intermission sake they
 led him
 Between the pillars; he his guide re-
 quested
 (For so from such as nearer stood we
 heard)
 As over-tir'd to let him lean a while
 With both his arms on those two
 massy pillars,
 That to the archèd roof gave main sup-
 port.
 He unsuspecting led him; which when
 Samson
 Felt in his arms, with head a while
 inclin'd,
 And eyes fast fix'd he stood, as one who
 pray'd,
 Or some great matter in his mind re-
 volv'd:
 At last with head erect thus cried aloud,
 "Hitherto, lords, what your commands
 impos'd
 I have perform'd, as reason was, obey-
 ing,
 Not without wonder or delight beheld:
 Now of my own accord such other
 trial

I mean to show you of my strength,
 yet greater
 As with amaze shall strike all who be-
 hold.
 This utter'd, straining all his nerves he
 bow'd,
 As with the force of winds and waters
 pent,
 When mountains tremble, those two
 massy pillars
 With horrible convulsion to and fro,
 He tugg'd, he shook, till down they
 came and drew
 The whole roof after them, with burst
 of thunder
 Upon the heads of all who sat beneath.
 Lords, ladies, captains, counsellors, or
 priests,
 Their choice nobility and flower, not
 only
 Of this but each Philistian city round,
 Met from all parts to solemnize this
 feast.
 Samson with these inmix'd, inevitably
 Pull'd down the same destruction on
 himself;
 The vulgar only scap'd who stood with-
 out.

CHORUS.

O dearly-bought revenge, yet glorious!
 Living or dying thou hast fulfill'd
 The work for which thou wast foretold
 To Israel, and now liest victorious
 Among thy slain self-kill'd,
 Not willingly, but tangled in the fold
 Of dire necessity, whose law in death
 conjoin'd
 Thee with thy slaughter'd foes in num-
 ber more
 Than all thy life had slain before.

SEMICHORUS.

While their hearts were jocund and sub-
 lime,
 Drunk with idolatry, drunk with wine
 And fat regorg'd of bulls and goats,
 Chanting their idol, and preferring
 Before our living Dread who dwells
 In Silo his bright sanctuary:
 Among them He a spirit of frenzy sent
 Who hurt their minds
 And urg'd them on with mad desire
 To call in haste for their destroyer;

They only set on sport and play
 Unweetingly importun'd
 Their own destruction to come speedy
 upon them.
 So fond are mortal men
 Fallen into wrath divine
 As their own ruin on themselves to
 invite,
 Insensate left, or to sense reprobate,
 And with blindness internal struck.

SEMICHORUS.

But he though blind of sight,
 Despis'd and thought extinguish'd quite,
 With inward eyes illuminated,
 His fiery virtue rous'd
 From under ashes into sudden flame,
 And as an evening dragon came
 Assailant on the perch'd roosts,
 And nests in order rang'd
 Of tame villatic fowl; but as an eagle
 His cloudless thunder bolted on their
 heads.
 So virtue given for lost,
 Depress'd, and overthrown, as seem'd,
 Like that self-begotten bird
 In the Arabian woods imboss'd,
 That no second knows nor third,
 And lay erewhile a holocaust,
 From out her ashy womb now teem'd,
 Revives, reflourishes, then vigorous
 most
 When most unactive deem'd.
 And though her body die, her fame
 survives
 A secular bird ages of lives.

MANOAH.

Come, come; no time for lamentation
 now,
 Nor much more cause; Samson hath
 quit himself
 Like Samson, and heroically hath fin-
 ish'd
 A life heroic, on his enemies
 Fully reveng'd, hath left them years
 of mourning.
 And lamentations to the sons of Caph-
 tor
 Through all Philistian bounds; to Israel
 Honour hath left, and freedom, let but
 them
 Find courage to lay hold on this oc-
 casion,

To himself and father's house eternal
 fame;
 And which is best and happiest yet, all
 this
 With God not parted from him, as was
 fear'd.
 But favouring and assisting to the end.
 Nothing is here for tears, nothing to
 wail
 Or knock the breast, no weakness, no
 contempt.
 Dispraise or blame, nothing but well
 and fair,
 And what may quiet us in a death so
 noble.
 Let us go find the body where it lies
 Soak'd in his enemies' blood, and from
 the stream
 With lavers pure and cleansing herbs
 wash off
 The clotted gore. I with what speed
 the while
 (Gaza is not in plight to say us nay)
 Will send for all my kindred, all my
 friends,
 To fetch him hence, and solemnly at-
 tend
 With silent obsequy and funeral train
 Home to his father's house: there will
 I build him
 A monument, and plant it round with
 shade
 Of laurel ever green, and branching
 palm,

With all his trophies hung, and acts
 enroll'd
 In copious legend, or sweet lyric song.
 Thither shall all the valiant youth re-
 sort,
 And from his memory inflame their
 breasts
 To matchless valour and adventures
 high:
 The virgins also shall on feastful days
 Visit his tomb with flowers, only be-
 wailing
 His lot unfortunate in nuptial choice,
 From whence captivity and loss of eyes.

CHORUS.

All is best, though we oft doubt
 What th' unsearchable dispose
 Of highest wisdom brings about,
 And ever best found in the close.
 Oft he seems to hide his face,
 But unexpectedly returns,
 And to his faithful champion hath in
 place
 Bore witness gloriously; whence Gaza
 mourns
 And all that band them to resist
 His uncontrollable intent;
 His servants he with new acquist
 Of true experience from this great
 event
 With peace and consolation hath dis-
 missed,
 And calm of mind all passion spent.

JOHN MILTON (1608-1674).



DAVID AND GOLIATH
A SACRED DRAMA



DAVID AND GOLIATH

A SACRED DRAMA.

*O bienheureux mille fois,
L'Enfant que le Seigneur aime,
Qui de bonne heure entend sa voix,
Et que ce Dieu diagne instruire lui-
meme!*

*Loin du monde eleve; de tous les dons
des Cieur,*

*Il est orne des sa naissance;
Et du mechant l'abord contagieux
N'altere point son innocence.—ATHALIE.*

PERSONS OF THE DRAMA.

SAUL, *king of Israel.*

ARNER, *his general.*

JESSE.

ELIAB,

ABINADAB, } sons of Jesse.

DAVID,

GOLIATH, *the Philistian giant.*

Philistines, Israelites, &c., &c.

Chorus of Hebrew women.

*The scene lies in the camp in the valley
of Elah, and the adjacent plain.*

The subject is taken from the seventh
chapter of the First Book of Samucl.

PART I.

SCENE—A shepherd's tent on a
plain.

DAVID, *under a spreading tree, plays
on his harp and sings.*

I.

GREAT Lord of all things! Pow'r di-
vine!

Breathe on this erring heart of mine
Thy grace serene and pure;

Defend my frail, my erring youth,
And teach me this important truth,

The humble are secure!

II.

Teach me to bless my lowly lot,
Confin'd to this paternal cot,

Remote from regal state!

Content to court the cooling glade,
Inhale the breeze, enjoy the shade,
And love my humble fate.

III.

No anxious vigils here I keep,
No dreams of gold distract my sleep,
Nor lead my heart astray;
Nor blasting Envy's tainted gale
Pollutes the pleasures of the vale,
To vex my harmless day.

IV.

Yon tow'r which rears its head so high,
And bids defiance to the sky,
Invites the hostile winds:
Yon branching oak extending wide,
Provokes destruction by its pride,
And courts the fall it finds.

V.

Then let me shun th' ambitious deed,
And all the dang'rous paths which lead
To honours falsely won;
Lord! in thy sure protection blest,
Submissive will I ever rest,
And may thy will be done!

[*He lays down his harp and rises.*]

DAVID. Methinks this shepherd's life
were dull and tasteless
Without the charm of soothing song or
harp:

With it, not undelightful is the haunt
Of wood, or lonely grove, or russet
plain,

Made vocal by the Muse. With this
lov'd harp,
This daily solace of my cares, I
sooth'd

The melancholy monarch, when he lay
Smit by the chill and spirit-quenching
hand

Of black despair. God of my fathers,
hear me!

Here I devote my harp, my verse, my-
self,

To thy best service! gladly to proclaim
Glory to God on high, on earth good-
will

To man; to pour my grateful soul be-
fore thee;

To sing thy pow'r, thy wisdom, and thy
love,

And ev'ry gracious attribute; to paint
The charms of heaven-born Virtue!
So shall I

(Though with long interval of worth)
aspire

To imitate the work of saints above,
Of Cherub and of Seraphim. My
heart,

My talents, all I am, and all I have,
Is thine, O Father! Gracious Lord,
accept

The humble dedication! Offer'd gifts
Of slaughter'd bulls and goats sacrifi-
cial

Thou hast refus'd: but lo, I come, O
Lord!

To do thy will; the living sacrifice
Of an obedient heart I lay before
thee:

This humble off'ring more shall please
thee, Lord,

Than horned bullocks, ceremonial
rites,

New moons, and Sabbaths, passovers,
and fasts!

Yet those I too will keep; but not in
lieu

Of holiness substantial, inward worth;
As commutation cheap for pious
deeds

And purity of life, but as the types
Of better things; as fair external signs
Of inward holiness and secret truth.

But see, my father, good old Jesse
comes!

To cheer the setting evening of whose
life,

Content, a simple shepherd here I
dwell,

Though Israel is in arms; and royal
Saul,

Encamp'd in yonder field, defies Philis-
tia.

JESSE, DAVID.

JESSE. Blest be the gracious pow'r
who gave my age

To boast a son like thee! Thou art
the staff

Which props my bending years, and
makes me bear

The heavy burden of declining age
With fond complacency. How unlike
thy fate,

O venerable Eli! But two sons,
But only two to gild the dim remains
Of life's departing day, and bless thy
age,

And both were curses to thee! Witness,
Heaven,

In all the cruel catalogue of pains
Humanity turns o'er, if there be one
So terrible to human tenderness

As an unnatural child!

DAVID. O! my lov'd father!
Long may'st thou live, in years and
honours rich;

To taste and to communicate the joys,
The thousand fond endearing charities,
Of tenderness domestic; Nature's best
And loveliest gift, with which she well
atones

The niggard boon of fortune.

JESSE. O! my son!
Of all the graces which adorn thy
youth,

I, with a father's fondness, must com-
mend

Thy try'd humility. For though the
seer

Pour'd on thy chosen head, the sacred
oil

In sign of future greatness, in sure
pledge

Of highest dignity, yet here thou
dwell'st

Content with toil and careless of re-
pose;

And (harder still for an ingenuous
mind)

Content to be obscure; content to
watch

With careful eye, thy humble father's
flock!

O earthly emblem of celestial things!
So Israel's shepherd watches o'er his
fold:

The weak ones in his fost'ring bosom
bears:

And gently leads in his sustaining hand,
The feeble ones with young.

DAVID. Know'st thou, my father,
Aught from the field? for though so
near the camp,

Though war's proud ensigns stream on
yonder plain,
And all Philistia's swarming hosts encamp,
Oppos'd to royal Saul, beneath whose
banners
My brothers lift the spear—I have not
left
My fleecy charge, by thee committed to
me,
To learn the various fortunes of the
war.

JESSE. And wisely hast thou done.
Thrice happy realm,
Who shall submit one day to his command
Who can so well obey! Obedience
leads
To certain honours. Not the tow'ring
wing
Of eagle-plum'd ambition mounts so
surely
To fortune's highest summit, as obedience
ence.

[*A distant sound of trumpets.*]

But why that sudden ardour, O my son?
That trumpet's sound (though so remote
its voice,
We hardly catch the echo as it dies)
Has rous'd the mantling crimson in thy
cheek,
Kindled the martial spirit in thine eye;
And my young shepherd feels an hero's
fire!

DAVID. Thou hast not told the posture
of the war,
And much my beating bosom pants to
hear.

JESSE. Uncertain is the fortune of
the field.
I tremble for thy brothers, thus expos'd
To constant peril; nor for them alone
Does the quick feeling agonize my
heart.
I feel for all!—I mourn, that ling'ring
War
Still hangs his banner o'er my native
land.
Belov'd Jerusalem! O War! what art
thou?
At once the proof and scourge of man's
fall'n state!
After the brightest conquest, what appears

Of all thy glories? for the vanquish'd,
chains!

For the proud victor, what? Alas, to
reign

O'er desolated nations! a drear waste,
By one man's crime, by one man's lust
of pow'r,

Unpeopled! Ravag'd fields assume the
place

Of smiling harvests, and uncultur'd
plains

Succeed the fertile vineyard; barren
waste

Deforms the spot once rich with
luscious fig

And the fat olive.—Devastation reigns.
Here, rifled temples are the cavern'd
dens

Of savage beasts, or haunt of birds
obscene;

There, pop'lous cities blacken in the sun,
And in the general wreck, proud palaces
Lie undistinguish'd save by the dun
smoke

Of recent conflagration. When the song
Of dear-bought joy, with many a
triumph swell'd,

Salutes the victor's ear, and soothes his
pride,

How is the grateful harmony profan'd
With the sad dissonance of virgin's
cries,

Who mourn their brothers slain! of
matrons hoar,

Who clasp their wither'd hands, and
fondly ask,

With iteration shrill, their slaughter'd
sons!

How is the laurel's verdure stain'd with
blood,

And soil'd with widows' tears!

DAVID. Thrice mournful truth!
Yet when our country's sacred rights
are menac'd;

Her firm foundations shaken to their
base;

When all we love, and all that we
revere,

Our hearths and altars, children, par-
ents, wives,

Our liberties and laws; the throne they
guard,

Are scorn'd and tramp'd on—then,
then, my father!

'Tis then Religion's voice; then God
himself

Commands us to defend his injur'd
name,

And think the victory cheaply bought
with life.

'Twere then inglorious weakness, mean
self-love:

To lie inactive, when the stirring voice
Of the shrill trumpet wakes the patriot
youth,

And, with heroic valour, bids them dare
The foul idolatrous bands, e'en to the
death.

JESSE. God and thy country claim
the life they gave;

No other cause can sanctify resentment.

DAVID. Sure virtuous friendship is a
noble cause!

O were the princely Jonathan in danger,
How would I die, well pleas'd, in his
defence;

When, 'twas long since, then but a
stripling boy

I made short sojourn in his father's
palace,

(At first to soothe his troubled mind
with song,

His armour-bearer next) I well re-
member

The gracious bounties of the gallant
prince.

How would he sit, attentive to my
strain,

While to my harp I sung the harmless
joys

Which crown a shepherd's life! How
would he cry,

Bless'd youth! far happier in thy native
worth,

Far richer in the talent Heav'n has lent
thee,

Than if a crown hung o'er thy anxious
brow.

The jealous monarch mark'd our grow-
ing friendship;

And as my favour grew with those
about him,

His royal bounty lessen'd, till at length,
For Beth'hem's safer shades I left the
court.

Nor would these alter'd features now
be known,

Grown into manly strength; nor this
chang'd form,

Enlarg'd with age, and clad in russet
weed.

JESSE. I have employment for thee,
my lov'd son!

Will please thy active spirit. Go, my
boy!

Haste to the field of war, to yonder
camp,

Where in the vale of Elah mighty Saul
Commands the hosts of Israel. Greet
thy brothers;

Observe their deeds, note their de-
meanour well,

And mark if on their actions Wisdom
waits.

Bear to them too (for well the waste of
war

Will make it needful) such plain health-
ful viands

As furnish out our frugal shepherd's
meal.

And to the valiant captain of their host
Present such rural gifts as suit our
fortune:

Heap'd on the board within my tent
thou'lt find them.

DAVID. With joy I'll bear thy pres-
ents to my brothers;

And to the valiant captain of their host
The rural gifts thy gratitude assigns
him.

Delightful task!—for I shall view the
camp!

What transport to behold the tented
field,

The pointed spear, the blaze of shields
and arms,

And all the proud accoutrements of
war!

But, oh! far dearer transport would it
yield me,

Could this right arm alone avenge the
cause

Of injur'd Israel! could my single death
Preserve the guiltless thousands doom'd
to bleed!

JESSE. Let not thy youth be dazzled,
O my son!

With deeds of bold emprise, as valour
only

Were virtue, and the gentle arts of
peace,

Of truth, and justice, were not worth
thy care.

When thou shalt view the splendour:
of the war,
The gay caparison, the burnish'd shield,
The plume-crown'd helmet, and the
glitt'ring spear,
Scorn not the humble virtues of the
shade,
Nor think that Heav'n views only with
applause
The active merit and the busy toil
Of heroes, statesmen, and the bustling
sons
Of public care. These have their just
reward,
In wealth, in honours, and the well-
earned fame
Their high achievements bring. 'Tis in
this view
That virtue is her proper recompense:
Wealth, as its natural consequence, will
flow
From industry: toil with success is
crown'd:
From splendid actions high renown will
spring.
Such is the usual course of human
things;
For Wisdom Infinite permits, that thus
Effects to causes be proportionate,
And nat'ral ends by nat'ral means
achiev'd.
But in the future estimate which
Heaven
Will make of things terrestrial, know,
my son,
That no inferior blessing is reserv'd
For the mild passive virtues; meek con-
tent,
Heroic self-denial, nobler far
Than all th' achievements noisy Fame
reports,
When her shrill trump proclaims the
proud success
Which desolates the nations. But, on
earth,
These are not always prosperous—
mark the cause:
Eternal Justice keeps them for the bliss
Of final recompense, for the dread day
Of gen'ral retribution. O, my son!
The ostentatious virtues which still
press
For notice and for praise; the brilliant
deeds
Which live but in the eye of observa-
tion,

These have their meed at once. But
there's joy
To the fond votaries of Fame unknown,
To hear the still small voice of Con-
science speak
Its whispering plaudit to the silent soul.
Heaven notes the sigh afflicted Good-
ness heaves,
Hears the low plaint by human ear un-
heard,
And from the cheek of patient Sorrow
wipes
The tear, by mortal eye unseen or
scorn'd.
DAVID. As Hermon's dews their
grateful freshness shed,
And cheer the herbage, and the flow'rs
renew,
So do thy words a quickening balm
infuse,
And grateful sink in my delighted soul.
JESSE. Go, then, my child; and may
the gracious God
Who bless'd our fathers, bless my much
lov'd son!
DAVID. Farewell, my father!—and of
this be sure,
That not one precept from thy honour'd
lips
Shall fall by me unnotic'd; not one
grace,
One venerable virtue which adorns
Thy daily life, but I, with watchful care
And due observance, will in mine trans-
plant it. [Exit David.]

JESSE. He's gone! and still my aching
eyes pursue
And strain their orbs still longer to
behold him.
Oh! who can tell when next I may
embrace him?
Who can declare the counsels of the
Lord?
Or when the moment pre-ordain'd by
Heav'n
To fill his great designs, may come?
This son,
This blessing of my age, is set apart
For high exploits; the chosen instru-
ment
Of all-disposing Heav'n for mighty
deeds.
Still I recall the day, and to my mind
The scene is ever present, when the
seer,

Illustrious Samuel, to the humble shades
 Of Bethlehem came, pretending sacrifice,
 To screen his errand from the jealous king
 He sanctify'd us first, me and my sons;
 For sanctity increas'd should still precede
 Increase of dignity. When he declar'd
 He came commission'd from on high to find,
 Among the sons of Jesse, Israel's king,
 Astonishment entranc'd my wond'ring soul!
 Yet was it not a wild, tumultuous bliss;
 Such rash delight as promis'd honours yield
 To light vain minds: no, 'twas a doubtful joy,
 Chastis'd by tim'rous Virtue, lest a gift
 So splendid and so dang'rous might destroy
 Him it was meant to raise. My eldest born,
 Eliab, tall of stature, I presented;
 But God, who judges not by outward form,
 But tries the heart, forbade the holy prophet
 To choose my eldest born. For Saul,
 he said,
 Gave proof, that fair proportion, and the grace
 Of limb and feature, ill repaid the want
 Of virtue. All my other sons alike
 By Samuel were rejected; till, at last,
 On my young boy, on David's chosen head,
 The prophet pour'd the consecrated oil.
 Yet ne'er did pride elate him, ne'er did scorn
 For his rejected elders swell his heart.
 Not in such gentle charity to him
 His haughtier brothers live: but all he pardons.
 To meditation, and to humble toil,
 To pray'r, and praise devoted, here he dwells.
 O may the Graces which adorn retreat
 One day delight a court! record his name
 With saints and prophets, dignify his race,
 And may the sacred songs his leisure frames

Instruct mankind, and sanctify a world!

PART II.

Scene—The Camp.

ELIAB, ABINADAB, ABNER, ISRAELITES.

ELIAB. Still is the event of this long war uncertain:

Still do the adverse hosts, on either side,

Protract, with ling'ring caution, an encounter,

Which must to one be fatal.

ABINADAB. This descent, Thus to the very confines of our land,
 Proclaims the sanguine hope that fires the foe.

In Ephes-dammim boldly they encamp;
 Th' uncircumcis'd Philistines pitch their tents

On Judah's hallow'd earth.

ELIAB. Full forty days Has the insulting giant, proud Goliath,
 The champion of Philistia, fiercely challeng'd

Some Israelitish foe. But who so vain
 To dare such force unequal? who so bent

On sure destruction, to accept his terms,
 And rush on death, beneath the giant force

Of his enormous bulk?

ABINADAB. 'Tis near the time
 When in the adjacent valley which divides

Th' opposing armies he is wont to make
 His daily challenge.

ELIAB. Much I marvel, brother,
 No greetings from our father reach our ears.

With ease and plenty bless'd, he little recks

The daily hardships which his sons endure.

But see! behold his darling boy approaches!

ABIN. How, David here! whence this unlook'd-for guest?

ELIAB. A spy upon our actions; sent, no doubt,

To scan our deeds, with beardless gravity

Affecting wisdom; to observe each word,

To magnify the venial faults of youth,

And construe harmless mirth to foul offence.

Enter DAVID.

DAVID. All hail, my dearest brothers!

ELIAB. Means thy greeting True love, or arrogant scorn?

DAVID. O, most true love! Sweet as the precious ointment which bedew'd

The sacred head of Aaron, and descended

Upon his hallow'd vest, so sweet, my brothers,

Is fond fraternal amity; such love As my touch'd bosom feels at your approach.

ELIAB. Still that fine glozing speech, those holy saws, And all that trick of studied sanctity, Of smooth-turn'd periods and trim eloquence,

Which charms thy doating father! But confess,

What dost thou here? Is it to soothe thy pride,

And gratify thy vain desire to roam In quest of pleasures unallow'd? or com'st thou

A willing spy to note thy brothers' deeds?

Where hast thou left those few poor straggling sheep?

More suited to thy ignorance and years The care of those, than here to wander idly?

Why cam'st thou hither?

DAVID. Is there not a cause? Why that displeasure kindling in thine eye

My angry brother? why those taunts unkind?

Not idly bent on sport; not to delight Mine eye with all this gay parade of war;

To gratify a roving appetite, Or fondly to indulge a curious ear

With any tale of rumour, am I come; But to approve myself a loving brother.

I bring the blessing of your aged sire, With gifts of such plain cates and rural viands

As suit his frugal fortune. Tell me now,

Where the bold captain of your host encamps?

ELIAB. Wherefore inquire? what boots it thee to know? Behold him there: great Abner, fam'd in arms.

DAVID. I bring thee, mighty Abner, from my father, (A simple shepherd swain in yonder vale)

Such humble gifts as shepherd swains bestow.

ABNER. Thanks, gentle youth! with pleasure I receive The grateful off'ring. Why does thy quick eye

Thus wander with unsatisfi'd delight?

DAVID. New as I am to all the trade of war Each sound has novelty; each thing I see

Attracts attention; every noise I hear Awakes confus'd emotions; indistinct, Yet full of charming tumult, sweet distraction.

'Tis all delightful hurry! Oh! the joy Of young ideas painted on the mind, In the warm, glowing, colours fancy spreads

On objects not yet known, when all is new,

And all is lovely! Ah! what warlike sound

Salutes my ravish'd ear?

[*Sound of trumpets.*]

ABNER. 'Tis the Philistine Proclaiming, by his herald, through the ranks,

His near approach. Each morning he repeats

His challenge to our bands.

DAVID. Ha! what Philistine? Who is he?

ELIAB. Wherefore ask? for thy raw youth

And rustic ignorance, 'twere fitter learn Some rural art! some secret to prevent Contagion in thy flocks; some better means

To save their fleece immaculate. These mean arts

Of soft inglorious peace far better suit
Thy low obscurity, than thus to seek
High things pertaining to exploits of
arms.

DAVID. Urg'd as I am, I will not
answer thee.
Who conquers his own spirit, O my
brother!
He is the only conqueror.—Again
That shout mysterious! Pray you (*to
Abner*) tell me who
This proud Philistine is, who sends de-
fiance
To Israel's hardy chieftains?

ABNER. Stranger youth,
So lovely and so mild is thy demeanor,
So gentle and so patient; such the air
Of candour and of courage which
adorns
Thy blooming features, thou hast won
my love:
And I will tell thee.

DAVID. Mighty Abner, thanks!

ABNER. Thrice, and no more, he
sounds, his daily rule!
This man of war, this champion of
Philistia,
Is of the sons of Anak's giant-race:
Goliath is his name. His fearful
stature,
Unparallel'd in Israel, measures more
Than twice three cubits. On his
tow'ring head
A helm of burnish'd brass the giant
wears,
So pond'rous, it would crush the stout-
est man
In all our hosts. A coat of mailèd
armour
Guards his capacious trunk! compar'd
with which,
The amplest oak that spreads his rugged
arms
In Bashan's groves, were small. About
his neck
A shining corslet hangs. On his vast
thigh
The plaited cuirass, firmly jointed,
stands.
But who shall tell the wonders of his
spear,
And hope to gain belief! Of massive
iron

Its temper'd frame, not less than the
broad beam
To which the busy weaver hangs his
loom:
Not to be wielded by a mortal hand,
Save by his own. An armour bearer
walks
Before this mighty champion, in his
hand
Bearing the giant's shield. Thrice ev'ry
morn
His herald sounds the trumpet of de-
fiance!
Off'ring at once to end the long-drawn
war
In single combat 'gainst that hardy foe
Who dares encounter him.

DAVID. Say, mighty Abner,
What are the haughty terms of his de-
fiance?

ABNER. Proudly he stalks around th'
extremest bounds
Of Elah's vale. His herald sounds the
note
Of offer'd battle. Then the furious
giant,
With such a voice as from the troubled
sky
In vollied thunder breaks, thus sends
his challenge:
"Why do you set your battle in array,
Ye men of Israel? Wherefore waste
the lives
Of needless thousands? Why protract
a war
Which may at once be ended? Are not
you
Servants to Saul your king? and am
not I,
With triumph let me speak it, a Philis-
tine?
Choose out a man from all your armèd
hosts,
Of courage most approv'd, and I will
meet him;
His single arm to mine. Th' event of
this
Shall fix the fate of Israel and Philistia.
If victory favour him, then will we live
Your tributary slaves; but if my arm
Be crown'd with conquest, you shall
then live ours.

Give me a man, if your effeminate
bands

A man can boast. Your armies I defy!"

DAVID. What shall be done to him
who shall subdue
This vile idolater?

ABNER. He shall receive
Such ample bounties, such profuse re-
wards,
As might inflame the old, or warm the
coward,

Were not the odds so desperate.

DAVID. Say, what are they?

ABNER. The royal Saul has promis'd
that bold hero
Who should encounter and subdue Go-
liath,
All dignity and favour; that his house
Shall be set free from tribute, and en-
nobled
With the first honours Israel has to
give.

As for the gallant conqueror himself,
No less a recompense than the fair
princess,

Our monarch's peerless daughter.

DAVID. Beauteous Michal!
It is indeed a boon which kings might
strive for.

And has none answer'd yet this bold
defiance?

What! all this goodly host of Israelites!
God's own peculiar people! all afraid,
T' assert God's injur'd honour and their
own?

Where is the king, who in his early
youth

Wrought deeds of fame! Where
princely Jonathan?

Not so the gallant youth Philistia fear'd
At Bozez and at Seneh,* when the
earth

Shook from her deep foundations to
behold

The wond'rous carnage of his single
hand

On the uncircumcis'd. When he ex-
claim'd,

With glorious confidence—'Shall num-
bers awe me?

God will protect his own: with him to
save

It boots not, friends, by many or by
few.'

This was an hero! Why does he delay
To meet this boaster? For thy cour-
tesy,

Thrice noble Abner, I am bound to
thank thee.

Wouldst thou complete thy gen'rous
offices?

I dare not ask it.

ABNER. Speak, thy wishes freely:
My soul inclines to serve thee.

DAVID. Then, O Abner,
Conduct me to the king! There is a
cause

Will justify this boldness!

ELIAB. Braggart, hold!

ABNER. I take thee at thy word; and
will, with speed,
Conduct thee to my royal master's
presence.

In yonder tent the anxious monarch
waits

Th' event of this day's challenge.

DAVID. Noble Abner,
Accept my thanks. Now to thy private
ear,

If so thy grace permit I will unfold
My secret soul, and ease my lab'ring
breast,

Which pants with high designs, and
beats for glory.

PART III.

Scene—Saul's Tent.

SAUL. Why was I made a king?
what I have gain'd

In envy'd greatness and uneasy pow'r,
I've lost in peace of mind, in virtue
lost!

Why did deceitful transports fire my
soul

When Samuel plac'd upon my youthful
brow

The crown of Israel? I had known
content,

Nay happiness, if happiness unmix'd
To mortal man were known, had I still
liv'd

*I. Samuel xiv:4.

Among the humble tents of Benjamin.
 A shepherd's occupation was my joy,
 And every guiltless day was crown'd
 with peace,
 But now, a sullen cloud forever hangs
 O'er the faint sunshine of my brightest
 hours,
 Dark'ning the golden promise of the
 morn.
 I ne'er shall taste the dear domestic
 joys
 My meanest subjects know. True, I
 have sons,
 Whose virtues would have charm'd a
 private man,
 And drawn down blessings on their
 humble sire.
 I love their virtues too; but 'tis a love
 Which jealousy has poison'd. Jonathan
 Is all a father's fondness could conceive
 Of amiable and good—Of that no more!
 He is too popular; the people doat
 Upon th' ingenuous graces of his youth.
 Curs'd popularity! which makes a
 father
 Detest the merit of a son he loves,
 How did their fond idolatry; perforce,
 Rescue his sentenc'd life, when doom'd
 by lot
 To perish at Beth-aven,* for the breach
 Of strict injunction, that of all my
 bands,
 Not one that day should taste of food
 and live!
 My subjects clamour at this tedious
 war,
 Yet of my num'rous arm'd chiefs not
 one
 Has courage to engage this man of
 Gath.
 O for a champion bold enough to face
 This giant-boaster, whose repeated
 threats
 Strike through my inmost soul! There
 was a time—
 Of that no more! I am not what I was.
 Should valiant Jonathan accept the
 challenge,
 'Twould but increase his influence, raise
 his fame,
 And make the crown sit lightly on my
 brow.

* I Samuel xiv, 23.

Ill could my wounded spirit brook the
 voice
 Of harsh comparison 'twixt sire and
 son.

SAUL, ABNER.

ABNER. What meditation holds thee
 thus engag'd,
 O king! and keeps thine active spirit
 bound;
 When busy war for other cares de-
 mands
 That ruminating thought and pale de-
 spair?

SAUL. Abner, draw near. My weary
 soul sinks down
 Beneath the heavy pressure of misfor-
 tune.

O for that spirit which inflam'd my
 breast
 With sudden fervour, when, among the
 seers

And holy sages my prophetic voice
 Was heard attentive, and th' astonish'd
 throng,

Wond'ring, exclaim'd,—'Is Saul among
 the prophets?'

Where's that bold arm which quell'd
 the Amalekite,

And nobly spar'd fierce Agag and his
 flocks?

'Tis past! the light of Israel now is
 quench'd:

Shorn of his beams, my sun of glory
 sets!

Rise Moab, Edom, angry Ammon rise!
 Come Gaza, Ashdod come! let Ekron
 boast,

And Askelon rejoice, for Saul is—
 nothing.

ABNER. I bring thee news, O king!

SAUL. My valiant uncle,
 What can avail thy news? A soul
 oppress'd

Refuses still to hear the charmer's
 voice,

Howe'er enticingly he charm. What
 news

Can soothe my sickly soul, while Gath's
 fell giant

Repeats each morning to my frighten'd
 hosts

His daring challenge, none accepting it?

ABNER. It is accepted.

SAUL. Ha! By whom? how? when?
What prince, what gen'ral, what illustrious hero,
What vet'ran chief, what warrior of renown,
Will dare to meet the haughty foe's defiance?
Speak, my brave gen'ral! noble Abner, speak!

ABNER. No prince, no warrior, no illustrious chief,
No vet'ran hero dares accept the challenge;
But what will move thy wonder, mighty king,
One train'd to peaceful deeds, and new to arms,
A simple shepherd swain!

SAUL. O mockery!
No more of this light tale, it suits but ill
Thy bearded gravity: or rather tell it
To credulous age, or weak believing women;
They love whate'er is marvellous, and doat
On deeds prodigious and incredible,
Which sober sense rejects. I laugh to think
Of thy extravagance. A shepherd's boy
Encounter him whom nations dread to meet!

ABNER. Is valour then peculiar to high birth?
If Heav'n had so decreed, know, scornful king,
That Saul the Benjamite had never reign'd.
No!—Glory darts her soul-pervading ray
On thrones and cottages, regardless still
Of all the artificial, nice distinctions
Vain human customs make.

SAUL. Where is this youth?

ABNER. Without thy tent he waits.
Such humble sweetness,
Fir'd with the secret conscience of desert;

Such manly bearing, temper'd with such softness,
And so adorn'd with ev'ry outward charm
Of graceful form and feature, saw I never.

SAUL. Bring me the youth.

ABNER. He waits thy royal pleasure.
[Exit Abner.]

SAUL. What must I think? Abner himself is brave,
And skill'd in human kind: nor does he judge
So lightly, to be caught by specious words
And Fraud's smooth artifice, were there not marks
Of worth intrinsic. But behold he comes!
The youth too with him! Justly did he praise
The candour which adorns his open brow.

Re-enter ABNER and DAVID.

DAVID. Hail mighty king!

ABNER. Behold thy proffer'd champion!

SAUL. Art thou the youth whose high heroic zeal
Aspires to meet the giant son of Anak?

DAVID. If so the king permit.

SAUL. Impossible!
Why, what experience has thy youth of arms?

Where, stripling, didst *thou* learn the trade of war?

Beneath what hoary vet'ran hast *thou* serv'd?

What feats hast *thou* achieved, what daring deeds?

What well-rang'd phalanx, say, what charging hosts,

What hard campaigns, what sieges hast thou seen?

Hast thou e'er scal'd the city's rampir'd wall

Or hurl'd the missile dart, or learn'd to poise

The warrior's deathful spear? The use
of targe,
Of helm, and buckler, is to thee un-
known.

DAVID. Arms I have seldom seen. I
little know
Of war's proud discipline. The trum-
pet's clang,
The shock of charging hosts, the ram-
pir'd wall,
Th' embattled phalanx, and the war-
rior's spear,
The use of targe and helm to me is
new.
My zeal for God, my patriot love of
Israel,
My reverence for my king, behold my
claims!

SÅUL. But gentle youth! thou hast
no fame in arms,
Renown, with her shrill clarion, never
bore
Thy honour'd name to many a land
remote;
From the fair regions where Euphrates
laves
Assyria's borders to the distant Nile.

DAVID. True, mighty king! I am in-
deed alike
Unbless'd by Fortune and to Fame un-
known;
A lowly shepherd-swain of Judah's
tribe:
But greatness ever springs from low
beginnings.
That very Nile thou mention'st, whose
broad stream
Bears fruitfulness and health through
many a clime,
From an unknown, penurious, scanty
source
Took its first rise. The forest oak,
which shades
The sultry troops in many a toilsome
march
Once an unheeded acorn lay. O king!
Who ne'er begins can never aught
achieve
Of glorious. Thou thyself wast once
unknown,
Till fair occasion brought thy worth
to light.

Far higher views inspire my youthful
heart
Than human praise: I seek to vindicate
Th' insulted honour of the God I serve.

ABNER. 'Tis nobly said.

SÅUL. I love thy spirit, youth!
But dare not trust thy inexperience'd
arm
Against a giant's might. The sight of
blood,
Though brave thou feel'st when peril is
not nigh,
Will pale thy ardent cheek.

DAVID. Not so, O king!
This youthful arm has been imbru'd in
blood,
Though yet no blood of man has ever
stain'd it.
Thy servant's occupation is a shepherd.
With jealous care I watch'd my father's
flock:

A brindled lion and a furious bear
Forth from the thicket rush'd upon the
fold,

Seiz'd a young lamb, and tore their
bleating spoil.
Urg'd by compassion for my helpless
charge,

I felt a new-born vigour nerve my arm;
And, eager, on the foaming monsters
rush'd

The famish'd lion by his grisly beard,
Enrag'd, I caught, and smote him to
the ground.

The panting monster struggling in my
gripe,

Shook terribly his bristling mane, and
lash'd

His own gaunt, gory sides; fiercely he
ground

His gnashing teeth, and rolled his start-
ing eyes,

Bloodshot with agony; then with a
groan,

That wak'd the echoes of the moun-
tain, died.

Nor did his grim associate 'scape my
arm;

Thy servant slew the lion and the bear;
I kill'd them both, and bore their shaggy
spoils

In triumph home: and shall I fear to
meet

Th' uncircumcis'd Philistine? No: that
 God
 Who sav'd mè from the bear's de-
 structive fang
 And hungry lion's jaw, will not he save
 me
 From this idolater?

SAUL. He will, he will!
 Go, noble youth! be valiant and be
 bless'd!
 The God thou serv'st will shield thee
 in the fight,
 And nerve thy arm with more than
 mortal strength.

ABNER. So the bold Nazarite* a lion
 slew:
 An earnest of his victories o'er Phil-
 istia!

SAUL. Go, Abner; see the youth be
 well equipp'd
 With shield and spear. Be it thy care
 to grace him
 With all the fit accoutrements of war.
 The choicest mail from my rich ar-
 mory take,
 And gird upon his thigh my own try'd
 sword
 Of noblest temper'd steel.

ABNER. I shall obey.

DAVID. Pardon, O king! the coat of
 plaited mail
 These limbs have never known; it
 would not shield,
 'Twould but encumber one who never
 felt
 The weight of armour.

SAUL. Take thy wish, my son!
 Thy sword then, and the God of Jacob
 guard thee!

PART IV.

Scene—Another part of the camp.

DAVID (*kneeling*).

Eternal justice! in whose awful scale
 Th' event of battle hangs! Eternal
 Truth!

*Samson. See Judges, chap. xiv.

Whose beams illumine all! Eternal
 Mercy!

If, by all thy attributes I may, un-
 blam'd,

Address thee; Lord of glory! hear me
 now:

O teach these hands to war, these arms
 to fight.

Thou ever present help in time of need!
 Let thy broad mercy, as a shield, de-
 fend,

And let thine everlasting arms support
 me!

Strong in thy strength, in thy protec-
 tion safe

Then, though the heathen rage, I shall
 not fear.

Jehovah, be my buckler! Mighty Lord!
 Thou who hast deign'd by humble in-
 struments

To manifest the wonders of thy might,
 Be present with me now! 'Tis thine
 own cause!

Thy wisdom sees events, thy goodness
 plans

Schemes baffling our conception—and,
 'tis still

Omnipotence which executes the deed
 Of high design, though by a feeble
 arm!

I feel a secret impulse drive me on;
 And my soul springs impatient for the
 fight!

'Tis not the heated spirits, or warm
 blood

Of sanguine youth with which my
 bosom burns!

And, though I thirst to meet th' insult-
 ing foe,

And pant for glory, 'tis not, witness
 Heav'n!

'Tis not the sinful lust of fading fame,
 The perishable praise of mortal man;
 His praise I covet, whose applause is
 Life.

DAVID, ELIAB, ISRAELITES.

ELIAB. What do I hear? thou truant!
 thou hast dared
 E'en to the awful presence of the king
 Bear thy presumption!

DAVID. He who fears the Lord
 Shall boldly stand before the face of
 kings,
 And shall not be asham'd.

ELIAB. But what wild dream
Has urg'd thee to this deed of desp'rate
rashness?

Thou mean'st, so I have learn't, to meet
Goliath,
His single arm to thine.

DAVID. 'Tis what I purpose,
Ev'n on this spot. Each moment I
expect
His wish'd approach.

ELIAB. Go home; return, for shame!
Nor madly draw destruction on thy
head.

Thy doating father, when thy shep-
herd's coat,
Drench'd in thy blood, is brought him,
will lament,

And rend his furrow'd cheek and silver
hair,
As if some mighty loss had touch'd
his age;

And mourn, ev'n as the partial patriarch
mourn'd

When Joseph's bloody garment he re-
ceiv'd

From his less dear, nor less deserving
sons:

But whence that glitt'ring ornament
which hangs

Useless upon thy thigh?

DAVID. 'Tis the king's gift.
But thou art right; it suits not me, my
brother!

Nor sword I mean to use, nor spear to
poise,

Lest men should say I put my trust in
arms,

Not in the Lord of Hosts.

ELIAB. Then thou indeed
Art bent to seek thy death?

DAVID. And what is death?
Is it so terrible to die, my brother?
Or grant it terrible, is it for that
The less inevitable? If, indeed
We could by strategem elude the blow,
When some high duty calls us forth to
die,

And thus for ever shun it, and escape
The universal lot,—then fond self-love,
Then cautious Prudence, boldly might
produce

Their fine-spun arguments, their learn'd
harangues,

Their cobweb arts, their phrase sophis-
tical,

Their subtle doubts, and all the specious
trick

Of selfish cunning lab'ring for its end.
But since, howe'er protracted, death
will come,

Why fondly study, with ingenious pains,
To put it off! To breathe a little longer
Is to defer our fate, but not to shun it.
Small gain! which Wisdom with indif-
f'rent eye

Beholds. Why wish to drink the bitter
dregs

Of life's exhausted chalice, whose last
runnings,

Ev'n at the best, are vapid! Why not
die

(If Heav'n so will) in manhood's op'n-
ing bloom,

When all the flush of life is gay
about us!

When sprightly youth with many a new-
born joy,

Solicits every sense! So may we then
Present a sacrifice, unmeet indeed,

(Ah, how unmeet!) but less unworthy
far,

Than the world's leavings; than a worn
out heart,

By vice enfeebled, and by vain desires
Sunk and exhausted!

ELIAB. Hark! I hear a sound
Of multitudes approaching!

DAVID. 'Tis the giant!
I see him not, but hear his measur'd
pace.

ELIAB. Look, where his pond'rous
shield is borne before him!

DAVID. Like a broad moon its ample
disk portends.

But soft!—what unknown prodigy ap-
pears?

A moving mountain cas'd in polish'd
brass!

ELIAB (*getting behind David*). How's
this?

Thou dost not tremble. Thy firm joints
Betray no fear; thy accents are not
broken;

Thy cheek retains its red; thine eye its lustre,
He comes more near! Dost thou not fear him now?

DAVID. No,
The vast colossal statute nor inspires
Respect nor fear. Mere magnitude of form,
Without proportion'd intellect and valour,
Strikes not my soul with rev'rence or with awe.

ELIAB. Near, and more near he comes! I hold it rash
To stay so near him, and expose a life
Which may hereafter serve the state.
Farewell. [Exit.]

[GOLIATH advances, clad in complete armour. One bearing his shield precedes him. The opposing armies are seen at a distance, drawn up on each side of the valley. GOLIATH begins to speak before he comes on. DAVID stands in the same place, with an air of indifference.]

GOLIATH. Where is this mighty man of war who dares
Accept the challenge of Philistia's chief?
What victor king, what gen'ral drench'd in blood,
Claims this high privilege? What are his rights?
What proud credentials does the boaster bring
To prove his claim? What cities laid in ashes?
What ruin'd provinces? What slaughter'd realms?
What heads of heroes, and what hearts of kings,
In battle kill'd, or at his altars slain.
Has he to boast? Is his bright armory
Thick set with spears, and swords, and coats of mail
Of vanquish'd nations, by his single arm
Subdu'd? Where is the mortal man so bold,
So much a wretch, so out of love with life,
To dare the weight of this uplifted spear,

Which never fell innoxious? Yet I swear,
I grudge the glory to this parting soul
To fall by this right hand. 'Twill sweeten death,
To know he had the honour to contend
With the dread son of Anak. Latest time
From blank oblivion shall retrieve his name
Who dar'd to perish in unequal fight
With Gath's triumphant champion.
Come, advance.
Philistia's gods to Israel's. Sound, my herald—
Sound for the battle straight.

[Herald sounds the trumpet.]

DAVID. Behold thy foe!

GOLIATH. I see him not.

DAVID. Behold him here!

GOLIATH. Say, where!
Direct my sight. I do not war with boys.

DAVID. I stand prepar'd: thy single arm to mine.

GOLIATH. Why this is mockery, minion! it may chance
To cost thee dear. Sport not with things above thee!
But tell me who of all this num'rous host
Expects his death from me? Which is the man
Whom Israel sends to meet my bold defiance?

DAVID. Th' election of my sov'reign falls on me.

GOLIATH. On thee! on thee! By Dagon, 'tis too much!
Thou curled minion! thou a nation's champion!
'Twould move my mirth at any other time;
But trifling's out of tune, begone, light boy!
And tempt me not too far.
DAVID. I do defy thee,
Thou foul idolator! Hast thou not scorn'd

The armies of the living God I serve?
By me he will avenge upon thy head
Thy nation's sins and thine. Arm'd
with his name,
Unshrinking, I dare meet the stoutest
foe
That ever bath'd his hostile spear in
blood.

GOLIATH (*ironically*). Indeed! 'tis
wond'rous well,
Now, by my gods,
The stripling plays the orator! Vain
boy!
Keep close to that same bloodless war
of words,
And thou shalt still be safe. Tongue-
valiant warrior!
Where is thy sylvan crook, with gar-
lands hung,
Of idle field flowers? where thy wanton
harp,
Thou dainty finger'd hero? better strike
Its notes lascivious, or the lulling lute
Touch softly, than provoke the trum-
pet's rage.
I will not stain the honour of my spear
With thy inglorious blood. Shall that
fair cheek
Be scarr'd with wounds unseemly?
Rather go
And hold fond dalliance with the Syri-
an maids;
To wanton measures dance, and let
them braid
The bright luxuriance of thy golden
hair;
They, for their lost Adonis, may mis-
take
Thy dainty form.

DAVID. Peace, thou unhallow'd railer!
O tell it not in Gath, nor let the sound
Reach Askelon, how once your slaugh-
ter'd lords
By mighty Samson* found one com-
mon grave:
When his broad shoulder the firm pil-
lars heav'd,
And to its base the tott'ring fabric
shook.

GOLIATH. Insulting boy! perhaps thou
hast not heard

*Judges, xvi.

The infamy of that inglorious day,
When your weak host at Eben-ezer†
pitch'd
Their quick-abandon'd tent? Then when
your ark,
Your talisman, your charm, your
boasted pledge
Of safety and success, was tamely lost!
And yet not tamely, since by me 'twas
won.
When with this good right arm I
thinn'd your ranks,
And bravely crush'd, beneath a single
blow
The chosen guardians of this vaunted
shrine,
Hophni‡ and Phineas. The fam'd ark
itself
I bore to Ashdod.

DAVID. I remember too,
Since thou provok'st th' unwelcome
truth, how all
Your blushing priests beheld their idol's
shame;
When prostrate Dagon fell before the
ark,
And your frail god was shiver'd. Then
Philistia,
Idolatrous Philistia, flew for succor
To Israel's help, and all her smitten
nobles
Confess'd the Lord was God; and the
bless'd ark,
Gladly, with reverential awe restor'd.

GOLIATH. By Ashdod's fane thou ly'st.
Now will I meet thee,
Thou insect warrior, since thou dar'st
me thus!
Already I behold thy mangled limbs,
Dissever'd each from each, ere long to
feed
The fierce blood-snuffing vulture. Mark
me well.
Around my spear I'll twist thy shining
locks,
And toss in air thy head all gash'd with
wounds,

†Samuel, v.

‡Commentators say, that Chaldee
paraphrase makes Goliath boast that he
had killed Hophni and Phineas, and
taken the ark prisoner.

Thy lip yet quiv'ring with the dire convulsion
Of recent death!—Art thou not terrified?

DAVID. No:

True courage is not mov'd by breath of words:

While the rash bravery of boiling blood,
Impetuous, knows no settled principle.
A feverish tide, it has its ebbs and flows,
As spirits raise or fall, as wine inflames,
Or circumstances change: but inborn
Courage,

The gen'rous child of Fortitude and Faith,

Holds its firm empire in the constant soul;

And like the steadfast pole-star, never
once

From the same fix'd and faithful point declines.

GOLIATH. The curses of Philistia's gods be on thee!

This fine-drawn speech is meant to lengthen out

That little life thy words pretend to scorn.

DAVID. Ha! say'st thou so? Come on then. Mark us well.

Thou com'st to me with sword, and spear, and shield;

In the dread name of Israel's God I come;

The living Lord of Hosts, whom thou defy'st!

Yet though no shield I bring, no arms except

These five smooth stones I gather'd from the brook,

With such a simple sling as shepherds use—

Yet all expos'd defenceless as I am,
The God I serve shall give thee up a prey

To my victorious arm. This day I mean

To make the uncircumcis'd tribes confess

There is a God in Israel. I will give thee,

Spite of thy vaunted strength and giant bulk,

To glut the carrion kites. Nor thee alone;

The mangled carcasses of your thick hosts

Shall spread the plains of Elah, till Philistia,

Through all her trembling tents and flying bands,

Shall own that Judah's God is God indeed!

—I dare thee to the trial.

GOLIATH.

Follow me—

In this good spear I trust.

DAVID.

I trust in Heav'n!

The God of battle stimulates my arm,
And fires my soul with ardour not its own.

PART V.

Scene—The tent of Saul.

SAUL (*rising from his couch*). Oh! that I knew the black and midnight arts

Of wizard sorcery! that I could call
The slumb'ring spirit from the shades of hell!

Or, like the Chaldean sages, could fore-know

Th' event of things unacted! I might then

Anticipate my fortune. How I'm fallen!
The sport of vain chimeras, the weak slave

Of fear and fancy; coveting to know
The arts obscene, which foul diviners use.

Thick blood and moping Melancholy lead

To baleful Superstition—that fell fiend,
Whose with'ring charms blast the fair bloom of Virtue.

Why did my wounded pride with scorn reject

The wholesome truths which holy Samuel told me?

Why drive him from my presence? he might now

Raise my sunk soul, and my benighted mind

Enlighten'd with religion's cheering ray.

He dar'd to menace me with loss of empire;

And I, for that bold honesty, dismiss'd his

And I, for that bold honesty, dismiss'd his

'Another shall possess thy throne,' he cry'd:
 'A stranger!' This unwelcome prophecy
 Has lined my crown and strew'd my
 couch with thorns.
 Each ray of op'ning merit I discern
 In friend or foe, distracts my troubled
 soul,
 Lest he should prove my rival. But
 this morn,
 Ev'n my young champion lovely as he
 look'd
 In blooming valour, struck me to the
 soul
 With Jealousy's barb'd dart. O Jeal-
 ousy!
 Thou ugliest fiend of hell! thy deadly
 venom
 Preys on my vitals, turns the health-
 ful hue
 Of my fresh cheek to haggard sallow-
 ness,
 And drinks my spirit up.

[*A flourish of trumpets, shouting, etc.*]

What sounds are those?
 The combat is decided. Hark! again
 Those shouts proclaim it! Now, O God
 of Jacob,
 If yet thou hast not quite withdrawn
 from Saul
 Thy light and favour, prosper me this
 once!
 But Abner comes! I dread to hear his
 tale!
 Fair hope, with smiling face but lin-
 g'ring foot,
 Has long deceived.

ABNER. King of Israel, hail!
 Now thou art king indeed. The youth
 has conquer'd:
 Goliath's dead.

SAUL. Oh speak thy tale again,
 Lest my fond ears deceive me!

ABNER. Thy young champion
 Has slain the giant.

SAUL. Then God is gracious still,
 In spite of my offences! But good
 Abner!

How was it? Tell me all. Where is my
 champion?

Quick let me press him to my grateful
 heart,
 And pay him a king's thanks. And yet,
 who knows,
 This forward friend may prove an
 active foe!
 No more of that. Tell me the whole,
 brave Abner!
 And paint the glorious acts of my
 young hero!

ABNER. Full in the centre of the camp
 he stood!
 Th' opposing armies rang'd on either
 side
 In proud array. The haughty giant
 stalk'd
 Stately across the valley. Next the
 youth
 With modest confidence advanc'd. Nor
 pomp,
 Nor gay parade, nor martial ornament,
 His graceful form adorn'd. Goliath
 strait,
 With solemn state began the busy work
 Of dreadful preparation. In one place
 His closely jointed mail an op'ning left
 For air, and only one: the watchful
 youth
 Mark'd that the beaver of his helm
 was up.
 Meanwhile the giant such a blow devis'd
 As would have crush'd him. This the
 youth perceiv'd,
 And from his well-directed sling quick
 hurl'd,
 With dex'trous aim a stone, which sunk,
 deep lodg'd,
 In the capacious forehead of the foe.
 Then with a cry, as loud and terrible
 As Lybian lions roaring for their
 young,
 Quite stunn'd, the furious giant stag-
 ger'd, reel'd,
 And fell: the mighty mass of man fell
 prone.
 With its own weight his shatter'd bulk
 was bruis'd.
 His clattering arms rung dreadfully
 through the field,
 And the firm basis of the solid earth
 Shook. Chok'd with blood and dust, he
 curs'd his gods,
 And died blaspheming! Straight the vic-
 tor youth

Drew from his sheath the giant's pon-
d'rous sword,
And from the enormous trunk the gory
head,
Furious in death, he sever'd. The grim
visage
Look'd threat'ning still, and still frown'd
horribly.

SAUL. O glorious deed! O valiant
conqueror!

ABNER. The youth so calm appear'd,
so nobly firm,
So cool, yet so intrepid, that these eyes
Ne'er saw such temp'rate valour so
chastis'd
By modesty.

SAUL. Thou dwell'st upon his praise
With needless circumstance. 'Twas
nobly done.
But others too have fought!

ABNER. None, none so bravely.

SAUL. What follow'd next?

ABNER. The shouting Israelites
On the Philistians rush'd, and still pur-
sue
Their routed remnants. In dismay, their
bands,
Disorder'd fly, while shouts of loud ac-
claim
Pursue their brave deliverer. Lo, he
comes!
Bearing the giant's head and shining
sword,
His well-earn'd trophies.

SAUL, ABNER, DAVID.

[DAVID, bearing GOLIATH's head and
sword. He kneels and lays both at
SAUL's feet.]

SAUL. Welcome to my heart,
My glorious champion! My deliverer
welcome!
How shall I speak the swelling grati-
tude
Of my full heart! or give thee the
high praise
Thy gallant deeds deserve!

DAVID. O mighty king!
Sweet is the breath of praise when
given by those

Whose own high merit claims the praise
they give.

But let not this one prosperous event,
By heav'n directed, be ascrib'd to me;
I might have fought with equal skill
and courage,
And not have gain'd this conquest; then
had shame
Harsh obloquy, and foul disgrace, be-
fallen me:
But prosp'rous fortune gains the praise
of valour.

SAUL. I like not this. In everything
superior.
He soars above me. (*Aside.*)—Modest
youth, thou'rt right,
And fortune, as thou say'st, deserves
the praise
We give to human valour.

DAVID. Rather say
The God of Hosts deserves it.

SAUL. Tell me youth,
What is thy name, and what thy father's
house?

DAVID. My name is David, Jesse is
my sire:
An humble Bethle'mite of Judah's tribe.

SAUL. David, the son of Jesse. Sure
that name
Has been familiar to me. Nay thy
voice
Thy form and features, I remember too,
Though faint and indistinctly.

ABNER. In this hero
Behold thy sweet musician; he whose
harp
Expell'd the melancholy fiend, whose
pow'r
Enslav'd thy spirit.

SAUL. This the modest youth,
Whom for his skill and virtues I pre-
ferr'd
To bear my armour?

DAVID. I am he, O king!

SAUL. Why this concealment? tell
me valiant David,
Why didst thou hide thy birth and
name till now?

DAVID. O king! I would not aught
from favour claim,

Or on remember'd services presume;
But on the strength of my own actions
stand

Ungrac'd and unsupported.

ABNER. Well he merits
The honours which await him. Why,
O king,
Dost thou delay to bless his doubting
heart
With his well-earn'd rewards! Thy
lovely daughter,
By right of conquest his!

SAUL (*to David*). True: thou hast
won her.
She shall be thine. Yes, a king's word
is past.

DAVID. O boundless blessing! What!
shall she be mine,
For whom contending monarchs might
renounce
Their slighted crowns!

[*Sounds of musical instruments heard
at a distance. Shouting and singing.
A grand procession. Chorus of He-
brew women.*]

SAUL. How's this! what sounds of
joy
Salute my ears! What means this need-
less pomp!
This merry sound of tabret and of
harp!
What mean these idle instruments of
triumph?
These women, who in fair procession
move,
Making sweet melody?

ABNER. To pay due honour
To David are they come.

SAUL (*aside*). A rival's praise
Is discord to my ear! They might have
spar'd

This idle pageantry; it wounds my
soul!

[*Martial symphony: after which, chorus
of women sing.*]

I.

Prepare! your festal rites prepare!
Let your triumphs rend the air!
Idol gods shall reign no more:
We the living Lord adore!
Let heathen hosts on human helps re-
pose,
Since Israel's God has routed Israel's
foes.

II.

Let remotest nations know
Proud Goliath's overthrow.
Fall'n Philistia, is thy trust.
Dagon mingles with the dust!
Who fears the Lord of Glory, need not
fear
The brazen armour or the lifted spear.

III.

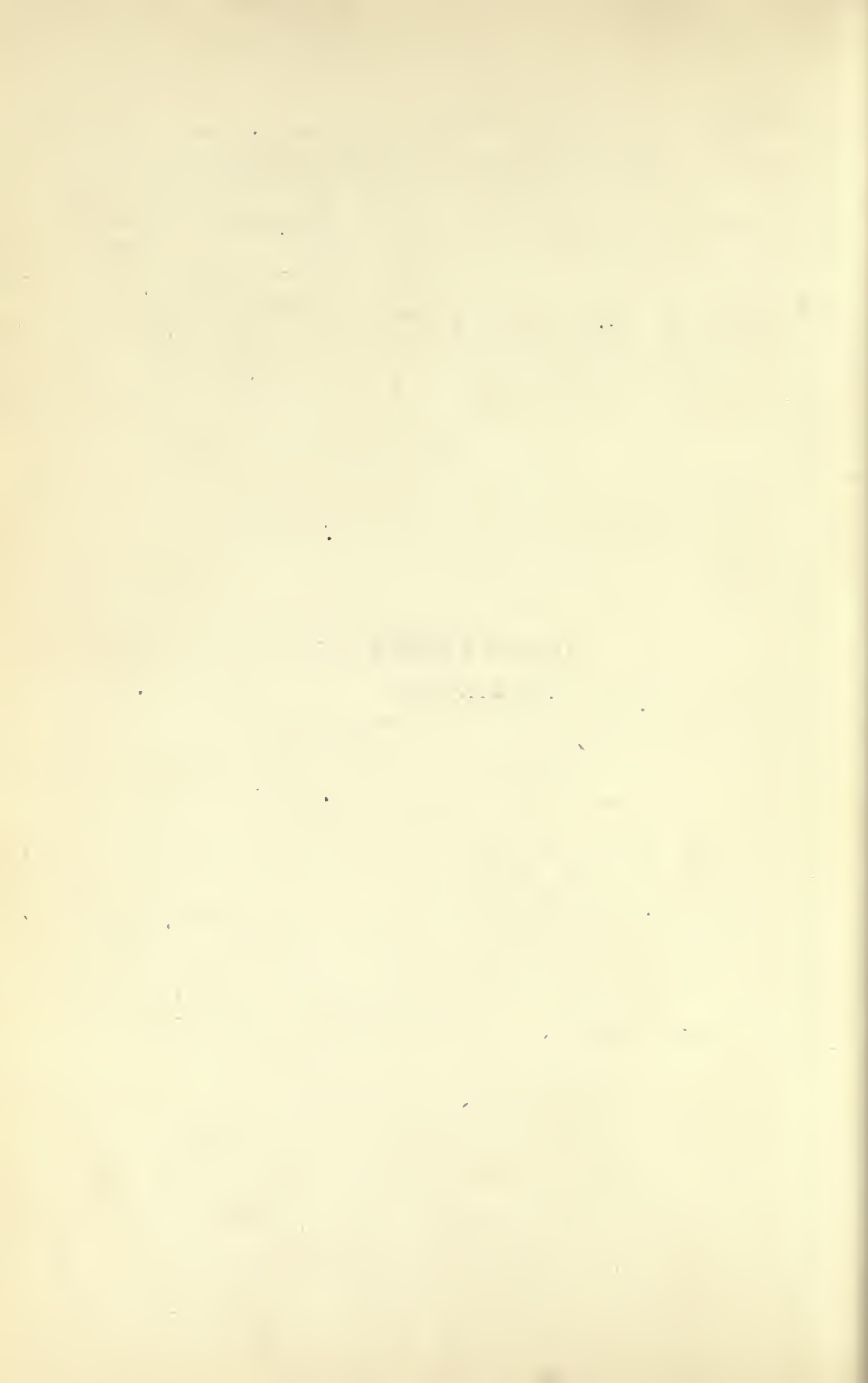
See, the routed squadron fly!
Hark the clamours rend the sky!
Blood and carnage stain the field!
See the vanquish'd nations yield!
Dismay and terror fill the frighten'd
land,
While Conq'ring David routs the trem-
bling band.

IV.

Lo! upon the tented field
Royal Saul has thousands kill'd!
Lo! upon th' ensanguin'd plain
David has ten thousand slain!
Let mighty Saul his vanquish'd thou-
sands tell,
While tenfold triumphs David's vic-
tories swell.

HANNAH MORE (1745-1833).

JONATHAN
A TRAGEDY



JONATHAN*

A Tragedy.

An imitation of the best and noblest life is the very truth of tragedy.

—PLATO (*The Laws*).

... and if it be according to the old text, still better.

—BYRON (*Don Juan*).

DRAMATIS PERSONAE.

SAUL.....King of Israel
JONATHAN.....

.....Saul's oldest Son and Heir

DAVID.....Anointed of Samuel

SAMUEL.....The Prophet

ABNER.....Cousin to Saul

ESHBAAL, MELCHISUA and

ABINADAB.....Sons of Saul

ARMORI and MEPHIBOSHETH

.....Sons of Rizpah and Saul

ADRIEL.....Saul's Son-in-Law

PALTI.....Saul's Son-in-Law

DOEG.....Saul's Chief Herdsman

ZIBA.....A Servant of Saul

ELHANAN.....A Lad

*An Amalekite, Cooks, Messengers
and Soldiers.*

MICHAL.....A Daughter of Saul and
Wife of David and afterward of
Palti.

AHINOAM.....Jonathan's Wife and
their two Children.

MERAB.....A Daughter of Saul and
Wife of Adriel.

Women of the Populace.

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ACT I.

"And the men of Israel said, Have ye seen this man that is come up? surely to defy Israel is he come up; and it shall be, that the man who killeth him, the king will enrich him with great riches, and will give him his daughter, and make his father's house free in Israel.

"And David spake to the men that stood by him, saying, What shall be done to the man that killeth this Philistine, and taketh away the reproach from Israel? for who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should defy the armies of the living God?

"And the people answered him after this manner, saying, So shall it be done to the man that killeth him."

I. SAMUEL, xvii: 25-27.

SCENE I.

The Vale of Elah, Saul in sackcloth, and with ashes on his head. Enter a Troop in like garb, singing:

Turn unto the Lord,
Speak but a word of bringing back
again

The King of kings, and he will come
to bless;

As on that day when fervent Samuel
set

Upon thy massive overtopping front,
The rule and majesty of Israel.

When a lion, fierce with heat and
thirst

Doth range the burning sand, and finds
at last

A palm-tree by a spring of water grown,
He laps, and heaves his sides, and
crouches down;

Even so the fiercest soul finds rest in
God,

Turn unto the Lord.

[*Exeunt the Troop of Singers.*]

SCENE II.

The same. Jonathan alone. The combat of David with Goliath has occurred in the time between the first and the second scenes.

JONATHAN.

Who can the stripling be, with courage
swift
To sweep over the farthest limit
reached
Among the mighty men of Israel;
Whose sling and rounded stone has
overturned
The huge Philistine? This boy, whose
slender arm
Cannot poise even the spear which I
can throw
Point-blank! My pride had fairly
wished him slain,
But that his spirit seemed so vastly
large,
As on he ran to meet the fierce Goliath,
And swore to give his flesh unto the
beasts!
Many left-handed Benjamites can sling
A stone within a hair, if done in sport;
But cool deliverance within the blast
And range of such a savage monster's
breath—
Here he comes—

Enter DAVID.

Fair youth, I know thy face,
What is thy name?

DAVID.

'Tis David, son of Jesse,
That Ephrathite of Judah-Bethlehem.

JONATHAN.

And where before have I encountered
thee?

DAVID.

When I have sung within thy father's
tent.

JONATHAN.

I would have known thee; but thy
mighty deed
A glamour round thy stripling figure
cast.
Who taught thee aim so sure and throw
so true
No matter what the stake?

[*Enter ABNER, unnoticed.*]

DAVID.

Not long ago
The mighty prophet, Samuel, seer of
God,
Came to my father's tents, and there
reviewed
The sons of Jesse, each of stalwart
frame
Beyond myself, who am the youngest
child;
Whilst I was on the plains of Bethle-
hem
Watching our flocks. But unto none
he gave
His approbation, and straightway he
asked
That I be summoned. There upon my
head
Pouring a horn of oil, he went his way.
Since then no danger hath affronted me
Which caused my heart to sink; I
turned my sling
Against Goliath with like confidence
As though against a sparrow casting a
stone.

JONATHAN.

Anointed one! I cannot hope to reach
Thy perfect faith. But I will doff thy
cap,
And set mine own upon thy chosen
crest;
Girdle my sword about thy slender
thigh;
Cast my cloak about thee; cry unto all

That I, as prince in blood, a kinship
claim,
With thy majestic nature. For on my
heart
By thee this day thy figure hath been
stamped
And thou shalt current be in all my
thoughts.

[DAVID *prostrates himself.*]

Up, up, arise! thou fitter prince than I.
For I will have no service to exclude
me
From fellowship with thee.

[*Exit ABNER unnoticed.*]

DAVID.

Thou praiseth much;
And much abusest thy superb repute,
Who, with no one save him that bore
thy shield—
Knowing that no restraint is on the
Lord,
The God of hosts, to save by many or
few—
Didst charge upon the garrison that lay
Behind the Bozez and the Seneh cliffs,
Which stand confronting Gibeah and
Michmash;
There thou didst slay of Philistines a
score,
Within an acre, in half a furrow-length.
How often have I heard the story told!
Terror seizes them all; their battle
lines,
Which bristled like unto windrows,
wildly tremble;
And now the mighty army melts away,
Scattering here and there, no two to-
gether.

JONATHAN.

Ah, heavy woful day to me! For Saul,
Without my having heard it, laid a curse
On him who any food that day should
taste.
But I, with hunger fierce, dipping my
spear
In honey, ate; that I might farther still
Drive on the battle. Thus like Jeph-
thah's daughter,

Whose fate the Hebrew maidens yearly
mourn,
Upon my head I brought confusion
down
Intending service. For, when we had
slain
The foe to Aijalon, Saul sought a sign,
And none was given. Then a lot he cast
Between the people and himself and me
To find the sinner. When the lot on us
Had fallen, and another marked out me,
The king straitly had slain me stand-
ing there,
Had not the men of Israel cried out
And plucked me from him. Still the
curse remains,
And one day it shall fall, I fear, and
crush me.
Now shalt thou make a covenant with
me;
That thou wilt not cut off thy loving
kindness.
From all my house forever. May the
Lord
Require it even from thine enemies.
For thou wilt stand beyond the range
and spring
Of such calamities as lie in wait
For those whose feet the royal path-
ways tread,
In the glare and desert of publicity.

DAVID.

Oh, prince! Oh, Jonathan! Thy loving
words
Have moved the deepest waters of my
soul.
Freely I swear as thou requirest me.
The Lord do so and more also to me
If I do break mine oath. But what
wilt thou
Swear unto me?

JONATHAN.

That thou shalt ever be
My brother, confidant, my heart's com-
panion—
But here is Saul; and, at his elbow,
Abner.

[*Enter SAUL and ABNER.*]

ABNER.

Hath the slinger so quickly dight himself
In princely garments?

SAUL.

What is meant by this?

DAVID.

Take back again thy cap, thy sword,
and cloak.
My sling and sheepskin jacket fit me
better.

ABNER.

Well spoken, shepherd!

[JONATHAN to ABNER.]

What is that to thee?
If thou wilt such another venture take,
I'll give my sword and anything thou
lackst.
If not, let thy promotion be but shame.

SAUL.

Son, our cousin Abner is in the right.
Because this youth has overturned
Goliath,
Is he become thy peer, or thy supplant-
er?
When thou wouldst buckle him within
thy cloak,
Thou dost forget thy line, and he his
place.

JONATHAN.

The youth is not at fault. He only took
What I did press upon him. Such a deed
As he today perform'd will make thy
reign
Renowned forever. Not a boy will
grow
To manhood, but must hear this tale
retold.
How grand the throne by such grand
pillars propped!
So thinking of him as thy loyal subject,
And from his friendship seeking in-
spiration,

I hung my sword upon him, put my cap
Upon his curly head, and threw my
cloak
About his shoulders. Nothing more
than this
Was meant by me or David.

SAUL.

Well, let it pass.

My cousin Abner, come.

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE III.

*Gibeah. Enter MICHAL and MERAB,
daughters of SAUL.*

MICHAL.

Tell me, my sister, dost thou favor
David?

MERAB.

And what is that to thee?

MICHAL.

A wedding, Merab.

MERAB.

Nay, not for me; I do not like his way.
This boy, who scarce hath left his fath-
er's flocks,
Doth pleasure Saul with every winning
art

Like an old courtier; yet maintains re-
serve,

Subtle and proud, toward every other
man,

As though he might, one day, be king
himself!

And when 'twas told him Saul would
have us wed,

"Who am I," quoth the artful hypo-
cite,

"Poor shepherd, to be made the sov-
ereign's son?"

He seeks enrichment at the hand of
Saul,

So Abner says. I know, I love him not.

MICHAL.

Lovest thou not the gentle Adriel?
Ah, sister, the Meholathite hath found
Grace in thine eyes, unless thy cheeks
do lie.

MERAB.

And thine, if David be not dear to thee.

MICHAL.

Didst thou not watch him fill his shep-
herd's scrip
With pebbles from the brook, and run
with staff
And whirling sling in hand, to front
Goliath?
Didst thou not hear his cry that all the
earth
Should learn there is a God in Israel?
I wept at once with rapture and with
dread,
And hid my face, until the troopers
cheered;
And then I looked and saw him set his
foot
Upon Goliath's neck, and draw that
sword
And hew the monster's head off from
the trunk
As some frail forester might fell an
oak.
Would that he loved me! But he
knows me not.

MERAB.

He needs must love thee if but he knew
thee, Michal,
And he shall know thee. I will go to
Saul,
Our father, tell him that I love Adriel;
And, if this youth must wed with one
of us
It must be thou. Belovèd Jonathan
Will lend a helping hand; and well we
know
The king is ruled by him. Let us away—
Our hearts shall both beat happily to-
day.

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE IV.

The same. MICHAL. *Enter* DAVID.

MICHAL.

What brought thee here to me?

DAVID.

To see thee, here.
Jonathan gave me leave.

MICHAL.

And having seen?

Here would I tarry if thou dost permit.

MICHAL.

If not?

DAVID.

I go.

MICHAL.

To leave me here alone?

DAVID.

Nay, not in truth alone. Since thee I
saw
In princely-virgin, many-colored robe,
Breasting the morning when the sun is
gentle
Upon the hill, my thoughts have been
with thee.

MICHAL.

Tell me now, David, what thou thinkst
of me,
Unless it would not please.

DAVID [*sings*].

Thou dearer art to me
Than are the ruddy beams to morn,
That every dewy drop adorn
As jewels be.

Thou dearer art than showers
Of gentle dropping are to spring,
That swelling buds and verdure bring
And fields of flowers.

The early beams above
Bring light to morn, the vernal rain
Brings beauty, life, and richest gain—
Thou bringest love.

MICHAL.

'Tis beautiful if it was meant for me;
But if composed another maid to
please—
It is not pretty to repeat it me.

DAVID.

'Twas meant for thee alone. I know
none other,
And not of any thought till I saw thee.
I live a life of deepest solitude
Guarding the sheep I tend; save now
and then
Some mystic traveler, upon a camel
Swaying from side to side with rolling
pace,
Comes to my tent as shelter for the
night.

MICHAL.

How dost thou pass the time?

DAVID.

Watching the sheep
Or warding dangers off. A bear one
day,
Falling upon us, seized a petted lamb.
I followed him and smote him till the
prey
Dropped from his jaws; and when he
rose in rage
I bearded him and slew and flayed him
there.

MICHAL.

Is it not dreadful?

DAVID.

No, the Lord is with me

Most in the wilds; least where men
are gathered.

I tend my sheep, and feel that I myself
Am one among a flock Jehovah keepeth.
My days are filled with strains from
Nature's lips;

Breezes which, with their airy fingers,
touch

The pendant forest leaves, or, swifter
blown,

Twang the taut branches; birds of
joyous song

Trilling aloft in furious ecstasy;
While, from the farther sea, the roting
waves

Measure the moments as they fleet
along.

When flaming day is gone, and heav-
en's floor

With God's unnumbered embers bright
is strewn,

I sleep upon a patch of tender grass

Upon the border of a rivulet.

There sweet composure the vexed earth
surrounds,

And all the air is filled with gentle
noise

Of sheep at rest, and insects humming
lightly,

And rhythmic lapping of the running
water,

Which seems to flow along my veins
and bathe

My body with a clean and cool refresh-
ment.

But, Michal, now the plains are desolate.

MICHAL.

And all our tents seem uninhabited

When thou art gone. But we must talk
no more.

[*They whisper together. Enter SAUL
and ABNER.*]

SAUL.

What does he tell her?

ABNER.

Lies about the bear.

SAUL.

He slew Goliath on the Elah Plain.

ABNER.

Goliath died of sheer astonishment.
It nearly killed me, too. Set him a
task—

Say one who seeks thy daughter's hand
must bring.

A worthy dowry, and that he is poor.
Send him to snatch him wealth at
Shaarrain;

I warrant he will not return alive,
And we shall know 'twas not the Lord,
but chance,

That helped him win his victory at Elah.

SAUL.

I fear the Lord is with him.

[Addressing DAVID]. David, bring
The proving of an hundred Philistines
Slain by thyself, and Michal shall be
thine.

Not wealth, but honors be thy dowry,
boy.

Tarry not, begone.

DAVID.

The hundred men
Who stand between thy daughter and
myself,
Shall pay the forfeit. Fare thee well,
my lord,
And thee, sweet Michal. I shall soon
return.

ABNER.

Let him who girds his battle-harness on
Not boast himself as he who puts it off.

[Exit DAVID and MICHAL.]

SAUL.

He seems a menace and reproach to me.
Michal must cause his downfall.

ABNER.

These Philistines
Will make their bread of him. He'll
trouble thee no more.

[Exeunt SAUL and ABNER.]

SCENE V.

The same. At the gate of the city.

MICHAL and JONATHAN.

MICHAL.

Will he in safety come to us again?
Say, that for David there is naught to
fear.

JONATHAN.

Well, I'll say this: That I had rather
choose

His chance of triumph than the chance
of one

Among the hundred living. There is
comfort.

But dost thou truly love him, little girl;
Or doth thy heart but trip to some new
air?

Life without love is like a journey,
traced

Along a way unknown; with love 'tis
swift

Like the returning. Thou art proud of
spirit,

And David masterful; he may not
please thee.

Not wilfulness but love should light the
path.

MICHAL.

Brother mine, thy love, thy wife and
children

Have filled my life till now. But now
—I fear—

I love him not, and yet when he is gone
My heart is sad. When thinkest he re-
turns?

JONATHAN.

What sound is that?

MICHAL.

The women crying "David!

David!! David!!!” Is it not his name?
He is returning. He hath slain the men.
Can it be that he hath failed? No, no!
The cry is “David! Victor!! Con-
queror!!!”

JONATHAN.

’Tis he. Let us await his coming here.
How grand, with triumph and with
youth aglow!
And, Michal, he hath triumphed over
foes
Worse than Philistines. Here the
women come.

[Enter a troop of women in gala at-
tire, dancing and singing]:

Saul hath slain his thousands,
And David his tens of thousands.
They who hate the Lord
Flee before his sword—
Flee till, robbed of breath,
All are hewn to death.
No Philistines live to tell
How he leveled wall and well.

[Enter DAVID and troopers.]

DAVID.

Such over-praise is worse than none at
all.
I pray you cease.

MICHAL.

Hast slain an hundred men?

DAVID.

Yea; and the proofs I bring in twice-
full tale.

JONATHAN.

Stay thou with Michal here, and I will
seek
Our father. Let the crowd at once
disperse.

[Exeunt Women and JONATHAN.]

DAVID.

I come to claim thee, Michal. Shall I
fling

Over thy head the banner of my love?

MICHAL.

At times I think me ready; but at times
I tremble lest, in changing my estate,
I shall but make unhappy thee and me.
Do not be angry, David.

DAVID.

Nay, not I.

I guessed as much. A ship that beats
the wind
Sweeps onward, back and forth, with
swelling sheet;
But when she swings her prow to
change the tack,
The sail, uncertain, flaps against the
mast.
And so thy heart as strong and true
will throb,
As wife or maiden, though it flutter
now
Because thy hastening feet must leave
the course
Thy happy childhood knew.

MICHAL.

How couldst thou guess
That of my doubtings I would speak to
thee?

DAVID.

Oh, there are ways; and sweethearts
keep us guessing
Of many things—most what they think
of us.

MICHAL.

I know a simple truthful little song,
Learned all anew since last I saw thee
here.
Wilt thou attend, whilst I discourse to
thee?

DAVID.

With all my ears, sweet Michal, and
my heart.

MICHAL.

Now, do not be provoked; for, though
'tis frank,
It ends with loving words, and prettily.

SONG.

I think of thee when morning breaks,
When early sunbeams creep
Along the earth, and Nature wakes—
If I am not asleep.

I think of thee throughout the hours
When life's excitements rage,
When thronging bees and birds and
flowers—
Do not my thoughts engage.

But when, at quiet eventide,
The night-born breezes free
In whispered plaints their loves confide,
I think of only thee.

DAVID.

There's for each saucy stanza [*patting
her on each cheek*],

There for the sweet one [*kissing her*].
But come, my Michal, we must now
prepare
Against our wedding, lest thy sprightly
fancy
Be otherwise engaged.

[*Exeunt DAVID and MICHAL together.*]

SCENE VI.

The same. SAUL. ABNER *leaving him,*
and JONATHAN *approaching.*

JONATHAN.

David returns with twice an hundred
slain—
Philistine men—and claims thy prom-
ise now.

SAUL.

But where hath David buried all our
foes?
Saul slays his thousands, David his
tens of thousands.
Runs it not so?

JONATHAN.

If Abner come as herald.

SAUL.

It is what happened. What can this
thy friend
Have further but the crown? Would
he were slain!

JONATHAN.

Sin not against him, father; he hath
sinned
Nothing toward thee, but all his works
have been
To thee-ward very good. He staked
his life
And slew Goliath. Thou didst rejoice
in it.
Why sin against his blood to take his
life?
For, though the wrong toward him may
be forgot,
Who shall intreat for sins against the
Lord?

SAUL.

Nay, I exclaimed in haste and rage at
talk
Of armies slaughtered with his virgin
sword.

JONATHAN.

The women's singing David checked at
once,
Saying that blame were better than such
praise.
There came post-haste a messenger to-
day
With news of great Philistine armies
massed
Along our borders, threatening descent.
If thou or I should fall, on whom could
either,
Surviving, lean? Our wisest counsel-
lors
Are brutish; keen for evil, but for good
Lacking all knowledge. Abner, double-
tongued,
Winnows with every wind. He would
not help.

Cant, catch-calls and corruption are his stock,
 Wherewith he cheats the people to his gain.
 The Lord approveth David. All the troops
 Follow him gladly at the King's command.
 And he doth laud thee to them, calling thee
 The grace of Israel who hath decked her daughters
 In scarlet cloth and ornaments of gold;
 Swift as the eagle, as the lion strong,
 Beating the foe as dust before the blast;
 Making thy people rest until the dawn.
 No new-born grace is his, but courtesy
 Ingrained through all his honored parent-stock.
 And Michal loves him. Only now they met.
 He comes in modest triumph. I see them there
 Under the shadow of yon ancient cedar.
 If I should call them, surely thou wilt bless.

SAUL.

Nothing can I deny thee, Jonathan,
 For, since thy childhood, thou to me hast been
 A ray of sunshine gladdening mine eyes.
 Go then, my son, and call the lovers here.
 If David swear that he will never fail
 In loyalty to thee when I am gone,
 As God doth live, his life shall not be sought.
 The Lord has poured his favor thick on him,
 And he can aid us.

JONATHAN.

I will fetch them here.

[Exit JONATHAN.]

SAUL [alone].

Strong as the lion, as the eagle swift,
 Driving the foe as chaff before the wind.

[Re-enter JONATHAN with DAVID and MICHAL.]

Come, children. [To DAVID.] I have learned of thy success;
 I welcome thee as son. But swear to me
 That when my Jonathan shall be the king
 Thou wilt sustain him, serve and honor him,
 As God thy life shall prosper.

DAVID.

Even as required
 So do I swear, as God shall prosper me.

SAUL [placing MICHAL's hand in DAVID's].

After the law of Moses, take her, son,
 According to the custom.

[To JONATHAN.] A blessing frame,
 And I will say amen.

JONATHAN.

Jehovah grant
 Enough, and wisdom. May He bless your lives
 In youth with children, in age with children's children.
 May she be to thee as Ruth to Boaz,
 Whom, in her toil, Naomi's daughter gleaned.
 May both, in Bethlehem, become as famed
 As these from whom thou springest;
 may you do
 As worthily in Ephrathah.

SAUL.

Amen.

So may the blessing rest upon you both.

ACT II.

"So David fled, and escaped, and came to Samuel at Ramah, and told him all that Saul had done to him. And he and Samuel went and dwelt in Naioth.

"And it was told Saul, saying, Behold, David is at Naioth in Ramah.

"And he went thither to Naioth in Ramah; and the Spirit of God was upon him also, and he went on, and prophesied, until he came to Naioth in Ramah.

"And he stripped off his clothes also, and prophesied before Samuel in like manner, and lay down naked all that day and all that night. Wherefore they say, Is Saul also among the prophets?"

I. SAMUEL XIX :18-19, 23-24.

SCENE I. *The same.* SAUL and ABNER.

ABNER.

Rumor spreads that Samuel once anointed David at Bethlehem. I know not what it may mean; but he grows so great with victories, with women's talk, with Jonathan's alliance, and, most of all, because of his marriage with Michal, that all the people expect to see him king when you are dead, or possibly deposed. Who knows what he plots? And Jonathan would fall in with anything which looked to David's welfare. I do not now speak of certainties, but tell what I hear reported, and feel bound to bring to you.

SAUL.

Yes, but his oath. He swore that he would serve and honor Jonathan when I am gone.

ABNER.

Ave, but already was anointed. Possibly it augurs nothing.

SAUL.

Augurs nothin^g? Whom beside has the prophet ever anointed with his oil, barring myself? Tell me how you heard of it?

ABNER.

I overheard David telling Jonathan.

SAUL.

And therefore told me that all the people report it?

ABNER.

Yes, I count it mere boasting. Can you think such a tale is truthful?

SAUL.

Who can say? The Lord is with David.

ABNER.

And the prince; and, if I may add it, the king.

SAUL.

What have I done?

ABNER.

Married David with Michal.

SAUL.

She loves him dearly.

ABNER.

What is love in royal marriage? Policy should make all alliances within your house. Our country is new in kingcraft. Not a prince of Philistia seeks a wife, or gives in marriage son or daughter, nephew, niece, or farther relative, but looks to swell his state. So should you. There is Palti: rich, a loyal subject, a worthy son-in-law to a king. I urged him. He was passed by, and David was picked instead. What will David add to your throne?

SAUL.

Far more than Palti could add. That puny son of Laish! If one should say, "Leave following your wife, for I will take her," he'd turn tail. What stuff's in Palti to found a royal line?

ABNER.

Oh, if the succession be not through Jonathan, David were best—and readiest to seize it.

SAUL.

What can I do?

ABNER.

Declare the marriage void.

SAUL.

Will not God be moved to anger?

ABNER.

Can man profit God? We fool ourselves with fictions. Whosoever is wise will profit himself and afterward square accounts. Take Michal back. She may like his vaporings about lions and bears slain and flayed (though no one ever has seen a skin or a carcass). But all this is childish fancy. David thinks of nothing but religious dances and feasts. He composes psalms about himself or about your shortcomings; sings them everywhere. She will tire of his hypocrisy; and should David prove a Jacob, that supplanter who cheated Esau, and make the anointing an occasion to juggle Jonathan out of the crown, he will trouble her with other marriages, or, mayhap, with looser bonds.

SAUL.

But what will Jonathan think? And will the army endure it?

ABNER.

Leave the troops to me. Jonathan should accede, seeing all is done for him; and doubtless will. The prophet, and he alone, must know the meaning which lies beneath the anointing. Ask of him.

SAUL.

Samuel loves me not, and never has he sought me since that fierce affair of Agag. I shall not seek him. Go you instead.

ABNER.

And be cut in pieces like Agag, and perhaps my members be sent by Samuel throughout all the land, to call the tribes to arms and seize the throne for David? No, the prophet loves me not; nor would answer me. But this anointing—it must have been about the time when Agag was slain. Said Samuel aught to you of the kingship?

SAUL.

Yes; he said the Lord had rent the kingdom from me; that he saw one after His heart whom He would have as ruler—a better than I. But that is long passed, and I am still king.

ABNER.

And, following you, David or Jonathan; what matters it which? Both are sons.

SAUL.

Sons with a difference! I will seek Samuel and know this portentous matter.

ABNER.

Rumor reports that David hides now with Samuel. You know the thing to do should you find him there.

SAUL.

Trust me to do as wisdom shall dictate.

ABNER.

As to Michal?

SAUL.

Talk of that again. Leave me now.

[Exit ABNER.]

SAUL [alone].

With their mouths they show love, but still their yearning goes after gain. Abner is cunning, always seeking some private end under guise of public service. Yet he reasons well, and seems loyal toward me and my house; and I must let him gain his advantage, for the aid that he gives me. I may not muzzle the ox that treads out the corn.

[Exit.]

SCENE III. *The same.* SAUL and JONATHAN meeting.

JONATHAN.

Whither, my father, goest thou?

SAUL.

To Naioth.

JONATHAN.

What turns thy footsteps now toward Samuel?
He hath not come to thee nor thou to him
Since Agag paid the forfeit terribly
Beneath his sword at Gilgal. What he meant
I never knew, nor why his long retreat.

SAUL.

'Tis this I seek to learn. If he should say
That God hath rent the kingdom, choosing one
Apart from thee, against my cherished wish,
Wouldst thou submit?

JONATHAN.

Shall feeble men oppose
The agent called to do the work of God;

Or he who holds the crown by God's decree
Rebel against His own ordained successor?
Our kings will come and go in Israel;
For God is over all, and, under Him,
The regal mantle cloaks the one most fit.

SAUL.

Who is so fit as thou? A prince in blood;
Familiar with affairs of state, and trained
From boyhood up in kingly polity;
Inured to warfare; raised above the need
To favor factions. If each succession brings
A king put forth by some ambitious house,
Rivalry fierce and wild will rend the kingdom
And order turn to chaos.

JONATHAN.

Doth then the crown
Endure for generations? If the people,
Yielding advantage, seek the common weal.
God will point out to each His choice for king.
Whoever rules, a station near the throne
Is sure to fall to me by general voice.

SAUL.

Better unplaced than second.

JONATHAN.

Yea, in pride,
But not in service. Israel is still
Jehovah's kingdom. Every man who works
As is appointed serves the Lord. Not place,
But power; zeal, not show of service, tells.
For God doth measure men by what they are.

SAUL.

Why, Jonathan, dost thou, at every
turn,
Thwart thus my purpose, and so inter-
fere
Against thine own advantage? I believe
That David would supplant thee. Hath
he not
Told thee of his anointing?

JONATHAN.

Not as the king.

SAUL.

Art thou so blind? The ceremony
means
A choice as king or nothing. Would
the seer
Have sought him out, besmeared his
locks with oil,
And filled his thoughts with fancied
preference,
Without a purpose? Hold thyself aloof.
He plainly seeks thy hurt.

JONATHAN.

The seer found thee
Little in thine own sight, and made thee
king
Of all the tribes. From those who
rudely cried,
"This man shall not rule over us!"
arousing
Rebellious clamor, hast thou not en-
forced
Submission?

SAUL.

Pray tell me what's thy trend?

JONATHAN.

If chosen, and anointed with the oil,
To be the keeper of God's covenant,
The shepherd of His people, David
must
Of one and all receive obedience.

SAUL.

Why should that ancient and immured
recluse
Have put his flesh-hook in? The king-
ship falls
Upon thy shoulders by sure preference,
And they are broad enough to carry it.
Until I see the prophet, hold thyself
Apart from David. Give him no as-
sent.
For I will learn the truth.

JONATHAN.

And, learning, yield?

SAUL.

Enough of this. Do thou the rather
frame
Thy mind to heed my wishes. All my
thoughts
Are fixed on thy advancement. Should
I, then,
Be thwarted, and by thee? I seek the
seer.

[Exit SAUL.]

JONATHAN [alone]

Misgivings torture me. Our inter-
course
Has been as lovers. Doth the hour ap-
proach,
When thou and I must follow parting
ways,
Or I must quit, for thee, the better
course?
Farewell, farewell, farewell. Jehovah
guide thee
Along the path that leads to perfect
peace.

[Exit JONATHAN.]

SCENE III. *Ramah* [NAIOTH]. SAMUEL
alone. Enter SAUL.

SAMUEL.

What purpose brings thee here?

SAUL.

I come to learn.

The will of God from thee His great-
est prophet.

Our scouts report the enemy as massed
Beyond the Jordan. Should thy servant
meet

The fate that lies ambushed for every
man,

Who then shall fill his seat; and what
shall he

Arrange against the chances?

SAMUEL.

Who, then, art thou?

SAUL.

The Lord's anointed.

SAMUEL.

Like the sow that is washed,
And wallows again in the mire.

SAUL.

Samuel,

I am the King. Thy rule is set aside.

SAMUEL.

It was not me they scorned; it was the
Lord.

What God directed, that I did. But thou,
A rabble-server, bringst the curse which
falls

When slaves are throned as monarchs.
Comest thou here

To learn God's will that it may be per-
formed;

Or, learning, wouldst thou impotently
seek

To thwart it? Once before, yea, more
than once,

Thou, knowing God's command, didst
yet prefer

Thine own devices. Hast thou changed
thy heart,

Or is it set on some accomplishment

Where thou wouldst have my favor?

SAUL.

What misdeeds

Dost thou recall?

SAMUEL.

For one, thy sparing Agag,
After Jehovah made his fixed decree
That he and all his followers, his flocks,
Women and suckling babes should die.

SAUL.

But my heart
Was sorely moved for him.

SAMUEL.

Thy melting pity
Savored of thrift. For all the weakly
ones,
The women, babes, and scrawny beasts
were slain;
The choicest camels, sheep, and kine
were spared,
And cruel, mincing Agag brought alive
To make a triumph.

SAUL.

But 'twas a stern decree.

SAMUEL.

Jehovah made it. Look how Joshua
Fulfilled a like command, and made a
heap

Of Ai, where he left them none to
breathe.

Often Jehovah's anger was inflamed
Against the people, seeing every man

Do what was pleasing in his eyes; such
crimes

As Sodom and Gomorrah wrought and
burned for.

Wherefore He left them many times
in bonds.

The hands of spoilers spoiled them.
Sisera

Laid the whole land so waste that trav-
elers

Walked in the byways. War was in
the gates

Of all the cities. Midian encamped
Against them, reaping every harvest

sown,
Until nor ox nor ass nor sheep was
left,

Nor sustenance throughout all Israel.
Even the very ark itself was taken—

To force, by wonders worked, a swift return.

At times there rose as judges godly men,
Jerubbaal, Ehud, Barak, Othniel,
Bedan and Jephthah; I was one of these.

With them Jehovah wrought deliverance.

But still His chosen people fell again,
And worshipped idols, Ashtaroth and Baal,

A petty god for every town and hamlet;

Though of the darkened nations all around,

Not one hath changed its gods—which are not God.

So when the people clamored for a king

And I at God's command anointed thee
To be the prince of His inheritance
(The day when thou, thy father's asses lost,

Fluttered the maidens when thou soughtst the seer)

I loved thee much, and hoped thy sway might serve

To roll the tide of disobedience back,
And keep the people from idolatry,
Till Shiloh come and fill the yearning earth

With grace of God, as waters fill the sea.

But God regardeth not the outward show,

As man must judge; He looketh on the heart.

That people born of Esau, Amalek,
Whom He had sworn to war upon and blot

Out of all memory, was made a test.
Yet thou didst spare the king, and keep the spoils

For bleating sacrifice, where God required

Obedience. When the Lord His people took,

As wayward children, by the hand to lead them

Out of Egyptian bondage, not to them
Spake He of offerings and sacrifice;

But "Harken unto me," He said, "and walk

In all my ways, and I will be your God,
And ye my people."

Though thy sin was great,
And I had thoroughly cautioned Israel,
That, shouldst thou practice wickedness, thyself

And all would be consumed, yet, none the less,

When God revealed His wrath, in prayer I wrestled,

That He, who had from Egypt pardoned us,

Even till now, might turn His anger back.

But He, of such beginning, knew the end.

The modesty, the singleness of aim,
The rugged majesty that marked thee out

Fitly a king, are frecked, disfigured, shattered.

For low ambition, petty policy,
Paltry excuses spun to cloak thy sins,
Have raveled out thy mind. God needs thee not.

Like the false light that comes before the morning,

Thou must pass. The Lord in anger gave

And in His wrath he taketh thee away.
For he hath found another implement
Fitter to chisel out His grand design,
And thou art cast aside.

SAUL.

My God! My God!

Why hath He turned His face away from me?

My sin is great, but I repent of it
In dust and ashes! Shall a king be whelmed

Like a poor merchant, whom a single act

Of folly steeps in ruin?

SAMUEL.

'Twas not thine acts

That wrought thy downfall. Disobedience,

Rebellion, stubbornness, the reckless will

That brought thee here to question
God's decree

And compass David's death—'tis this
destroys
The part of thee that might have stood.
The end
Will follow soon. Thinkst thou the
matter light
That thou shouldst break the bond of
God's control,
And waste the blessing promised? Is
it light
That thou hast tempted God to pour on
us,
In all its wrath, the curse pronounced
by Moses:
That even the gentle breeze which
bringeth rain
Shall turn to the whirlwind driving
sand and hail?
Our towns be compassed round with
savage foes,
Their very tongue unknown; our loving
men
Shall turn an evil eye on all held dear;
Our tender women, who, for dainti-
ness,
Would not adventure even to tread the
ground,
Shall fain devour the little ones that
come
Between their feet; and that God's
chosen people,
Tossing among the nations to and fro,
At last shall sell themselves unto their
foes,—
And none shall buy them?

SAUL.

Yea, but, my son?

SAMUEL.

The Lord
Will care for Jonathan. Jehovah sends
me
Hither and thither; something I divine
From such employment; naught beyond
is known.

SAUL.

Is there then naught that I can do to
save
To Jonathan the throne of Israel?
No one than he is fitter. I will place

Upon his head the crown which I have
lost.
Yea, I will yield my life, as Aaron did
What time his mantle fell on Eleazer.
For I have loved him since I felt his
breath
Sweet with his mother's milk. His lit-
tle feet
That knew not how to walk, his boast-
ful youth
And his majestic manhood—Thou hast
loved him.
Why should he, too, be punished? For
the law
Of Moses teaches, for the father's sins
The children shall not suffer.

SAMUEL.

Yet the sinful
Upon the sinless may bring evil down.
Not all the piety of Eli saved
His household, when his sons did wick-
edly;
I, too, have suffered, but perhaps with
guilt.
Thy horn is broken. On another's head
Have I the holy ointment poured, and
he
Shall rule when thou art gone.

SAUL.

Is all the honor,
Which God hath heaped, departed from
my house?
The rains descend, the waters wear the
hills,
The yawning ocean swallows all at last;
Of no avail is anything that is.
Jehovah raised me from the dust of
earth;
Made me to sit at princes' feasts; my
feet
In highest places set; yet casts me off,
As one that is an hireling when he is
old.
Who after me shall wield the scepter?

SAMUEL.

David,
Whom thou wouldst slay, but God will
keep from harm.

SAUL.

If aught is good that I have ever done,
Here take my life, and give me burial
In this thy mountain, as on Nebo God
Granted to Moses; so that I may hide
The shame upon me. As the moving
floods

Fail from the sea, the river drieth up,
So may I sink and waste, and none
shall say,

"Where is he?" Let me die and rise no
more.

Not till the heavens fall let me be
roused

Out of my sleep. For I am one whose
hope

Is in the grave.

[SAUL strips off his clothing and falls
down.]

SAMUEL.

The Lord will soon enough
Require thy soul. The shame is light.

Thy load

Of wickedness is more than thou canst
bear.

O weak and wretched man! While life
remains

Seek thou forgiveness. May God pity
thee.

ACT III.

*"And he said unto him, Fear not:
for the hand of Saul my father shall
not find thee; and thou shalt be king
over Israel, and I shall be next unto
thee; and that also Saul my father
knoweth. And they two made a cove-
nant before the Lord: and David abode
in the wood, and Jonathan went to his
house."*

I. SAMUEL xxiii: 17-18.

SCENE I. *Near Gibeah.* JONATHAN
alone.

Enter DAVID.

DAVID.

What have I done? What mine iniquity
Wherefor the king, thy father, seeks
my life?

As thy soul lives, there's but a step
between
Me and death.

JONATHAN.

But Saul cannot seek thy life.

DAVID.

He came to Naioth, where, with Samuel,
I lay in hiding. Thrice he sent his
servants.

Within the prophet's holy presence, all
Were moved to prophecy. At last the
king

In person sought the seer, and on him
came

The spirit; all that day and all that
night

He lay upon the ground and prophe-
sied;

And men who saw him, asked in won-
der, "Is Saul,

Also, among the prophets?" Thus the
Lord

His purpose turned aside, that I might
live.

JONATHAN.

To Samuel he went to learn God's will.
He loved thee much; but now he dreads
thy fame,

And hears in awe those mighty psalms
of thine

Which on the wicked call God's anger
down.

Tomorrow we begin to celebrate
The waxing moon; and, at the feast,
thy presence

Is certainly expected. There, I hope
That I may make between the king and
thee

A reconciliation.

DAVID.

Jonathan,

I must remain away.

JONATHAN.

Thy reason, David?

DAVID.

Dost thou recall the fabled wasp, alight
Upon a farmer's wagon? When the
man
Upraised his cap to strike, "Where-
fore," said it,
"Shouldst thou prepare to kill me? I
am here
With best of feeling." "Though thy
feeling be
All that thou sayest," said the farmer,
striking,
"How may I know but that, before we
reach
Our journey's end, thou wilt sting me?"

JONATHAN.

What is the moral?

DAVID.

With men who fear thee do thou not
consort.
When from the coming feast the king
doth miss me
Say that I earnestly requested leave
To go to Bethlehem, there to attend
A yearly sacrifice now being held
By all my family. If he say thus, "It is
well,"
Then have I peace. But should his
anger rise,
Rest thee assured that toward me ill is
planned.
So much I ask because we two have
sworn.
But if in me iniquity is found
Thyself shalt slay me here. For why
shouldst thou
Bring me before thy father?

JONATHAN.

Have, then, thy wish.
Look thou at yonder rocks called Ezel,
crowned
With trees which show the simple lines
of winter;
Tall elms, like giant birds with wings
up-lift

To soar, but still a-tiptoe. Mark the
range.
Thinkest that I can shoot an arrow
there?

DAVID.

I can if thou canst not.

JONATHAN.

I take the challenge.
[*They shoot.*]
My arrow falls beyond.

DAVID.

And mine falls short.

JONATHAN.

Hide there at sunrise on the second day
When I shall hither come for archery,
Attended by a lad; then toward the
rocks,
As though at mark, three arrows will
I shoot.
When the lad shall run to fetch them,
if I call:
"Behold, they lie beyond thee!" go thy
way.
But if I call: "The arrows lie this
side!"
As God doth live, peace waits thee, and
not harm.

DAVID.

Dear Jonathan, my life is in thy hand—
'Tis safer there even than in mine own.
And I would make thee keeper of my
head—
But now I feel, looking to thee for help,
That thou shouldst know the truth.
The seer at last
Revealed the meaning hidden under-
neath
The ceremony, where he poured the oil
Upon my head in Bethlehem.

JONATHAN.

Of the which
Thou hast already told me?

DAVID.

Goliath down. Yea, when I flung
Saul, too, the meaning
learned.

JONATHAN.

At Ramah?

DAVID.

Yes.

JONATHAN.

My David, brother, friend,
Thou needst not fear to speak the truth
to me.
Is not God's oath between us? Tell
me, then,
If He will make thee king instead of
me.

DAVID.

God's gifts are tempered when they
are bestowed.
After full many years of toil they come;
Or, if, in youth, then bringing sacrifice,
That they may be worn with meekness.
Otherwise
The heart becomes unmannerly, and all
the fruit
Is changed to ashes. Here we togeth-
er stand,
Brothers in law and love. To thee the
crown
Should come by due succession; yet un-
to me
It is decreed. My heart is sadly tried
Thus to supplant thee. God's unchang-
ing will
Can not be turned aside. But thou shalt
be
My keeper over all, and in the throne
Only will I exceed, as Pharaoh Joseph.

JONATHAN.

But will the king submit? Will all the
pack
That fawn upon him yelp him on to
ruin?
Will both of us survive the mighty
shock

Should he resistance seek to force from
me?

The foes of David, they who flatter
Saul,

And every one at war with Jonathan,
Will press my claim, relying on my
virtue

To compass my destruction. Now is
poised

The curse which Saul declared. Of
what avail

Are love and faith and service? God
hath forged

Out of my buckler bolts that pierce my
heart.

Without a place of refuge must I run
Hither and thither. Swear to me again

That thou wilt never cut thy kindness
off

From me, my wife, and little ones.

DAVID.

I swear

By great Jehovah. Yonder Ezel-rocks
Shall stand as witness, hearing all the

vows
Which we have spoken. Like the altar

raised
By all the tribes that dwell beyond the

Jordan,
These stones shall show that God, in

choosing me,
Hath not a border set between our seed

That thou shouldst have no portion.
Courage, friend!

God is a shield to them that trust in
Him;

And, like the wayward swallow still a-
wing,

The curse without a cause alighteth not.
The Lord will slay the wicked ones that

strew
Our paths with adders' fangs. But He

will search
Our thoughts, and surely show us how

to tread
The perfect way.

JONATHAN.

I go now to seek the king.
David, the hand of Saul shall find thee
not.

But do not chafe under the checks that hold

Thy young ambition back; for youth can wait

Until the foot-falls of retiring age
Are lost in silence, and yet run his race.
After that Saul is gone, and thou art become

A king among the people, like a river
Which doth bedew its banks and rageth not

(Where trees may spread their roots,
nor fear the heat,

Bearing their blossom, leaf, and grateful fruit

Alike in years of drouth and years of rain),

If thou wilt have me serve thee then,
'tis well;

Since we have both of us together sworn

That God the Lord shall be between thy seed

And my seed, me and thee forever.

DAVID.

Faithful,

Beloved Jonathan, farewell.

[*Exeunt severally.*]

ACT IV.

"And Saul cast a javelin at him to smite him; whereby Jonathan knew that it was determined of his father to slay David. So Jonathan arose from the table in fierce anger, and did eat no meat the second day of the month: for he was grieved for David, because his father had done him shame."

I. SAMUEL xx: 33-34.

SCENE I. *Gibeah.* ABNER. *Enter* DOEG.

ABNER.

Is all well?

DOEG.

All is well.

ABNER.

What news spurs to such haste?

DOEG:

Samuel lies at Ramah—dead.

ABNER.

As any Nobite?

DOEG.

Yes, priests and all.

ABNER.

Well, what else? Met you any one worthy of mention?

DOEG.

Some miles below, David—turned toward Bethlehem.

ABNER.

Send Eshbaal and Palti here. Tell them the news requires haste. Hold your peace about David, but spread Samuel's death through the town, that Israel may mourn. Hasten.

[*Exit* DOEG.]

ABNER [*alone.*]

Who threw the stone into David's bowl? It was his proper time to flee. Palti is only a spider to sting him with, and perhaps anger him into rebellion. As for Eshbaal, he will not stand the hair-test; but Saul will be so angered at David's flight, and so strengthened by Samuel's death, that he will agree to anything should Jonathan hold out.

[*Enter* PALTÍ.]

My Palti, you shall wed Michal forthwith.

PALTI.

What shall I do?

ABNER.

Nothing, most worthy Palti. And, above all, lest you muddle everything, say nothing; let the word die within you. Have no fear, it will not burst you. When I send word, be-take yourself to Michal.

PALTI.

But what will David and Michal do to me?

ABNER.

Idyllic quarrels you must settle, my Palti. Leave David to me. I will arrange the thing with Saul. To be a princely son-in-law is worth—even marriage. Noble Palti, go.

[Exit PALTI.]

[Enter ESHBAAL.]

ABNER.

The seer is dead.

[Cries of mourning without.]

ESHBAAL.

All the people mourn him, the grandest prophet since Moses.

ABNER.

Let them mourn. Pressure of affairs stifles sorrow. The warrior-politician-prophet dead, David's hope dies with him. Who, now, will tell of that anointing, or believe it if told? You, Saul, Jonathan and I—no others hold it certain, barring David; and Jonathan must side with us. Would you be king?

ESHBAAL.

Jonathan will not side with us.

ABNER.

Let him go. Why force him to take a crown which he despises. Think of David, that captain of malcontents and beggars gathered-up from every cranny of Judea; think of him made king, and picking ministers from out his rabble! What respect shall we men of weight and substance find from such a motley crew? It shall not be. David has bored Jonathan's ear, and holds him slave for life. They cannot meet but Jonathan must be unshoeing himself. You shall take his place.

ESHBAAL.

But will Saul accede? When he returned from Ramah he seemed resigned, or dead to all hope.

ABNER.

Because your father hath eaten sour grapes, must your teeth be set on edge? Besides, he must accede. You know his temper. Jonathan, with him, rules him; Jonathan away, anger lashes Saul to fury. When Saul has caught the import of Samuel's death, which I shall forcibly expound, David shall envy the fox his hole to hide him in; and, if we catch him sunning, we will not smite the fellow twice. When the king is gone hunting with David, Jonathan will lose control of his temper—and of Saul. What say you, Eshbaal?

ESHBAAL.

Both Melchishua and Abinadab, being elder, should be preferred to me.

ABNER.

The younger cattle feed in the front. You, of all your father's sons, alone sustain him. Remember, the heel of the slow is scarred. Press on and the crown is yours. Now go, prepare for the feast.

ESHBAAL.

Does David come?

ABNER.

I trust so, but do not surely know. I shall seek the king, to tune his mind to our plans.

[*Exeunt severally.*]

SCENE II. *The same.* SAUL and ABNER.

ABNER.

Your chief herdsman, Doeg, who dispatched the herd of priests caught assisting David, reports Samuel dead at Ramah.

SAUL.

I heard the wailing, and learned the news.

ABNER.

It is a happy chance. David's claim dies with Samuel.

SAUL.

How?

ABNER.

For lack of proof. The claim is based on the anointing, which no one knows of excepting David's family, and yours, and me. Their word will stand for nothing, and we will all deny it.

SAUL.

Yes, all excepting Jonathan, whose yea will stand against a world of nays.

ABNER.

But Jonathan will take the crown, or will yield the place apparent to a more filial son—Melchishua, Abinadab, Eshbaal, as you choose. One must be selected.

SAUL.

When were you appointed anointer? Did Ramah's seer bequeath his prophet's horn to you?

ABNER.

Have your fling. Then consider this: Jonathan rejects the crown; David, he approving, claims it; we oppose. How can we make headway without a head? All will be one to you, I will not submit to having a king made of this Moabitish thorn.

SAUL.

Quite right. A royal cousin serves you instead of kingly place. If David were king, Joab would be his Abner, would pluck the plums that David missed, and would find the gleanings better than all your vintage.

ABNER.

Ever so it has been since Jonathan bowed the knee to David.

SAUL.

What has been?

ABNER.

That your friends are put to shame, and your enemies rejoiced; and so it will be until a son appointed to take your place is named—

SAUL.

It is Jonathan.

ABNER.

—And shirks it not.

SAUL.

He shall not shirk it. If at the coming feast, finding occasion, you stir discord up with David, prompt some act which may appear to be directed toward my person, on the flash I will pin him where he sits.

[*Noise without.*]

ABNER.

What call is that?

[Enter PALTÍ.]

We might pick a quarrel over Palti.

PALTÍ.

Nay, by your leave.

ABNER.

We will start no strife for you to carry on.

SAUL.

If nothing better offers, he will serve.

[Exeunt.]

SCENE III. *Gibeah. The Feast of the New Moon. Enter a procession of PRIESTS, chanting.*

PRIESTS.

Sing aloud unto God our strength;
Make joyful noise to the God of Jacob.
Take up a psalm; bring hither the tim-
brel,

The pleasant harp, with the psaltery.
Blow up the trumpet in the new moon,
In the time appointed, our solemn feast;
For 'tis a statute of the house of Jacob,
It is an ordinance of the God of Israel.

[Exeunt procession of PRIESTS.]

Enter COOKS, with caldrons, firewood, meats, &c. They prepare the feast and spread the table. They sing.

COOKS.

Pick the choicest from the flock,
Sparing neither lamb nor wether;
Pile the fuel, branch and stock,
Burning wood and bones together.

Heat the caldron till it boil,
Fill it full of thigh and shoulder;
Feed the flames with fat and oil,
Never let the fire smolder.

[Exeunt COOKS.]

Enter ABNER, with ESHBAAL, PALTÍ, DOEG, and ADRIEL. ABNER seats the others.

ABNER.

The King will come soon. This seat upon his left is mine; Eshbaal next to me; Adriel next; Palti and Doeg will sit across from you, leaving next to Saul, and upon his right-hand, a place for princely David; for he seeks the seat of honor from the king. Jonathan must needs take the farther end.

[Enter MELCHISHUA and ABINADAB.]

Melchishua, seat yourself to the right of the place reserved for Jonathan; and you, Abinadab, upon the left.

[Enter ARMONI and MEPHIBOSHETH.]

The sons of Rizpah will sit upon either side, near the farther end. Guess, my friends, a riddle: Who is it eats the fat and drinks the sweet himself, and sends what is left to them that lack?

DOEG.

David, who eats all of the meat and leaves the bones for the rest of us to gnaw upon.

ABNER.

Scarcely timely. Adriel, give us a song while we are awaiting the King. Come, though your voice be ever so tuneful, to hear you is not worth coaxing for.

ADRIEL [*sings*].

Ho! for a feast when the moon is new,
With hearty cheer and friendship true,
And wine that sparkles like the dew,
And lightens every face.

But when the moon is thin and old,
And the midnight sky is dark and cold,
It is, oh! for rest in the time untold,
And a grave in a sheltered place.

[Enter SAUL.]

SAUL.

Thy song, my son, would rival somber
Egypt,
Where, at a feast, a death's-head holds
a place,
Of jollity to check the bubbling flow.
Snatch joy; it will not wait the seek-
er's hand.

[*All rise.*]

ALL.

Welcome mighty ruler.

SAUL.

Welcome all,

My sons and friends. I greet you, each
in turn,
All, and each one, to this our festival.

[*All are seated.*]

But where are Jonathan and David?

ESHBAAL.

Behold

Jonathan appears.

[*Enter JONATHAN.*]

JONATHAN.

My father and my King.

SAUL.

My well-beloved son.

[*JONATHAN makes to seat himself
next to SAUL, on his right.*]

ABNER.

The seat reserved

For David.

[*JONATHAN goes to the farther end
of the table and stands there.*]

JONATHAN.

A happy day to one and all.
How gay the feast is! Palti, we are
well met.
I never saw thee wear so glad a face.

DOEG [*to SAUL*].

David is fleeing.

ABNER [*to JONATHAN*].

Palti and Michal wed.

JONATHAN.

Palti weds Michal?

SAUL.

David fleeing?

JONATHAN.

No tongue
Save thine could speak a thing so gross.
Is there, then, nothing sacred in thy
sight?

Must sister, brother, all be sacrificed
To thy designs, which smell so dank
and foul,

The people's breath is stifled? Not so
long
As I may live, shall such a crime be
done.

ABNER.

Am I a dog's head, to be so put upon,
For kindness shown to thee and all thy
house?

Whilst thou would set the throne of
David up
From Dan to Beersheba!

SAUL.

Hold, cousin! Son,
The pledge to Palti stands not fully
made.
But David—Doeg, saidst thou David
flees?
He was not purified, and cometh not.
Tell me, my son.

JONATHAN.

He asked me leave to go
To Bethlehem, where all his household
keep
A yearly feast; therefore, he cometh
not.

SAUL.

Son of a woman rebellious and perverse,
Hast thou not chosen him to thine own shame,
And to the shame of thy mother's nakedness?
While David lives upon the ground, thy rule
Will never be established. Therefore,
send
And fetch him here, that he may surely die.

JONATHAN.

Why should he be slain? What hath he done?

SAUL.

He is a rebel.

ABNER.

Rebel!

SEVERAL.

Rebel!

JONATHAN.

Rebel

Because the King rebels against Jehovah.

[SAUL casts his javelin at JONATHAN.]
When traitors rend thee, call me back again.

[Exit JONATHAN. The feast breaks up in confusion.]

ACT V.

"And when the inhabitants of Jabesh-Gilead heard of that which the Philistines had done to Saul, all the valiant men arose, and went all night, and took the body of Saul and the bodies of his sons from the wall of Beth-shan, and came to Jabesh, and burnt them there. And they took their bones, and buried them under a tree at Jabesh, and fasted seven days."

I. SAMUEL xxxi:11-13.

"And David lamented . . . over Saul and over Jonathan his son."

II. SAMUEL 1:17.

SCENE I. *Gibeah. Enter JONATHAN and ELHANAN, a lad.*

ELHANAN.

Will there be giants when I'm grown a man
As big as David?

JONATHAN.

Yes, Elhanan, doubtless.

ELHANAN.

Well, I can sling a stone, as straight as he.

JONATHAN.

Then, if thou bide thy time, thou wilt find a mark.

ELHANAN.

I fear they'll all be killed.

JONATHAN.

Nay, fear not so.
Each battle hath its giants; many lack Their David. Let me make trial of thy skill.

Canst thou a pebble sling to yonder rocks?

ELHANAN.

If I but find a stone that will sail, I can.

JONATHAN.

Here is a round and flat one. Do thy best;
'Tis always worth thy while to hit the mark.

[ELHANAN slings the stone.]
Well thrown. But couldst thou hit a giant there?

ELHANAN.

I'd run up closer.

JONATHAN.

Let me try a shaft.

[JONATHAN shoots an arrow.]

The wind blew that aside. Another, boy.

[*Shoots again.*]

Too much allowance. Just one other try
For yonder tree-tip.

[*Shoots a third time.*]

That was fairly shot.

ELHANAN.

There is no one else could do it.

JONATHAN.

Fetch them here.

[*ELHANAN runs for the arrows.*]

Behold! The arrows lie beyond thee,
boy.

[*Enter suddenly ABNER, DOEG and
TROOPERS in search of David.*]

ABNER.

Whom dost thou look for?

JONATHAN.

Answer thou me, instead.

ABNER.

I seek the traitor.

JONATHAN.

I have found him here.

ABNER.

Is David hereabouts?

JONATHAN.

Nay, Abner is.

ABNER.

I, from the king, my high commission
hold.

JONATHAN.

And David his from the King of kings.

ABNER.

Your proof.

JONATHAN.

Jehovah once was King of Israel.

He said to this one "Come," to that one
"Go,"

And they obeyed. Then rulers held
from God

Their high commissions; and, like a
lion's whelp,

Crouched in his lair, the young but
mighty tribes

Throughout the hosts opposing scat-
tered dread.

What find we now? Philistine armies
massed

Ready to spring on us; sheer in the
North

Judgment o'erhangs, and in the farthest
East

No hope appears.

DOEG.

Our hope with David hides,
And thou alone canst tell us where to
search.

We hear he flees to Ziklag.

JONATHAN.

Go, seek him there.

ABNER [*to DOEG.*]

If thou dost ne'er return 'tis something
gained.

[*To JONATHAN.*]

Hath not the king decreed? And thou,
of all,

Shouldst know, and not attempt to
thwart his will.

JONATHAN.

I thwart him not; the king is sceptered
right.

He may not let his cursed advisers seat
Themselves upon his throne. The
meanest subject

May front a king who thus unseats
himself.

ABNER.

He may, and lose his head—

JONATHAN.

To save the state.
 You eat the fat and clothe yourselves
 with wool;
 You kill the fatlings, but feed not the
 sheep.
 You do not heal the sick, the broken
 bind,
 Nor in the desert seek the one that
 strays.
 But he on whom the Lord hath set His
 seal
 Is hunted like a partridge in the moun-
 tains.

[*Re-enter ELHANAN excitedly. JONA-
 THAN is fearful that he may
 have seen DAVID.*]

Ho! My men! From tracking David,
 turn
 And follow me, your prince. This
 shifty knave
 Hath fooled the king to his own bet-
 terment.
 The time is come when, like the elusive
 sand,
 He with all them that follow him will
 slip
 Here—there—away, and let the king-
 dom fall.
 Stand you with me; or would you flee
 with him?

TROOPERS.

The Prince! God save the Prince of
 Israel!

[*The TROOPERS range themselves
 with JONATHAN.*]

ABNER.

The king will punish this.

JONATHAN.

No hurt shall fall
 On one of these while my head keeps
 its seat.

[*Exeunt JONATHAN and the TROOP-
 ERS.*]

ABNER.

Go, seek out David; I have other busi-
 ness.

[*Exit ABNER.*]

DOEG.

And I will seek for game that's safer
 found.

[*Exit DOEG.*]

SCENE II. *A wood in the wilderness of
 Ziph. Morning. Enter JONATHAN.*

JONATHAN.

Here, said the message. I will plant
 my spear,
 And hang my cap upon it; 'twas the
 sign.
 Of all the kings of time the kingliest,
 David must flee because our paths have
 crossed.
 Here will I see him and will strengthen
 him,
 Lest he despair.

[*Enter DAVID.*]

My David!

DAVID.

Jonathan!

JONATHAN.

Thou standest on the mountain fair of
 youth,
 Whence all the kingdoms of the teem-
 ing earth,
 And all their glory, seem within thy
 reach.
 Thy day will surely come. But I, who
 long
 To see its splendor even as they who
 watch
 Await the morning, shall have gone the
 way
 Where no returning footsteps ever fall.

DAVID.

Let not the staff that I would lean upon
 Be snatched from me, while I am toil-
 ing on

Unto the cold and lone and kingly
 summit!
 My flagging footsteps halt, my hope is
 gone.
 I cry aloud; and, in the vacant air,
 My voice doth waste itself. Oh! brutal
 age,
 That finds no fitting place for such a
 man!
 If thou art gone, of whom shall I be
 king?
 Or, lacking thee, how shall I learn to
 rule?
 Flee, brother! let the host be slain, but
 save,
 To prop my kingdom, that majestic
 form
 Which long hath borne the brunt of
 every blast
 That beat upon the throne. Me thou
 wouldst save,
 When on the dizzy height of power I
 stand,
 From all the arrows which Philistine
 wars
 Or fierce temptations aim. Be ruled,
 and fly!

JONATHAN.

But how, with such remembrance, could
 I live?
 My course is straight and brief.

DAVID.

Oh, bitter fate!
 A kingdom flung at me with such rude
 force
 That thou art slain beside me! I must
 pick
 The fragments up; the throne together
 piece.

JONATHAN.

The heavens, indeed, are black! Thy
 star alone
 Shines through a rift. Upon thy shoul-
 der rests
 The covenant of God with Israel,
 The hope of all this world. Through
 thee must come
 An universal brotherhood, where now
 Each man against his neighbor turns
 his arm.

Not in the range of time hath one ap-
 peared,
 On whom such hope hath rested. David,
 art thou
 He that should come, or wait we for
 another?
 Thy heart—is it so fair as thy fair face?
 And is thy soul, as thy courage, great
 and high?
 Canst thou upon thy slender body bear
 The crushing weight of anguish cast on
 him
 Whose single life shall change the heart
 of man?
 Wilt thou wear out thy heart, thy soul,
 thy life,
 Like Moses straining toward the prom-
 ised land?
 Oh, brother! stand for God, though all
 the herd
 Shall trample thee to dust, though
 children, wife—
 All who may claim a seat beside thy
 hearth—
 Shall rend thee. Be a king in deed and
 truth,
 Though all thy subjects mock and buffet
 thee.
 The wrong may seem to triumph; but
 the right
 Is still eternal. God will teach thee
 judgment;
 For thou art called of Him to feed His
 flock;
 And guide them with the wholeness of
 thy heart.

DAVID.

Oh, may He lead me in the perfect way
 Which thou hast shown me. May He
 come to me,
 That I, within my house with simple
 heart
 Shall ever walk, nor base ambition
 know;
 But on the faithful of the land shall fix
 Mine eyes, that they may dwell with
 me in peace;
 And I shall take my stand in line with
 those
 Who from the past, in great or lowly
 place,
 Have handed on our heritage of truth.
 So may our parting chasten my sad
 heart,

That still to all the world our love shall
 prove
 How friend may strengthen friend.
 Whilst I but stand
 As thou hast taught me, there is no
 defeat;
 And when I die I lay me down with
 thee.

JONATHAN.

Go, brother, run thy course; and let the
 end
 Crown the beginning. I my father
 seek,
 For one last meeting.

DAVID.

God thy mission bless,
 And grant the well-earned guerdon of
 success. [*Exeunt severally.*]

SCENE III. *Near Mount Gilboa at night.*
 JONATHAN *alone at the door of
 his tent.*

JONATHAN.

Who looks upon this ordered universe,
 And seeks no further than its marshal-
 ing?
 The pinioned reason beats against the
 bars
 Of nature's conservations; and escapes
 To soar, and see the great Creator's
 face.
 The earth that stands at rest from
 nothing hung,
 The stars that cheer us in our tread-
 mill lives,
 God's diadem the sun, the sky serene
 That guards for us the bounds of vision
 —all
 Proclaim by day and night the thoughts
 of God.
 As David says, there is no speech nor
 language,
 Their voice cannot be heard; yet
 through the earth
 Their line is gone, their words to the
 end of the world.
 We learn a little part, and say, "Behold,
 It is nothing;" and the whole is hid
 from us.
 For, when the stars were placed and
 taught their bounds,

Where, then, were we? Their paths
 exemplify
 The unchanging rule which brings for
 us in turn
 Summer and winter, spring and har-
 vest-home,
 Night and then daylight, even as our
 God,
 The Lord of all the hosts of heaven,
 swore,
 And with the rainbow his sure compact
 sealed,
 Shall still continue while the earth re-
 mains.

If He ruled o'er the heart the tumult
 stirred
 In every bosom soon would still itself,
 And all would be at rest. But now,
 instead,
 Hatred, rebellion, plague and pestilence,
 Famine and fury, break the peace of
 nature;
 While things eternal pass unnoted by.

[*AHINOAM, JONATHAN'S wife,
 within the tent, sings.*]

AHINOAM.

My heart seeks after thee, but thou art
 gone.
 Once we—oh! joyous years—
 Shared with each other, hopes and
 fears;
 But now I am alone.

My hope still clings to thee, but thou
 dost sleep.
 Some day—oh! will it be?—
 I shall be joined again with thee;
 But now alone I weep.

[*Enter from the tent JONATHAN'S wife
 with their two children.*]

AHINOAM.

Do thou not let the choice of David
 weigh
 Thy spirit down. For they who bear
 the rule
 Must act from policy; a lowly place
 Admits of clearer life; and, in the end,
 The virtues bred in secret make the
 state.

JONATHAN.

The state is jarred to breaking. David flees—
To Gath, to join with Achish there, I fear.
Jehovah's open enemies are camped
Upon our borders, while his secret foes,
Around the king, lead him, like Samson, chained;
And blinder, knowing not that he is bound.
All of his people, even the ark of God
Is placed in jeopardy; our children,
thou—
Nothing is safe.

AHINOAM.

The Lord will guard His own.

JONATHAN.

Yes; but who can submit him to decrees
Which crush his heart? These prattlers,
each afraid
Of the boo of the other—half afraid of
his own—
If I be taken, what will visit you?
Affliction's net will trammel you, and
want
Will come upon you like an armed man.

AHINOAM.

Then flee with us for safety, dearest
love.

JONATHAN.

It would not be thy love who fled with
thee.
If God shall grant that thou and I may
live
Until the whirlwind of his fury pass,
And David mount the throne of Israel,
Together we will seek the cooling
shadow
Of some great rock and dwell in peace
and love.

AHINOAM.

Hast thou no pity for thy little ones
And hapless me, their mother? Must
I look

To see thee slain, and some Philistine
fiend
Drag us away; while thy dear body lies
Upon the ground, for birds and beasts
to tear?
Better that we should go the way of
death
Than live when thou art gone.

JONATHAN.

These things, dear wife,
I too have pondered. May my ears be
stopped
In sleep eternal, e'er I hear thy wail,
When thou hast lost the light of liberty.
But if Jehovah hath for us in store
Such fate, where fleeing can we find
escape?
Yet may our children fill thy heart with
pride,
When thou hast heard their praise in
higher note
Than ever mine was sung in; may they
rise
And call thee blessèd. Loved Ahinoam,
The wife I wedded in my stainless
youth,
The dear companion to my plighted
vow;
Thou' hast rejoiced the heart which
trusted thee—
Hast done me good, not evil, all our
days.
Beauty and grace and dignity have
clothed thee,
And kindness ruled thy life.

AHINOAM.

My staff, my strength,
Full seven times the righteous man may
fall
And rise again; and though he rise no
more,
Yet in the thought of God and men
remembered,
He marcheth on forever, triumph-
crowned,
The victor for the prizes undefiled.

JONATHAN.

My little ones, my glorious wife, your
path

Is like the parting branches when the
 hart
 Leaps in the thicket! I must watch
 awhile.
 Good-night, good-night, good-night.

[*He embraces and kisses them.*]

All that the chastened spirit needs is
 promised:
 The eternal God to be thy dwelling
 place,
 And, underneath, the everlasting arms.

[*Exeunt AHINOAM and the
 children into the tent.*]

JONATHAN [*alone*].

How long, oh Lord! Wilt Thou for-
 get forever?

How long wilt Thou withhold Thy
 face from me?

How long shall I take counsel in my
 soul,

With sorrow in my heart through all
 the day?

Consider now, and answer me, my
 God!

Lighten mine eyes, that I sleep not in
 death;

Lest they that trouble me prevail
 against me,

And they that cherish me be filled with
 woe.—

But I have trusted in Thy mercy ever,
 My heart shall yet rejoice in Thy sal-
 vation;

And I will sing unto the Lord my God,
 Because with me He hath dealt lov-
 ingly.

AHINOAM [*in the tent, sings:*]

The sun will shine as bright to thee,
 Thy smile will be as sweet for me,
 As though he were not gone.

The world moves on without concern;
 And this from thee I gently learn,
 My little one.

While over thee my watch I keep,
 Rest thou, and sweetly dreaming, sleep,
 As though he were not gone;
 And in thy slumber I will find
 A balm to soothe my troubled mind,
 My little one.

Grow on, unchecked, in every part,
 In body, spirit, mind and heart,
 As though he were not gone.
 Life is still with gladness fraught;
 And this assurance thou hast taught,
 My little one.
 [*Enter ZIBA, breathless.*]

JONATHAN.

What fateful tidings brings thee here
 in haste?

ZIBA.

I am one of those who went with Saul
 to-night

To Endor from Gilboa. Saul had called
 Upon the Lord to learn the fate in
 store;

But no prophetic word or sign had
 come

By dreams, by Urim and Thummim,
 nor by seers.

At last the king bade me to ferret out
 A woman with familiar spirit vexed.

At Endor found I such an one, and led
 The king unto her, cloaked in deep dis-
 guise.

He asked that she would bring up
 Samuel.

Something she muttered; then she
 wildly starts

And cries aloud, "Wherefore hast thou
 deceived?"

For thou art Saul!" "Woman, what
 seest thou?"

"I see a god arising." "What his
 form?"

"An old man covered with a robe,"
 said she.

Then Saul divined that Samuel was
 there,

And fell upon the ground. And Sam-
 uel said,

"Wherefore dost thou disquiet me, see-
 ing the Lord

Hath rent the kingdom out of thine
 hand, and given it

To thy neighbor, even to David? Yea,
thy host,
All, come the dawn, Jehovah will de-
stroy,
And thou shalt be with me."

JONATHAN.

What said he more?

ZIBA.

"Thou, and thy sons."

JONATHAN.

My hour is come at last.

[*The dawn begins to break.
Enter a messenger.*]

MESSENGER.

Saul doth cry out for aid.

JONATHAN.

Unfurl my banner.

Say that none else are called, save men
like those

Who fought with Gideon, each from
an hundred picked.

[*Exit messenger.*]

ZIBA.

'Twere better we ourselves should end
our lives
Than fall a prey to foes uncircum-
cised.

JONATHAN.

God gave my life, and though of sor-
row fulfilled

Hath it been, He alone shall take it
away.

My heart shall not reproach me while
I live;

My soul, unweighted, wing its flight
from earth.

Thy worth I know and service; dis-
allowed,

Since honor was made dishonor by the
king.

Within this tent is all I hope to save

From sweeping desolation. Stand thou
here

Until I am gone. Then flee with them
for life.

To David go. Tell him thy present aid,
Demand of him a fitting recompense;
And ask that he fulfill unto my house
Our covenant.

[*JONATHAN looks into the tent.*]

I will not wake them now.

Too many wakeful hours lie in wait.—
But I should miss them more. The little
ones

Will gently teach their mother how to
live

A life whereof I am not. May the Lord
Require of thee that harm shall never
reach them.

ZIBA.

I will write it on the tablet of my heart.
[*TROOPS gather. Enter a second Mes-
senger.*]

MESSENGER.

Saul is sorely pressed on Mount Gilboa.
Abner is fled and, with him, Eshbaal.
Abinadab is slain. Melchishua
Is with the king, and calls to thee for
aid.

JONATHAN.

Farewell, my life, my love, my all—fare-
well.

Form the troop in order! Sound the
advance.

The king—my father—needs me. For-
ward, men,

For God and Israel!

[*A bugle is sounded. Exit JON-
ATHAN and the troopers and mes-
sengers, leaving ZIBA alone at the
door of the tent.*]

SCENE IV. *On Mount Gilboa. Saul
alone; JONATHAN approaching.*

SAUL.

Why art thou come? Is not the hope
of God

Departed from me? Flee, then,—with
 Eshbaal,
 Abner, and all who drew their breath
 from me,
 And now, as one infected, leave me
 here,
 To perish singly. May they die the
 death
 The malefactor dies, their hands and
 feet
 With fetters bound! And may there
 never fail
 Among their offspring one that an issue
 hath,
 A leper, one that falleth upon the sword,
 Or lacketh bread! 'Tis thou hast been
 the cause.
 This crown, which I had lifted from
 my head
 To place upon thine own, by thee was
 dashed
 Upon the ground. Why dost thou come
 to see it
 Cleft with the sword that ends my
 wretched life?
 Out on thee, traitor! than David blacker
 far,
 Lacking inducement. Out, I say—be-
 gone!

JONATHAN.

My troopers all are gone, but not as
 thine;
 For each has paid in full the debt he
 owed
 To God and king and country. Why
 have these,
 Whom I have drawn about me, perished
 here,
 While those about thee fled? But I
 come not,
 My father, to reproach thee. May we
 die,
 As we have lived, together.

SAUL.

My Jonathan,
 Hast thou forgotten how I cast my spear
 To take thy life? I have not called to
 thee.
 What then has brought thee? All thy
 later course

Toward David, has to me an enigma
 seemed.
 Comment from men now fled has
 spurred my rage,
 Till I have thought to ride thee down
 rough-shod.
 But now, when death his net about me
 casts,
 Thou art come here to bear me com-
 pany?

JONATHAN.

Confronting one another we have stood,
 And, us between, has rested what has
 seemed
 To me a cloud of fire, lighting up
 The path of duty; but to thee appeared
 As a cloud of darkness. God the Lord
 shone there.
 Now let us stand together, braving all;
 For what remains to us, soon will hap-
 pen here.
 The crown, which parted us, is lost to
 both.
 Then let us both forget the sorrow
 passed,
 In one embrace of joyous reuniting.

SAUL.

Let the Philistines take me, bore mine
 eyes,
 Set me to tread the mill where Samson
 slaved.
 Flee from me, mock me, spit upon me,
 slay me!
 Heap thou not coals of fire upon my
 head—
 Dearer than life itself, my hope, my
 boy!
 [SAUL takes the crown from his head
 and places it upon JONATHAN'S
 head.]
 Thus do I crown thee, I, thine only
 subject;
 But, being king, I make thee king of all.
 Now give me one embrace, and flee for
 life,
 That I alone may suffer for my sins.

[They embrace. A shower of arrows,
 SAUL is wounded. JONATHAN
 falls dead, and the crown rolls
 upon the ground.]

Oh! for the universal midnight cry
Of smitten Egypt now to wail my dead
one!

Not all the loss of Pharoah and his sub-
jects,

Home-born and captive, when the Lord
in blood

Poured out his fury, could, in general
tale,

Sum up the worth of this my eldest
born;

And even the slightest faith by any felt,
Of those who, with the hyssop, sprin-
kled blood

Upon the lintels, would have saved him
me,

To wear my crown. Now goes he unto
death

Before me.

[*Enter an AMALEKITE.*]

Who art thou?

AMALEKITE.

An Amalekite.

SAUL.

Hold thou my sword for me to fall upon;
For anguish taketh bitter hold on me,
Because my life is whole within me still.

[*The AMALEKITE holds the sword
and SAUL falls upon it.*]

May thy soul stay for me, my Jonathan.

[*SAUL dies*]

SCENE V. *At Jabesh-Gilead. A funeral
pyre. Enter mourners, bearing the
bodies of SAUL and JONATHAN.*

DAVID meets them.

DAVID.

Thy glory, O Israel,
Is slain upon Thy high places!

*How are the mighty
Fallen!*

Tell it not in Gath,
Publish it not in the streets of Askelon;
Lest the daughters of the Philistines re-
joice,

Lest the daughters of the uncircum-
cised triumph!

Ye mountains of Gilboa, let there be no
dew nor rain upon you,
Neither fields of offerings;

For there the shield of the mighty
was vilely cast away,

The shield of Saul, as of one not
anointed with oil.

From the blood of the slain,

From the fat of the mighty,

The bow of Jonathan turned not back,
And the sword of Saul returned not
empty.

Saul and Jonathan were lovely and
pleasant in their lives,

And in their death they were not di-
vided;

They were swifter than eagles,

They were stronger than lions.

Ye daughters of Israel

Weep over Saul,

Who clothed you in scarlet delicately,

And put ornaments of gold upon your
apparel.

How are the mighty

Fallen in the midst of the battle!

O Jonathan,

Slain upon thy high places!

I am distressed for thee, my brother
Jonathan.

Very pleasant hast thou been unto me;
Thy love for me was wonderful,

Passing the love of women.

How are the mighty

Fallen!

And the weapons of war

Perished!

THOMAS EWING, JR. (1862—).



DAVID AND BATHSHUA



DAVID AND BATHSHUA*

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

DAVID, *afterward King of Israel and Judah.*

THE LITTLE PRINCE, *his son.*

AHITOPHEL, *his chief counsellor.*

JOAB, *captain of his host.*

URIAH, *husband of Bathshua, and officer of David.*

ABISHAI, *Officer of David.*

NATHAN, *the prophet.*

ABIATHAR, *the high priest.*

FIRST ELDER OF JUDAH.

BOAZ, }
SIMON, } *Revellers.*

A PRISONER.

AN AMALEKITE.

Princes, Rulers and Elders of the Tribes, Priests, Ziphites, Captains, Soldiers, Attendants, Etc.

SAUL, *the first King of Israel.*

JONATHAN, *his son.*

ABNER, *captain of Saul's host.*

Lords, Captains and Soldiers in Attendance Upon Saul.

MICHAL, *daughter of Saul and wife of David.*

MERAB, *sister of Michal.*

BATHSHUA, *granddaughter of Ahitophel, and later the wife of Uriah.*

ZOE, *nurse to Bathshua.*

AN OLD WITCH.

Ladies, Girls, Attendants, Etc.

*NOTE: The text is that of the *second edition*, published in London, 1911, in the Author's *By the Way of the God*. It differs considerably from the first edition, London, 1903, issued under the name of CHARLES WHITWORTH WYNNE, the poet's pseudonym.

SCENE: *Palestine.*

ACT I.

SCENE I.—*Forest, near Hebron.*

Enter a number of girls, garlanded with flowers; some carrying timbrels, others small harps; Bathshua conspicuous. After some light movements, they dance and sing:

I.

How joyous the Spring is!
How jocund the hours
When the call of the throistle
Awakens the flowers,
When the merry, mad squirrels
Their revels prolong,
And the aisles of the forest
Are ringing with song!

II.

As the laughter of April
Enkindles the Spring,
As the song of the skylark
Is blithest on wing,
So stirs with new wonder
The heart of a maid,
When the first stars besprinkle
The daffodil glade.

BATH. You strew your notes as
lightly as the sunbeams:
A veritable rain of skylarks' music!
SMALL GIRLS [*clinging to Bathshua*].
Our holiday—how shall we spend it,
Bathshua?

BATH. How can we spend it better
than in such wise
Singing and dancing? The forest's
full of song,
And dancing is the true accompani-
ment

To hearts at ease. Here's sward for
lightsome feet,

A carpet woven of needles of the pine;
And there are tufted hillocks, lawny
banks

Where we may sit and rest. Come,
girls, lead off!

Those who would idly talk of sense-
less love

May go elsewhere.

1 MAID. Why, Bathshua, of love?
Have we nought else to talk about but
love?

2 MAID. And is love senseless? this
is some newer sense

In Bathshua!

BATH. What do all maids desire?
But I would have you know 'tis waste
of breath

And want of sense to speak of it.

SEVERAL. Of love?

BATH. Yea—what is love to us?

2 MAID. A thing to dream of,
And every time you dream find more
entrancing.

3 MAID. O come, sweet dreams, and
whisper of this love!

BATH. O why is all the world so
full of love?

Enter old witch, unobserved.

WITCH. So full of love? Ay, ay—
youth reckons not
Love's pains and forfeitures. 'Tis a
sad world:

I' faith a sorry world, a woeful world!
Woe's me, woe's me!

BATH. Tell us your grief, poor
mother;
We have the wish to mend it.

WITCH. Child, I have none,—
At least not troubles such as mortals
rue,—

Pity so fresh drops balm on older
wounds.

Love and Sorrow, Sorrow and Love—
Alack the day that thou wert born

For thou, dear Heart, shalt live to prove
The Rose of Life hath many a thorn.

So beautiful! And oh, to think that
thou

Must drink so soon of this same
poison'd cup

—The cup of love! Ay—of life's bit-
terness!

And yet, to know the measure of
earthly love,

That leaveneth much! Ah, bitterer
indeed

Were life to Woman, did she lack
that knowledge!

BATH. Mother, why dost thou break
upon our play

With notes of such ill sound?

WITCH. I follow, follow,

Now up and down the world, now
round and round the world.

The throes of travail bring me to
deliverance.

[*Taking Bathshua's hand*] I stand
upon the threshold of all Time—
Hist, child!—Quick, words! and image
forth my vision.—

I see thee seated on a golden throne
I' the golden gates of morning, about
thy brow

A crown of beaten gold, and in thy
hand

The sceptre of a queen . . .

A thousand hearts give thee their
benison!

For charity and grace around thee
flow,

Like mists exhaling light . . . Thou
shalt be loved

By him who is the very prince of love;
And in thy children shalt thou be
beloved,

For thou shalt mother him, the pride
of men,

In wisdom greatest of the sons of men,
And through that son's remoter Son
bequeath

Unto the world the Spirit of all Truth—
The Prince of Peace, Who shall thy
sex redeem

From bonds of sin and ancient servi-
tude,

Making the weak fit help-mate for the
strong,

And adding to the glory of the woman
The tender joy of true maternity,

Till motherhood become the basic law
Of life—of life and nobler men to be!

Of life—of life and nobler men to be!

BATH. The old dame turns my head:
what would she say?

And I—what heaven-born grace in me
abides
To achieve such life—a simple, witless
maid?

WITCH. And simpler for the fact
thou art a maid.

But Time will show; and when thine
hour shall fall,

Dread not the trumpets of the wind,
Nor evil toward from mankind.

Follow thy lord, follow thy lord,
For love is of life the master-chord!

I MAID. She rides on air! It is the
witch of the wood!

[*Witch vanishes.*]

BATH. What mystery, what wonder-
realm of Fate
Hath she unroll'd?

2 MAID. How now, sweet Bathshua?
What of thy senseless love? If love
shall bring thee

A crown, and jewels, and the prince
of love,
Thou'lt surely never say love hath no
sense?

3 MAID. Our Bathshua a Queen! let's
crown her, all,
And do obeisance to her majesty.

ALL. Your Majesty's most liege and
humble servants!

BATH. Go to, you fools, nor mock me
any more.
Liker were heaven to fall than I to
queen it!

[*Eerie music is heard, and a mysti-
cal light appears above them.*]

VOICE. Much greater wonders hath
this old world seen
Than that a lowly maid should die
a queen;
For all that hath been is, and all that
is hath been.

[*They scatter frightened.*]

*After a pause, showing the failing light,
Enter David and Jonathan.*

JON. The king will alter. Do not take
his moods
So much in earnest, his spirit frets
him sore.

It is more pain of body than intent
To do thee harm.

DAVID. From less hath murder come.
But that I saw the glint and leap of
madness

Flame in Saul's countenance, ere he
could poise

His javelin, my body now were pinn'd
Against his palace wall, and thou the
loser

Of this thy friend.

JON. Thy life's star is too bright
To pale before the fury of Saul's
wrath.

Dismiss such thoughts. More it con-
cerneth me

That thou so gifted, so divinely fav-
our'd,

Shouldst pledge thy faith to such an
one as I,

Who fashion'd in a less heroic mold
Am all unworthy.

DAVID. No more, dear Jonathan,
Nature has bound our souls in such
sure bonds

Of amity that nor dissevering death
Nor any hap of life that chain shall
loose;

Nor even that sweet visionary love
We dream of, thou and I—

The meeting between heavenly voy-
agers,

That draw together like long-sunder'd
stars

To flood the night with their con-
verging joy;

That unity of minds, diversely strung,
Resolving to one harmony; that spirit-
love

Which doth fulfil the life of man and
woman,

Which, unfulfill'd, leaves desolate their
days.

JON. Death may deny the flesh, but
not the spirit,

For death is but the exchange for
happier fields

Where we may own the love so stifled
here.

Yet never maid shall steal my heart
from thee,

For there is not within the heart of
woman

Love such as thine. David, place here
thine hand:

Now vow, by that dear faith which
seals us brothers,

Thou wilt not wreak thy vengeance
upon Saul

Nor on Saul's house, that 'twixt thy
seed and mine

Peace may for ever dwell.

DAVID. My Jonathan,
How could I war against thee, or thy
sire?

He is the King, Anointed of the Lord,
And if I find not favor in his sight,
Within myself the blame of variance
lies.

Yet would I knew my fault! For if
there be

A flaw within my loyalty or love,
I had liefer, friend, that thou shouldst
take and slay me—

[*Presenting his sword to Jonathan.*]

Silently draw this blade across my
throat

That my vile blood might out, and
that the traitorous trunk

Might shrivel and bleach before the
light of day.

But, if there be not,—how may I
change Saul's heart?

For verily there yawns an open grave
Which way I set my face. Since that
dark hour

When Israel's youth call'd out my
young achievements,—

Won in Jehovah's name, and wholly
His,—

Saul hath not miss'd occasion to undo
me.

By violence now, anon by stratagem,
He seeks my life; and whether by his
hand,

Or waging war upon his enemies,
What matters it the way by which
I go?

Evil he sees in all my thoughts toward
him:

I may not live, and hope to serve the
king!

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE II.—*Gibeah. A room in Saul's
palace.*

Enter Merab and Michal.

MICH. I have not seen our brother in
such anger
As when he rose from table yestereve.

Alas, that his brave pleading was in
vain,

His zeal and his devotion for his friend
Of no avail!

MERAB. David will prove his ruin.
May Jonathan take profit of this lesson
And league with his own kin. 'Twere
tact to do so.

MICH. Thou wouldst stand by and
see injustice done?

MERAB. If that I could not stem the
tide of wrong—

MICH. Such tact must stand for
cowardice, my sister!

Most tact so savours. Who fear to
speak the truth

Too oft indeed are credited with tact,
Or take it to themselves as ready balm
To lull the sting of slow-awakening
pride.

MERAB. I have no pride toward the
King, my father.

MICH. And *I* have so much pride to-
ward him, that I
Cannot endure to see Saul wrong him-
self

What time his evil spirit clouds his
mind.

Thou wouldst impel him to the giddy
brink,—

The tottering heights where sanity
grows dim,—

By silent acquiescence in the wrong.
For to comply with Saul when he is
mad

But speeds him to his doom.

MERAB. Not to comply
Might bring, methinks, a speedier doom
upon him!

MICH. Thou caviller!

MERAB. Perhaps — May be—I care
not!

*Enter Saul, Lords, Ladies and
Attendants.*

SAUL. And hath yon fool, your
brother, school'd his wrath?

Or vaunts he still his friendship for
that adder

That's ever in our path, sliming our
palace walks,

Seeking the undergrowth wherein to thrive,
 And striking at us darkly through our sons?
 Most noble friendship! that would league with those
 The enemies of his house. Most loyal friendship!
 Magniloquent in treason to his kin.
 Indeed a friendship such as women feign,
 Secretive and bemask'd. Men of true heart
 Need no such guileful looks and words and ways!

MERAB. Dear father, what thou sayest mefears is just:
 I would I could think otherwise. But, alas,
 David was ever traitor at the core,
 Traitor to man and—woman! And his heart,
 Since that thy javelin fail'd a second time,
 Hath now to black and icy hate congeal'd.
 Henceforth thy life—

MICH. Hush, Merab! Stay thy speech.
 Thou wilt repent thee of such hasty words.
 Was David ever, then, traitor to thee? I should have had more pride than to announce it!
 Slander like thine, my sister, cannot live
 Beyond the bitter moment of its birth.
 And thou, my father! shame on thy kingly mind
 That could conceive and coin such wickedness;
 David in league with Jonathan? Aye, if to league
 Be but to set up bands of staunchest steel
 About thy throne and thee—daily to vie
 In loving fealty and true heart-service
 Which shall commend him first to thy affection,
 Then David is in league with Jonathan!
 Then David is indeed the worst of traitors!
 David, my heart's true husband!

MERAB. Ha, thy husband!

Methought thy husband was a feather bolster,
 An image stuck with goat's hair! So thy couch
 Harbour'd no traitor then?

MICH. My gentle sister
 Indulgeth a brave wit.

SAUL. Enough! Enough!
 And you,—to call out shame upon my speech—
 Who put to shameful use your marriage bed!

MICH. My noble father doth forget himself:
 That which I did, I did to save his life.

SAUL. But yesterday it was to save your own;
 Lie upon lie! So go you forth and prosper:
 Deceive your sire as you have shamed your husband!

MICH. Either I would not willingly offend.
 But if, from harsh necessity, I wrought
 Some slight deception on my lord the king,
 It was to save—Saul from himself, and David
 From one unlike to Saul, Saul's evil spirit.

SAUL. Child, get you hence, ere you exhaust my patience.
 David's your choice: look no more to your sire,
 Henceforth you have none.

MICH. My father, O my father!
 [Exit sobbing.]

MERAB. Take care she prove not now the greater rebel!
 A woman scorn'd is far more to be dreaded
 Than twenty men; men know not how to hate,
 Their hates like mists before the sun disperse.
 But woman, when she hates, hates once for all,
 Hates with a fury that no force may quell,
 Hates with a hate for ever at white heat
 Till it burn on to vengeance, or consume

The vessel that can hold such bateless
fire.

Michal is now the fiercer enemy.

SAUL. My Merab, can you speak
thus of your sister?

MERAB. Of twenty sisters, proved
they false as—

SAUL. False!
Hath she proved false to you?

MERAB. I know not, father;
But plots she not against thy life and
throne?

And am not I thy daughter, and most
loyal?

SAUL. Yea, more my daughter than
your sister's friend,
More loyal may be than loving!

MERAB. Traitors I hate.

SAUL. Ah, say not so; it doth em-
brace too many!
It is not good for human hearts to
hate,

Howe'er incensed: there is no healing
in it.

Bear with the injury and it will heal,
Bear with the injurer and he'll repent.

MERAB. But, father, thou dost hate
as well as I.

SAUL. Nay, child, I do get wroth
upon occasion;
But hate is anger that hath petrified.
I never yet could hate beyond a day.

MERAB. I cannot hate, and unhate,
in that fashion.

SAUL. Then had you better never
hate at all.
For she who cherishes within her
bosom

That generating Viper men call Hate,
Irks her own flesh more than her
enemy.

Else would she not in her close heart
give hospice

For its dark brood to prey upon her
peace.

For God requites us for our love or
hate

In just such measure as we give them
rule.

MERAB. Then the reward of David
must be great;

For is not his whole heart an arméd
camp
Of treason and rebellion?

[Saul frowns.]

Enter Jonathan.

JON. Treason and rebellion!
So-ho these common maladies, that do
call

For a physician somewhat out of grace!
What! are these fair ones rebels then
indeed?

SAUL. The mothers, daughters, wives
of rebels—All!

As if that weren't enow, your sister
Michal

Must needs become the mistress of a
rebel!

JON. David a rebel? No! The
devil's prompting!

SAUL. Then get you to him there!
[Hurls his javelin at Jonathan.]

(To lords) Out of my way! For I
could mow you down

Like full-ear'd blades before the ad-
vancing storm.

[Exeunt all except Saul.]

Now Samuel is gone from me, who
have I

On whom to lean? For these ungov-
ern'd bursts

Must wreck my brain, even as they
rack my body.

O Samuel! my confidant and friend,
Why didst thou leave me in my hour of
trial?

Why for one sin, one trivial sin for-
sake me?—

One small transgression that me deeper
led,

Stung by the measure and menace of
thy wrath.

The Philistines were at the gates of
Gilgal,

And surely did I think thou wouldst
not come,

Or thy behest I had not disobey'd!
Yet how didst thou rebuke my fall from
grace?

Thou turn'dst my fault to treason
against God.

And didst revoke my kingship! Aye,
much more—

Thou didst the downfall of my house
decree!
Did sin of mine such retribution merit?
Surely God hath forgiven? forgiven
me all?
And thou, my guide, my earthly coun-
sellor,
Art thou still stubborn? Lies there no
way to peace?
Is Saul for ever damn'd?—The face of
his soul
Held up to him as in a threefold mirror
Wherein he sees all his defects of
nature,
Without thy cold indifference to remind
him?
Will nothing move thee? Can no
prayer prevail?
(*Penitentially*) O Samuel, my advocate
at need,
Come to me that my soul may strength-
en'd live,
That I may feel once more God's Holy
Spirit
Replenishing the hidden springs of life!
—Ah, no: it cannot be! The day is
past!
For Samuel still keeps his vow of
silence!
He hath anointed David in my stead!
My sons, my sons! if it were not for
you,
Saul firm, tho' scarr'd, could meet the
shock of Fate!
But Saul is damn'd—in heart, in hope,
in kingship!
Damn'd! triply damn'd! and damn'd
beyond redemption!
Then Saul now bids defiance to Je-
hovah,
Spits at his temple, tramples on his
priests,
Despoils his people. And for this
same David,
Let me but once lay hands on him!
But once! [*Exit.*]

SCENE III.—*Mountainous country in the
wilderness of Engedi. In the back-
ground limestone caves. In the fore-
ground groups of soldiers, Abner and
other Captains.*

*Enter Saul (stepping out of one of
the caves).*

SAUL. Abner, this mountain search
is wholly vain.
No man, however sorely press'd, would
choose
These sun-baked slopes, this wild and
arid desert,
For his concealment; and canst per-
suade me that
The crafty leader of a bandit tribe
Would let himself be taken unaware
Within these narrow wadys?

ABNER. Nay, my lord;
Yet cunning wears strange masks; and
these same caves
Might well afford both shelter and con-
cealment
To one hard press'd.
My counsel is we seal them with all
speed,
Setting to North and South an ample
guard.
Then at our leisure we may search
them through.

SAUL. Nay, Abner,—loss of time.
On to Hachilah,
There in the forest we shall run him
down.

ABNER. My lord, spare but the time
for this one search;
And afterwards—to Hachilah.

SAUL. Afterwards,
Thou'lt still be crying afterwards!

ABNER. Sire, humbly
I beg—

SAUL. Confusion take thy humble-
ness!
Humble thyself by swift obedience.
Set all our force in motion.

[*They move off slowly.*]

*Enter David (from the cave) attended
by Joab, Abishai, and other
Captains.*

DAVID. My lord, the king!

SAUL. David! do I indeed behold my
son?

DAVID. My lord, thou dost behold a
loyal servant:
One who, tho' sorely tried, remaineth
true.

Witness this pledge of his unfaltering
faith!

[*Holding up a piece of Saul's robe.*]

Wherefore, my lord O king, pursuest
 thou me?
 Doth David harbour treason, or seek
 thy hurt?
 If so, the occasion hath but slipp'd his
 grasp.
 Why then shouldst thou believe in my
 dishonour,
 And so prejudge me traitor, all un-
 heard?
 What wrong could I conceive against
 my lord?
 Evil proceedeth but from evil men,
 And those who evil think encompass
 evil,
 But every thought of mine toward the
 king
 Is, as my hand this day, void of offence.

SAUL. David, my son, my son,
 How welcome falls thy voice upon my
 ear,
 E'en tho' thou speakest to thy sire's
 confusion!
 Saul stands before thy greater soul
 abash'd—
 Saul, who doth own no master but
 Jehovah,
 Humbles himself and his high pride
 to thee.
 How have I wrong'd thee, son, this
 many a day!
 And, ah, how nobly hast thou me re-
 quited!
 For who would so have spared his
 adversary?
 May the great God reward thee for
 thy zeal,
 Thy tender care and dutiful devo-
 tion!
 Ay, and He will reward thee.—For
 remember
 Saul also hath been known among
 the prophets!—
 Thou shalt be father to a line of
 kings,
 Prouder than any that have walk'd
 the earth,
 Greater than any from the dawn of
 Time;
 Thou art the herald of a world-wide
 hope,
 In thee the Sun of Israel shall not
 set
 But flame on the hills for ever! . . .
 Come thou near,
 That I may lean upon thee as of old.

Few are there now on whom my age
 may lean,
 And if that few were fewer it were
 well!
 [Exeunt.]

ACT. II

SCENE I.—*Saul seated under a tree in
 Ramah; Merab, Michal; Jonathan,
 Abner, Lords and Ladies in attend-
 ance. At the hour of sundown.*

ABNER. The king looks sad.

SAUL. And so wouldst thou look,
 Abner,
 If thou hadst won a kingdom with
 thy prowess
 And saw it slowly, slowly slipping
 from thee,
 As steadily as sinks yon western orb.
 The night is coming up, and I must
 die,
 —Pass, and leave all I have to other
 hands
 And those not of my blood! What
 vails it that
 I look'd death in the face a thousand
 times,
 If that my victories serve to disinherit
 My own true sons? David is not my
 kin—

ABNER. Nor shall he reign, whilst
 one of thy royal house
 Yet lives, and this my sword can
 speak for justice!

SAUL. I know thee, trusty friend;
 but I have sworn.

MERAB. Under misapprehension:
 David trick'd thee!—
 He knew far better than to lay his
 hand
 Upon the person of the Lord's
 Anointed,
 With Abner and three thousand men
 near-by,
 Himself scarce able to command five
 hundred.
 Be sure that David weigh'd the odds
 of battle
 Ere he had made a virtue of his fear,
 And staked his all upon thy clemency.
 His ready wit stood him for double
 gain—
 Renewal of his life, and of Saul's fa-
 vour;

For every moment's doubt did more
imperil

One in so close a strait.

SAUL. Thou speakest well.
And I, to have been so wrought upon
by words!

Hadst thou been born a boy, my
throne were safe.

My days had then gone down, serene
and full,

With peaceful ebb upon Time's sound-
less sea.

But when I look on these, my natural
heirs,

I do despair for Israel! Sons have
I none;

Thy wit is now sole bulwark to my
state.

JON. And ministers but to a state
diseased.

SAUL. Silence, thou fool!
David will take the crown from off
thy head.

JON. When David shall be king,
then shall he know
That the arm of Jonathan is strong
to stead him:

Perchance as captain of his host,
but if

He should assign to me some lowlier
office,

Then will I serve him full as loyally.
So that I serve him, matters not how
or where!

SAUL. If David chooseth captains
such as thou,
The crown he covets will prove a
crown of thorns.

MICH. Father, take back that taunt:
it is unworthy

Of your great heart, and wrongeth
Jonathan.

SAUL (to Abner). David appears
to have more friends than I,

And—fashion'd from these loins: I
have raised up

These children but to sting and canker
me

With their invidious love for this
usurper.

Enter Attendant (in advance of Ziph-
ites).

ATTEND. My Lord, some men of
Judah beg an audience.

SAUL. Bid them attend! What
would you, men of Judah?

FIRST ZIPH. My lord, we bring
you news of him you sought
But lately thro' the wilderness of
Ziph,
And drove past tarn and quarry. He
is now

In hiding in the forest of Hachilah.

SAUL. Enough. Abner, within the
hour we march:

Spread wide the net. This time I
shall not spare him! [Exeunt.]

SCENE II.—*The Hill of Hachilah.
Night. Saul and his men asleep
in their encampment. David and
Abishai seen dimly groping their
way amid the slumbering host.*

ABISH. My lord, here lies the king
wrapt in deep slumber.

Into thy hands hath God deliver'd
him!

Let me strike home: he shall not stir
again.

DAVID (staying his arm). Nay,
Abishai, I cannot hold him
guiltless

Who would so use the Lord's
Anointed. God

In His own way and time will punish
him:

He will avenge me on mine adver-
sary.

Take now the cruse that stands beside
Saul's pillow.

David himself uproots Saul's spear.
These tokens will suffice. We must
away:

Faint glimmerings shoot up from the
underworld,

And dawn is near.

[As they move off the dawn broad-
ens, and several of the sleeping sol-
diers awake. David and Abishai are
next seen on the other side of a ra-
vine, from which David hails Ab-
ner.]

DAVID. Abner, thou valiant chief,
stirrest thou not?

Are day dreams pleasanter than duty?
Abner!

ABNER. Who calls unto the King?

DAVID. Lo one, indeed,
More thoughtful of the King than
thou! tho' less
In his high favour. Surely, my
friend, thou art
A leader vers'd i' the strategy of war,
Subtle and perspicacious in thy
plans,
Of manifold experience and resource,
Yet wouldst thou be surprised if I
should charge thee
With grave neglect concerning thy
great master.
See now Saul's cruse and spear of sov-
ereignty!
Some enemy hath come too nigh the
King.

SAUL. Is that thy voice, my son?
the voice of David?

DAVID. Thou knowest my voice, O
king, and wilt thou tempt
My strain'd allegiance till it snap and
fail?
Are all Saul's promises of no ac-
count?
Is David's life so trivial a thing
That he must hold it ever at thy
mercy?
Try me not overmuch, for I am frail.
What evil genius stands beside the
king
To prick him to such imperseverant
folly?
What woman's strategy lies veil'd in
this?
Show me my fault, and I will strive
to mend it.
For Saul is oft persuaded 'gainst him-
self
To his own hurt: and those, my slan-
derers,
Dare not to speak the thing which
they affirm,
Except as slanderers behind my back;
For they are many who would do me
wrong.

SAUL. David, I have sinn'd—sinn'd
grievously against thee.
I have believed that which I knew
was false;
Believed, because I wish'd so to be-
lieve:
Evil I had sought and hoped to find
in thee.

But now I know thee for my own true
son,
Whose breast hath never harbour'd
thought of guile
But an exceeding goodness and great
mercy.

DAVID. Alas, men oftener take
their friends for foes,
Than recognize a false friend when
they see him.
Let now my lord send one of his
young men
To fetch his spear and cruse. And,
Saul! for that
Thy soul was this day precious in my
sight,
So may the soul of David find redemp-
tion
When he himself shall stand in need
of mercy!

SAUL. Blessèd be thou, blessèd be
thou, my son!
For as in the beginning thou pre-
vail'dst,
So to the end shall David be victori-
ous.
Thou wilt accomplish much, for God
is with thee. [Exeunt.]

SCENE III.—*On the foreshore of the
Great Sea.*

[Enter BATHSHUA.]

BATH. How good it is to come here
from the plains!
I cannot breathe enough of the sweet
air!
O to live free with the dear winds of
heaven,
Not pent amid the narrow haunts of
men!
—Of men, so burden'd with their sor-
did aims!
Have they no eyes to see the beautiful?
No souls to feel what tender women
feel?
No hearts?—Ah, there's but one
among them all!
David, my heart's true idol—and its
king!
How valiant wert thou as thou strod'st
along,
Leading thy stalwarts to the tent of
Saul,

Heading thy captains and thy men of war!
 Brave face all flush'd with battle,
 flashing eyes
 Bright as the noonday sun, and thy whole soul
 Emblazon'd on thy god-like countenance!
 I would give all the world for one long kiss
 Of thy grave mouth; and yet, except God wills,
 I may not even touch thy hand—I, who
 Am but a lowly maid of Benjamin.

ENTER NURSE.

NURSE. Stay thee, Bathshua! Stay thee, my child—stay thee!
 Thy poor old nurse has not the strength to follow
 And scarce, I think, the breath.

BATH. I am sorry, Nurse; I meant not to outrun thee. The air strikes brisk,
 And hard it is to hold my spirits in check.

NURSE. Yes, my sweet dove, I know't. I would have raced thee thirty summers back, and left thee standing.
 Then was I lithe of limb and long of wind.

Ah, many a hardy and intrepid lover Found to his cost he could not capture me!

BATH. Come, Nurse, is this all truth? the unvarnish'd truth?

NURSE. Why, child, look at this instep. Know'st thou not what that high arch denotes? It is indeed
 Sure sign of a swift runner.

BATH. True, dear (*raising her skirts*). But mine is higher: *thou* wouldst not then have outrun me!

NURSE. Certes thou art more nimble with thy tongue!

BATH. But with my feet?

NURSE. My years thou reckonest not!

BATH. Thou'lt not concede the victory! Dear Heart,
 Let us along. The day is failing fast. Already makes the sun toward the horizon,
 And we must homeward. Ah, what lovely shells!
 I did not know the sea possess'd such jewels.

NURSE. Fine jewels! Why, they are only common shells.
 Wait till thou see'st the jewels at the court:

Rubies and amethysts, diamonds and—
 Why, child, thou art not listening.

BATH. Indeed, I am. There are no jewels at the court like these,

None half so fine, nor of so great variety.

Look, Nurse, upon this shell and tell me—Hath

The diamond of the court so many hues,
 Or such transparency? the beaming ruby

A countenance like this?—
 Here are the very waters of the sea, Roll'd into flesh of iridescent pearl.

NURSE (*deprecatingly*). Dear, dear! —My child! my child!

BATH. How few can look Upon a lowly thing and find it lovely? —The lovelier for its lowliness! Even so

The vast, indifferent multitude would deem

This wholly mean and insignificant Beside some tawdry jewel of the court,

Wrung from deep mines with blood and toil of men.

He whom I love would not have so disdain'd it.

NURSE. Who is this paragon of thine?

BATH. Ah, Nurse, That is *my* secret:
 One that can look into the starry heavens

And trace God's finger there, or on the mountains

And mark amid their monumental calm

The immeasurable strength of their
 Creator;
 Or just as simply—for his faith is
 large—
 In the bright colouring of an autumn
 leaf
 Attest the Great Artificer amid
 The russets, and the yellows, and the
 browns.

NURSE. Indeed, these be great virtues!
 but myself
 Had just as lief prefer a man more
 stolid,
 Who look'd to *me* for beauty, not to
 the stars
 Nor to the dulling glory of the leaf.

BATH. To me for beauty! I dare
 not think of that.
 Yet at still moments all unbidden
 come
 Those chiming words, full-fraught
 with mystery—
 'I see thee seated on a golden
 throne
 I' the golden gates of morning, about
 thy brow
 A crown of beaten gold, and in thy
 hand
 The sceptre of a queen.'

NURSE. Thou art a queen
 —A Queen of Beauty! and what hath
 any queen
 To boast of but her beauty? It was
 for that
 Queendom was given—and, when she
 loses it,
 She loses half her empery!

BATH. O heart of mine,
 Could we be worthy of so great a
 lord?
 He only can give voice to all our
 thoughts:
 Could we not add some radiance to
 his?
 For we would so encompass him with
 love,
 That he must lovelier live and love-
 lier die;
 For Love is cardinal high-priest of
 life! . . .
 Beauty is but the blush-rose of the
 body.
 Give me the charms that blossom from
 the heart!

Grace, that shall set the bells of his
 soul aringing,
 Sympathy, attuned to the fall of a
 sigh,
 Mute understanding, softly and si-
 lently winging
 To a home in his heart, none
 knoweth so well as I.

Such the bright fetters that my love
 would clasp
 About his soul to keep it ever mine!
 Oh, I could love, Nurse dear, if only
 another
 Could love me as *I* could love! Ah
 me!

NURSE. Who is
 This favour'd prince, for prince indeed
 he seems?

BATH. Ah, sounds he not too like
 a prince of faery?

NURSE. He must be faery prince
 that wins my maid.
 Comes such an one a-wooing?

BATH. Nay, sweet gossip;
 But sometimes I have dreams of such
 an one.

NURSE. God send thou mayst have
 more than dreams of him!
 [Exeunt.]

SCENE IV.—*Ziglag. At the entrance
 of the city.*

ENTER DAVID, HIGH PRIEST, CAPTAINS
 AND SOLDIERS.

DAVID. What news of Saul? Comes
 there no messenger?
 When last we heard the king was has-
 ting North
 To expel the invading host encamp'd
 at Shunem,
 And with him all the might of Israel.
 The prize—the lovely vale of Es-
 draelon,
 The key to the trade and commerce
 of the North,
 The highway to the South. Philistia's
 Lords
 Have long set covetous eyes upon this
 pass,
 And now with their confederated
 powers
 They do await Saul's battle at ad-
 vantage.

If he engage them in the open plain,
 Israel is lost! Valour will not avail
 Against the savage onset of their
 horse,
 The roar and rattle of their flaming
 cars
 That like a whirlwind sweep the floor
 of earth
 And leave but wrack and ruin in their
 path.
 Whatever hosts Saul might to these
 oppose,
 The heathen scythes would cut and
 mow them down,
 And shock them in close sheaves upon
 the morrow.
 But,—ay, and in that 'But' lies Israel's
 safety!—
 Back'd by their own inhospitable hills,
 The Tribes may turn to all Philistia's
 war
 A tower invulnerable, and given a
 leader
 Hurl her back headlong! Yet no
 leader comes!
 For Saul is headstrong, rash, impetu-
 ous;
 And Jonathan too easily o'er-borne
 In council, tho' none mightier in the
 field;
 Abner—a shuttle-cock between these
 two.
 My mind misgives the issue.

ENTER MESSENGER.

MESS. News, news, my lord!
 [*Prostrating himself.*]

Scatter'd are Israel's hosts, while Saul
 the king
 Lies deep amid the slain.

DAVID. Saul—dead?

MESS. My lord,
 When the king saw the battle was
 against him
 And that his sons were slain, himself
 sore-stricken,
 Merciful death he craved of his own
 spears.

But all—I know not whether from
 tear or grief—

Forebore. And whilst I watch'd, Saul
 raised himself

Sideways upon his underpropping
 arm,

Even upon the pivot of his thigh,
 And cried aloud, 'If there be one with
 courage,

Or friend or generous foe, let him
 draw near

And ease me of my mortal agony.
 Then, out of pity for a dying man,
 I did for Saul that last and kindly
 office.

And scarcely had the spirit left his
 body,

When that proud man who had stood
 by unmoved,

Immovable! — his whilom armour-
 bearer,—

Stepping astride the massy, sinuous
 trunk,

Fell heavily on the point of his own
 sword,

Despairing to outlive his royal master.

DAVID. And Jonathan, how fared
 he thro' the strife?

MESS. He was the first to fall, tho'
 not until

A dozen wounds had bit thro' helm
 and buckler.

He fought as one who reck'd not of
 his life,

Exposed himself most freely, and
 where he swept

The battle seem'd to ope and widen
 out

Before his sword, so terrible his ire.
 And when at last they bore him from
 the field,

Far spent from loss of blood, he
 made as though,

Between returning pangs of conscious-
 ness,

He would have spoke, had not his
 parch'd lips

Refused their office, mutely articulate;
 Until upon one long and labour'd
 sigh

He breath'd thy name and died.

DAVID. O Jonathan, my brother,
 Dearer than life wert thou!

(*To Messenger*) What do men call
 thee?

MESS. A stranger I, and an Amal-
 ekite;

And hither have I brought Saul's
 crown and bracelet,

Strip'd from his body.

DAVID. Base slave, offer'st thou these

As price of a king slain? and durst thou now

Face me with the red tokens of thy guilt

Warm in thine hand? thou art, indeed, a stranger!

Craftily and with colour hast thou spoken,

But,—that hereafter none may lightly lay

Rash hand upon a heaven-anointed king,—

Thee we deliver to a traitor's death.

[*Exit Messenger guarded.*]

[*To High Priest*] Appoint thou this a day of supplication;

Let there be prayer and fasting. For to-morrow

We march on Hebron to convene the Tribes.

[*David then takes his tunic in both hands and rends it; next, turning to the people, he intones:*]

Saul, Saul is dead. Saul, Saul—and Jonathan.

The heroes and the captains are no more.

O Israel, where are now thy battled hosts,

Scatter'd and strewn upon Gilboa's Mount?

Wail with the sound of mighty lamentation,

For Saul is dead.

The bravest of the brave lies slain.

[*The people take up the refrain, and chant it after him as they retire.*]

[*Exeunt.*]

ACT III

SCENE I.—*Hebron. An open space.*

A full muster of the tribe of Judah.

Enter David, High Priest, Joab, Ahitophel, Captains, Elders and chief Men of the Tribe.

FIRST ELDER. Most valiant prince, most reverend councillors,

And you thick-sinew'd sons of mighty Judah!

If to the privilege of age be added Devotion to the people and the law, Then need I yield to none priority, Who can look down upon the oldest here

As yet a child in knowledge. For among you

Who can recall the scenes of that dread night

When the first messenger arrived from Aphek,

And Eli, eld-hoar priest, fell forward dead

On hearing that the Ark of God was taken,—

When thirty thousand of the sons of Israel

Chose death before defeat,—and when the westering light

Threw back the lurid and portentous glare

Of Shiloh, that dear city of our rest, Rising in smoke and fire and flame to God?

Those scenes were burn'd into my boyish brain.

Thro' the long years of manhood I beheld

The heathen tyranny, the alien yoke, Our young men shackled and held to

menial tasks,

Our maidens oft defiled, without redress,

The nation stripp'd to the bare means of life.

Until our lengthening cry of supplication

Jehovah heard—and raised up Samuel. Under that princely judge, that noble

law-giver,

Israel regain'd her strength, for the Great God

Directed all her councils. Happy indeed

Had she retain'd that governance divine!

Yet craved she of High God an earthly ruler—

And in that ruler is she now abased, Her glory lies with him on Mount Gilboa!

And we must choose betimes one in his place;

For we are brought to no uncertain pass.

Unless the Lord doth lead, vain is the setting forth!

Exalt him whom Jehovah hath so blest—

The son of Jesse, by Samuel ordain'd
And mark'd out for the Kingship after Saul.

JOAB. Compatriots of Judah! you have heard
The speech which flow'd like honey from the lips

Of our august and age-inspirèd Elder.
To that I can add little, but that little

I am prepared to back with my good sword.

Ye know me blunt of speech, but my weapon's edge

Hath not been left from like disuse to rust.

With *that* I shall uphold against all others

My liege's claim to the chieftainship of Judah.

Then for King David, I! and these my veterans

Will follow him till death. Long live King David!

TRIBESMEN (*with loud acclaim*).
King David! King David!

AHITOPHEL (*as President of the Council*). I understand the tribesmen are resolved

To raise to Judah's throne the son of Jesse.

Nathless, it is most right and meetly fitting

That we proceed on lines of precedent,
That nothing may be lacking to confirm

Our will, or prejudice the King's election.

Lo! unto you 'tis given, Scions of Judah!

Here to acclaim your choice. Those for King David,

Let the uplifted sword now testify!

[*Swords are raised in acclamation.*]

Will ye swear fealty to King David?

TRIBESMEN. Aye.

AHIT. Let Jesse's son stand forth before the people.

Most dread and potent Prince, art thou prepared

The kingly vows to ratify?—to rule Nobly and well, submitting at all seasons

Thy will unto the Will of the Most High?

To govern and strive but for thy people's good,

Faithful and diligent to the great charge

Entrusted to thy keeping? Wilt thou respect

The Law and the Commandments, and preserve them

As the true fountain of the nation's life?

Wilt thou redeem thy word wherever given,

That men may know there lives a king in Judah?

These vows wilt thou now covenant and keep?

DAVID. God aiding me, all these will I observe;

And hereby make my solemn attestation

To uphold the law, and make my people's will

My own. And on the sword of Saul I swear.

AHIT. Then David, son of Jesse, I declare thee

Duly elect, the father of this people. Designate and anoint by Samuel

King over Judah,—so shalt thou with full rites

Be 'stablished and confirm'd in royalty,
Even at the hands of his august successor.

The Lord direct thy soul both now and ever!

ALL THE PEOPLE. Amen!

[*David kneels to the High Priest, who anoints his head with oil.*]

HIGH PRIEST. Rise up, King David, blessed of the Lord.

This day thou art ordain'd, under God's guidance,

To be the guardian of His people Judah.

Firm in the faith, and valiant for the right,

Go forth, nor fear the issue of that battle

Which thou must ever wage against
 thyself,
 For mask'd within lurks man's worst
 enemy!
 The stubborn will, the oft-unguarded
 heart,
 The ear that lulls its votary to sleep
 Upon the giddy heights of crown'd
 ambition,
These are the foes most perilous to
 princes!
 Saul brought upon himself his own
 vast ruin;
 For jealousy grew round his royal
 heart
 Like binding ivy, that up the massy
 oak
 Climbs but to kill. Even so the tor-
 tured Saul
 In the grasp of hate declined. Then
 putting off
 The kingly nature, he his trust abused,
 Fell foul of all true feeling—fled his
 soul,
 And by so devious shifts provoked
 his doom.
 Take heed of such! The Lord shall
 be thy strength:
 Place thou thine heart in His most
 holy keeping.
 My prayer shall rise for thee both
 night and day,
 The prayer of all thy people shall up-
 hold thee.
 God bless, and guard, and guide thee
 to His peace.

DAVID. Most gentle potentate and
 priest of God,
 And you dread lieges of the tribe of
 Judah!
 The dignity which you have here in-
 voked
 Almost o'erwhelms me. Friends, did
 I not feel
 The sharp and stern compulsion of
 the times,
 I could not lay upon my country's
 altar
 This unstaunch'd heart that bleeds for
 Jonathan,
 With whom conjoin'd, in fortune and
 in love,
 I had hoped to rule this land in after
 years.

God hath disposed it otherwise, and
 all
 Must bow to His high ruling! *Men*
 are we,
 And, tho' the loss of those we love
 unman us,
 Must brace our hearts, and put our
 trust in Him.
 Yet lay not upon Saul our great de-
 feat,
 For the Just God will not let one man's
 guilt
 Carry so far, nor for his grievous
 fault
 Afflict the many. We must look
 within,
 For the offence is even in our hearts—
 We have denied our Maker, set up
 idols
 Of blind selfwill, and follow'd our
 own pleasure
 Even to the bloody steep of Mount
 Gilboa! [*Subdued applause.*]
 And now is come the reckoning! and
 to us
 The stinging, vile disgrace of routed
 men,
 And all the nameless horrors bred of
 war.
 Meet is it that we learn humility
 From such dire chastening. Let us re-
 turn to God,
 And that which we in our poor wis-
 dom deem
 Irreparable loss, may be the means
 Of strengthening us in fibre and in
 soul.
 Of Israel's host, Judah alone remains
 Unbroken, undivided, unavenged!

[*Shouts of "Judah for Israel!"*]

Then let her be the centre of our
 strength
 Until the might of Israel gather round
 her,
 And we, the invaded, turn on our in-
 vaders,
 And break them even from Gaza unto
 Gath.
 Now let the fiery summons speed
 forthwith
 From tribe to tribe, until remotest
 Dan
 Have heard our battle cry, and Asher
 know

We will not let the heathen sit in
 peace
 Upon his spoils. My speedy Asahel,
 Bear to the men of Jabesh Gilead
 greeting,
 And tell them we would have them
 near our person;
 For that they gave fit burial unto
 Saul,
 Were faithful to the fallen. Men such
 as these,
 Staunch in misfortune, are beyond all
 price. [Exeunt.]

SCENE II.—*The Hill of Zion. Dawn.*

ENTER BATHSHUA.

BATH. Dawn!
 The still, gray dawn; and in the fitful
 East
 The tender presage of another day—
 A day so big with promise! One by
 one
 The starry sentinels have changed
 their guard,
 Their furthest fires withdrawn . . .
 How silently
 The morn arrays herself! . . . Soon
 will the sun
 Gild roof and dome and minaret with
 fire,
 And hasten on the hour of our rejoic-
 ing.
This was no night for sleep! but to
 receive
 From the sweet, tender stars a spir-
 itual grace,
 A hallow'd benediction; for to-day
 The Ark of the Holy Covenant re-
 turns.
 From Ephratah, even unto the steeps
 Of woody Lebanon, the Tribes have
 heard,
 And all the Land shall break in song.
 To-day
 Mine eyes shall see the king. God
 grant to me
 One long, last look at his loved counte-
 nance!
 That by it I may live another year
 And learn to endure in silence. O my
 father,
 Why didst thou thrust on me that
 hateful marriage?
 What thought have I in common
 with this Hittite?

I had as lief be trod beneath his feet
 As take his kiss—and now I must sub-
 mit
 To him in all things. One day's re-
 prieve, O God!
 —One day, for pity! And perchance
 to-morrow
 I shall be stronger, more content. . . .
 To-day!
 [A smile breaking over her face.]
 Let me not mar it by remembering
 him!
 O my prince, my king,
 This day is thine with every thought
 of it!
 Thro' the long watches of the silent
 night
 Our prayers have risen together; even
 now
 The same glad beams are springing in
 thy heart
 And mine. O, one in soul and spirit,
 come!
 Lead me to the sure haven of thy
 rest.
 Hark! like the sough o' the wind on a
 distant sea,
 Or the beat and thud o' the surf on
 some lone shore,
 Cometh the tramp of men. Hark! for
 I hear,
 The shriller-sounding trumpets, faint
 and far,
 And the tinkling clash of cymbal and
 castanet.
 Now soars the voice as of a multi-
 tude,
 Pealing and swelling thro' the vale of
 Hinnom—
 Hush, hush, my heart! break not for
 sudden joy!
 With hidden music must thou now be
 mute.

[*The voices grow louder as the dawn broadens, and the procession is seen slowly winding its way up the Hill of Zion, until it comes into position before the gates of the citadel.*]

ORDER OF PROCESSION.

Mighty warriors (*blowing silver trumpets*).
 The two High Priests (*in their cere-
 monial robes*).

Seven Trumpets.

The Ark (*borne on staves by Levites*).
King David.

Priests and Levites.

Princes and Rulers of Judah and Benjamin.

Princes and Rulers of the more northerly tribes.

The children of Israel and Judah.

[*As the Ark comes into full view of the 'citadel, the Priests and Levites take up the following chant*]:

"Let God arise, and let His enemies be scattered:
Let them also that hate Him flee before Him.

"Arise, O Lord, into Thy rest,
Thou, and the Ark of Thy strength.

"Let Thy priests be clothed with righteousness;
And let Thy saints shout for joy.

"For the Lord hath chosen Zion;
He hath desired it for His habitation."

HIGH PRIEST (*standing before the ramparts*).

"Lift up your heads, O ye gates;
Be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors:
That the King of Glory may come in."

THE WARDER OF THE CITADEL (*from the ramparts*). "Who is this King of Glory?"

HIGH PRIEST. "Jehovah, strong and mighty;
Jehovah, mighty in battle."

[*The gates are thrown open, and the procession enters, the Levitical choirs chanting*]:

"Lift up your heads, O ye gates,
Be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors;
And the King of Glory shall come in.
Who is this King of Glory?
The Lord of Hosts,
He is the King of Glory." [Exeunt.]

SCENE III.—*The Gardens of the Palace.*

Enter from one side, King David and his Captains, returning from plac-

ing the Ark on Zion; and, from the other, Michal and her attendants.

DAVID. Comest thou forth in Miriam's dauntless spirit,
With timbrels and glad heart of song,
as after

That fateful passage thro' the pillar'd Sea,—

Or, like that peerless maid, Jephthah's fair daughter,

With the proud light of victory in her eyes,

To greet her sire's return? For, verily,

God hath been gracious unto me' this day,

Who of His infinite mercy hath vouchsafed

The great and long-withholden privilege

Of bearing to its rest the sacred Ark. There on the Mount of Zion is it set,

A jewel bright upon the Hills of Time!

For evermore the glory of His people,
The loadstar of our race.

MICH. (*contemptuously*) When thou hast finish'd—

DAVID. What! dost deny me, Michal? This—thy welcome?

MICH. Thyself thou didst debase in all men's sight,

And dost expect of me a royal welcome?

Whom shall we welcome then—the King, the Priest,

Or the Baalite? for, like a wanton, thou

Didst dance before the Ark in light apparel.

Thou didst this day shame me to my handmaidens,

Lowering the priestly vestments to the dust;

And, for a king, thou madest kingly sport

In most unkingly guise!

DAVID. Michal, have done!
Profane no more thy lips with such wild speech,

Thy heart with such ill thought. Thou dost dishonour

Thyself unto all time, dishonouring
me:

Nay more, thou here dishonourest thy
God!

Of Him ask thou forgiveness. Hence-
forth, Michal,

Thou art dead to me. Withdraw into
seclusion.

This day a curse shall light on thee.
For barren

As is thy heart even so shall be thy
womb!

Lo! unto thine handmaidens is vouch-
safed

The honor thou hast forfeited—in
that

My dancing was before the Lord Most
High.

Alas, that the rebellious blood of Saul
Must out—even in thee!

MICH. Shame me no more.
The king has done with me. Long
live the king!

[*Exeunt Michal and attendants.*]

DAVID. Retire all ye: we would
commune alone.

[*Exeunt Captains.*]

Such is the wife whom I have held so
dear!

She can no more this heart recipro-
cate

Than the cold moon. Beyond the
flesh, she knows

No wider range of possibilities!

Often I have thought a handclasp
might suffice

For more than she can give, for in the
touch

Of kindred souls are peace and satis-
faction.

I have loved lightly as men love, but
never

As I indeed *could* love, were I united
To one, my spiritual counterpart

Who could unlock this heart with a
golden key,—

The key of love: a smile, a touch, or
a tear,—

Till it o'erflowed with rubies. Only
to-day,

As the Ark of the Lord drew nigh its
Hill of Rest,

I caught for a moment the eyes of a
face in the crowd,

And my heart on a sudden stood still,
and then beat high

With rapturous pulse that clamour'd
above the crash

Of cymbal, and horn, and viol, for
there—O there—

The heart of all hearts that the world
can hold for me!

And a mist came over mine eyes, and
I dreamt as we pass'd

That I had been face to face with an
infinite bliss,

That the bitter drought of my soul
was at last assuaged.

Those eyes! those dear, dark eyes are
haunting me still:

Pray God I may find them at last! but
of that I am sure,

As I am of the grace, and the joy, and
the fulness, and favour

Of this day in a million years. [*Exit.*]

[*The last speech is delivered during
the mystical hour of twilight. The
scene has been gradually darkening,
while the stars peer brighter and
more bright through the cobalt sky.
Now torchbearers cross the stage,
and thereafter the gardens are seen
to be illuminated and en fête.*]

ENTER GROUP OF REVELLERS.

BOAZ. Here's health to King David!
I have had such a supper as
should sleep me into the new
moon, if I am able to recognize
the slim wench when she ap-
pears. Why, for such wine as
this (*drinks*), it were a sin not
to see the old lady—young lady.
I beg her pardon!—double: dub
her with the honours of a ma-
tron, and look over her sleekness,
her slimness, her slender horn;
she's a saucy one too! changing
her smiles every month, just
like the rest of her sex!

(*Catching sight of one of the
girls mocking him*) O thou little,
cozening trickster! the more I
see of thee—

FIRST MAID. O shame! whom are
you asking to see more of?

BOAZ. Well, let me think.—Ah, I
remember, I was squillocising
with the moon.

FIRST MAID. Fancy squililo—What do you call it?—squil-ilo-cising with the moon.

BOAZ. Soquilocising, wench, so-quililocising.

FIRST MAID. Soliloquizing, you old muddlehead!

BOAZ. That's just what I said: squi-squilocising.

FIRST MAID. I should try and sneeze it out next time.

BOAZ. As if I couldn't pronounce a five legged word after a few cups!

FIRST MAID. Come away, then and mend your syllables and—your manners!

[*Exeunt Maid and Boaz.*]

SEC. MAID. Come, Simon, thou wert going to give us the King's dance.

SIMON. Ay, it was a fine step 'a taught us. 'A knows how to fling his legs about does the king! I think, after another cup (*drinks*), I might hit the 'step.

SEC. MAID. Thou art as like to hit the step with thy head as with thy feet, if thou goest on drinking.

SIM. 'Tis necessary to put one's head into one's feet to dance well: thou wouldst never make a good dancer, for thou hast not brains enough.

SEC. MAID. I have enough to make thee dance anyway.

[*Strikes him.*]

SIM. That's not brains, that's coercion, that is—force without brains.

[*Simon thereupon commences a wild dance, flourishing his wine cup in his right hand, and mimicking the king's performance before the Ark. In the midst of the dance Uriah enters.*]

URIAH. What folly is here? Is this how you repay

Our royal master's hospitality?

Were it not that the times are mutinous,

I'd have you sorely scourged, you pestilent knaves!

Away! Uriah's sword frets in its sheath! [*Exeunt Revellers.*]

URIAH. Thus are our finer acts of service foil'd

By meaner minds, and all our nobler uses

Twisted and turn'd awry—our best affections

Check'd and diverted inward, but to warp us.

O who would nobly think or nobly dare

Did he but heed the end—Ingratitude? Of such is this world's justice! Have

I not striven,

In service of a like nobility,

To wean my wife from fanciful dreams of love

To Love's divine reality—the cup That holds the sacramental wine of life?

For is she not my true and lawful spouse?

And am not I, of privilege, entitled To take her, and to bend her to my will?

But could I hope *that* way to win her? No!

Ten thousand piteous, painful, stifling No's!

I have given all to win that pearl, her heart,

That precious jewel set in a shrine so beauteous

It ravisheth the sense to think of it. . . O Bathshua, Bathshua, have you then

no pity?

Come! I'll invest her with yet further proofs

Of my devotion, cut from my flesh if needs be.—

Such scars as make a soldier covetous!—

And if she give me not full love for love,

Then must I strangle her, or I shall stifle

In love that knows no end and no beginning!

[*Exit.*]

Enter Bathshua and Nurse.

BATH. Oh, Nurse, this wedded life
lowers darkling round me:
Never it seem'd to threaten like to-day.
I feel that I must forthwith kill my-
self

If he demand from me his perfect right
—This body. How I dread him!

NURSE. Come, my child,
Talk not so wildly; a thousand chances
lie

Betwixt you and—Uriah. List! he may
Be summon'd to the front.

BATH. There's a whisper of war!
[*Uriah is seen approaching.*]

NURSE. One lightly putteth on his
armour, but
Other and stranger hands may yet un-
loose.

One setteth forth who never may re-
turn.

BATH. I quake at sight of him.

NURSE. Be brave.

Re-enter Uriah.

URIAH. What, Bathshua!
Hast heard the news?

BATH. Who should convey it to me?

URIAH. The Philistines our ancient
foes are up:

And we ere daybreak take the road for
Gath.

The soldier in me rejoices! Now I
shall

Gain honour, Bathshua, or leave my
body

Where heaves the highest pyramid of
the slain.

The glory is for you, my child, my
queen;

But if God wills it that Uriah fall,
Then deem his death but proof of his
devotion,

Who died to win your love, so long
denied.

BATH. You are a brave man.

URIAH. All men are brave in love.
I could be braver for one little word;
Tell me that I shall win to love at last.
Silence, perhaps, speaks most! (*kiss-
ing her brow*).

I shall return—

You feel the cold; the night is treacher-
ous.

BATH. Ah, not more treacherous
than I!

URIAH. Dear child,
I know how hard it is for you to bear
With one so rough as I—much less to
love him.

Ah, but I could be tender, Bathshua!

BATH. I know't, Uriah; and there-
fore do I say

That I am treacherous: for you de-
serve

Far better. I—I am not worthy of you.

URIAH. Ah, no: you are too good,
too pure, too holy!

I could wish you less saint and—more
a woman.

[*Trumpet heard.*]

Belovéd! 'Tis my country that so
calls!

I must away: bid me God-speed.

BATH. God speed Uriah!

URIAH. Kiss me upon my lips, that
if I fall

I may send back your kiss with my
last breath.

My loyal heart would greet you, even in
death.

Ah God, one more! so sweet, so pure,
so true!

[*Breaking away from her.*]

God keep you, Bathshua!

BATH. And you, Uriah!
[*Exeunt.*]

ACT IV.

SCENE I.—*A Room in the Palace.*

King David rising as though from sleep.

*Enter Ahitophel (bearing a cup of
wine.)*

AHIT. I trust I did not break upon
your slumber.

DAVID. I did but drowse, Ahitophel.
The face

I saw but two noons past in the pro-
cession

Dethroneth sleep.

AHIT. Could my lord but describe
The face?

DAVID. Ah, that were difficult, my
friend.

Yet speech perchance may aid thy quest
of her!

So will I now endeavour to portray
All that a momentary glance might cull
Of her exceeding beauty. First then:
her hair,

Wound like a diadem of rare device,
Was wreath'd about her head in massy
coils,

Showing the perfect oval of her face;
From which there shone twin eyes,
bright as the ocean

When the moonbeams flood the waters,
and the dreamy deep

Is all a shimmer of silver; and on the
marge

Two tiny isles of bliss—her coral ears;
A forehead wide, yet smooth and
womanly,

And spaced with arch'd and finely pen-
cil'd brows;

A mouth distilling sweetness — the
lower lip

Hung like a clustering peach warm i'
the sun,

Yet ripe with summer fullness; her
melting charms

Converging in the roundest dimpled
chin

That the soft kiss of love e'er lighted
on.

I tell thee, man, that every sense grew
faint

At sight of workmanship so exquisite.
And now the thought of her doth drive
me mad,

For fear fruition may not crown de-
sire.

[*Strolling toward window.*]

AHIT. (*aside*). It well describes her.

DAVID. Didst thou speak?

AHIT. Methinks

My lord hath praised her beauty over-
much.

DAVID. In no way. What fair dwell-
ing have we here,

That buttress'd leans against my pal-
ace wall,

Whose garden-roof this window over-
looks?

AHIT. It is the home of two new-
wed. Uriah,

Thy general, was pleased to take to
wife

The daughter of my son Eliam.

DAVID. So!

She is . . . beautiful?

AHIT. My lord, she is so reported;
Although for me hard were it to pro-
nounce

Upon her looks.

DAVID. And hath this man, Uriah,
A great affection for her?

AHIT. Rumour hath it
He dotes on her: worships the very
ground

She treads upon: cannot contain him-
self

An hour out of her sight: follows her
glance

Like a hungry wolf: is jealous without
cause—

DAVID. In brief, her lover he?
[*King leaves the window.*]

AHIT. Assuredly,
For is he not her husband?

DAVID. Friend, the window
From which thou dost survey this vir-
tuous world

Is surely very narrow!

AHIT. My Lord, there are
Times when a narrow window doth
promote

The happiness of all within the house.

DAVID. I shall remember that, Ahi-
tophel.

It may well suit me that thy view
should be

So closely shutter'd; for I had always
thought

Thee—too observant, that thy window
was

Thrown wide to all the broad faults
of the world.

But, as to this same relative of thine,
Canst bring her to me? for I am de-
sirous

To put her beauty to the test. I have
Been sad too long—disconsolate, I

might say.
Perhaps this lady—

AHIT. Thy servant knows my lord
Doth jest?

DAVID. Provoke me not, old fool, too
far!

Is not the honour of a king worth
more
Than all the unveil'd Beauties of the
world?

AHIT. With deep misgiving do I
now obey.

DAVID. Hasten thou!

AHIT. (*aside, ironically*). A king's
honour! A king's honour!

[*Exit.*]

DAVID (*taking up the cup and return-
ing to the window*).

What miracle of grace! what radiant
beauty!

Would I had eyes a thousand to en-
visage

The motions of her form! O blinding
bliss,

Her vesture falling round her like soft
clouds

Reveals a fleckless heaven! See now
she turns,

Her bosom's broad expanse glows to
the light,

And all her snowy, sinuous waist lies
bare!

Her potency enthalls—I must possess,
Possess her whilst this ruddy riot lasts
And youth's mad fever burns along
my veins.

(*Holding up cup*) Drown, Virtue,
drown! Thou'rt but a jaded hag,
I'll hug thy chains no more! Give me
the wine of Love—

The love that comes like this in purple
flashes!

Full of new life, and hope, and manly
vigour,

Not cloy'd with dull satiety and custom,
But burning, breathless, pulsing to its
goal!

Yet soft! there is much need for cir-
cumpection—

But newly wed? I must walk warily
To make possession sure. Some women
are won

By swift assault, but most by under-
mining—

The gradual encroachment day by day,
Until the much-prized stronghold yields
at last

To man's persistence—imperceptibly,
The city captured e'er they know 'tis
threaten'd!

If I can but subdue her to my will!

O wine of Love! I drink thee to the
lees!

[*Drains cup.*]

*Re-enter Ahitophel [leading Bathshua
closely veiled].*

DAVID. Leave us, good friend. Didst
thou not hear me? leave us!

AHIT. Sire, thou dost compromise
my daughter's honour.

DAVID. Thy granddaughter's!

AHIT. Be't so, my lord.

DAVID. Ah well,
Ahitophel, we like not forcéd sweets.

The daughter of Eliam has a voice,
And she shall answer thee. If 'tis her
wish,

Reluctantly we shall release her. (*To
Bath.*) Speak,

Thou hast none here to fear!

BATH. What the King wills,
That would thine handmaid fain obey.

AHIT. Ah, child,
Thou knowest not what a net thou
draw'st about thee:

Consider well thine answer!

BATH. I have consider'd through
long nights and days:

There is none like unto the King, none
—none

Whatever hap may fall to me from
him,

I shall endure it gladly.

DAVID. Art content?

AHIT. I needs must be.

DAVID. Then, if thou lov'st thy—
daughter,

See that none come upon us unaware.
Thy head shall answer for the slightest
breath

Aspersing her fair fame.

[*Exit Ahitophel.*]

(*The King draws closer to Bathshua.*)

BATH. What would my lord?

DAVID. Why dost thou linger to un-
veil the dawn?

[*As she unveils, the King starts back
as though blinded by her beauty.*]

BATH. Love's dayspring—hath it
pierced thee also?

DAVID. Aye,
The shaft of Fate hath sped: the view-
less arrow
Hath wing'd in silence, and hath found
its mark.

Nothing will ever be the same again.
I have look'd for thee through the
years—through the long years:
Thou didst delay thy coming, O my
love!

And now at last our lips have spoken.
What more

Is to be known?—save this (*taking her
hand*)—save this, I love thee!

BATH. So fast, my lord, O King!
And I—have I no voice?

Wait! what if I should be the wife
of one
As brave and resolute as thou, perhaps
As loving? Why! thou dost not even
know
My name.

DAVID. Thy name! There is no
single word
That could reveal thee! No range of
words. For thou

Art faultless, and words fail us at the
highest,

Being ever halt and lame interpreters.
Thy name?—I'll put it to my heart and
ask,

'Twixt kiss and kiss, what best becom-
eth thee!

For, of the flowers, I would take coun-
sel,—whether

The lily or the rose, the jasmine or

The hyacinth breathes fragrance like
to thine;

And, of the stars, those glistening or-
acles,—

Whether the violet-tinted amethyst,
Or the deep-gleaming, opalescent
moon-stone,

Those dark eyes can outlustre; or, to
bespeak

Thy heart of hearts,—whether the
blood-red ruby

Hides passion in its depths deeper than
thine.

Thy name! why wait for that? were we
not named

Ere we were born? were we not born
for this—

To meet, to thrill, to merge at last?

[*Strives to embrace her; she strug-
gles faintly and then yields.*]

BATH. O David!
How can I hold thee back? How any-
thing

Deny thee? Like the rush of many
waters

O'erwhelming all,—thine eyes, thy
voice, constrain me;

The tide of love comes flooding in
again,

Filling each creek and crevice of my
soul

With thee—my lord—my King! But
thou—canst *thou* be true?

DAVID. Until this minute what should
hold me true

Where that light-o'-love—a woman's
luring smile

Beckon'd and drew? But now—

BATH. Yes, yes; but now?

DAVID. Now, my beloved, know I
that true faith

Is far more beautiful than ranging love.
Never, until this hour, have I believed
That love could last—outstay the kiss
of passion.

Love for one only I have held to scorn!
But now all things are changed,—my-
self the most.

From the first moment that our glances
met,

When first I saw thine eyes amid the
crowd

Glint fire of recognition, soul to soul,
I knew the hour of all my life had
come!

For art thou not my own, my very own,
Born mine from the beginning of all
time?

My spiritual counterpart? my body's
soul?

Art thou not that dear being for whom
I have sigh'd

Through the long, listless and unleave-
n'd years,

Mocking at love that came not? On
my lips

Breathe—heart on homing heart—we
two are one

For all the years that are past and are
to come!

BATH. (*breaking away*). Thy mouth
—thy mouth: it hath undone me!
Nay!

I was undone long since in dreams of
thee.

For when our spirits even at distance
met

I knew my prince of men. But ever,
till this hour,

Love shone and hallow'd all about thy
path.

David! thou wert my first instructor.
Thou

Didst teach me with thy poet soul to
love

All that I love. Through thy brave
eyes have I

Look'd out upon the world and found
it fair.

And now thou wouldst fall off from thy
great self,

And do this evil in the sight of God
On this thine handmaid: for thou
knowest well

No armour can foil love!
For him, my husband,—

That fiery Hittite who was thrust upon
me,—

I care not. For myself what should
I care,

Who love thee far beyond all fear of
skaith?

But, for the soul of David,—Stay, oh
stay!

Thou wilt think differently, my lord,
to-morrow.

DAVID. To-morrow shall not come,
and thou and I

Remain as we are now to one another!
This hour is mine and thine! Irrevo-

cable
This mingling of our lives.

BATH. (*sinking in his arms*). O Da-
vid, David!

The stars are going out: I faint: I fail.
[*The King supports her 'to an*

inner room.]

Re-enter Ahitophel.

AHIT. (*turning over the cup*). To
the dregs! So he hath ta'en the
bait prepared.

Henceforth he is *my* servant: not *I*
his.

Such power affordeth by-lanes of sweet
pleasure:

My rich intent and aim to exercise it
Upon my former master! But I must
draw

The toils about him, or he may escape
me.

Monarchs, like men, have ever a close
device

Of finding scapegoats for their own
misdeeds.

This must I now prevent! He must
e'en answer

For his own sins, not *I* for him: so
here's

To stir up trouble, on the crest of
which

I ride—and higher mount this slippery
shore!

[*Exit Ahitophel.*]

[*The stage is momentarily darkened,
and then the dawn is seen slowly
stealing into the apartment. As
the light increases, David enters
and seats himself in a recessed
window. He appears dejected
and absorbed in reverie.*]

Enter Ahitophel.

AHIT. My lord,
The palace is aroused and in high fer-

ment.
As thou didst feast thine eyes on a
dumb show,

Even so did others of this household
spy

Upon a living one—thou wert o'er-
look'd,

Even as thou thyself didst overlook:
And now there's mischief i' the wind!

My daughter
Did leave thy presence in full flood of
tears,

And hath, despite her friends' remon-
strances.

Refused all fellowship. Such is the
way of women:

They weep at that which they enjoy
the most;

They love to chew the cud of their
own thoughts

And ruminat in tears.

DAVID. Proceed more tersely,
We want not the philosophy of love
But facts—plain facts, Ahitophel!

AHIT. The tongue of slander,
At all times lolling forth in the fresh
air

To taint the breeze with its envenom'd
breath,

Grown surfeited on such a rich repast,
And dropping poison from its neigh-
bouring fangs,

Hath pierced the triple armour of thy
throne

And craves a victim.

[*Murmurs of disaffection heard
without.*]

Hark, the serpent hisses!
We must supply the thing with food or
—perish.

DAVID. Go, perish then—thou and
thy cowardice!

What care I for the rabble! Call out
the guards!

But first—secure her safety: haste thee
now!

Convey her by the subway to the pal-
ace. [*Exit Ahitophel.*]

So 'soon upon my joy! comes it so
soon!

The enchantment first, swift follows
retribution;

The brief delight, at once the bitter
pain;

The dream of bliss, and oh, the chill
awakening!

For all the joys we aim at are but
shadows,

Our destination to believe them real!
And what have I here gain'd? say,

rather, lost?

For the spirit's loss outweighs the
body's gain,

Shaking the tender scales of love and
honour

With clangorous overpoise.
[*Uproar without.*]

So this then is
The flaming gauge and penalty of
Greatness!

One step beyond the boundaries of pru-
dence,—

And who that ever loved was worldly-
prudent?—

And the whole hell-swarm follows fast
upon me,

As thick as wolves and ravening for
their prey.

Fell hypocrites! craven slaves of secret
vice!

I'll hold a mirror to their own dark
souls.

Not one o' them but had done as I
have done,

Given the all-hallow'd opportunity!
For who of men is free from this same
lure,

The languor and the grace of woman-
kind?

A glance, a smile—their doom's al-
ready spun!

Re-enter Ahitophel.

AHIT. My lord, the guards scarce
hold their own. The people
Swarm in with rage: we must devise
some means

To quiet them. (*Aside.*) It works al-
most too well.

DAVID. Hast thou secured her?

AHIT. She is upon her way.
Thy body-guard will answer for her
safety.

DAVID. Until I hear her footfall in
the palace,

Talk not to me of safety! Let them
rave!

Fulfill thy mission, and that speedily,
Or, God! I'll fling thy corpse out to the
mob:

'Tis thou shalt quiet them!

AHIT. (*aside*). I have him in the
toils!

[*Exit Ahitophel.*]

DAVID. The dog! 'Tis a slant eye:
I like it not.

But treachery will out, and so wilt
thou,

My crafty councillor, when time per-
mits.

Such secrets tarry safer under ground.
I'll have no witness to my guilt; I'll
not

Enact that folly!

Re-enter Ahitophel.

AHIT. My lord, she is without
And but awaits thy pleasure.

DAVID. Ah, at last!
 [*Ahitophel ushers in Bathshua: the King meets her and takes her by both hands.*]

Now I can breathe! Whilst thou, my Soul, wert threaten'd,
 A torturing terror held me. Now am I free,
 To think, to act—to act, to greatly dare,
 To venture all, if needs be, for thy sake!
 Now let them thunder! (*To Ahit.*)
 Hast thou then conceived
 A plan, my subtle friend, that shall convince
 The unruly mob of our wrong'd innocence?

AHIT. The proof of innocence?
 Why, surely,—if
 The proof weren't damning! But,
 lacking that, speed thou
 The remedy.

DAVID. What remedy avails us?

AHIT. Thou hast but one: 'tis set forth here.

[*Hands him scroll.*]

DAVID (*reading aloud*). To Joab, captain of the king's forces before Rabbah: "*Set ye Uriah in the forefront of the hottest battle, and retire ye from him, that he may be smitten, and die.*"

So thou
 Wouldst remedy one ill, by setting up
 Another?

AHIT. The most usual course—in nature.

DAVID. The worser evil counteract the lesser?

AHIT. Say rather,
 The lesser evil counteract the greater:
 It surely were a less calamity
 That one should perish, than that this
 whole realm
 Should be subvert with mutiny?

DAVID. Convincing
 To minds like thine. They dare not
 strike at me!

[*A noise as of crashing timber: the porch of the palace is wrecked. Some of the guard are driven in, but recover themselves.*]

AHIT. (*pointing to debris*). The proof of what I speak! My lord remembers

The law of Moses, and the death that stones

Those taken in adultery? Her blood
 Will soon besplash thy palace walls,
 unless—

BATH. Think not of me, my lord!
 my life is thine;
 I do not fear—death—if at thy dear hands.

My body then would satisfy these wolves.

I have loved . . . I have lived . . . It is enough!

DAVID. No, not to die—to live! to live and love,

And grow more fond with every fleeting hour.

New vistas of delight are opening up
 Through these same lurid and portentous skies—

(*Pointing skyward.*) See, see the blue—how it expands for us!

There, somewhere, shall we reach our isle of bliss,

And sun our souls by the violet-tinted sea.

To die! why, child, we have but begun to live!

To live—and oh, the difference in living!

AHIT. My lord, my lord, this is no time for love!

DAVID. What then, old gray-beard, fear'st thou for thy skin?

All times are happy, if we count them so;

And death is nothing when the heart is light,

A broken sunbeam—that is all!
 (*To Bathshua.*) Fear not.

I shall o'ercome them.

AHIT. Thou must take action then,
 Or let the occasion slip.

DAVID (*indicating scroll*). How will that serve us?

AHIT. In this way. I will publish far and wide

A grave reverse hath fallen upon our arms

In front of Rabbah, and that Uriah is Foremost among the slain.

DAVID. They'll not believe it:
No messenger hath yet approach'd the
city.

AHIT. My lord, one came this morn-
ing: him have I
Held up, with all his news unpromul-
gate.

DAVID. That messenger hath a
tongue!

AHIT. Fear not thou *that*.
Him also I'll curtail of living speech
After he hath fulfill'd our—

DAVID. Thou art a devil,
Ahitophel,—a very prince of devils!

AHIT. My lord is a good judge—of
devils. (*Presenting scroll.*) Will
My lord sign?

BATH. (*taking scroll*). Not his life!
Ah, no—not that!

DAVID (*seizing her by the wrists and
looking into her eyes*). He
stands between us! There is no
other way.

[*Unclops her fingers and takes
scroll from her; she gazes wildly
about her and then falls.*]

Seven years elapse between Acts
IV. and V.

ACT V.

SCENE I.—*Jerusalem: Hall of Audience
in King David's Palace. Hour,
twilight. Bathshua lulling her
little son to sleep.*

BATH. (*singing*).
Darkness steals o'er hill and valley,
In the heavens one pale star shines,
Whilst the nightjar's murmurous music
Breathes the magic of the pines.
Sleep: sleep: in happy slumbers blest,
For Silence broods upon a world at
rest.

Enter King David.

DAVID (*anxiously*). My little son—?

BATH. Sssh! .. Thou must not awake
him.

He hath been somewhat petulant of
late,

And will not sleep unless I hush him
off.

To-night he pleaded to sit up with me
And see the stars come through, but
this warm eve

Hath worn him out. He is a little poet,
Just pushing forth small tender buds
of knowledge.

Some day thou wilt be proud of him.

DAVID. Proud of him!
I am proud of him! Never was a fa-
ther

Prouder or fonder of his son than I.

I tell thee, wife, he's so dear to me
That if it should please God to take
him from us—

BATH. Fond heart, why speak'st
thou so alarmingly?

He is firm and well-knit for his years—
why then

Should'st thou be anxious?

DAVID. Ah, why indeed? Are we
Not always anxious about those we
love?

By these God hath the power to
scourge us most.

No child hath ever nestled to my heart
Like this one. With what soul-ensnar-
ing mirth

He doth reciprocate my love for him!
And is he not *our* son—our first-born?

BATH. He is
The dearest pledge that ever yet was
given

In love.

DAVID (*offering to lift the child*).
Shall I?

BATH. Nay: let him now sleep on.
I am fain to keep you by my side
awhile,

Here in the mystic twilight, hand in
hand.

DAVID. Yea, hand in hand, unto eter-
nity.

Beloved, thou only know'st what I have
suffer'd,

What we together suffer'd . . . and must
suffer!

While in this drear abyss we darkling
gripe

Remote from Him, our Father and our
God.

For seven long years I have not heard
 His Voice,
 Neither in the deep quiet of the noon-
 tide,
 Nor 'mid the starry stillness of the
 night,—
 As when the North Wind, stealing
 through my chamber,
 Did winnow with soft wings my slum-
 bering harp,
 And woke the silent strings to tremu-
 lous life.
 Often it bore me to the fields of sleep,
 To the murmur of wind-music; oft in
 vigils
 It spoke to my rapt soul of God, and
 the night
 Was hallow'd, and the day came all too
 soon.

[*David rises.*]

Those ministering voices are all past,
 I am as one given over to the dead,
 A spirit restless in a land of shadows.
 O Bathshua! Is my sin beyond re-
 demption?
 Heeds He no more? Ah, no: I'll not
 believe it!
 For He whom I have worship'd and
 revered
 Is above all a just and jealous God,—
 Of mercy infinite, and of love so vast
 That all our boundaries of love must
 stretch and break
 Ere we can prove its fulness. Only in
 death
 Shall we first know the power of such
 a love,
 And comprehend the measure of His
 grace.
 O voice of God, speaking within and
 around me,
 Only to know Thou speakest is enough!
 Speak! speak! thy servant listeneth, O
 Lord.

BATH. O husband mine, be patient!
 and His mercy
 Will of a surety find thee.—Never yet
 Did He deny the contrite heart and
 pure.

DAVID. Nay, love, it were in vain:
 I have not paid
 The penalty of sin. Blood-guiltiness
 Is on my soul, and He will not re-
 deem it.

Unless—ah, no, I dare not think of
 that!

BATH. Of what?

DAVID. Too well I know my punish-
 ment.

Dwells it not here? Lives it not aye
 before me?

“A life for a life”—'tis thy life or the
 child's:

My son, my little son, or—thee, my
 Queen!

I can at least cheat God of that de-
 spair;

For in that moment when thou diest,
 I die.

BATH. My life is of less value than
 the child's.

Thou canst get other wives—more lov-
 able,

More fair; but not another son like
this.

DAVID. Thy life determines my life,
 thy death my death:

But I would die before thee, for thou
 dost

Not love as I love thee!

BATH. O faint of heart,

Dost think I do not love thee unto
 death?—

What were the world to me without thy
 love?

But thou—thou judgest God, even be-
 fore

He hath judged thee.

DAVID. He hath already judged me—

His silence is my judgment, Bathshua!

Each lifting prayer falls still-born
 from my lips.

He, He alone, knows my exceeding
 need!

Leave us awhile; seek yet I will his
 mercy—

For the child, for thee, but most for
 my far sin.

If He may lift that burden from my
 soul. [*Bathshua withdraws.*]

[*David kneels at the couch and of-
 fers the following prayer:*]

“Have mercy upon me, O God, ac-
 cording

To Thy loving kindness:

“Hide Thy face from my sins,

And blot out all mine iniquities.

"For I acknowledge my transgression
And my sin is ever before me.

"Against Thee, Thee only, have I
sinned
And done this evil in Thy sight.

"Create in me a clean heart, O God,
And renew a right spirit within me.

"Cast me not away from Thy presence;
And take not Thy Holy Spirit from
me!"

SCENE II.—*The Same.*

King David, sitting in judgment. Bathshua seated on his left, her right hand resting on the shoulder of her little son. Lords and councillors in attendance. A prisoner is brought forward, bound hand and foot, and thrown upon his knees before the King.

DAVID. What accusation overshadows him?

AHIT. He hath conspired against your throne and person.

DAVID. The evidence?

AHIT. The testimony of The woman at his side, supported by Most damning, gross particulars. The knave Nothing denies, but a sullen silence keeps.

DAVID (*to prisoner*). Knowst thou the serious nature of the charge That is preferr'd against thee?

PRIS. I do, my lord.

DAVID. And that, if proven, the penalty is death?

PRIS. I am content—to die.

DAVID. Hast thou then naught To urge in thy defence?

PRIS. Nothing, my lord.

DAVID (*aside*). And yet, methinks, he looks not like a traitor.

(*To the Prince*) Dost think that man would take thy father's life?

[*The little prince steps down from the throne, and looks the prisoner with childlike frankness in the face.*]

PRINCE. He is a good man, father: I am sure That he is good. And are you—a good woman?

WOMAN. Child, what a foolish question! Of course I am: Why shouldst thou think I am not?

PRINCE. I don't like you.

WOMAN. A child's whim, this! And who made thee my judge?

DAVID. No one hath judged thee—unless it be thyself. But we are very much of the same mind

As our small son. (*To officer.*) Release him.

[*Prisoner is unbound.*]

Now wilt tell us Why thou refusedst to defend thyself?

PRIS. My Lord, must I incriminate my wife?

DAVID. Thou art here to speak the truth.

PRIS. Then truth is this: All subterfuge, all falseness, all deceit Have but one mask—the white face of a woman.

She'd have me dead so she espouse her lover.

Here is her script.

DAVID (*after reading*). But why hast thou withheld it?

PRIS. The bitter knowledge of her treachery

Struck deeper far than death. Ah! death to that

Were but a blessed boon, a swift release.

Why then should I defend myself? . . .

But now The little prince, thy son, hath won my heart.

God bless him—bless him! for his frank blue eyes

Have probed my wound, and drawn its venom off.

No traitor, I!

DAVID. Thou needest not avouch it.
And, since we know not 'mid the stress
of life

When we may need such loyalty, be
thou

The keeper and custodian of our son.

PRINCE. I am so glad! I am so
glad!

DAVID. For thee,
Thou thing enswath'd in the soft flesh
of woman,
Thy darken'd soul shall prey upon
itself.

Take her, and shut her from the light
of day.

[Exit guard with woman.]

[David rises as though to rescind
the order, then sinks back hope-
lessly.]

DAVID (*aside*). Can I so glibly sen-
tence her? Myself,
Seven years this very day, for such a
cause,
Struck down Uriah with the sword of
Ammon.

Enter Attendant.

ATT. My Lord, the prophet Nathan
is without,
And begs an audience.

DAVID. Then bid him enter.

Enter Nathan.

DAVID. Seer of the living God, up-
rise! thy message?

NATH. My lord, O King!
I ask for judgment. It hath ever been
The privilege and custom of our Col-
lege,

Whose humble messenger I am this
day,

To bring to the knowledge of our lord
the King

Cases of grievous wrong, that his re-
proof

May echo through the land, and be a
warning

To evildoers. The facts I shall relate,
Grave as they did appear unto my
Order,

Immured in lives of holy meditation,

Will strike, I doubt not, a responsive
chord

Of horror and of noble indignation
In the exalted heart of our lord the
King,

And set for a mark and seal upon all
time

His justice and his judgment.

DAVID. Nathan, speak on.

NATH. Two men there were, dwell-
ing in thy chief city—

One rich, the other poor. And the rich
man had

Of flocks and herds, of wine, and oil,
and treasure,

Exceeding great abundance: but the
poor man

Had little substance he might call his
own,

Save one ewe lamb that he had bought
and cherish'd,

That ate from his own hand, and drank
from his own cup,

And that was dear to him even as a
daughter.

Now as it chanced there came a trav-
eler

To him that had such plenitude of
riches,

And begg'd of him a stranger's enter-
tainment.

But he who had been bless'd with such
increase

Did spare to take of his own flock;
but seized

And slew, in utter wantonness of heart,
The poor man's one ewe lamb, and set
it dress'd

Before the wayfarer.

DAVID (*rising in indignation*). *The
man who hath done
This thing shall surely die.*

NATHAN (*pointing at David*). *Thou
art the man!*

[*The King falls back upon his seat,
crushed; his left hand supporting
his head, his right clutching at
the arm of the throne; and he
remains in this attitude, while
Nathan pronounces sentence.*]

"Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, I
anointed thee king over Israel,
and I delivered thee out of the
hand of Saul;

"And I gave thee thy master's house, and thy master's wives into thy bosom, and gave thee the house of Israel and Judah; and if that had been too little, I would moreover have given unto thee such and such things.

"Wherefore hast thou despised the commandment of the Lord, to do evil in His sight? thou hast killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword, and hast taken his wife to be thy wife, and hast slain him with the sword of the children of Ammon.

"Now therefore the sword shall never depart from thine house; because thou hast despised Me, and hast taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be thy wife.

"Thus saith the Lord, Behold, I will raise up evil against thee out of thine own house, and I will take thy wives before thine eyes, and give them unto thy neighbour.

"For thou didst it secretly: but I will do this thing before all Israel, and before the sun."

DAVID. *I have sinn'd against the Lord.*

NATHAN. *And the Lord also Hath put away thy sin; for He hath heard*

Thy voice of supplication and He knoweth

The sorrow and contrition of thy heart. The soul that doth repent, the same shall live.

But, forasmuch as thou hast given occasion

For seekers after wrong to blaspheme God,

The child that hath been born to thee in sin—

The tender fruit of thine adulterous commerce

(*pointing at the prince*)—

He shall most surely die.

[*Bathshua puts her hands silently into those of the King. As he realizes the full force of the blow, the King's head falls on his breast.*]

DAVID (*in a broken voice*). It is enough:

My cup is full.

PRINCE (*seeking the King's face*).
Father! Why should I die?

SCENE III.—*A Room in the Palace.*

The little prince laid out for burial. Bathshua alone beside the body.

BATH. My son—my little son—my little son—
Can God so keep thee from me?

Enter David (with the signs of mourning upon him.)

DAVID. The child is dead: Come, put away thy grief, for it is barren.

Whilst he yet lived, our prayers might still avail him;

But now he hath pass'd beyond the bourn of tears

Where sorrow is not, but Divine Compassion

Leans earthward to annul our loss. Look up,

Answer his smiles with smiles; for he awaits

The day, the hour, when we shall go to him:

Serene he waits—serenely let us bear This transient separation.

BATH. My loss is new. O leave me with my grief—in pity leave me!

DAVID. How frail thy heart of trust! Bethink thee, wife,

Thou canst not add one comfort to his rest.

He is at peace. There all is well with him.

BATH. Let me but look on him a little longer, His face so fair!

DAVID. Think of him as he was! Now that the spirit hath fled, it is but

clay Thou worshippest.

BATH. It is all that remains To us—all save a memory! And soon This dear, cold body will have pass'd from sight.

DAVID. 'Tis better so, for thou wilt
grieve the less.

[*Tries to draw her away.*]

BATH. Never! not while these eyes
may treasure him,
These hands yet tend him, and these
ears await
His little kingly voice, his princely
bidding;
For see he sleeps, he sleeps so peace-
fully!
Almost could I believe that still he
breathes,
So surely doth the blanchéd coverlet
heave!
It cannot be that death hath part in
him,
Else death than life were lovelier!—
O my child!
Mine in these moments, more than ever
mine!
Too soon the grave will hide thee!—
Spare me, my lord,
I am a woman and a mother—

DAVID. True:
Thou art a woman, and canst find re-
lief
In tears—men find them unavailing.
Weep on:
Somewhere, unseen, thy child is gath-
ering up
The priceless, precious jewels that are
falling,
Like star on star in the ocean, and his
eyes
Are moist with unshed tears, as the
Angels' are.
O never doubt but that the day will
come
When thou wilt look on this heart-
searching sorrow
But as a landmark in God's love for
thee!

BATH. Thy heart, my King, is per-
fect. Would I had
But a tithe of thy great faith! for then
I might
Uplift the front and forehead of my
grief,
Strive to forget, and build life up anew.
I can but walk i' the ways that I have
known,
The tear-stain'd ways of weak and lov-
ing women.

DAVID. This little body that was ten-
anted.

With love for us, God did reclaim
from us:

He gave that we might feel our loss—
the greatest

Sin-sacrifice demanded yet of any.

Let us not murmur that this dread
atonement

Is wrung from our full hearts. But
Love remains,

Enrich'd and hallow'd by this poignant
loss,

It will uphold us now that he has gone.
And when this stormy grief hath spent
itself,

And thou canst look through these same
winnowing cloudrifts

To the clear and shining spaces of the
sky,

Come, place thy gentle hands in mine—
we two

Will yet fare forth together, closelier
knit

Because of this deep sacrament of love.

[*Kisses the forehead of the dead
child and withdraws.*]

BATHSHUA'S PRAYER.

Father of Life, of light, of love,
In Whose vast arms the world en-
dures,
Pour down Thy blessing from above—
The peace that Faith alone secures.

O let the waters flow again!

The fountain of my grief upspring;
For all life's sands are parch'd with
pain,

And desolate the heart I bring.

Remove, O Lord, the sense of guilt,
The bitter memories amass'd!

Thou canst give sevenfold, if Thou
wilt,

The treasure that seem'd unsur-
pass'd.

But of all treasures—this the most,

O keep me first in David's heart!

For without him my life is lost;

Let not his joy in me depart!

And with his love, dear God, restore
 The spirit that hath left this clay,
 Into another vessel pour
 The life, the light, that was our day!

Enter Nathan.

NATH. Comfort thee, Bathshua!
 God's peace be with thee!
 The Lord hath heard thy prayer, and
 hath vouchsafed
 A son—in likeness of thy treasure
 here;
 And he shall be belovéd of the Lord,
 The hope and joy of thy declining
 years.
 And thou shalt name him "Solomon,"
 because
 The peace which was withholden in our
 day
 Shall last throughout his reign. To him
 'tis given
 To build a temple to the Lord Most
 High—
 That tabernacle which King David
 plann'd,
 But unto whom it is inhibited
 Even to lay one stone upon another:
 Not for his grievous sin, which God
 hath put away,
 But for the innocent blood that he hath
 shed.
 Yet, so high-minded is our lord the
 king,
 He will complete this trial of his faith
 Greater in soul—for he shall live to
 strengthen
 The hands and heart of his more hon-
 our'd son,
 And see in vision that vast fane up-
 rise.—
 To David the conception and design,
 To Solomon the honour and the glory!
 And now, O Queen, thou hast been
 blest as wife,
 Yea, still more blesséd shalt thou be
 as mother,—
 Through thee shall spring a line of
 mighty kings,
 Yet mightiest He that is the lowliest
 born!
 What solace and support thy heart can
 give,
 Thy husband will have need of; for 'tis
 written

King David's reign shall set in clouds
 and gloom.

[Exit Nathan.]

BATH. It is the voice of the Lord!
 His will be done!

*Re-enter David, having put off the signs
 of mourning.*

BATH. David, my lord, my king! my
 rock of refuge!
 In shelter of you the winds of grief
 are laid,
 And gentle peace closes the watch of
 sorrow.
 Wondrous and deep as was my love
 for him,
 It is no measure of my love for you;
 For he was but a tender rivulet,
 You are the fount from which the
 blessing sprang.
 Lavish once more your wealth of love
 upon me!
 And let the whisper of another life
 Make music through the channels of my
 heart:
 For God hath here vouchsafed to me
 a son,
 And in that son shall David's line con-
 tinue.

DAVID. Hath Nathan visited thee?

BATH. He hath, dear lord.
 And this sad heart doth sing aloud for
 joy,
 For God—our God—hath wholly us for-
 given.

DAVID. He hath heard thy suppli-
 cation, O my soul!
 The years of travail draw now to an
 end.
 And thou, O Queenly heart!
 Lovingly leal through that long, dread
 atonement,
 Be thou partaker and consort of my
 joy—
 This blessed joy, ensanctified by sor-
 row,
 Of our complete reunion under God.
 His hands shall guide us, and His peace
 enfold us,
 Until we know Him as He truly is.

[Curtain.]

CHARLES WILLIAM CAYZER (1902).

HADAD



HADAD

[SCENE.—*The terraced room of AB-SALOM'S house, by night; adorned with vases of flowers, and fragrant shrubs; an awning spread over part of it.*
TAMAR and HADAD.]

TAM. No, no, I will remember—
proofs, you said,
Unknown to Moses.

HAD. Well, my love, thou knowest
I've been a traveller in various climes;
Trode Ethiopia's scorching sands, and
scaled
The snow clad mountains; trusted to
the deep;
Traversed the fragrant islands of the
sea,
And with the Wise conversed of many
nations.

TAM. I know thou hast.

HAD. Of all mine eyes have seen,
The greatest, wisest, and most wonder-
ful,
Is that dread sage, the Ancient of the
Mountain.

TAM. Who?

HAD. None knows his lineage, age,
or name; his locks
Are like the snows of Caucasus; his
eyes
Beam with the wisdom of collected
ages.
In green, unbroken years, he sees, 't is
said,
The generations pass, like autumn
fruits,
Garnered, consumed, and springing
fresh to life,
Again to perish, while he views the sun.
The seasons roll, in rapt serenity,
And high communion with celestial
powers.

Some say 't is Shem, our father, some
say Enoch,
And some Melchizedek.

TAM. I've heard a tale
Like this, but ne'er believed it.

HAD. I have proved it.—
Through perils dire, dangers most im-
minent,
Seven days and nights 'midst rocks and
wildernesses,
And boreal snows, and never-thawing
ice,
Where not a bird, a beast, a living
thing,
Save the far-soaring vulture comes, I
dared
My desperate way, resolved to know, or
perish.

TAM. Rash, rash adventurer!

HAD. On the highest peak
Of stormy Caucasus, there blooms a
spot
On which perpetual sunbeams play,
where flowers
And verdure never die; and there he
dwells.

TAM. But didst thou see him?

HAD. Never did I view
Such awful majesty: his reverend locks
Hung like a silver mantle to his feet,
His raiment glistened saintly white, his
brow
Rose like the gate of Paradise, his
mouth
Was musical as its bright guardian's
songs.

TAM. What did he tell thee? Oh!
what wisdom fell
From lips so hallowed?

HAD. Whether he possess
The Tetragrammaton,—the powerful
Name

Inscribed on Moses' rod, by which he wrought

Unheard-of wonders, which constrains the Heavens

To part with blessings, shakes the earth, and rules

The strongest Spirits; or if God hath given

A delegated power, I cannot tell
But 't was from him I learned their fate, their fall,

Who, erewhile, wore resplendent crowns in Heaven;

Now, scattered through the earth, the air, the sea.

Them he compels to answer, and from them

Has drawn what Moses, nor no mortal ear,

Has ever heard.

TAM. But did he tell it thee?

HAD. He told me much,—more than I dare reveal;

For with a dreadful oath he sealed my lips.

TAM. But canst thou tell me nothing?

—Why unfold

So much, if I must hear no more?

HAD.

You bade

Explain my words, almost reproached me, sweet,

For what by accident escaped me.

TAM.

Ah!

A little—something tell me,—sure, not all

Were words inhibited.

HAD.

Then, promise never,

Never to utter of this conference

A breath to mortal.

TAM.

Solemnly, I vow.

HAD. Even then, 't is little I can say, compared

With all the marvels he related.

TAM. I'm breathless.—Tell me how they sinn'd. Come, how fell.

HAD. Their Prince involved them in his ruin.

TAM. What black offence on his devoted head

Drew such dire punishment?

HAD. The wish to be
As the All-Perfect.

TAM. Arrogating that
Peculiar to his Maker!—awful crime!
But what their doom? their place of
punishment?

HAD. Above, about, beneath; earth,
sea, and air;
Their habitations various as their
minds,
Employments, and desires.

TAM. But are they round us, Hadad?
—not confined
In penal chains and darkness?

HAD. So he said;
And so your holy books infer. What
saith
Your Prophet? what the Prince of Uz?

TAM. I shudder,
Lest some dark Minister be near us
now.

HAD. You wrong them. They are
bright Intelligences,
Robbed of some native splendor, and
cast down,

'Tis true, from Heaven; but not de-
formed, and foul,

Revengeful, malice-working Fiends, as
fools

Suppose. They dwell, like Princes, in
the clouds;

Sun their bright pinions in the middle
sky;

Or arch their palaces beneath the hills,
With stones inestimable studded so.

That sun or stars were useless there.

TAM.

Good heavens!

HAD. He bade me look on rugged
Caucasus,
Crag piled on crag beyond the utmost
ken

Naked, and wild, as if creation's ruins
Were heaped in one immeasurable chain
Of barren mountains, beaten by the
storms

Of everlasting winter. But within
Are glorious palaces, and domes of
light,

Irradiate halls, and crystal colonnades;
Blazing with lustre past the noontide
beam,

Or, with a milder beauty, mimicking
The mystic signs of changeful Maz-
zaroath.

TAM. Unheard of wonders!

HAD. There they dwell, and muse,
And wander; beings beautiful, immor-
tal,
Minds vast as heaven, capacious as the
sky;
Whose thoughts connect past, present,
and to come,
And glow with light intense, imperish-
able.
So in the sparry chambers of the Sea
And Air-Pavilions, upper Tabernacles,
They study Nature's secrets, and enjoy
No poor dominion.

TAM. Are they beautiful,
And powerful far beyond the human
race?

HAD. Man's feeble heart cannot con-
ceive it. When
The Sage described them, fiery elo-
quence
Broke from his lips, his bosom heaved,
his eyes
Grew bright and mystical; movèd by
the theme,
Like one who feels a deity within.

TAM. Wondrous!—What intercourse
have they with men?

HAD. Sometimes they deign to inter-
mix with man
But oft with woman.

TAM. Ha! with woman?

HAD. She
Attracts them with her gentler virtues,
soft,
And beautiful, and heavenly, like them-
selves.
They have been known to love her with
a passion
Stronger than human.

TAM. That surpasses all
You yet have told me.

HAD. This the sage affirms;
And Moses, darkly.

TAM. How do they appear?—
How love?—

HAD. Sometimes 't is spiritual, signi-
fied
By beatific dreams, or more distinct
And glorious apparation.—They *have*
stooped
To animate a human form, and love
Like mortals.

TAM. Frightful to be so beloved!—
Frightful! who could endure the horrid
thought?

HAD. (*After a pause.*) But why con-
demn
A spirit's love? so high,
So glorious, if he haply deigned?—

TAM. Forswear
My Maker! love a Demon!

HAD. No—Oh, no,—
My thoughts but wandered—Oft, alas!
they wander.

TAM. Why dost thou speak so sadly
now?—And lo!
Thine eyes are fixed again upon Arc-
turus.
Thus ever, when thy drooping spirits
ebb,
Thou gazest on that star. Hath it the
power
To cause or cure thy melancholy
mood?—

(*He appears lost in thought.*)
Tell me,—ascrib'st thou influence to the
stars?

HAD. (*Starting.*) The stars!—What
know'st thou of the stars?

TAM. I know that they were made to
rule the night.

HAD. Like palace lamps! Thou echo-
est well thy grandsire!—
Woman! The stars are living, glorious,
Amazing, infinite!

TAM. Speak not so wildly.
I know them numberless, resplendent,
set
As symbols of the countless, countless
years
That make eternity.

HAD. Thou speak'st the word—
O, had ye provcd—like those Great
Sufferers,—

Shot, once for all, the gulf,—felt myri-
 ad ages
 Only the prelude,—could ye scan the
 void
 With eyes as searching as its tor-
 ments,—
 Then—then—mightst thou pronounce
 it feelingly!

TAM. What ails thee, Hadad?—Draw
 me not so close.

HAD. Tamar! I need thy love—more
 than thy love—

TAM. Thy cheek is wet with tears—
 Nay, let us part—

'T is late. I cannot, must not linger.—
 (*Breaks from him, and exit.*)

HAD. Loved and abhorred!—Still, still
 accursed!—

[*He paces, twice or thrice, up and
 down with passionate gestures; then
 turns his face to the sky, and stands a
 moment in silence.*]

O! where,
 In the illimitable space, in what
 Profound of untried misery, when all
 His words, his rolling orbs of light,
 that fill
 With life and beauty yonder infinite,
 Their radiant journey run, forever set,
 Where, where, in what abyss shall I be
 groaning? (*Exit.*)

JAMES ABRAHAM HILLHOUSE
 (1789-1841).

ELIJAH



ELIJAH

THE ARGUMENT.

ZEPHON, one of the Sons of the Prophets, to whom the caves of Mount Carmel afforded a refuge from the persecutions of Queen Jezebel, is joined upon the top of the mountain by Obadiah, King Ahab's pious steward, or more properly, major-domo, who narrates to him Elijah's challenge to the priests of Baal to meet him upon that spot for a solemn trial or ordeal by fire.

The procession enters. Chorus of Virgins of the Sun. The heralds announce the object of the convocation. While the altar is being constructed and other preparations made, the king proposes an argument between Elijah the prophet, and Amaziah, the priest of Baal, to which the latter reluctantly submits. Amaziah descants on the antiquity of the worship of the Sun, and its time-honored traditions. Elijah goes back to the birth of time and the creation of the sun by Jehovah. He alludes to his obeying the command of Joshua. He answers objections from the destruction of the Canaanitish nations. Hiel, the Bethelite, an infidel, explains the myth of Adonis by the sun's return from winter to spring. Queen Jezebel interposes, extolling Sidon and other heathen capitals, for their improvement in taste, the arts, commerce, architecture, and the products of the loom, contrasted with the rudeness of the Hebrews. Elijah shows the superior value of truth and virtue. Maachah, the king's mother, upbraids the prophet with his severity. Ithobal, priest of the grove, the queen's chaplain, advises him to leave the vicinity of the court, and repair to the more congenial atmosphere of Judah. The prophet protests his willingness to en-

sure martyrdom for his religion. The king abruptly closes the debate.

Chorus of priests of the Sun. In proportion as the day wears away without any answer by fire, their behavior grows frantic. Elijah taunts them with bitter irony. They become incensed, and Amaziah charges his presence as the obstacle to their success. He insists that the offended deity can be propitiated only by a human sacrifice, and demands the surrender of Elijah for the purpose. A great tumult ensues. Ahab protects him, and orders that the prophet offer sacrifice in his turn.

Elijah builds an altar, and drenches it with water. He prays. Fire descends from heaven, and consumes the sacrifice. The people, affected by the miracle, applaud, and vow their homage to Jehovah.

Elijah orders the slaying of the priests of Baal at the river Kishon.

The poem concludes with a grand chorus of the sons of the prophets.

THE PERSONS.

ELIJAH, The Tishbite, the Hebrew prophet.

ZEPHON, one of the sons of the prophets.

OBADIAH, King Ahab's steward, or governor of his house.

AHAB, king of Israel.

HIEL, the Bethelite.

AMAZIAH, priest of Baal or the Sun.

ITHOBAL, priest of the Grove.

MELZAR, chief astrologer.

ZABDIEL, a Hebrew.

HEZRON, a Hebrew.

MARSHAL and assistants.

JEZEBEL, queen of Israel.

MAACHAH, mother of Ahab.
 CHORUS of priests of Baal or the Sun.
 CHORUS of Virgins of the Sun.
 CHORUS of the Sons of the Prophets.
 HEBREWS, SIDONIANS, &c.

The *Scene* is the summit of Mount Carmel, looking to the sea. The *Time*, from morning till evening.

ZEPHON, *alone*.

SOFTLY the sunrise stealeth o'er the sea,
 The many twinkling, many sounding sea.
 Its earliest kiss the snows of Hermon
 caught,
 Suffused with virgin blushes; down it
 leaped
 From peak to sparkling peak, with frolic
 haste,
 O'er gloomy gorges and o'er rough
 ravines,
 O'er dewy tamarisk slopes and broomy
 vales,
 O'er pastoral plains, and dream-em-
 bosomed lakes,
 Flooding with equal glory town and
 tower.
 The shadow of the headland, that had
 stretched
 Its giant bulk athwart the ample bay,
 Shrinks back affrighted to the moun-
 tain's foot;
 While o'er his level floor glad Ocean
 lays
 A regal pathway, paved with flakes of
 gold.
 Swift to the west the laughing Splendor
 flies,
 To pash out the weak moon and pallid
 stars,
 And strip the purple from discrownéd
 Night.
 So spreads a smile from Childhood's
 happy lips,
 Beams in the eye, and dimples in the
 cheek,
 Till every feature shows the genial joy.

No cloud doth fleck the sky, nor ruf-
 fling breeze
 Winnoweth wantonly the delicate spray.
 The lazy shallops in the roadstead doze,
 With blistered decks, and canvas idly
 furled.

The white-laced surf runs creaming up
 the beach,
 Toying around the fisher's naked feet.
 The solid sea, smooth to th' horizon's
 rim,
 Seems a broad shield of gray and bur-
 nished steel,
 Whereon Day's champion, rioting in
 strength,
 His crest new trimmed, ablaze with
 hornéd light.
 Incessant flings a sheaf of golden darts,
 Shivered as soon, and in a glittering
 shower
 Resilient, as of topaz freshly broke.

Thou changeful, changeless Sea! all
 placid now,
 As Infancy lulled by its cradle-hymn;
 But late we saw thy swirling billows
 huge,
 Lush-green and foam-capt, madly chase
 along,
 And bold the swimmer that would tempt
 thy spleen.
 So sleeps the tiger, with retracted claw,
 And sleek and shining skin. A breath
 provokes,
 Capricious termagant! thy meekness
 feigned.
 Thou battlest with the tempest at its
 top,
 And hurl'st defiance to the thunder-
 cloud.
 Down goes the bark that trusted to thy
 smile,
 With all on board, strewing the ocean-
 floor
 With ingots, jewels, silks of gorgeous
 Ind,
 And costlier treasures earth were poor
 to buy.
 Thou roll'st remorseless, heedless of the
 hopes
 Thy frenzy wrecked. Perfidious, beaute-
 ous Sea!
 We dote like lovers on thy fickle face,
 Morn, noon, and fresh'ning eve, intent
 to spy,
 But chief at glint of day, or rising moon,
 New phases and aspects of loveliness.

The dreamy moan of thy perpetual
 surge,

Mysterious, plaintive, soul-subduing,
low,

Intoning ever in the ear of Time,
Nature's entrancing chorus sweetly
swells.

The Universal Hymn ascends; none
mute;

Birds their shrill treble pipe; the insect
hum

Floats jocund on the liquid air; winds
blow

Their trumpet-blast, or sweep the forest-
harp;

Flowers swing their censers, steaming
with perfume;

The affluent accords still keeping time
Unto thy tidal pulses evermore;

The bending skies drink in the solemn
joy.

Thee, God! the sea, Thee, earth and
heaven praise.

OBADIAH *enters.*

OBADIAH.

Pardon my step abrupt, intruding thus
Upon thy early orisons: I come
Charged with grave tidings for the
prophet's ear.

ZEPHON.

Welcome, thou faithful servant of the
Lord,

Unspotted 'midst the vain, luxurious
court,

My benefactor and protector thou!

Never forgotten is the dreadful day

When the queen's minions, all athirst for
blood,

Against the prophets of the Lord went
forth

To torture and to slay; thy generous
care

At hazard of thine own the life pre-
served

Of full four-score, concealed and fed
within

The dusky covert of old Carmel's caves.

May He, who over sacrifice prefers

Sweet mercy, and provided in the law

For the birds' fledglings, well reward
thy love!

But what contrives our subtle enemy,
Like the autumnal star, baleful as fair?

OBADIAH.

I will narrate in order, from the first.
As late I sought, amid the general
drought,

Some tender meadow for the royal
steeds,

Sudden the holy prophet, stern as wont,
In camlet coarse with leathern girdle
bound,

Coming I know not whence, before me
stood.

Awful he spake, the while, fear-para-
lyzed,

I sank upon my face: "Go, tell thy
lord,

Elijah waits him here!" "Alas!" I
cried,

"What is my fault, that thou shouldst
work me harm?

Of every land the king exacteth oaths
They hold thee not, so covets he thy
head.

Now thou art here, but soon a power
unseen

Shall whirl thee hence, and when the
king shall come,

Nor find thee, me deceiver will he brand,
And in the transports of his rage, will
slay.

Harm not, my lord Elijah! one from
youth

God-fearing, to thy people ever kind."
"Distrust me not," he said, "thou art
secure;

Go tell the king, Elijah waits him here."
I sped my message. Straightway rode
the king,

And found the prophet in the selfsame
spot.

"Troubler of Israel!" he sharply spoke,
"What wouldst thou?" "Not to me be-
longs,"

Replied the man of God, "that keen re-
proach;

'Tis thou and thine should wear it, hav-
ing left

Jehovah's altar for a foreign god.

Hear now my challenge. Bring to Car-
mel's top,

Before assembled Israel, Baal's priests,
And likewise all the prophets of the
grove,

By hundreds reckoned. There our sev-
eral faiths

Put thou to trial, and be that avowed
The faith of Israel, which shall stand
the test.

Who answereth by fire, let him be God."
"I marvel at thy boldness," said the king,
Thou for an outlaw askest much, and
great

The condescension that consents to this.
Be it as thou hast said; but, mark me
well,

Failure doth put in jeopardy thy head."
"So be it," said the seer, "equal the
terms

To both. Safe-conduct next I ask."
"For this occasion sole," replied the
king.

They parted, and the royal mandate
sped.

The vast procession hither tends, and
soon

Their barbarous music will fatigue thine
ear.

With friendly haste I come my lord to
warn

Of subtle secret plots against his life.
Not unobservant have I watched the
arts

Of the queen's sleek and crafty chap-
pellain,

Her favorite, the Sidonian Ithobal.

ZEPHON.

Already see along the mountain side
The long procession upward winds its
way.

First walk the oxen, marked for sacri-
fice,

With gilded horns, and streaming fillets
decked;

The sacred car, of ivory and gold,
With purple canopy, on pillars borne
Of silver, see! by snow-white horses
drawn,

Whose seat no mortal weight presumes
to press.

But tell me, for the court thou knowest
well,

Who are those women, beautiful but
bold,

With open vestures given to the wind?

OBADIAH.

The Virgins of the Sun thou dost per-
ceive,

Trained to the wanton dance and thrill-
ing song.

In cloisters they the sacred wardrobe
tend,

The richly broidered veils and priestly
robes,

And, if belied not, skilled in softer arts.
Behind them throng the round and well-
fed priests,

With thurible and sistrum.

ZEPHON.

Who is their chief?

OBADIAH.

'Tis Amaziah, from the lowest dregs
Upraised, like Jeroboam's vulgar priests;
Of shallow learning, but with brow of
brass.

ZEPHON.

What company is that, with sooty robes
And muffled heads, who seem to march
apart?

OBADIAH.

They the Chemarim are, and theirs the
rites

Due to th' Infernal Powers, whose banef-
ful sway

They humbly deprecate with whine and
howl.

ZEPHON.

And who are those with high and peaked
caps,

And wands all rough with quaint mys-
terious signs?

OBADIAH.

The Casdim they, from far Euphrates'
shore.

'Tis said they read the heavens as a
scroll;

They know the planets five, and the
thrice ten

Celestial watchers, and the figured belt
Whose influences mark the natal hour.

ZEPHON.

Profane and blasphemous their occult
trade!

The meek-eyed stars stoop not to watch
our dust.

OBADIAH.

I marvel much why from the solemn
pomp
The prophets of the grove, full twenty
score,
Are absent. Can it be, the wily queen
Distrusts the issue of this challenge
strange,
And means to screen her favorites from
harm?
Or have they stood upon some jealous
point
Of ceremonious precedency?

ZEPHON.

Explain why they her special favorites
are.

OBADIAH.

Error is various; Truth is ever one;
So many sects. so many jealousies.
To Ashtaroth devoted is her zeal,
The Syrian goddess; in whose shaded
groves
What rites are held, beseems me not to
say.
Samaria's temple-palace doth inclose
A stately fane, where worshipped is the
sun,
Adonis, Baal, Lord of light and heaven,
(Baal-zebub, the Fly-god, better named,) Its
cornices, its statues, censers, wrought
Of flaming gold. In smaller chapels
stand
The symbols of the Starry Host; and
one,
To Heaven's queen sole dedicated, bears
No ornaments but silver. Jezebel,
After Sidonian custom there resorts.
Black was the day that brought her to
our shores,
With her outlandish and seductive ways!

ZEPHON.

Report doth give her charms beyond her
sex.

OBADIAH.

Lithe as the willow, graceful as the
palm

That waves by Elim's wells its plummy
crown.

Nor is she shamed to snatch a grace
from art,

With cunning pigments heightening her
charms,

As roses swimming in a vase of milk.

Most gorgeous her attire, of Sidon's
looms

The daint'est fabrics. Foreign workman-
ship

Alone can answer her fastidious taste.

Not hers the modest and retiring grace

Which in the violet finds its lovely type,

Pure as the dew that fills its blushing
cup,

Sweet as the scent exhaling back to
heaven;

Chief ornament of woman, for whose
loss,

Nor beauty makes amends, nor brilliant
wit.

ZEPHON.

And what her disposition and her mind?

OBADIAH.

Beyond conception subtle and astute.

Such skill she hath in tongues, ambassa-
dors,

Astonished, with interpreters dispense.

Her eye, its own expression taught to
veil,

Looks down into the depths of other
minds,

And reads their secret thought, its own
unread.

She hath withal a soft persuasive voice,
That melts into the ear, and wins as-
sent,

Without or proof or argument, to what
she wills.

Fond of dissembling and intrigue, she
bends

All things to her unscrupulous love of
rule.

Winning her blandishments, but, when
provoked,

No netted tigress more infuriate.

Secure she manages the easy king;

Give him his horses, and his Helbon
wines,

And his Samarian harem, whoso will

May take the irksome toil of govern-
ment.

In state she comes, surrounded by her
guards,
As fits a queen.

ZEPHON.

And hath she tricked our troops
In foreign armor, not the manly steel
Wherewith our valiant fathers glory
gained?
Rounded their beards and hair, the
which our law
Forbids. Upon their stalwart breasts
plate-mail
Of burnished silver flashes in the sun,
Their silver helms with disc and cres-
cent topped.
One hand supports a lance, the other
wields
A circular targe of steel with gold inlaid.

OBADIAH.

Of foreign lineage are they; none but
such
The queen about her person tolerates.
Our Hebrews make not supple courtiers;
stiff
Their necks and knees to ply the fawn-
ing trade.
But we must here arrest discourse, for
see!
Th' impatient crowd are clambering up
the steep,
Clinging to bush and crag, the shortest
paths.
Soon will they stand upon the moun-
tain's top.
Oh, vast assemblage! oh, momentous
day!
God of our fathers! bare thy mighty
arm,
The idol gods confound, and vindicate
Before the world thy worship and thy
name!
Hence! to the hoary prophet let us
haste. [*Exeunt.*]

[*Enter MARSHAL and ASSISTANTS, and
People.*]

MARSHAL.

Quick, marshals! to your posts. The
Circle trace,

Time-honored symbol of the Lord of
Day.

The area clear. Assign to each his
room,
And keep the rabble close without the
lines.

Set up the chair of state and canopy
On yonder knoll. This mountain-height
the air
Somewhat attempers. On the swelter-
ing plain
The heat and dust endurance do defy.
O for a shower, a cool, refreshing
shower!

FIRST ASSISTANT.

Stand back! stand back! what, have ye
no respect?
Room for the king, I say!

SECOND ASSISTANT.

By all the gods,
One might as well beat back the tide at
flood.

MARSHAL.

Hark to the trumpets! Each one to his
place!

[*The procession enters; king AHAB,
the queen, their attendant trains,
and a multitude of people; after-
ward OBADIAH and ZEPHON.*]

ALL.

Long live the king!

SIDONIANS.

And live queen Isabel!

AHAB.

At length the level summit we have
gained
Of Carmel's well-poised mount, garden
of God,
And worthy of the name. Its stony
ribs
Health-breathing pines and lordly oaks
adorn;
The hazy olives turn their linings up

Like silver lamps amid a night of green;
While copses of luxuriant laurel fringe
The rocky dells and sinuous ravines,
Like a bride's tresses. In profusion wild,
Anemone, that reddens in its cup,
In a fine tremble from the zephyr's kiss,
Crisp hyacinth, and modest asphodel,
Lend rarest fragrance to the loitering
breeze.

And what a charming prospect courts
the eye,
Of woods, and plains, and distant moun-
tain-tops!

Lord-steward! as familiar with these
scenes,
Describe the goodly landscape point by
point.

OBADIAH.

Truly familiar to me are these haunts;
For here in boyhood with my bow I
roamed

To hunt the whirring partridge, or to
trap

The stealthy fox that spoiled the early
vines;

And from the crystal brooks oft slaked
my thirst—

Yon crystal brooks that never cease their
flow.

See distant Tabor looming up on high
A verdurous islet in the sere champaign.
There Sirion's range defines our north-
ern bound,

Amana's peak, and Shenir wreathed in
mist,

Where lions prowl, and leopards have
their lair.

Outlined distinct against the glowing
sky,

Lo! Nature's priest, majestic Lebanon,
In cope and mitre of unblemished snow,
Doth scatter dewy benedictions round.
His ancient cedars stand in rev'rent
row,

The Levites of the sylvan sanctuary,
Their solemn psalm uplifting full and
clear

To the responsive trumpets of the
storm.

Southeastward see the long pale line
that marks

The lordly pile near Jezreel newly
built,

In wealth of myrtles, and of vines em-
bowered,
With scarlet glories of pomegranates
graced.

Commanding site, for princes fit retreat!

AHAB.

To round my park, an angle I require
Of the adjacent vineyard, but the churl
Denies the sale. Whom all the gods
confound!

JEZEBEL.

Thou shalt, my lord, possess it; rest at
ease.

A king should find his lightest wishes
law,

Else were the golden round a barren toy.

OBADIAH.

Beneath us undulates the battle-plain
Of Esdraelon; as our fathers tell,
There Barak, like a torrent, from the
height

Of Tabor, rushed impetuous. Not the
strength

Of iron chariots could resist the stroke.
The sword devoured its thousands,
drunk with blood,

And ancient Kishon swept them to the
sea,

Yon westering sea, where Carmel dips
his foot.

The blue expanse melts in the bluer sky
Flecked with the fleets of Tarshish and
of Tyre,

The land of Caphtor, and far Chittim's
isles.

JEZEBEL.

Oh, blesséd, blesséd sea! that laves the
shores

Of my beloved Sidon. When shall I,
My country! see thy tide-kissed walls
again,

Thy piers, thy palaces, thy princely
pomp?

ITHOBAL.

Madam, restrain thy tears, I do im-
plore;

The nobles see this passionate burst ill-
pleased.

JEZEBEL.

Excuse, my lords, my feelings' ardent
gush!
The tears would flow at sight of the
blue waves
That wash my old, beloved, ancestral
halls.
The shell will murmur of its ocean-
home;
The prisoned dove its native wood-notes
trill;
The smitten flint its heart of fire betray.
Nature hath had her due, and I am calm.

AHAB.

Heralds! make proclamation of the
cause
That here convenes us.

HERALD.

Be it known to all,
Our sovereign lord the king, of his good
pleasure,
Doth convocate the tribes upon these
heights,
That solemn ordeal may be made be-
twixt
The two religions, Baal's and Jehovali's.
Three years of drought have turned the
earth to iron,
The heavens to brass. The herbage is
burnt up.
The husbandman, distraught, doth
thrust his knife
Into the veins of his last ox, to quench
his thirst.
That altar, whereupon the fire from
heaven
Shall swift descend, and burn the sac-
rifice,
To be succeeded by refreshing showers
Of copious rain, shall instant be con-
fessed
The altar of the True and Only God.
There bow
The grateful nation, and no other own!
With this condition; whichsoever party
Shall fail, do put in jeopardy their lives
A forfeit and atonement to the God.

AHAB.

Call the Chartummim and Astrologers.
Melzar, are all the auguries auspicious?

MELZAR.

May the king live forever! by the rules
Of divination, freely pecking birds,
The bright sons of the quiver duly
drawn,
Chaldean numbers big with coming fate,
The aspects and conjunctions of the
stars,
There never shone a more auspicious
hour.
Fearless proceed, the issue must be
happy.

MAACHAH.

But where's the vaunting prophet, at
whose call
Kings, priests, and commons crowd
these flinty heights?
Or does he mock us? for, in sooth, no
law
His savage nature owns but his caprice.

HIEL.

Mayhap the holy man hath of his fears
Taken wise counsel, dreading a defeat;
For blusterers, when subjected to the
test,
Oft, like a treacherous bow, do swerve
aside.
Trust me, my lord, he'll hardly show his
face
Or here obtrude his sanctimonious cant.

AHAB.

What saith my steward? for thou first
didst bear
His message. Wilt thou now the surety
be
For his appearance?

OBADIAH.

My most gracious lord,
Misdoubt him not; within that rind
austere
Lie rugged honesty and downright truth.
Averse to rites of worship he loves not,
He but delays till they have been per-
formed.
I'll answer for his presence with my life.

JEZEBEL.

I would your Grace would put him un-
der ban,
And set a price upon his stubborn head.

AHAB.

My queen, what have we now to apprehend
 From a defenceless and unarméd wretch,
 Whose followers have melted all away
 Like snow in Salmon? Not a tongue is found
 To lisp against our fair establishment.
 The fang's extracted.

JEZEBEL.

But the venom's left.

AHAB.

Whence is thine unrelenting enmity?

JEZEBEL.

The presence of reprovers is unwelcome,
 Though from their lips no syllable escape.
 Rude as his shaggy garb his manners are,
 As blunt to queens as to their tiring-maids.

AHAB.

I too dislike him, yet I feel there's good
 'Neath that rough outside. Would he were my friend!
 Marshal! the ceremonies may proceed.

[*An altar is erected. The Virgins of the Sun chant the Hymn of Inauguration. At the close of every strophe, they dance round the altar in a circle.*]

CHORUS OF THE VIRGINS OF THE SUN.

I.

Beat the ground with briskest measure,
 Bound each pulse with liveliest pleasure!
 Merrily the sistrums tinkle,
 Rapidly the white feet twinkle;
 Round and round in mystic ring,
 Choir of planets symboling!
 Joy and rapture rush along
 On the swelling tide of song;
 And with warm exultant strain,
 Greet the Day-god's welcome reign!

II.

Hail th' auspicious moment, hail!
 Over hill and over dale,
 O'er the rivers, o'er the sea,
 Streams the dazzling majesty.
 First the courier of the dawn
 Wakes the lark upon the lawn,
 Till from every feathered throat
 Richest symphonies upfloat;
 And with warm exultant strain,
 Greet the Day-god's welcome reign.

III.

Nor alone the birds and flowers
 Gratulate the rosy hours;
 Busy hands and earnest hearts
 Rouse to act their wonted parts;
 Toils of peasants, cares of kings,
 Traffic with its woven wings;
 All the joyous world's astir,
 Leaping from night's sepulchre;
 And with warm exultant strain,
 Greet the Day-god's welcome reign.

IV.

Weary lid and fevered head,
 Tossing on a sleepless bed;
 Mothers, half with terror wild,
 Bending o'er a moaning child;
 Sentries pacing at their post;
 Sailors off a dangerous coast;
 Frequent turn a longing eye
 To the flushing eastern sky;
 And with warm exultant strain,
 Greet the Day-god's welcome reign.

V.

By the laughing Hours attended,
 Onward moves the pageant splendid;
 Dappled Dawn with diamond dew,
 Sunset pomp of Tyrian hue;
 Spring, with green and tender shoots,
 Autumn, with its luscious fruits;
 Men, who thrive these gifts upon,
 Pour their grateful benison;
 And with warm, exultant strain,
 Greet the Day-god's welcome reign.

ELIJAH enters, with the Sons of the Prophets.

AHAB.

In a good hour thou comest, hoary seer!
 To save thy name from damage, and thy truth;

Already had the whisper gone abroad,
That thou thy cause had yielded by default.

ELIJAH.

My liege! I come to pay the homage due
The ruler of my country, faithless else
To my religion and the holy Law.
Which curse disloyalty. Not mine the
tongue

To sow sedition, or disturb the realm.
The sword and sceptre are from God;
by him
Kings reign and princes judge with
equity,

And likest Him they show, when found
most just.

For magistracy is of God ordained
A social blessing, anarchy and crime
To banish, and the feeble to defend.
Raised to the topmost round of power,
for this

They to the King of kings shall give
account.

No traitor I, no dark conspirator,
Were I admitted to thy counsels, prince!
Thy throne should stand upon a firmer
base,

And thou shouldst be a king indeed, un-
curbed

By priestly malisons and auguries,
That hidden power, o'ershadowing the
throne.

AHAB.

By Tammuz' wounds, I like thy frank-
ness much;

Such speech hath long been strange unto
mine ear.

Thou shalt my prophet be, my chappel-
lain,

Director of the royal conscience, not
An idle sinecure. But to the point:
The tribes are met, the solemn ordeal
waits;

Dost thou not shrink, thy single self
opposed

To overawing numbers?

ELIJAH.

Not alone

Stands the brave champion of a holy
cause;

Greater and more his friends are than
his foes

Fire-chariots of the sky encompass him;
The angels count his every step; the just
And good bend from their heavenly
thrones to give

Their approbation and their sympathy.
And should he fall, his infinite reward
Dies not. The listening ages catch his
name,

And send it onward. Like a trumpet's
blast

Men's hearts to leap within them at the
sound;

Heroic virtue gains new suffrages,
And from the martyr's ashes spring fresh
fires.

Why should I quail? To God I trust my
cause;

Who feareth God can have no meaner
fear.

AHAB.

Ho! Amaziah! 'twere a pleasant thought,
Now that confronted are the chiefest
men

Of these adverse religions, that ye hold,
The whilst the sacrifices are prepared,
An argument to entertain the time.

AMAZIAH.

My lord, O king! 'twould be a compro-
mise

Of dignity, for us to condescend
To argue with schismatics. Only that
Which owns its likely fallibility
Seeks and rejoices in debate, as if
In noise and clamor weakness to con-
ceal.

But our religion needs no argument;
It on prescription, not on reason, stands.
Ours is the old religion, handed down
From hoar antiquity. And who but
knows

That from the earliest times, while
Moses was

A slave in Egypt, nor yet had despoiled
The Emims and Zamzummims of their
lands,

The king Adonis, lord of Light and
Day,

Received the homage of the Syrian
maids.

Before his orient pomp the prostrate
world,

As now, with early reverence, adored.
Ev'n Abraham, their vaunted patriarch,

A Chaldean was, and worshipper of fire.

ELIJAH.

What though a thousand years have
 come and gone,
 Since, from the second cradle of our
 race,
 'Twixt Ararat's twin peaks, the nations
 swarmed,
 And all that time in Error's chains were
 bound?
 What though our ancestors, ere Abram's
 day,
 In Aramæa, blind idolaters,
 Bowed to the Sun or Fire? No lapse
 of time
 Can Error's nature change, or conse-
 crate.
 Error is Error still, nor can be Truth,
 Though one be but the outbirth of an
 hour,
 The other claim the centuries for its
 own.
 Talk we of hoar antiquity? Lead back
 Thy thought to that majestic hour, when
 first
 God into being spake the Earth and
 Heaven.
 Over the vast Eternal Silences
 In Night and Horror veiled, rang forth
 the word,
 "Let there be Light!" and from the
 chaos, Light
 Sprang forth obedient, all the infant
 worlds
 Revealing: while the glorious Sons of
 God;
 Bright morning-stars, in chorus sang
 for joy.
 Then first the sun, a new-made orb, was
 set
 To rule the day, the moon to rule the
 night,
 In peaceful and unwearied ministry,
 Jehovah's will fulfilling for man's good.
 And short the homage stops, that stays
 on them,
 Mere servants without mind or life, nor
 higher
 Rises to the great Hand that lit their
 fires,
 To creatures giving the Creator's due.
 What courtier suing to his gracious
 king,

Lavishes on the scribe his bursting
 thanks,
 And for the royal donor has no praise?

AMAZIAH.

Blank atheism! What! the glorious
 Sun
 Nought but a globe of fire, a vulgar
 lamp,
 For meanest deeds of meanest men de-
 vised!
 Sublimier views are ours; that gorgeous
 orb,
 Upon whose blinding splendors none
 may gaze,
 The palace is of Sovereign Deity,
 His seat and dwelling-place, his flaming
 throne,
 Majestic chariot, whence he guides the
 spheres.
 Not otherwise the Moon, and several
 Stars,
 Showering down radiance from their
 golden urns,
 Are the abodes of gods, of spirits bright,
 Presiding o'er the elements, man's natal
 hour,
 The growth of empires, or their threat-
 ened fall.

ELIJAH.

Not me, rather thyself an atheist deem,
 Who dost the true and only God deny.
 Which of thine idols, wood, or brass, or
 stone,
 Silver or gold, hath made and fashioned
 thee
 And giv'n thee breath? How could they
 aught create,
 Themselves the fragile work of human
 hands,
 Half on a shrine, and half behind the
 hearth?
 My God Creator is of Earth and
 Heaven,
 And all things in them that do live or
 move.
 Where were these mighty gods, these
 sovereign powers,
 With high celestial influences impregn'd,
 When the five kings before great
 Joshua fled?
 "Sun, stand thou still on Gibeon!" he
 cried,

"And stay, thou Moon, o'er Ajalon's
 deep vale!"
 They heard the mandate, and their fer-
 vid wheels
 Arrested in mid-heaven; nor e'er was
 known
 A day so long as that, when at the voice
 Of mortal man the heavens obedient
 stood
 To help him rout their faithful worship-
 pers.
 Strange! they should listen rather to
 their foe,
 Deaf to their votaries' despairing
 prayer!
 These are thy gods, Samaria! put to
 shame
 Before Jehovah, true and only God,
 The God of Gods, the Lord of Hosts,
 Most High.

AMAZIAH.

And canst thou glory in a cruel God,
 Ruthless and partial, giving to the
 sword
 Whole unoffending nations, whose sole
 fault
 Was fighting for their altars and their
 homes
 Against the insults of a foreign horde?
 The patriot's meed, the patriot's wreath,
 be theirs!

ELIJAH.

In holy horror to lift up thine hands
 At thought of cruelty, doth well become
 Those who to devils sacrifice their sons,
 To Canaan's idol-gods their daughters
 dear!
 Now hearken, and thy calumny retract.
 From Egypt fled, asylum Israel sought,
 Molesting no one on their peaceful way,
 Till first themselves assailed by every
 king
 From Zoar unto Zidon, passage free
 Refusing, or opposing them in arms.
 Compelled to self-defence, they drew the
 sword,
 Putting their foes to ignominious rout;
 And thus they won themselves a resting-
 place.
 Claim not the patriot's hallowed name
 or meed.

For wretches stained with deeds of lust
 and blood,
 Who tossed their smiling babes to
 Moloch's fires.
 The land, unable longer to sustain
 Their vile abominations, spued them
 forth;
 A holy God beheld their measure full.
 Has high prerogative, it is, to use
 Famine or earthquake, pestilence or
 sword,
 To sweep profane transgressors from
 the earth.
 Behold the Vale of Siddim scathed with
 fire,
 And sunk beneath the sullen Sea of Salt,
 Whose ruined cities, smothered in their
 lust,
 Attest the justice of avenging heaven.
 And these abominations ye would fain
 Lift to the shrine once more, your dung-
 hill gods
 Seeking to please with rites detestable.
 Repent! and to the bats your idols fling,
 Or robed in vengeance shall the Lord
 unlock
 The armory of heaven. Then shall his
 eye
 Spare not nor pity. Think not it shall
 prove
 A mountain-echo vain. On foreign
 shores
 Exiled and naked, labor-sore and sad,
 The heathen whom you copy, shall you
 serve;
 Already buds the rod of chastisement,
 The web is wove that mantles you with
 shame.
 Oh Israel! oh my country! shun the fate
 Which heaven-daring wickedness in-
 sures;
 O Israel, hear! The Lord thy God is
 ONE!

ZABDIEL, (*aside.*)

His words do stir me like a trumpet's
 sound,
 Waking up long-forgotten memories;
 I learned them standing by my mother's
 knee,
 A happy child of innocence and prayer.

HEZRON, (*aside.*)

It is too true; the land in mourning lies
For crimes at which humanity may weep,
While Modesty conceals her blushing
face.

Like priest, like people! Princes and
the crowd

Follow with greed these base enormities.

HIEL THE BETHELITE.

Why quote the legends that have had
their day,

Long antiquated and exploded quite!
The world is wiser grown, and in these
myths

Of Tammuz, or Osiris, or Adonis,
Of Isis or Astarte, we discern
Profoundest truths of astronomic lore,
Seasons and solstices prefiguring,
'Tis a fair thought with dance and song
to hail

Nature reviving from her wintry trance,
And from her icy fetters joyful freed;
Spring, with its buds and birds, and
breath of balm,

Its blowing flowers, and opulence of
leaves;

A resurrection from the shades of
Death.

But for those Hebrew writings, none
that prize

A name for culture or a liberal mind
Respect their superstitious legends weak
Of worlds made out of nothing, when we
know

Matter must be eternal; and of gods
That plagued th' Egyptians in the wil-
derness.

'Tis the same books denounce a curse
on him

Who would the City of Palm-trees dare
rebuild.

The curse has harmless stood and will;
and I

Am he who will expose it to contempt.

ELIJAH.

Behold! the messenger is on his way
To tell thee the foundation hath been
laid

Now in thy first-born's blood. One after
one

Shall of thy children follow, giving
space

For thought and for repentance, which
if thou

Fail to improve aright, the lofty gates
Shall in thy youngest darling be set up.

JEZEBEL.

'Tis not for me to enter in the lists
Of keen polemics. Theologic war
Suits nor my sex nor taste. Not judg-
ment cold,

But warm instinctive impulse governs
me.

Much more congenial to my woman's
heart,

Than a stern God, in storm and thunder
drest,

Is she who glides, a gentle patroness,
In silver shallop 'mid the island-stars,
The mild Astarte, to our frailties kind,
Full of a mother's sympathy for all.

Sweet mother! Queen of Heaven! be
hers my vows,

The incense, and the monthly offering!
But harsh thy creed, old man! and rude
thy speech,

Rough as the sea, when boisterous
Cadim blows,

Or winds Etesian chafe the billowy
waste.

Unpolished and uncouth thy native
tribes,

Beside the more refined and courtly
realms

Of wise old Egypt, or Assyria grand,
Sidon, the populous mart of all the
world,

Or Tyre, her island-daughter, young
and fair.

There taste is nursed, there elegance
presides;

There art and science all their marvels
show;

There commerce dazzles with her wealth
of wares,

Exquisite products of the wheel and
loom,

Spices, and gems, and royallest of dyes;
The very sands with crystal treasures
teem.

Shrines, temples, stately palaces adorn
Each avenue, and charm the stranger's
eye.

A thousand keels, dripping with foreign
brine,
Borne down with rich freight to the
water's edge,
The harbor throng, luxuriously equipped
With brodered sails and banks of ivory.
How far beyond the base simplicity
Of the half-tutored Hebrews, who can
show
No arts, no commerce, no soul-breath-
ing forms
By master-hands from purest marble
wrought!
Nay, when the only temple that they
boast
Was at vast cost of toil and treasure
reared,
Unequal to the task they stood confest.
Sidonian builders shaped the mighty
pile,
Sidonian skill the cedars carved, and
hewed
Column and cornice from the stubborn
stone.
Say, which the better creed, most worthy
heaven,
Which most embellishes and brightens
life?

ELIJAH.

What are the vaunted miracles of art,
The sumptuous colonnade, the sculp-
tured pomp,
The thrift of trade, the niceties of taste,
The sophist's swelling words, the harp's
sweet tones,
What to the welfare of a deathless soul!
A soul in ruins! an immortal mind,
By error led astray, and kindred vice,
Fall'n like a star from heaven; its glory-
robes
Besmirched and sullied in the mire of
sin!
Better to starve in honest rags, than roll
A pampered wanton, to the shades of
death;
Better the uncouth peasant, rude in
speech,
Who knows the true God and him know-
ing loves,
Than the proud prince who bows to
idols false,
And as he bows, proclaims his deeper
shame.

With pen of iron and point of diamond
writ,
The Truth of God defies the tooth of
Time,
Imperishable 'mid the world's wild
wreck,
When Noph and Nineveh shall buried
be.
And thou, gay, godless Sidon, drunk
with wealth,
Thy revenue the harvest of the sea;
Thou that the people of the Lord dost
scorn,
And tempt them with thy vile idolatries;
The sword without, and pestilence
within,
Shall lay thy princes low; the captive
yoke
Shall gall thy neck; deserted and de-
cayed,
Thy silt-choked harbor and thy beg-
gared site
Shall to the far-off ages loud proclaim,
Who God dishonor, shall dishonored be.
Howl, haughty Tyre! thy glory taketh
wing;
Prepare the sackcloth and the ashes
strew!
I hear the shout of war, the clashing
lance,
The trampling hoof, the hollow-rumbling
wheel,
The tower and rampart thund'ring to
the dust,
And leaving thee a bald and naked rock.
Ye nations, pass the cup of trembling
round,
Nor dare to put it from your vice-worn
lips!

MAACHAH.

Old man! thou art severe; thou hast no
ruth,
No pity in thy soul. Thy veins were
filled
Not from a woman's, but a tiger's
breasts.

ELIJAH.

Not so! God knoweth, who shall be my
judge,
'Tis not from native love of savageness,
Nor from delight in pain, that I employ

Warnings and threatenings to deter from
sin.

Not to my sympathy in vain appealed
The widow of Sidonian Zarephath,
Nor none o'er her reviving son more
joyed.

Unfeeling call me not! My heart doth
bleed

To see my people perish for the want
Of thought, like ships upon the breakers
driv'n.

Most willingly, t' avert th' impending
fate,

On mine own head I'd call the thunders
down.

Sole witness for the true religion left,
With bitter tears and groans I cry aloud,
O Israel, hear! The Lord thy God is
ONE!

'Tis thou, O queen! that playest the
cruel part,

For thou thy rightful influence dost
abuse,

To lure thy son to worship Baalim,
Their ruin thus assuring, and his own.

ITHOBAL.

Prophet, forbear! thou touchest delicate
ground;

The sanctity which princes doth environ
Should be preserved inviolate. If thou

Must prophesy of ill, to Judah turn,
Where with congenial bigots thou may'st
herd;

But vent not thy rebukes where courtly
ears,

Fastidious, are to smoother language
used.

ELIJAH.

Truth is the passion of my soul. For
Truth

I'd tread the burning marl, or dare the
rage

Of lions and of leopards, or of men
More fierce than either. Unappalled I'd
stand

Beneath the frown of power, or face the
shock

Of the incensed and surging multitude,
By prejudice and malice hounded on.

Torn be my tortured body limb from
limb,

My martyr heart hiss in the curling
flames,

Ere I the word of God should compro-
mise!

Soon as the Spirit Divine, with hallowed
fire,

Exalting sense and soul, my lips doth
touch,

All meaner objects vanish from my
sight,

Nor thrones nor dungeons dazzle or
confound.

The word put in my mouth I'll speak, if
men

Lend or refuse their ears. Be it that ye
wish

No further parley! Let us to the test.

Less than a miracle will not suffice

This contest to decide. Who answereth
By fire, O Israel! he shall be thy God.

AHAB.

A limping course hath this debate pur-
sued,

Like every other, leaving either side

Just where it found them. As for my
dull brain,

Stunned by these subtleties, sufficeth it
I am th' anointed ruler of this realm.

'Tis my prerogative to legislate

In civil and ecclesiastic things supreme.
With rights of conscience I ne'er inter-
fere,

All as they please may think, but must
conform

To the established worship. Odious
schism

And factious discord I abominate,

Nor license disobedience to the laws.

Go, heralds! bid the holy priests prepare

The gravest rites of their religion now,

And in our dire d'stresses spare no pains

To make the immortal gods propitious
to us.

ELIJAH.

Aye, bid them spare no pains, put forth
their strength,

And summon all th' array of their re-
sources.

How long 'twixt two opinions will ye
halt,

O Israel! as cripples sway about,

Or as a bird that hops from spray to spray,
And settles upon neither? If convinced
Jehovah is the true and only God,
Almighty, all-sufficient, perfect, good,
Give him your homage, pay to him your vows.

If Baal be the true and living God,
Serve Baal; for ye cannot worship both.
Why silent all? and have ye ne'er a word
To answer me, from policy or fear?
Why, see! I, only I, one feeble man,
Am left of all the prophets of the Lord,
While twenty score are ranged on Baal's side;

What have ye then to fear with such vast odds?

Give us two bullocks; and let Baal's priests

Make their selection, dress their sacrifice,

And lay it on the altar; but no fire
Put 'neath the wood, as is their wont to do.

I will the other bullock treat likewise.
Then call ye on your gods; and I will call

Upon the sole name of Jehovah-God.
And let the God who answereth by fire
Be publicly confessed the only God.
Must not the God of Fire his votaries hear?

Is not the element at his command?
Shall it be said, he either lacks the power,

Or else the will, to send the kindling flame?

And lacking either, does he merit homage?

Are ye content?

ALL.

We are; thou hast well said.

HERALD.

The altar's reared, the sacrifice disposed,
They wait but for the royal word.

AHAB.

Proceed.

[*The Priests of Baal march round the altar, singing in chorus, and dancing vehemently at the close of each strophe.*]

CHORUS OF THE PRIESTS OF BAAL.

I.

Dread Lord of heaven, sole source of day,

To whom our constant orisons we pay,
Hear us, great king!

Adoni, hear!

Thee we revere,
Accept our offering.

II.

Behold our blighted fields!

No fruit the olive yields,

No more the land with milk and honey flows;

The pools and fountains fail,

The fainting cattle wail,

Bashan is parched, and faded Sharon's rose.

O vine of Sibmah, mourn!

Upon the ear is borne

No more the shout of merry vintagers;
The presses are all still;

On valley and on hill

No voice of joy the slumbering echo stirs.

III.

Beautiful Water, best gift of the sky,
Cool to the touch, and clear to the eye;
Hidden deep in the shaded well,
Bubbling up from the mossy dell.

Beautiful in the rocky grot,
Where the heats of noontide enter not;
In the dewy pearls that sprinkle the lea,
In the shimmering lake, and the dimpling sea.

Beautiful in the rainbow bright,
Woven of mists and threads of light;
Beautiful in the vernal shower,
Greening the leaf, and tinting the flower.

Beautiful in the sandy waste,
The Eye of the Desert, with palm trees graced;

With frantic joy the caravans cry,
Beautiful Water! best gift of the sky.

Windows of heaven, open again,
Refresh once more the thirsty plain!
Merciful Lord! Thy suppliants spare,
Close not thine ear to a nation's prayer!

iv.

Why do thy quenchless ardors
burn,
Why dost thou our petitions spurn,
Why do thy fire-topt arrows fly
Vengeful athwart the brazen sky?
Thy altars we have not forsaken;
The holy fire
We have not suffered to expire;
And freely hath the choicest of the herd
been taken.

v.

Not thus did Nature mourn,
Disheveled and forlorn,
When in the shady Syrian grove,
The queen of Beauty and of Love,
Her divine and perfect charms
Gave to thy consenting arms,
All nature breathed of happiness;
From their gold-lipped chalices
A thousand flowers sweet odors
shed

To grace thy happy nuptial-bed.
All the dreamy noon was still,
Save the rippling of the rill,
And the doves, with breasts of
snow

Cooing soothingly and low;
Slumberous zephyrs softly sighed,
Kissing myrtles soft replied;
Sifted through the leafy screen
Mellow light fell, golden-green;
All thy faculties entrancing,
Every pulse with rapture dancing;
Thus, in the shady Syrian grove,
The hours were given to thee and
love.

vi.

By those thrilling ecstasies,
By that lunacy of bliss;
By their fond remembrance now
Clothe with smiles once more thy
brow.

Hear us imploring,
See us adoring!

vii.

Recall that day of woe,
When to the chase thou fain wouldst go;
In vain thy queen around thee clung,
In vain prophetic warnings filled her
tongue.

Then met thee, in the forest lone,
The cruel boar of Lebanon;

See his visage grim and dusky,
His bloodshot eye, his horrid tusk!
The slender spear within thine hand
Could not his powerful charge with-
stand;
Rushing like a wintry storm,
He dashed to earth thy lissom form;
And ripping up thy naked side,
Tore a ghastly wound and wide.
So a lily, frail and fair,
Cloven by the ruthless share,
Sudden drops its beauteous head,
Sinking on the turfy bed.

viii.

From that wound thy life's warm
blood
Welled amain in stanchless flood,
Dabbling all thy sunny hair;
Thy body, delicate and fair,
Smooth as rosebud of the spring,
In clotted gore enveloping.
It bathed the wind-flower growing
nigh,
And tinged it with a sanguine dye;
Then, trickling onward to the river,
Incarnadined its waves forever,
And flower and river still retain
The memory of that mournful stain.

ix.

What words the frantic grief can paint
That poor Astarte's bosom rent,
As by that mangled corse she sate,
Utterly disconsolate!
The Syrian maids, with sobs and sighs,
Mingled their deepest sympathies,
Seated like mourners on the ground:
"Tammuz is dead!" the woods,
"Tammuz is dead!" the floods,
"Tammuz is dead!" the rocky hills re-
bound.

x.

Upstarting from her trance of grief,
From heaven the goddess seeks relief,
And all her potent influence yields;
Reluctant Death his victim yields.
Tammuz revives,
He lives, he lives!
Restored to upper air,
Again the joys of life and love to
share.

The Syrian maids
Bid woods and glades

Once more re-echo his beloved name.
And Nile from Byblos learns to celebrate his fame.

XI.

And still, from year to year,
With songs and dances they appear;
And still, from age to age,
All people in thy praise engage;
Whether with flowing hair and foot of gold,
Thou dost the portals of the Dawn unfold,
Or sett'st 'mid gorgeous piles of crimson glory,
All climes and tongues rehearse the pleasing story.

Then hear our prayer!
Lowly we bend,
Deliverance send,
Sweet Tammuz, hear!

XII.

God of day,
Prince of light,
Disperser of clouds,
Scatterer of night;
Adoni great,
Sphered in splendor,
Life of the world,
Our health's defender,
Hear, Baal, hear,
Answer our prayer!

ZABDIEL.

If in vociferation prayer consist,
Or clamor be the test of piety,
Then iron lungs and throats of brass must rate
The chief equipment of superior saints.
Prayer is the quiet breathing of the heart,
The lowly whisper, or the contrite sigh,
Which He who made the heart interprets well;
Only when calm, the lake reflecteth heaven.
See how they toil and sweat, at vast expense
Of nerve and muscle, vaulting in the air,
While "Baal! Baal! Baal!" is their cry,
Repeated o'er and o'er, a thousand times.

HEZRON.

And see, as with a sudden frenzy seized,

They leap upon the altar, and with shouts
And mad contortions, cut with lancets keen
And sacrificial knives, their arms and breasts.

ELIJAH.

Loud and yet louder lift your urgent voice,
And spill the crimson tide, whose stream delights,
Sweeter than incense, your blood-thirsty god!
Louder and louder cry! spare not your breath!
For sprung from mortals, to your god may cleave
Some weaknesses of frail mortality.
Perchance he sleeps; for now 'tis past high noon,
When gods do oft retire to cover up
Their feet, and slumber in some cool recess.
Perchance he tarries in the nether world,
Not having heard the vivifying voice
That terminates his hybernation drear.
Perchance with Ashtaroth he converse holds,
And as he lips his leman, fails to catch
Your feeble supplications. Or, mayhap,
Fond of the chase, again he flies the boar,
And drops again beneath the deadly tusk.
Or, it may be, on Ethiopian hills,
A twelve days' journey gone, he keeps a feast,
And nectar sips 'mid all his jocund troop,
Nor heeds the miseries of mortal men.
Cry, cry aloud! Shout till your throats are hoarse,
For day is waning, and as yet no voice
Nor answering sign gives proof of being heard.

AMAZIAH.

Stop the baldheaded prater's ribald tongue,
Nor longer let him vent his blasphemies!
He hath profaned the awful name, at which
The world adores and trembles. Wizard hoar!

Thy counter-prayers and secret arts prevail

Against a nation's warm devotions.

Here, Here see the fatal cause of this long drought!

No wonder that the angry god withholds His favor, whilst that this blasphemer lives.

We have besieged his throne; with flocks and herds

Incessantly his altar-fires have smoked, And all in vain. Behold the guilty cause! The god demands a human sacrifice, And richer blood, his chiefest enemy's, Must flow, and now, that he may be appeased.

Haste, seize the traitor, bind his aged limbs,

And lay him as a victim on the stone!

ALL.

Down with the wretch! kill him! away with him!

Let not his presence more pollute the earth!

AMAZIAH.

Our royal master sees the people's rage; It swelleth like the sea, nor can be curbed.

Will he not yield consent?

JEZEBEL.

I give my voice, To have this insolent wretch at once cut off.

MAACHAH.

The gloomy bigot! let him die the death.

HIEL.

Aye, crush the reptile, on him stamp the heel, And leave no fragment to all future time.

AHAB.

My lords and ladies! much it irketh me To say ye nay; but I have pledged my word, Safe conduct have engaged. It must be kept.

AMAZIAH.

And suffer vile blasphemers to escape! What rights of faith preserved, or promises,

Can outlaws claim, the enemies avowed Of God and man?

HIEL.

Spare not the sniveling dotard! Smite the conspirator against thy peace, The troubler of the realm!

ITHOBAL.

I thank the gods, For this propitious hour! Thine influence add, O queen! of him thou hatest rid thyself!

JEZEBEL.

Art thou a king, and dost thou yet allow Petty punctilios to restrain thy hands? Kings are above all law; the fountains they

Of honor; in the place of God they stand;

Their doings none may question or gain-say.

AHAB.

My noble lords! the royal word is pledged.

To all my faults I dare not add this crime, Dishonored in the world's eyes and mine own.

And since this trial should approach its close,

And Baal's priests the livelong day have prayed,

It is but just the prophet in his turn Now offer sacrifice; and if so be, No answering sign from heaven be vouchsafed,

As he this convocation first proposed, I to your pleasure will surrender him. Heralds! make room, all needful things provide.

ELIJAH.

Countrymen, Hebrews, Sons of Israel, Of him who, as a prince, had power with God!

If any faithful and devout remain
 In all this concourse, let him hither
 come,
 And build with me an altar to the Lord.
 I charge you by those grand old mem-
 ories
 Which cluster round our nation's history.
 Can you forget the wonders and the
 signs;
 The land of bondage, and the pilgrim
 march;
 The pillared cloud; the separated sea;
 The thundered law, and Sinai in a blaze;
 The manna and the rock; the swollen
 flood
 Of Jordan parted in the midst; the walls
 Of Jericho at seventh circuit fall'n;
 The giant Anakim, the banded kings,
 Vanquished by Israel's victorious arms?
 Can ye forget, O Israel! who nursed
 Your weakness into strength, on eagle-
 wings
 Upbare you, like a mother overwatched
 And to your present greatness led your
 steps?
 Will you forsake Jehovah, Lord of
 Hosts?
 Upon this height, by hands of godly
 men,
 In generations past, an altar rose
 To the true God. Dismantled and broke
 down,
 Ours be it now this ruin to repair.
 Set up twelve stones on which no tool
 hath passed,
 According to the number of the tribes,
 And dig around the base a hollow trench.
 Next pile the wood; the bullock kill and
 flay;
 And all his pieces place upon the wood;
 It is a whole burnt-offering to the Lord.
 Wherefore, to testify his world-wide
 rule,
 I wave the shoulder to the north, whence
 come
 Frost or fair weather, as his breath di-
 rects;
 Unto the south, impregn'd with soften-
 ing winds;
 Unto the east, that hails the rising sun;
 Unto the west, that sees its going down.
 And now, to silence scoffing lips, that
 fain
 Would prate of juggling and collusive
 arts,

Four water-barrels empty on the whole.
 A second time repeat it; and a third;
 Until both altar, sacrifice, and wood,
 Are saturated, and the trench o'erflows.

ZABDIEL.

Oh, how my heart did leap to hear his
 words,
 As though it had with holy fire been
 touched!
 Dost note the slanting shadows? 'Tis
 the hour
 Of evening sacrifice, by the old law
 Appointed.

HEZRON.

True! a strange coincidence!

ZABDIEL.

And dost thou note the man of God his
 face
 Studious averteth from the sun, to teach
 The crowd, the god they worship is not
 his?

HEZRON.

And see! he stretcheth forth his hands
 to pray.
 Believest thou that fire will fall from
 heaven?

ZABDIEL.

If there's a God in Israel, it will.

ELIJAH.

O Thou Most High Jehovah, cov'nant
 God
 Of Holy Abraham, Isaac, Israel!
 The hour hath come for thee to pluck
 thine hand
 From out thy bosom, and to bare thine
 arm
 In sight of all the people. Let them
 know
 That thou art Israel's God, worthy alone
 Of praise and worship, working in the
 heavens
 As pleases thee, and ruling over all.
 Approve me as thy servant, and make
 known
 That all that I have done was at thy
 word,

And not of mine own counsel. Hear me,
 Lord,
 O hear! and answer by a sign of dread.
 As thou didst Aaron, Gideon, David,
 hear;
 That they may know thou art Jehovah-
 God,
 For thy name jealous, yet most merciful.

HEZRON.

See! see! the fire from heaven! from the
 clear sky
 The flash descends—the altar's in a
 blaze—
 The sacrifice is hid in smoke—the wood,
 The stones, the very dust, are all con-
 sumed,
 All melted in one mass of blood-red
 flame—
 Ne'er for such purpose to be used again.
 And see! the water hissing in the trench,
 The fire hath licked it up, to vapor
 turned.

ELIJAH.

Down on your faces, O ye people, fall,
 And own your God! the great Jehovah
 own!

ALL.

Behold a miracle! a miracle!
 Jehovah is the God, the God alone;
 Jehovah is the true and living God.
 No more we worship idols, but our backs
 We turn on Baal, and the Lord adore.

ELIJAH.

Now if ye from your idols truly turn,
 And will be zealous for the Lord of
 Hosts,
 Seize the false priests of Baal, let none
 flee!
 So is it written in the law, "If one,
 Although he be thy bosom-friend, and
 dear
 As thine own soul, should slyly thee en-
 tice
 To follow other gods, thou shalt not
 spare,
 Nor shall thine eye have pity. He shall
 die,
 For that he thrust thee from the Lord
 away
 Who brought thee from the land of
 bondage." Hence!

Away with the idolatrous, foul brood,
 To Kishon's brook, and slay them there.
 The waves
 Shall wash the land forever of this
 plague.

JEZEBEL.

Wilt thou, O king, permit this massacre
 Of a whole priestly tribe, before thine
 eyes?

AHAB.

I cannot interfere. Such was the pact,
 Such the conditions I myself imposed,
 "Failure, to either party fatal proves."

ZEPHON.

It may be weakness, but such bloody
 scenes
 Are to my feelings most repugnant.
 Truth
 Requires not, sure, such questionable
 aids.
 Not words of thunder, nor rebukes of
 fire,
 Not earthquake throes, nor elemental
 war,
 But gentle ministries of patient love,
 Subdue the heart, and melt its flint to
 tears.

OBADIAH.

The fickle people and the court, I know
 Better than those who in seclusion live,
 And premature this exultation deem.
 Sudden reforms, unbased on principle,
 Lack root and permanence. Reaction
 comes;
 The cloud exhales before the first hot
 sun;
 The unfed torrent dies out in the sand;
 Discouragement ensues, despair and fear.
 Stunned by the failure and the total
 wreck,
 Ev'n prophets, for they are but men, may
 yield
 The hopeless cause, and to the desert
 flee.

ELIJAH.

In the faint rustle of the leaves, O
 king!
 I hear the token of returning grace;
 Now get thee up, to thy pavilion hie,
 And with unwonted gladness spread the
 feast.

I give myself to prayer. Thou, Zephon!
 climb
 Yon rising ground, and bring me sure
 report
 What thou discernest on the rough'ning
 sea.
 God of my fathers! let me with thee
 plead;
 Appear for thine own name; thy word
 fulfil;
 Nor leave thy cause to deep reproach
 and shame!

ZEPHON.

No pleasing change I mark: the brazen
 sky
 Glows with unshaded and relentless
 glare.

ELIJAH.

Seven times return again, and watch un-
 tired.
 O gracious King of Heaven! shall the
 bold mocks
 Of heathen scoffers now insult mine ear,
 While they profanely cry, "Where is thy
 God?
 Not for mine honor, Lord! but thy great
 name,
 Reveal thine arm, and teach the godless
 world,
 'Tis Thou alone, not Gentile vanities,
 That rain dost give, from out thy treas-
 ure-cloud.

ZEPHON.

Seven times mine eye hath the far sea-
 line swept,
 Since thou hast here bowed motionless,
 thine head
 Deep-buried in thine hands; and now
 at length
 Out of the sea ascends a little cloud
 In form and bigness like a human hand.

ELIJAH.

I thank thee, God of prayer! On rapid
 wing
 Expanding, 'twill o'er canopy the heav-
 ens,
 And burst with sudden and resistless
 force
 In an impetuous deluge on the plain.

My lord, O king! thy chariot prepare,
 That the swift-coming tempest stay thee
 not;
 Whiles that thy servant, girding up his
 loins,
 Will run before thee to thy palace-gate.

Welcome, thrice welcome, to the thirsty
 fields,
 The genial gift of Him who answers
 prayer!
 Praise to the King of Glory! who doth
 give
 Unto his saints a two-edged sword, his
 wrath
 To execute upon the heathen, and to
 bind
 In chains the rebels that oppose his will.
 Sons of the prophets! lead the swelling
 strain,
 For this should be a joyful day to you.

CHORUS OF THE SONS OF THE PROPHETS

I.

Laud, blessing, adoration, are thy right,
 Great King of boundless majesty!
 Thy mantle is the living light;
 Thou fillest heaven's high throne,
 And sway'st the sceptre of the skies
 alone:
 Among the gods none dares to rival
 thee.

II.

Thou madest heaven and earth,
 The hoarse waves echo back thine
 awful name;
 Thou wast, before the mountains had
 their birth,
 Before the pillars of old Nature's
 frame.

III.

The flaming sun
 Thy glory, not his own, reveals;
 As on his swift but silent wheels,
 Along the constellated arch,
 With giant step, and conqueror's
 march,
 He slackens not the rein, until his goal
 be won.

IV.

Rising, setting,
Ne'er forgetting

The place to which he, panting, must
return;

Thy guiding will

He hastens to fulfill,

Which formed him first, and bade his
splendors burn.

V.

The thunder is thy voice; and thine,
O God!

The lightning's terrible beauty, gleaming
far;

When thou dost yoke the whirlwind to
thy car,

And ride upon the wings of storms
abroad.

VI.

O'er the Great Sea resounds the deafen-
ing roar,

The range of Lebanon it rolleth o'er,
And Sirion at its terrific peals.

Flash after flash the forest-depths re-
veals,

Shivers the lofty cedars with its stroke,
And of its foliage strips the giant oak.

Rent is the black and overhanging pall,
And welcome torrents on the valleys

fall.

VII.

What are idols, false and vain?

Lust and blood are in their train;

Sightless eyes and helpless hands;

None his votary understands;

Weak to bless, and weak to ban,

Senseless god, and senseless man!

VIII.

Our God is in the heavens: He guides
The starry paths, the ocean tides;

Nothing too great, nothing too small!

His equal eye is over all;

Dropping with gold the insect's wing,
Or widest empires managing.

The callow raven's cry he hears,

And champion of the poor appears.

IX.

They that persecute the just

Touch the apple of his eye;

His terrors make the' oppressor fly,
And beat the wicked small as dust.

Though hand in hand,

The wicked band,

His people to exterminate;

For Israel's sighs

He will arise,

Their righteous cause to vindicate.

Asunder cut the impious cords,

God of gods, and Lord of lords!

X.

Praise Him in the highest height,

Lucid orbs of quenchless light!

Praise Him in the depths below,

Lightning's flash, and winter's snow!

Praise Him, mountains gray and tall;

Torrents, that in thunder fall!

Birds, whose song the morning wakes;

Beasts, whose roar the forest shakes!

Praise Him, ye of mortal race,

Sharers of his sevenfold grace;

Gifts of mercy, deeds of power,

Witnessed by each grateful hour!

Praise Him, princes on the throne;

Praise Him, tribes of every zone!

Join, O Earth! thy loftiest hymn

To the chant of Cherubim!

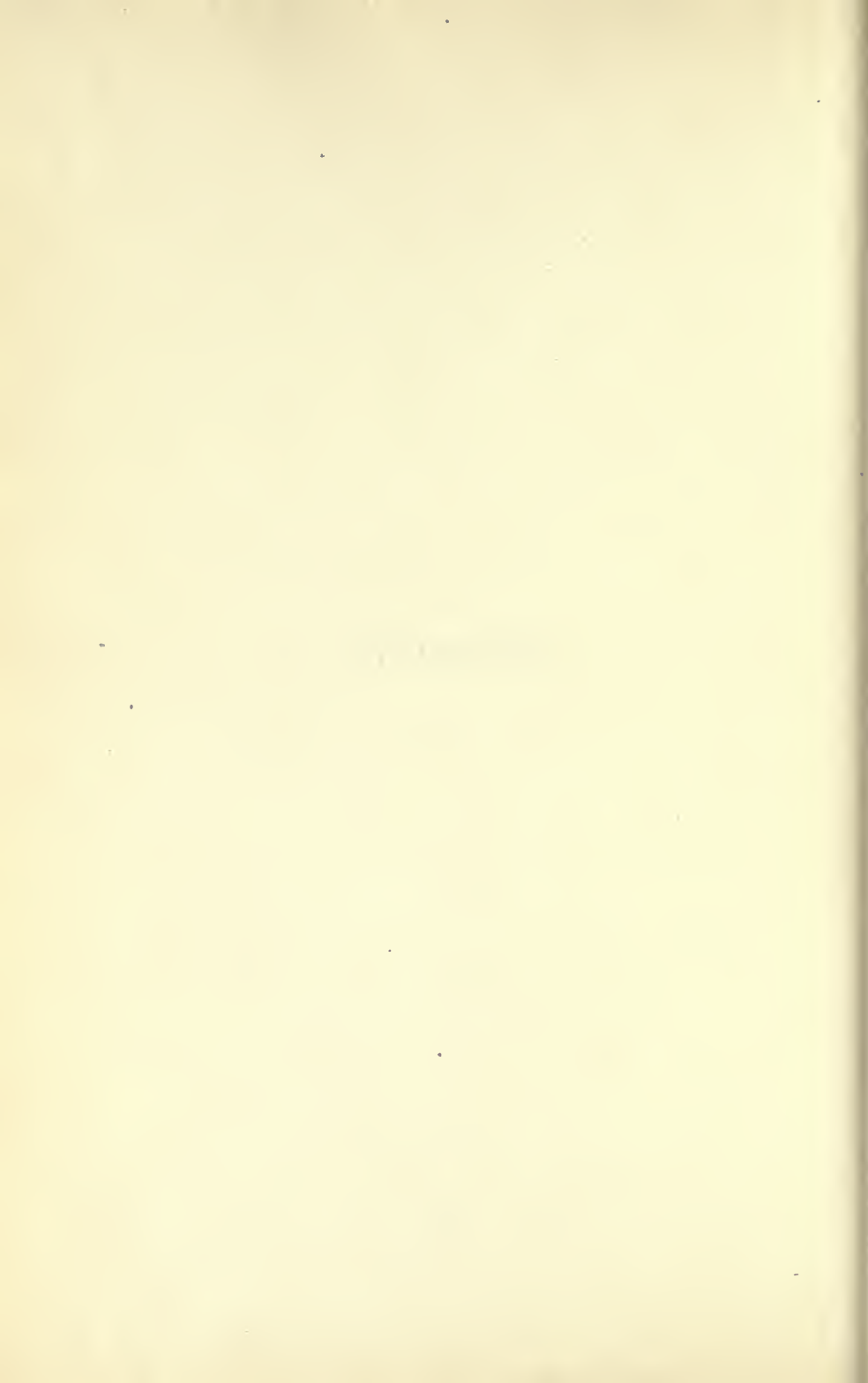
[*Excunt Omnes.*]

ROBERT DAVIDSON

[*Published New York, 1860*]



ATHALIAH



ATHALIAH

CHARACTERS.

JOASH, *King of Judah and Son of Athaliah.*

ATHALIAH, *Widow of Joram, and Grandmother of Joash.*

JEHOSHEBA, *Aunt of Joash, and Wife of the High Priest.*

ZACHARIAH, *Son of Jehoiada and Jehosheba.*

SALOME, *Sister of Zachariah.*

ABNER, *one of the Chief Officers of the Kings of Judah.*

AZARIAH, ISHMAEL, *and the three other Chiefs of the Priests and Levites.*

MATTAN, *an Apostate priest; Chief Priest of Baal.*

NABAL, *confidential Friend of Mattan.*

HAGAR, *an Attendant of Athaliah.*

Band of Priests and Levites.

Attendants of Athaliah.

Nurse of Joash.

Chorus of Young Maidens of the Tribe of Levi.

The scene is laid in the Temple at Jerusalem, in an ante-chamber of the High Priest's dwelling.

ACT I.

SCENE I.

JEHOIADA AND ABNER.

ABNER.

Yea, to the Temple of the Lord I come,
To worship with the solemn rites of old,
To celebrate with thee the famous day
When from the holy mount our Law
was giv'n.

How times are changed! Soon as the
sacred trump

With joyous blast announced this day's
return,

The Temple porticoes, with garlands gay,
Could not contain the crowds of the
devout;

Before the altar all in order due,
Bringing the earliest harvest of their
fields,

Offered those firstfruits to the Lord
of all;

Nor were there priests enough for sac-
rifice.

A woman's will has dared to check these
throngs,

And turn'd the day's bright glory into
gloom.

Scarce dare a few most zealous wor-
shippers

Recall for us some shadow of the past;

The rest are all forgetful of their God,

Or, e'en to Baal's altars flocking now,

In shameful orgies learn to bear their
part,

And curse the Name on which their
fathers call'd.

My soul is troubled,—naught will I
conceal—

Lest Athaliah visit upon thee

Her vengeance, spurn all remnant of
respect,

And tear thee from the altar of the Lord.

JEHOIADA.

Whence comes to thee this presage
dark to-day?

ABNER.

Holy and righteous, how canst thou
escape?

Long has she hated that rare constancy
Which adds new brilliance to thy mitred
brow;

Long has she treated thy religious zeal
As obstinate sedition and revolt.

The shining virtues of thy faithful spouse

Have earned the special hatred of the Queen.
 If Aaron's priesthood has devolved on thee,
 Thy wife is sister to our latest king.
 Mattan moreover, that apostate priest,
 His foul desertion from our altars crowns
 With eager persecution of all good,
 And, worse than Athaliah, spurs her on.
 'Tis not enough that in a foreign garb
 The Levite serves at Baal's altar now,
 This Temple is to him a sore offence,
 And he would fain destroy the God he left.
 No means he leaves untried to ruin thee,
 And undermines with praise no less than blame.
 He feigns for thee a treacherous kindness,
 Masking the blackness of his venom thus.
 Sometimes he prompts the Queen to dread thy power,
 And sometimes, looking to her lust for gold,
 Pretends that somewhere known to thee alone,
 Thou hidest treasures David had amass'd.
 For two days past the proud imperious queen
 Has seem'd as though consumed by baffled spite.
 I saw her yesterday with furious eyes
 Glare at this sacred place, and mark'd her well,
 As if within the Temple's deep recess
 Lurk'd God's avenger arm'd to punish her.
 The more I think thereon, the less I doubt
 On thee her wrath is ready now to burst,
 And that, with all her mother's thirst for blood,
 E'en in His shrines she will defy our God.

JEHOIADA.

He who enchains the fury of the waves
 Knows how to curb the plots of wicked men.
 Submitting humbly to His holy will,
 I fear my God, and know no other fear.
 And yet, I thank thee, Abner, for thy zeal

That o'er my peril keeps a watchful eye.
 I see injustice chafes thine inmost heart,
 Thou art a faithful son of Israel still.
 For that may Heaven be bless'd! But secret wrath
 And passive worth, art thou content with these?
 Is faith sincere, if it declines to act?
 An impious foreigner for eight long years
 Has David's throne usurp'd with all its rights,
 Unpunish'd waded in our princes' blood,
 Foul murderess of the children of her son,
 And e'en against our God has raised her arm.
 And thou, a pillar of this trembling state,
 Bred in the camp of good Jehoshaphat
 Under his son Jehoram in command,
 On whom alone our towns in terror lean'd
 When Ahaziah's unexpected death
 Scatter'd his armies before Jehu's face,
 Say'st thou—"I fear the Lord and own His truth!"
 Lo, by my mouth to thee the Lord replies,—
 "What boots it that thou boast zeal for My Law?
 Thinkest to honor Me by barren vows?
 What fruit have I of all thy sacrifice?
 Need I the blood of heifers and of goats?
 Thy princes' blood cries out, and is not heard.
 Break, break all compact with impiety,
 Root up the crimes amidst My people rife,
 And come and sacrifice thy victims then."

ABNER.

What can I do? The people have lost heart,
 Judah is cow'd, and Benjamin is weak;
 The day that saw their royal line extinct
 Extinguish'd all their ancient valor too.
 The Lord Himself, they say, withdraws from us,
 Tho' once so jealous of His people's praise;
 He sees unmoved their majesty abased,
 And His compassion is at last worn out.
 No more for us His mighty arm outstretch'd

With countless marvels terrifies our
foes;
His Ark is dumb,—utters no oracle.

JEHOIADA.

Yet when did miracles abound as now?
When by more signs has God displayed
His power?

Will ye have always eyes that cannot
see,
Ungrateful people? Shall His mightiest
deeds

Strike on your ears, nor ever move
your hearts?

Say, my dear Abner, must I needs repeat
The wonders brought to pass in these
our days;

The signal fall of Israel's tyrant kings,
And God found faithful to perform His
threats;

Ahab destroyed, and with his blood
defiled

The plot of land which murder had
usurped;

Hard by that fatal field Jezebel slain,
A queen down trampled under horse's
hoofs,

The dogs that licked up her inhuman
blood,

The mangled limbs of her dishonored
corpse;

The troop of lying prophets brought to
shame,

The fire from heav'n that on the altar
fell;

Elijah's voice ruling the elements,
The skies thereby shut up, the earth
like brass,

For three whole years left without rain
or dew;

The dead arising at Elisha's word?
Recall, O Abner, these portentous signs,
God is to-day as He has always been,

He can unfold His glory when He will,
And ever in His mind His people dwell.

ABNER.

But where the promises so often made
To David and to Solomon his son?

Alas! We hoped that from their fruit-
ful stock

Kings were to issue in a numerous
train;

That over every nation, tribe, and tongue
One of their lineage should extend his
sway,

Should everywhere make war and strife
to cease,

And at his footstool see earth's proudest
kings.

JEHOIADA.

And why distrust the promises of
Heaven?

ABNER.

That son of David, where shall he be
found?

Can Heav'n itself restore the living sap
Of that 'dry' tree, now withered at the
root?

'E'en in his cradle Athaliah slew
The babe, and eight years after can he
live?

Ah! might it be her fury missed its aim,
That of our royal blood some drop
escaped—

JEHOIADA.

What would'st thou do?

ABNER.

O happy day for me!
How gladly would I go to meet my
king!

Doubt not that to his feet our eager
tribes,—

But wherefore mock me with these idle
dreams?

Ill-fated heir of our victorious kings,
We had but Ahaziah, with his sons;

By Jehu's darts I saw the father slain,
And thou his sons by his own mother
murdered.

JEHOIADA.

I cannot now explain; but when the sun
Shall the third portion of his course
complete,

Bringing the morning hour that bids to
prayer,

Hither return and with the self-same
zeal.

Then God may prove to thee by gracious
deeds

His word is faithful still, and never fails.

So, for this solemn day I must prepare
And dawn already gilds the temple roof.

ABNER.

What gracious deed is this, to me unknown?

Tow'rd thee Jehosheba directs her steps;
I leave thee, and will join the faithful band

Brought hither by this solemn festival.

SCENE II.

JEHOIADA AND JEHOSEBA.

JEHOIADA.

Princess, the time is come for us to speak,

Thy happy theft can be no longer hid.
The insults of the enemies of God,
Abusing this our silence, have too long
Charged with unfaithfulness His promises.

Nay more; success has animated rage,
And Athaliah would to Baal burn,
E'en in God's courts, incense idolatrous.
Reared in His Temple 'neath the
Almighty's wing,

'Tis ours to show the King thine hands
have saved.

He'll prove himself courageous as his sires,

Already in his wit beyond his age.

Ere I unfold his wondrous destiny,

I offer him to God by Whom kings reign;

Then, gathering straight our Levites and our priests,

I will proclaim their master's long lost heir.

JEHOSEBA.

Knows he his name and noble fortune yet?

JEHOIADA.

He owns no other than Eliakim,

And thinks himself some foundling left to die,

Whom I in pity treated as my son.

JEHOSEBA.

Ah! from what perils I delivered him!
What danger is he now to meet once more!

JEHOIADA.

What! Fails thy faith already in alarm?

JEHOSEBA.

My lord, I yield me to thy counsels wise.
Since first I snatched this precious babe from death,

I placed his welfare in thy careful hands;

Yea, dreading e'en the fervor of my love,

I shun his presence where and when I can,

For fear lest my unguarded heart betray
My secret with the tears I cannot check.

Three days and nights I thought that duty bade

Devote to weeping and impassioned prayer.

Yet may it be allowed me now to ask,
What friends thou hast ready to take thy side?

Abner, brave Abner, will he lend his aid?

Say, has he sworn to stand beside his King?

JEHOIADA.

Abner, though on his faith we may rely,

Knows not as yet that any King is ours.

JEHOSEBA.

Who is to guard young Joash? Wilt thou trust

Obed or Amnon with so high a charge?

My father's kindness they have often proved,—

JEHOIADA.

And sold themselves to Athaliah's will.

JEHOSEBA.

Whom to her hirelings wilt thou then oppose?

JEHOIADA.

Have I not said? Our Levites and our priests.

JEHOSHEBA.

I know that, secretly assembled near,
Their numbers have been doubled by
thy care;

That full of love for thee, horror for
her,

A great oath binds them, ere the trial
come,

To David's heir when he shall be re-
vealed.

But though with loyal ardour they may
burn,

Can they unaided vindicate their king?

Is zeal enough to cope with such a task?
Doubt not the Queen, when the first
rumour spreads

Of Ahaziah's son in hiding here,
Will gather all her savage troops around,

Besiege the Temple, and break down
its gates.

Against such foes will sanctity avail,
And holy hands raised to the Lord in
prayer?

Their province is to intercede for guilt,
No blood but that of victims have they
shed;

Joash, perchance, sore wounded in their
arms,—

JEHOIADA.

Countest as naught the God who fights
for us?

God, who protects the orphan's inno-
cence,

And e'en in weakness manifests His
might;

God, who hates tyrants, and in Jezreel
swore

He would root out Ahab and Jezebel;
Who, striking Joram, husband of their
child,

And Joram's son, their family pursued;
Whose threatening arm, though for a
time withheld,

Over that impious race is ever stretched?

JEHOSHEBA.

Yea, 'tis His righteous sentence on
them all—

That makes me tremble for my brother's
son.

Who knows if he, inheriting their guilt,
Was not at birth condemn'd to share
their fate?

Or whether God exempts him from the
curse,

And will for David's sake his pardon
seal?

Ah! his sad state when Heaven gave
him me

Returns each moment to alarm my soul.
With slaughter'd princes was the cham-
ber full;

Dagger in hand, th' inexorable Queen
To bloodshed urged her barbarous sol-
diery,

And eagerly her murderous course pur-
sued!

Young Joash, left for dead, there met
my eyes;

I seem to see his terror-stricken nurse
Still vainly crouching at the assassin's
feet,

His drooping form clasp'd to her feeble
breast.

I took him stain'd with blood. Bathing
his face

My copious tears restored his vanish'd
sense;

And, whether yet with fear or fond
caress,

I felt the pressure of his tender arms.
Great God, forbid my love should be his
bane,

Last relic of the faithful David now.
Bred in Thine House, and taught to
love Thy Law,

He knows no other Father than Thyself.
If, ready to attack a murderous Queen,
Faith falters trembling at the danger
nigh;

If flesh and blood, disquieted this day,
Have shed too many tears, alarm'd for
him;

Heir of Thy holy promise, guard him
well,

And for such weakness punish only me!

JEHOIADA.

Thy tears, Jehosheba, no blame deserve,
But God would have us trust Him as a
Father.

He visits not with blind resentment sins
Of impious ancestors on pious sons.

All that remains of faithful Israel still
 Will come to-day here to renew their
 vows,
 Deep as their reverence for David's race,
 They hold abhorr'd the child of Jezebel;
 Joash will move them with his modest
 grace,
 Seeming to light anew the glorious past;
 And the Lord's Voice, making our cause
 His own,
 Will in His Temple to their hearts
 appeal.
 Two faithless kings in turn have Him
 defied,
 Now must a monarch to the throne be
 raised
 Whose grateful memory shall bless the
 day
 When God by His own priests his rights
 restored,
 Who pluck'd him from th' oblivion of
 the tomb,
 And David's lamp rekindled when put
 out.
 Great God, if Thy foreknowledge sees
 him base,
 Bent to forsake the paths that David
 trod,
 Then let him be like fruit ere ripeness
 pluck'd
 Or flower wither'd by a noisome blast!
 But if this child, obedient to Thy will,
 Is destined to advance Thy wise de-
 signs,
 Now let the rightful heir the sceptre
 sway,
 Give to my feeble hands his pow'rful
 foes,
 And baffle in her plots a cruel Queen.
 Vouchsafe, my God, on Nathan and on
 her
 That spirit of blind foolishness to pour
 Which leads deluded monarchs to their
 fall!
 No more; farewell. Our children with
 them bring
 Maidens, of holiest stock the hallow'd
 seed.

SCENE III.

JEHOSHEBA, ZACHARIAH, SALOME,
 CHORUS.

JEHOSHEBA.

Dear Zachariah, go, nor stay thy steps,
 Accompany thy venerable sire.
 Daughters of Levi, young and faithful
 band,
 Whom with His zeal the Lord already
 fires,
 Who come so often here to share my
 sighs,
 Children, my only joy in griefs pro-
 found;
 These gay festoons and coronets of
 flow'rs
 Once well accorded with our stately
 feasts,
 But now, alas, when shame and sorrow
 reign,
 What offering is more fit than one of
 tears!
 Already do I hear the solemn trump,
 Soon will the Temple doors be opened
 wide,
 While thither I myself prepare to go,
 Sing, praise the God whose presence here
 ye seek.

SCENE IV.

THE CHORUS.

ALL THE CHORUS SINGS.

His glory fills the universe sublime,
 Lift to this God for aye the voice of
 prayer!
 He reign'd supreme before the birth of
 Time;
 Sing of His loving care.

ONE VOICE (*alone*).

Vainly unrighteous force
 Would still His people's praise that
 must have course;
 His Name shall perish ne'er.
 Day tells to day His pow'r, from time
 to time;
 His glory fills the universe sublime;
 Sing of His loving care.

ALL THE CHORUS REPEATS.

His glory fills the universe sublime;
Sing of His loving care.

ONE VOICE (*alone*).

He paints the flow'rs with all their
lovely hues;
The fruit to ripeness grows,
For daily He bestows
The day's warm sunshine, and the
night's cool dews,
Nor does the grateful earth t' o'erpay
the debt refuse.

ANOTHER VOICE.

The sun at His command spreads joy
around,
'Tis from His bounteous hand
its light proceeds;
But in His Law, so pure, so holy found,
We hail His richest gift to
meet our needs.

ANOTHER.

Oh! mount of Sinai, let the memory
stay
Of that for ever great and famous day,
When on thy flaming head,
In clouds conceal'd, the Lord reveal'd
To mortal eyes a ray from His own
glory shed.
Tell us, why glow'd those lightning fires
up there,
Why roll'd the smoke, why peal'd in
troubled air
Thunder and trumpet's blare?
Came He that, back to primal Chaos
hurl'd,
On its foundations of past ages whirl'd,
Came He to shake the world?

ANOTHER.

He came that He to Israel might reveal
Th' immortal lustre of His holy Law;
He came that to their hearts He might
appeal,
To claim their lasting love, based upon
reverent awe.

ALL THE CHORUS.

O Law divine and full of grace!
Justice and goodness all supreme!
What reason and what joy extreme,

Our love and trust in such a God to
place!

ONE VOICE (*alone*).

From slavery's yoke He did our fathers
save,
And for their desert-food sweet manna
gave;
To us He gives His Laws, all gifts
above
Save of Himself; for all He only claims
our love.

THE CHORUS.

Justice and goodness all supreme!

THE SAME VOICE.

For them divided He the waters of the
sea,
From the dry rock He made the tor-
rent stream;
To us He gives His Laws, all gifts
above
Save of Himself, for all He only claims
our love.

THE CHORUS.

O Law divine and full of grace!
What reason, and what joy extreme,
Our love and trust in such a God to
place!

ANOTHER VOICE (*alone*).

You who can only know a servile fear,
Whose thankless souls God's goodness
fails to move;
Does it to you so hard a task appear,
So difficult to love?
Slaves dread the tyrant's lash that
makes them smart,
But children feel a love that binds the
heart;
To share God's lavish bounty you are
fain,
But not to love again!

ALL THE CHORUS.

O Law divine and full of grace!
Justice and goodness all supreme!
What reason and what joy extreme,
Our love and trust in such a God to
place!

ACT II.

SCENE I.

JEHOSHEBA, SALOME, CHORUS.

JEHOSHEBA.

Maidens, it is enough; your songs must
cease;
'Tis time for us to join the public
prayers.
The hour is come to celebrate the feast,
And in our turn before the Lord appear.

SCENE II.

JEHOSHEBA, ZACHARIAH, SALOME AND
CHORUS.

JEHOSHEBA.

What do I see? My son, what brings
thee back?
So pale and breathless, whither dost
thou run?

Mother!
ZACHARIAH.

JEHOSHEBA.
Speak, then!

ZACHARIAH.
The Temple is profaned!

What?
JEHOSHEBA.

ZACHARIAH.
And the altar of the Lord forsaken!

JEHOSHEBA.
I tremble. Quickly tell thy mother all.

ZACHARIAH.
My father, the High Priest, with all
due rites
Presented to the Lord, Who feeds man-
kind,
The first loaves of the harvest we have
reap'd,

And then, while offering with blood-
stain'd hands
The smoking inwards of the victims
slain;
And, standing by his side, Eliakim
Help'd me to serve him, clad in linen
stole;
While with the blood of sacrifice the
priests
Sprinkled the altar and the worshipers;
There rose a tumult, and the people
turn'd,
Sudden astonishment in every eye.
A woman—is to name her blasphemy?—
A woman—it was Athaliah's self.

JEHOSHEBA.

Great Heav'n!

ZACHARIAH.

Within the court reserved for men
This woman enters with uplifted brow,
Yea, and attempts to pass the limit set,
Where none but Levites have a right
to come.
The people fly, all scatter'd in dismay;
My father—ah, what wrath blazed from
his eyes!
Moses to Pharaoh seem'd less terrible,—
"Go, Queen," my father said, "and leave
this place,
Bann'd to thy sex and thine impiety!
Comest to brave the majesty of God?"
And then the Queen, fiercely confronting
him,
Seem'd as in act to utter blasphemies;
I know not if the Angel of the Lord
Appear'd before her with a glittering
sword,
But straight her tongue seem'd frozen
in her mouth
And all her boldness utterly abash'd;
She could not move her eyes, in terror
fix'd
And strange surprise on young Eliakim.

JEHOSHEBA.

What! Did he stand there in her very
sight?

ZACHARIAH.

We both stood gazing on that cruel
Queen,

Stricken with equal horror at our hearts;
But soon the priests encompass'd us
around,
And forced us to withdraw. I came to
thee,
To tell the outrage done; I know no
more.

JEHOSHEBA.

Ah! she would doubtless tear him from
our arms.
E'en at God's altar hunting for her prey.
Perchance, ere now, this child of many
tears—
O God, remember David, see and save!

SALOME.

Who is he, thus to cause your tears to
flow?

ZACHARIAH.

Why should his life be threaten'd? Can
it be?

SALOME.

What can the boy have done to enrage
the Queen?

ZACHARIAH.

What fear they from a helpless orphan
child?

JEHOSHEBA.

She comes! She must not see us, let
us go.

SCENE III.

ATHALIAH, ABNER, HAGAR, ATTENDANTS
OF ATHALIAH.

HAGAR.

Madam, why stay in such a place as this,
Where every sight offends and wounds
thine eye?
Leave to the priests this temple where
they dwell;
Fly from this scene of tumult; and
within
Thy palace, lull each troubled sense to
rest.

ATHALIAH.

I cannot. Thou dost see me vex'd and
weak.
Go thou, send word to Mattan that he
come
With haste: oh! happy still, if by his aid
I find that peace I seek, and seek in vain!
(*She seats herself.*)

SCENE IV.

ATHALIAH, ABNER, ATTENDANTS OF
ATHALIAH.

ABNER.

Madam, forgive me if I dare defend
him,
His zeal should not surprise you. For
the God,
Whom we adore, Himself ordain'd it so,
And gave us charge to guard His altar
well;
The work of sacrifice to Aaron's sons,
And to the Levites place and task
assign'd;
To their descendants strictly He forbade
All fellowship with other deities.
Art thou the wife* and mother of our
kings,
A stranger to our customs on this point?
Dost thou not know our laws? And
must to-day—
But Mattan comes: with him I leave
thee now.

ATHALIAH.

We need thy presence, Abner. Let it
pass,
Jehoiada's presumptuous insolence,
With all that heap of superstitions vain
Which bid you keep your Temple to
yourselves:
A subject far more urgent wakes alarm.
I know that from a child, rear'd in the
camp,
Abner is generous, knowing how to pay
Alike to God and King the debt he owes.
Remain.

* Racine has "fille" (daughter) by an oversight.

SCENE V.

ATHALIAH, ABNER, MATTAN, ATTENDANTS OF ATHALIAH.

MATTAN.

Great Queen, is this a place for thee?
What trouble stirs, what terror chills
thine heart?

What dost thou in the midst of enemies?
Darest thou this unhallowed fane approach?

Hast thou that bitter hatred cast away—

ATHALIAH.

Both of you lend me an attentive ear.
I do not wish now to recall the past,
Nor give account to you for blood I shed:

A sense of duty prompted all my acts.
Nor will I take for judge a hasty crowd;
Whate'er they may presume to spread
abroad,

My vindication Heav'n has made its
care.

My pow'r, establish'd on renown'd success,

Has magnified my name from sea to sea;
Jerusalem enjoys profoundest peace;
The wandering Arab Jordan sees no
more

Ravage his borders with continual raids;
Nor boasts Philistia over Judah now,
And Syria owns me for a sister Queen.

Lastly the traitor, who destroy'd my
House,

And e'en to me thought to extend his
rage,

Jehu, fierce Jehu, in Samaria quails
Before a mighty rival's rapid strokes,
Whom I incited to attack my foe;
And thus th' assassin leaves me mistress
here,

To reap the fruits of policy in peace.

But for some days a gnawing care has
come,

To check the flood of my prosperity.

A dream (why should a dream disquiet
me?)

Preys on my heart, and keeps it ill at
ease;

I try to banish it; it haunts me still.

'Twas deepest night, when horror falls
on man,

My mother Jezebel before me stood,
Richly attired as on the day she died,
Her pride undaunted by misfortune's
touch.

That borrow'd brightness still her features wore,
Which she would paint upon her wither'd
face,

To hide the ravages of ruthless age:

"Tremble," she said, "child worthy of
myself;

O'er thee too triumphs Judah's cruel
God,

And thou must fall into his dreadful
hands,

Whereat I grieve." With these alarming
words,

Her spectre o'er my bed appear'd to
bend;

I stretch'd my hands to clasp her; but I
found

Only a hideous mass of flesh and bones,
Horribly bruised and mangled, dragg'd
thro' mire,

Bleeding and torn, whose limbs the dogs
of prey

Were growling over with devouring
greed.

ABNER.

Great God!

ATHALIAH.

While thus disturb'd, before me rose
The vision of a boy in shining robe,
Such as the Hebrew priests are wont to
wear.

My drooping spirits at his sight revived;
But while my troubled eyes, to peace
restored,

Admired his noble air and modest grace,
I felt the sudden stroke of murderous
steel

Plunged deeply by the traitor in my
breast.

Perhaps to you this dream, so strangely
mix'd,

May seem a work of chance, and I my-
self,

For long ashamed to let my fears prevail,
Referr'd it to a melancholy mood;

But while its memory linger'd in my
soul,

Twice in my sleep I saw that form
again,

Twice the same child before my eyes
appear'd,

Always about to stab me to the heart.

Worn out at last by horror's close
pursuit,

I went to claim Baal's protecting care,
And, kneeling at his altars, find repose.
How strangely fear may sway our
mortal minds!

And instinct seem'd to drive me to these
courts,

To pacify the god whom Jews adore;
I thought that offerings might appease
his wrath,

That this their god might grow more
merciful.

Baal's High Priest, my feebleness for-
give!

I enter'd; and the sacrifice was stay'd,
The people fled, Jehoiada in wrath
Advanced to meet me. As he spake, I
saw

With terror and surprise that self-same
boy

Who haunts me in my dreams. I saw
him there;

His mien the same, the same his linen
stole,

His gait, his eyes, each feature of his
face;

It was himself; beside th' High Priest
he walk'd,

Till quickly they removed him from my
sight.

That is the trouble which detains me
here,

And thereon would I fain consult you
both.

Mattan, what means this omen marvel-
lous?

MATTAN.

Coincidence so strange fills me with
dread.

ATHALIAH.

But, Abner, hast thou seen this fatal
child?

Who is he? What his family, his tribe?

ABNER.

Two children at the altar lend their aid,
One is the High Priest's son, the other
is

To me unknown.

MATTAN.

Why hesitate to act?

Your Majesty must needs secure them
both.

'Tis known how I regard Jehoiada,
Seeking no vengeance for my private
wrongs,

In all my warnings studying to be fair;
But, after all, were this indeed his son,
Would he one moment let the guilty
live?

ABNER.

Of what crime can a child be capable?

MATTAN.

Heav'n show'd him with a dagger in his
hand;

And Heav'n is just and wise, nor works
in vain.

What more dost want?

ABNER.

But, trusting to a dream
Say, would'st thou have us bathe in
infant blood?

Ye know not yet his father nor his
name.

MATTAN.

Enough for fear! I have considered all.
If from illustrious parentage he springs,
His ruin should be hasten'd by his rank;
If fate has placed him in a lot obscure,
What matters it if worthless blood be
spilt?

Must kings keep pace when justice lags
behind?

On promptitude their safety oft depends;
No irksome scruples need their freedom
check;

To be suspected is all one with guilt.

ABNER.

Mattan! Is this the language of a
priest?

Nursed in the lap of war, in carnage
reared,

Stern agent of the vengeful wrath of
Kings,

'Tis I who now must urge misfortune's
plea!

And thou, who owest him a father's
love,

A minister of peace in times of wrath,
Cloaking resentment with pretended zeal
Dost chafe that blood should flow so
tardily!
Thou badest me, Madam, speak my
honest thought:
What, then, is this that moves thy fear
so much?
A dream, a feeble child, whom, it may
be
Too readily thy fancy recognized.

ATHALIAH.

Abner, I will admit I may be wrong,
Heeding too much, perchance, an idle
dream,
More closely then must I behold that
child,
And at my leisure scan his features well.
Let both the boys be brought before me
now.

ABNER.

I fear—

ATHALIAH.

What! Can they fail to grant me this?
What reason could they have to say
me no?
'Twould rouse suspicion. Bid Jehosheba,
Or else her husband bring the children
here;
I can at pleasure use a monarch's tone.
Abner, I tell thee candidly, your priests
Have cause to bless my kindness hither-
to;
I know how far they freely have
discuss'd
My conduct, and abused my sovereign
power;
And yet they live, and yet their temple
stands.
But soon, I feel, the limit may be pass'd.
Jehoiada must curb his savage zeal,
And not provoke my wrath a second
time.
Go.

SCENE VI.

ATHALIAH, MATTAN, ATTENDANTS OF
ATHALIAH.

MATTAN.

I may now at last in freedom speak,
And clearly set the truth before thine
eyes.

A growing monster in this temple lurks;
A tempest threatens, wait not till it
breaks.
Ere daylight Abner with th' High Priest
conferr'd;
Thou knowest well his love for David's
line.
What if Jehoiada should in their ranks
Foist this young child with whom Heav'n
threatens thee,
His son or not—

ATHALIAH.

Thou hast unseal'd mine eyes,
And Heaven's warning vision grows
distinct.
But I would fain be free from every
doubt:
Children will readily betray their
thoughts,
One word will oft disclose some deep
design.
Let me, dear Mattan, see him, question
him.
Go thou, meanwhile, and secret orders
give
That all my Tyrians quickly arm them-
selves.

SCENE VII.

JOASH, ATHALIAH, JEHOSEBA, ZACH-
ARIAH, ABNER, SALOME, TWO LEVITES,
CHORUS, ATTENDANTS OF ATHALIAH.

JEHOSEBA (*to the TWO LEVITES*).

Keep constant watch, ye servants of the
Lord,
Over these children, precious and be-
loved.

ABNER (*to JEHOSEBA*).

Take courage, Princess; they shall be
my charge.

ATHALIAH.

Heav'n's! the more closely I examine
him,—

'Tis he! And horror seizes me again.
(*Pointing to JOASH*).

Wife of Jehoiada, is this thy son?

JEHOSHEBA.
He, Madam?

ATHALIAH.
He.

JEHOSHEBA.
His mother? No, not I.
(*pointing to ZACHARIAH.*)
There is my son.

ATHALIAH (*to JOASH.*)
Who is thy father, child?
Answer, thyself.

JEHOSHEBA.
Heav'n till this very day—

ATHALIAH.
Why in such haste to answer for the
boy?
It is for him to speak.

JEHOSHEBA.
From one so young
What revelation canst thou hope to gain?

ATHALIAH.
The young are innocent; and simple
truth
Their honest frankness knows not to
disguise:
Let him explain all that concerns him-
self.

JEHOSHEBA (*aside*).
Great God, put now Thy wisdom in his
mouth!

ATHALIAH.
What is thy name?

JOASH.
My name's Eliakim.

ATHALIAH.
Thy father?

JOASH.
Fatherless, they say, I am,
Cast since my birth upon the arms of
God;
I never knew my parents, who they
were.

ATHALIAH.
Hast thou no parents?

JOASH.
They abandon'd me.

ATHALIAH.
How? and how long ago?

JOASH.
When I was born.

ATHALIAH.
Where is thy home? This can at least
be told.

JOASH.
This Temple is my home; none else I
know.

ATHALIAH.
Where wast thou found? Hast thou
been told of that?

JOASH.
'Midst cruel wolves, ready to eat me up.

ATHALIAH.
Who placed thee in this temple?

JOASH.
One unknown,
She gave no name, nor was she seen
again.

ATHALIAH.
Whose guardian hands preserved thine
infant years?

JOASH.
When did God e'er neglect His children's
needs?
The feather'd nestlings He provides
with food,
And o'er all nature spreads His bounty
wide.
Daily I pray; and with a Father's care
He feeds me from the sacred offerings.

ATHALIAH.
New wonder comes to trouble and
perplex!

The sweetness of his voice, his infant
 grace
 Unconsciously make enmity give way
 To—can it be compassion that I feel?

ABNER.

Madam, is this thy dreaded enemy?
 'Tis evident thy dreams have played
 thee false;
 Unless thy pity, which now seems to
 vex,
 Should be the fatal blow that terrified.

ATHALIAH (to JOASH and JEHOSEBA).

Why are ye leaving?

JEHOSEBA.

Thou hast heard his tale:
 His presence longer might be trouble-
 some.

ATHALIAH (to JOASH).

Nay, child, come back. What dost thou
 all the day?

JOASH.

I worship God, and hear His Law ex-
 plain'd;
 His holy volume I am taught to read,
 And now to write it has my hand begun.

ATHALIAH.

What says that Law?

JOASH.

That God requires our love,
 Avenges, soon or late, His Name blas-
 phemed,
 Is the protector of the fatherless,
 Resists the proud, the murderer pun-
 ishes.

ATHALIAH.

I understand. But all within these walls,
 How are they occupied?

JOASH.

In praising God.

ATHALIAH.

Does God claim constant service here
 and prayer?

JOASH.

All else is banish'd from His holy courts.

ATHALIAH.

What pleasures hast thou?

JOASH.

Where God's altar stands,
 I sometimes help th' High Priest to
 offer salt
 Or incense, hear His lofty praises sung,
 And see His stately ritual perform'd.

ATHALIAH.

What! Hast thou pastime none more
 sweet than that?
 Sad lot for one so young; but come
 with me,
 And see my palace and my splendor
 there.

JOASH.

God's goodness then would from my
 memory fade.

ATHALIAH.

I would not force thee to forget Him,
 child.

JOASH.

Thou dost not pray to Him.

ATHALIAH.

But thou shalt pray.

JOASH.

There I should hear another's name in-
 voked.

ATHALIAH.

I serve my god: and thou shalt worship
 thine.

There are two powerful gods.

JOASH.

Thou must fear mine;
 He only is the Lord, and thine is naught.

ATHALIAH.

Pleasures untold will I provide for thee.

JOASH.

The happiness of sinners melts away.

ATHALIAH.

Of sinners, who are they?

JEHOSHEBA.

Madam, excuse

A child—

ATHALIAH.

I like to see how ye have taught him;
And thou hast pleased me well, Eliakim,
Being, and that past doubt, no common
child.

See thou, I am a queen, and have no
heir;

Forsake this humble service, doff this
garb,

And I will let thee share in all my
wealth;

Make trial of my promise from this day;
Beside me at my table, everywhere,

Thou shalt receive the treatment of a
son.

JOASH.

A son!

ATHALIAH.

Yes, speak.

JOASH.

And such a Father leave

For—

ATHALIAH.

Well, what?

JOASH.

Such a mother as thyself!

ATHALIAH (*to* JEHOSHEBA).

His memory is good; in all he says
I recognize the lessons ye have given.
Yes, this is how, corrupting guileless
youth,

Ye both improve the freedom ye enjoy,
Inciting them to hatred and wild rage,
Until they shudder but to hear my name.

JEHOSHEBA.

Can our misfortunes be conceal'd from
them?

All the world knows them; are they not
thy boast?

ATHALIAH.

Yea; with just wrath, that I am proud
to own,

My parents on my offspring I avenged.
Could I see sire* and brother massacred,
My mother from the palace roof cast
down,

And the same day beheaded all at once
(Oh, horror!) fourscore † princes of the
blood:

And all to avenge a pack of prophets
slain,

Whose dangerous frenzies Jezebel had
curb'd.

Have queens no hearts, daughters no
filial love,

That I should act the coward and the
slave,

Too pitiful to cope with savages,
By rendering death for death, and blow
for blow?

David's posterity from me received
Treatment no worse than had my father's
sons!

Where should I be to-day, had I not
quell'd

All weakness and a mother's tenderness,
Had not this hand of mine like water
shed

My own heart's blood, and boldly check'd
your plots?

Your god has vow'd implacable revenge;
Snapt is the link between thine house
and mine,

David and all his offspring I abhor,
Tho' born of mine own blood I own
them not.

JEHOSHEBA.

Thy plans have prospered. Let God see,
and judge!

ATHALIAH.

Your god, forsooth, your only refuge
left,

What will become of his predictions
now?

Let him present you with that promised
King,

That Son of David, waited for so long,—
We meet again. Farewell. I go content.
I wished to see, and I have seen.

* *Ahab was in reality mortally wounded
at the battle of Ramoth-Gilead.*
(*I Kings xxiii: 34.*)

† *Seventy, according to II Kings x, 7.*

ABNER (*to JEHOSEBA*).

The trust
I undertook to keep, I thus resign.

SCENE VIII.

JOASH, JEHOSEBA, ZACHARIAH, SALOME,
JEHOIADA, ABNER, LEVITES, THE
CHORUS.

JEHOSEBA (*to JEHOIADA*).

My lord, did'st hear the Queen's pre-
sumptuous words?

JEHOIADA.

I heard them all, and felt for thee the
while.
These Levites were with me ready to aid
Or perish with you, such was our re-
solve.

(*To JOASH, embracing him.*)

May God watch o'er thee, child, whose
courage bore,
Just now, such noble witness to His
Name.
Thy service, Abner, has been well dis-
charged:
I shall expect thee at th' appointed
hour.
I must return, this impious murderess
Has stain'd my vision, and disturb'd my
prayers;
The very pavement that her feet have
trod
My hands shall sprinkle o'er with cleans-
ing blood.

SCENE IX.

CHORUS.

ONE OF THE MAIDENS FORMING THE
CHORUS.

What star has burst upon our eyes?
What shall this wondrous child become
one day?
Vain pomp and show he dares despise,
Nor lets those charms, where danger
lies,
Lead his young feet from God astray.

ANOTHER VOICE.

While all to Baal's altar flock,
And for the Queen their faith disown,
A child proclaims that Israel's Rock
Is the eternal God alone,
And though this Jezebel may mock,
Elijah's spirit he has shown.

ANOTHER VOICE.

Who will the secret of thy birth explain?
Dear child, some holy prophet lives in
these again!

ANOTHER VOICE.

Thus grew the gentle Samuel of yore,
Beneath the shadow of God's dwelling-
place;
And he became the hope of Israel's race,
To guide and comfort; this be thou and
more!

ANOTHER VOICE.

Oh! blest beyond compare,
The child who knows His love,
Who early hears His voice, and keeps
with care
The teaching he receives from God
above!
Far severed from the world, from birth
endued
With all the gifts of Heaven,
No evil influence has imbued
His innocence with sin's infectious
leaven.

ALL THE CHORUS.

A happy youth he spends,
Whom the Lord teaches, whom the Lord
defends!

THE SAME VOICE (*alone*).

As in sequester'd vale,
Where a clear streamlet flows,
Shelter'd from every stormy gale
Darling of Nature, some young lily
grows.
Far severed from the world, from birth
endued
With all the gifts of Heaven,
No evil influence has imbued
His innocence with sin's infectious
leaven.

ALL THE CHORUS.

Blest more than tongue can tell,
The child whom God inclines to keep
His statutes well!

ONE VOICE (*alone*).

With faltering steps doth dawning Virtue
tread
'Mid countless perils that beset the way;
What hindrances and snares for him are
spread
Who seeks thee, Lord, and fears from
innocence to stray!
Where can Thy saints a shelter find,
With foes in front and foes behind?
Sinners fill all the earth, my God, look
where we may.

ANOTHER VOICE.

Palace and City, David loved so well,
O Mount, where God himself long
deigned to dwell,
What has thy crime that draws down
vengeance been?
What sayest thou, dear Zion, to behold,
Seated where sat thy kings from days of
old,
An impious foreign Queen?

ALL THE CHORUS.

What sayest thou, dear Zion, to behold
An impious foreign Queen,
Seated where sat thy kings from days
of old?

THE SAME VOICE (*continues*).

Where once the Lord was bless'd,
Father and God confess'd
Where David's holy strains so sweet
had been,
What sayest thou, dear Zion, to behold
Cursing thy Name thy kings adored of
old,
Praising her own false gods, an impious
foreign Queen?

ONE VOICE (*alone*).

How often, Lord, how often yet shall we
Against Thee rising up the wicked see?

They with unhallow'd feet Thy courts
defile,
And all who worship Thee as fools
revile.
How often, Lord, how often yet shall we
Against Thee rising up the wicked see?

ANOTHER VOICE.

Ah, what avails, say they, this virtue
stern.
That from sweet Pleasure's voice
Morosely bids you turn?
Your God does naught for you to justify
your choice.

ANOTHER VOICE.

Where Pleasure leads, laughter and song
be ours;
Thus speak those impious throngs:
Care for the future to dull fools belongs,
To passion give the reins, cull the sweet
flow'rs;
Too quickly at the best years take their
flight,
Who knows if he shall see to-morrow's
light?
Let us to-day enjoy life's fragrant
bowers!

ALL THE CHORUS.

Let tears and terrors, Lord, their por-
tion be,
These outcast wretches, who shall never
see
Thy holy city with eternal glory crown'd;
Be ours, on whom Thy beams immortal
shine,
To hymn Thy gifts divine,
Be ours with voice of praise Thy majesty
to sound!

ONE VOICE (*alone*).

Of all their false delights what will
remain
To souls absorb'd therein? As visions
vain,
That vanish with the dawning day,
When they awaken with dismay!
While for the poor Thy table shall be
spread,
Deep shall they drain the cup of judg-
ment dread

That Thou shalt offer to all such as
they,
When Mercy's hour has fled.

ALL THE CHORUS.

O, wakening of dismay
From dream too quickly sped,
From error's dangerous sway!

ACT III.

SCENE I.

MATTAN, NABAL, THE CHORUS.

MATTAN.

Go, damsels: let Jehosheba be told
That Mattan would in private speak with
her.

ONE OF THE MAIDENS OF THE CHORUS.

Mattan! May God in Heav'n confound
his plots!

NABAL.

They all disperse in flight without reply!

MATTAN.

Let us draw near.

SCENE II.

ZACHARIAH, MATTAN, NABAL.

ZACHARIAH.

Rash man, where would'st thou go?
Beware thou do not step beyond this
spot:
This is a dwelling sacred to the priests;
Our laws forbid all common entrance
here.
Whom seekest thou? This solemn day,
my sire
Shuns contact with impure idolatry,
And prostrate now before Jehovah's
shrine,
My mother will not have her pray'r
disturb'd.

MATTAN.

My son, be not distress'd, we will wait
here.

To your illustrious mother I would
speak;
I come charged with a message from
the Queen.

SCENE III.

MATTAN, NABAL.

NABAL.

Their very children ape their insolence!
But what means Athaliah now to do?
Whence springs this indecision in her
plans?
This morn, rebuff'd by that presumptu-
ous priest,
When dreams had warn'd of danger
from a child,
Her mind was to destroy Jehoiada,
And in this temple Baal's altar place,
With thee to serve him; in thy joy I
shared,
Hoping to gain my part in the rich spoil.
What made her change her fickle pur-
pose thus?

MATTAN.

She has not been herself these two days
past.
No more is she the bold, clear sighted
Queen,
With spirit raised above her timid sex,
Whose rapid action overwhelm'd her
foes,
Who knew the value of an instant lost:
Fear and remorse disturb that lofty soul;
She wavers, falters, all the woman now.
Not long ago I fill'd with bitter wrath
Her heart already moved by threats
from Heav'n,
And she, intrusting vengeance to my
care,
Bade me assemble all her guard in
haste;
But whether that young child, before
her brought
(A poor, unhappy foundling, as they
say),
Assuaged the terror that her dream had
caused,
Or seeing in the boy some secret charm,
I find her shaken in her dire resolve,
Postponing vengeance to some future
day;

And fatal strife in all her counsels
reigns.

"I have inquired," said I, "about that
child,

And hear strange boasts of royal an-
cestry,

How to the malcontents, from time to
time,

The High Priest shows him, bids the
Jews expect

In him a second Moses, and supports
His speech with lying oracles." These
words

Made her brow flush. Swiftly the false-
hood work'd.

"Is it for me," she said, "to pine in
doubt?

Let us be rid of this perplexity.

Convey my sentence to Jehosheba:

Soon shall the fire be kindled, and the
sword

Deal slaughter, soon their Temple shall
be razed,

Unless, as hostage for their loyalty,

They yield this child to me."

NABAL.

For one unknown,

Whom chance, may be, has thrown into
their arms,

Will they behold their Temple buried
low—

MATTAN.

Ah! but no mortals have such pride as
they.

Rather than to my hands resign a child,

Whom to his God Jehoiada has vow'd,

He will endure to die the worst of
deaths,

Besides, they manifestly love this child,

And, if I construe right the Queen's
account,

Jehoiada knows more than he will say

Touching his birth. Refusal I foresee,

In any case, with fatal consequence,

The rest be my concern; with fire and
sword

To wipe this odious Temple from my
eyes

Is my last hope.

NABAL.

What prompts so fierce a hate?
Is it consuming zeal for Baal's cause?

Myself a child of Ishmael, as thou
knowest,

I worship neither thine, nor Israel's god.

MATTAN.

Dost think, my friend, that any senseless
zeal

For a dumb idol could my judgment
blind—

A perishable log, that worms destroy

In spite of all my efforts, day by day?
From birth devoted to the God, who

here

Is worship'd, Mattan still might be his
priest,

If but the love of grandeur, thirst for
pow'r,

Could be consistent with his stringent
yoke.

Nabal, I hardly need to thee recall

The quarrel 'tween Jehoiada and me,

When against him I dared the censer's
claim;

They made some stir, my struggle, tears,
despair.

Vanquish'd, I enter'd on a new career,
And bound me, soul and body, to the

court.

By slow degrees I gain'd the ear of
kings,

And soon my voice was deem'd oracular.
Their hearts I studied, flatter'd each

caprice,

And sprinkled flow'rs for them on
danger's brink

Nothing to me was sacred that they
craved,

Measure and weight I alter'd as they
will'd.

As often as Jehoiada's blunt speech

Boldly offended their fastidious ears,

So often I had pow'r and skill to charm;

Concealing from their eyes unpleasant
truths,

Gilding their savage passion with fair
tints.

And lavish more than all of human
blood.

At length was raised by Athaliah's
hands

A temple to the god she introduced.
 Jerusalem with tears the outrage saw;
 The sons of Levi, stricken with alarm,
 Appeal'd to Heaven with indignant cries.
 I only, leading cowards in my train,
 Deserter from their Law, that act ap-
 proved,
 And Baal's priesthood thereby merited.
 Thus made my rival's formidable foe,
 I donn'd the mitre; march'd along, his
 peer.
 Still, I confess, e'en at my glory's height,
 Harass'd by memories of the God I left,
 Some fear remain'd to discompose my
 soul,
 And this it is that fans and feeds my
 rage:
 Happy if, wreaking vengeance on His
 shrine,
 I may reduce His wrath to impotence,
 And amidst ruin, desolation, death,
 Lose my remorse in plentitude of crime!
 Here comes Jehosheba.

SCENE IV.

JEHOSHEBA, MATTAN, NABAL.

MATTAN.

Sent by the Queen
 To bring back peace, and hatred drive
 away,
 Be not surprised that I should thee
 accost,
 Princess, whose gentle spirit comes from
 Heav'n,
 A rumor, which of falsehood I suspect,
 Supports the warning that a dream had
 giv'n,
 Accusing the High Priest of dangerous
 plots,
 And raising in the Queen a storm of ire.
 I wish not here to vaunt my services,
 Knowing Jehoiada to me unjust,
 But good for evil is a due return.
 In short, I come commission'd to speak
 peace.
 Live, keep your feasts without a shade
 of fear.
 For your obedience she but asks a
 pledge—
 (My efforts to dissuade her have been
 vain),
 This orphan, whom she says that she
 has seen.

JEHOSHEBA.

Eliakim?

MATTAN.

Whereat I feel some shame
 On her account, making an idle dream
 Of too much moment. But unless ye
 give
 This child to me forthwith, her mortal
 foes
 Ye prove yourselves. Your answer she
 awaits,
 Impatient.

JEHOSHEBA.

These, then, are her words of peace!

MATTAN.

And can ye for one moment hesitate
 By slight concession such a boon to
 gain?

JEHOSHEBA.

Strange would it be, if Mattan, free of
 guile,
 Could trample down the injustice of his
 heart,
 And, after being of all ill contriver,
 Could be the father of some shade of
 good!

MATTAN.

What is your grievance? Has the
 Queen, in rage,
 Sent to tear Zachariah from your arms?
 He is your son; the other why so dear?
 This fondness, in my turn, surprises me.
 What treasure find ye there of priceless
 worth?
 Has Heav'n in him sent a deliverer?
 Bethink you, your refusal may confirm
 A secret rumor that begins to grow.

JEHOSHEBA.

What rumor?

MATTAN.

That illustrious is his birth,
 And that thy husband hatches some
 grand part
 For him to play.

JEHOSHEBA.

And Mattan, by this tale
That soothes his rage—

MATTAN.

Princess, it is for thee
To disabuse my mind. I know thou
would'st,
As falsehood's ruthless foe, resign thy
life
Sooner than sully thy sincerity.
By the least word that is opposed to
truth.

Hast thou no clue then to this mystery?
Is his birth buried in the deepest night?
Knowest thou not thyself from whom
he sprang?

Whose hands they were that gave him
to thy spouse?

I pause for answer; ready to believe
thee.

Give glory, Princess, to the God thou
servest.

JEHOSHEBA.

Base man, it suits thee well to dare to
name

A God whom thou hast taught men to
blaspheme!

Can such a wretch as thou invoke His
truth,

Thou on the seat of foul corruption
throned,

Where falsehood reigns and spreads its
poison round,

Whose lip with treachery and imposture
teems!

SCENE V.

JEHOIADA, JEHOSHEBA, MATTAN, NABAL.

JEHOIADA.

Where am I? Is this Baal's priest I see?
Does David's daughter with a traitor
talk,

And turn a listening ear? Dost thou
not fear

That 'neath his feet should gape a gulf
profound

And flames forth issuing straight scorch
and consume thee,

Or these walls crush thee falling upon
him?

What would he? Why this bold
effrontery?

Why comes God's foe to taint this holy
air.

MATTAN.

To rail is but to be Jehoiada!
Yet might he well, in reverence for the

Queen,
Show greater prudence, and forbear to
insult

The chosen envoy of her high command.

JEHOIADA.

With what ill-omened tidings art thou
charged?

What dreadful mission brings such mes-
senger?

MATTAN.

Jehosheba has heard the royal will.

JEHOIADA.

Then get thee from my presence, impious
wretch;

Go, and fill up the measure of thy crimes.
Soon will God make thee join the per-
jured crew

Of Dathan, Doeg, and Ahithophel;
The dogs He fed with fallen Jezebel,
Waiting to glut their fury upon thee,
Besiege thy door, all howling for their
prey!

MATTAN (*in confusion*).

Ere the day close—which of us is to be—
'Twill soon be seen—but, Nabal, let
us go.

NABAL.

Where dost thou stray? Is then thy
sense distraught?

There lies thy way.

SCENE VI.

JEHOIADA, JEHOSHEBA.

JEHOSHEBA.

The storm's about to burst:
The angry Queen demands Eliakim.
Already they begin to penetrate

The mystery of his birth and thy designs,
Mattan could all but tell his father's
name.

JEHOIADA.

Who to the traitor can have giv'n a
clue?
Thine agitation may have told too much.

JEHOSHEBA.

I have done all I could to master it:
And yet, believe me, danger presses
close.

Let us reserve this child for happier
times.

While still our wicked foes deliberate,
Ere they come round to tear him from
our arms,

Let me, my lord, hide him a second time:
The gates stand open, and the way is
free.

To wildest deserts must I carry him?
Ready am I. I know a secret path,
By which, without a chance of being
seen,

Crossing the Kedron's torrent with the
lad,

The wilderness I'll gain, where wept of
old

David, in flight from his rebellious son,
And seeking safety from pursuit like us,
I shall fear less for him lions and
bears—

But why reject Jehu's good offices?
Is not the counsel sound that I unfold?
Let us in Jehu's charge this treasure
place,

And one may reach his realm this very
day;

The way that leads to him is short. Nor
starts

The heart of Jehu from compassion's
touch;

The name of David he in honor holds.
Ah! lives there king so cruel and so
hard,

Unless his mother were a Jezebel,
Who would not pity such a suppliant's
cry?

Must not all monarchs make his cause
their own?

JEHOIADA.

What timid counsels, and how boldly
urged!

Canst thou then place thy hopes in
Jehu's aid?

JEHOSHEBA.

Does God forbid all forethought and all
care?

Condemns He not too blind a con-
fidence?

Making mankind fulfill His holy ends,
Is it not God Himself arms Jehu's
hands?

JEHOIADA.

Jehu, whom God in His deep wisdom
chose,

Jehu, on whom I see thy hopes are
based,

Ungratefully forgets His benefits;
Ahab's fierce daughter he has left in

peace,
And follows the vile steps of Israel's
kings,

Keeps up the shrines of Egypt's bestial
god,

And on high places rashly dares to burn
An incense that the Lord our God

abhors.

Jehu too surely lacks the upright heart,
And clean hands, needed to promote His

cause.

No, we must cling to God, and Him
alone.

We must not hide but plainly show the
boy,

With royal diadem around his brow;
I e'en intend to advance the appointed

hour,
Ere Mattan can mature his counterplot.

SCENE VII.

JEHOIADA, JEHOIADA, AZARIAH (*fol-
lowed by the CHORUS, and a
number of LEVITES*).

JEHOIADA.

Well, Azariah, is the Temple closed?

AZARIAH.

I have seen all the gates securely barr'd.

JEHOIADA.

Remain there none but thou and thine allies?

AZARIAH.

Twice have I gone all round the sacred courts,
All have fled hence, nor think they of return,
Scatter'd by panic like a flock of sheep;
The holy tribe are left sole worshipers.
Never, since they escaped from Pharaoh's pow'r,
Has such dismay as this the people seized.

JEHOIADA.

Faint-hearted people, born for slavery,
Bold only against God! Let us pursue
The work we have in hand. But who still keeps
These children in our midst?

ONE OF THE MAIDENS FORMING THE CHORUS.

Could we, my lord,
Sever ourselves from you? No strangers we
Here, in God's House, where ranged
beside thee stand
Our fathers and our brothers.

ANOTHER MAIDEN.

If to avenge
The shame of Israel we lack Jael's pow'r,
Who pierced the temples of God's impious foe,
We may at least for Him our lives lay down;
When for His threaten'd shrine your arms shall fight,
At least our tears may to His throne appeal.

JEHOIADA.

Lo, what avengers of Thy holy cause,
O Wisdom infinite—these priests and babes!
But, Thou supporting, who can make them fall?

Thou canst, at will, recall us from our graves,
Canst wound and heal, canst kill and make alive.

They put no trust in merits of their own,
But in Thy Name, for them so oft invoked,
Thy promise to the holiest of their kings,
This Temple where Thou dost vouchsafe to dwell,
Destined to last long as the sun in Heaven.

Why throbs my heart with holy ecstasy?
Is it God's Spirit thus takes hold of me,
Glows in my breast, speaks, and unseals mine eyes?

Before me spread, dim distant ages rise.
Ye Levites, let your melodies conspire
To fan the flame of inspiration's fire.

THE CHORUS (*singing to the accompaniment of musical instruments*).

Lord, be Thy voice to our dull ears conveyed,
Thy holy message to our hearts be borne,
As to the tender blade
Comes, in the spring, the freshness of the morn!

JEHOIADA.

Ye heavens hear my voice; thou earth give ear:
That the Lord sleeps, no more let Israel fear:
The Lord awakes! Ye sinners, disappear!

(*The music begins again, and JEHOIADA immediately resumes.*)

How has pure gold changed into worthless lead?
What Pontiff's blood is at the altar shed?
Weep, Salem; faithless city, weep in vain!
Thy murderous hands have God's own prophets slain:
Therefore His love for thee hath banish'd been,
Thine incense is to Him a smoke unclean.

Oh, whither are these tender captives led?
 The Lord the queen of cities hath dis-crown'd,
 Cast off her kings, her priests in fetters bound;
 Within her streets no festal throngs are found:
 The Temple falls! high leap the flames with cedar fed!
 Jerusalem, sad spectacle of woe,
 How in one day thy beauty disappears!
 Would that mine eyes might be a fount of tears,
 To weep thine overthrow!

AZARIAH.

Oh, holy shrine!

JEHOSHEBA.

Oh, David!

THE CHORUS.

Lord, restore
 Favor to Thine own Zion, as of yore!
*(The music begins again, and JEHOIADA,
 a moment afterwards, breaks in upon it).*

JEHOIADA.

What new Jerusalem is this draws nigh,
 With beams of light that from the desert shine?
 She bears upon her brow a mark divine:
 Ye peoples, raise your joyous song on high!
 Zion is born anew, far fairer to the eye.
 From every side a gathering crowd I view,
 Children that thine own bosom never knew;
 Jerusalem arise, lift up thine head!
 Thy glory fills with wonder all these kings,
 Each monarch of the earth his homage brings,
 Her mightiest kiss the dust where thou dost tread,
 All press to hail the light around thee shed.
 Blessèd be he whose soul with ardor glows
 To see fair Zion rise!
 Drop down your dews, ye skies,

And let the earth her Saviour now disclose!

JEHOSHEBA.

Ah, whence may we expect a gift so rare,
 If those, from whom that Saviour is to spring—

JEHOIADA.

Prepare, Jehosheba, the royal crown,
 Which David wore upon his sacred brow:

(To the Levites.)

And ye, to arm yourselves, come, follow me
 Where are kept hidden, far from eyes profane,
 That dread array of lances, and of swords,
 Which once were drench'd with proud Philistia's blood,
 And conquering David, full of years and fame,
 Devoted to the Lord who shelter'd him.
 Can we employ them for a nobler use?
 Come; and I will myself distribute them.

SCENE VIII.

SALOME, THE CHORUS.

SALOME.

What fearful scenes, my sisters, must we see!
 These arms, great God, strange sacrifice portend:
 What incense, what firstfruits do they intend
 To offer on Thine altar unto Thee?
 ONE OF THE MAIDENS OF THE CHORUS.
 What sight is this to meet our timid eyes!
 Who would have thought that we should e'er behold
 Forests of spears arise,
 And swords flash forth, where Peace has dwelt from days of old?

ANOTHER.

How comes it that, when danger is at hand,

Our city shows such dull indifference?
How comes it, sisters, that for our
defense
E'en valiant Abner leads no succoring
band?

SALOME.

Ah! In a court that owns no other
laws
Than force and violence,
Who would embrace the inauspicious
cause
Of youthful innocence?
Baseness and blind submission there pro-
vide
High honors that to virtue are denied.

ANOTHER MAIDEN.

When danger and disorder grimly
frown,
For whom thus bring they forth the
consecrated crown?

SALOME.

The Lord hath deign'd to speak
But vainly do we seek
His prophet's utterance to comprehend.
Arms he destructions upon us to wreak?
Or arms He to defend?

ALL THE CHORUS *sings*.

Promise and threat! What may this
mystery be?
What evil and what good in turn fore-
told!
How with such anger can such love
agree?
Who shall the clue unfold?

ONE VOICE (*alone*).

Zion shall perish in devouring flame
And all her beauty shall be overthrown.

ANOTHER VOICE.

Zion's defense is in Jehovah's Name,
His deathless word her sure foundation
stone.

THE FIRST VOICE.

I see her glory sink before mine eyes!

THE SECOND VOICE.

The spreading radiance of her light I
see!

THE FIRST VOICE.

Plunged in the deepest gulf of misery!

THE SECOND VOICE.

Zion uplifts her forehead to the skies!

THE FIRST VOICE.

What ruin!

THE SECOND VOICE.

Endless life to her belongs!

THE FIRST VOICE.

What cries of pain!

THE SECOND VOICE.

Hark to victorious songs!

A THIRD VOICE.

Cease these perplexing thoughts to trace,
God will the mystery solve, we know
not how.

ALL THREE VOICES.

Before His wrath in reverence let us
bow,
And let our hopes His love embrace.

ANOTHER VOICE.

The heart whose love is Thine,
My God, who can disturb its peace?
Thy will supreme its guiding star doth
shine,
With beams that never cease:
What happiness in earth or heav'n can
be
Like peace that keeps in sweet tran-
quillity,
The heart that loveth Thee?

ACT IV.

SCENE I.

JOASH, JEHOSEBA, ZACHARIAH, SALOME,
A LEVITE, THE CHORUS.

SALOME.

With step majestic, by my mother's side,

Comes with my brother young Eliakim.
Sisters, what bear they wrapp'd within
those veils?
What means that sword carried in front
of them?

JEHOSHEBA (*to ZACHARIAH*).

My son, with reverence on this table
place
The awful volume of our holy Law.
And thou, my sweet Eliakim, lay here,
Close to the book of God, this diadem.
Levite, it is Jehoiada's command,
Let David's sword be placed beside his
crown.

JOASH.

Dear Princess, tell me, what new sight
is this?
The sacred scroll, the sword, the diadem?
Since God within His Temple shelter'd
me,
No preparation have I seen like this.

JEHOSHEBA.

Soon will thy wondering doubts be
clear'd, my son.

JOASH.

Try not that diadem upon my brow!
'Tis profanation of the glorious dead!
The King who wore it claims more
reverence.
A poor unhappy child, left for the
bears—

JEHOSHEBA (*trying the crown upon him*).

Let be, my son: thus has it been
enjoined.

JOASH.

But do I hear thee sob? Princess, thy
cheeks
Are wet with tears! What pity touches
thee?
Am I, as Jephthah's daughter was of
old,
To be presented for a sacrifice,
And, by my death, appease the wrath of
God?
A son has naught his Father may not
claim.
Ah, me!

JEHOSHEBA.

Lo, here is one who will declare God's
will
To thee, alone: fear not.
Come, let us go.

SCENE II.

JOASH, JEHOIADA.

JOASH (*running into the High Priest's
arms*).

Father!

JEHOIADA.

My son!

JOASH.

What preparation's here?

JEHOIADA.

'Tis right, my son, that thou should'st
know the truth,
And, sooner than all-others, learn God's
will,
His purpose for His people and for
thee.
Arm thee with courage, and renew thy
faith.
The time is come to prove that fervent
zeal
Which I have cherish'd in thy heart with
care,
And to discharge the debt due to thy
God.
Art thou resolv'd to show a generous
mind?

JOASH.

Yea, ready if He will to give my life.

JEHOIADA.

Oft hast thou heard the story of our
kings;
Dost bear in mind, my son, how strict
the laws
A king must follow, worthy of the
crown?

JOASH.

Wise kings, for thus hath God Himself
declared,

Will not rely on riches and on gold,
But fear the Lord their God, regarding
still
His precepts, and His judgments, and
His laws,
Nor yoke oppressive on their brethren
lay.

JEHOIADA.

But wert thou bound to copy one such
king,
Which would'st thou choose to imitate,
my son?

JOASH.

There seems to me none worthy to
compare
With faithful David, full of love divine.

JEHOIADA.

Thou would'st not follow then the
erring steps
Of faithless Joram and his impious son?

JOASH.

Father!

JEHOIADA.

Proceed, and tell me all thy mind.

JOASH.

Whoso resembles them perish as they!
(JEHOIADA *prostrates himself at his feet.*)

Father, why dost thou kneel before my
face?

JEHOIADA.

I pay thee the respect I owe my King.
Joash, prove worthy of thine ancestor,
Of David.

JOASH.

Am I Joash?

JEHOIADA.

Thou shalt know
How graciously God foil'd the savage
plot
Of Athaliah, saving thee from death,
Already with the dagger in thy breast.
Nor from her fury art thou yet escaped:
With the same eagerness that would
erewhile

Have slain in thee her son's posterity,
Her cruelty is bent on thy destruction,
Nor does a change of name elude pur-
suit.

But 'neath thy standard I have gather'd
here,
Prompt to avenge thee, an obedient
band.

Enter, brave captains of the holy seed,
Honor'd by sacred service in your turns.

SCENE III.

JEHOIADA, JOASH, AZARIAH, ISHMAEL,
AND THE THREE OTHER CHIEFS
OF THE LEVITES.

JEHOIADA (*continues*).

Lo there, the King's avengers 'gainst his
foes!
And there, ye priests, behold your prom-
ised King!

AZARIAH.

Why, 'tis Eliakim!

ISHMAEL.

Is that sweet child—

JEHOIADA.

The rightful heir of Judah's kings, the
last

Of hapless Ahaziah's lineage,
Called by the name of Joash, as ye know.
All Judah, like yourselves, bewail'd the
fate

Of that fair tender flow'r so soon cut
down,
Believing him with all his brethren
slain.

With them he met the traitor's cruel
knife:

But Heaven turn'd aside the mortal
stroke,
Kept in his heart the smouldering spark
of life,

And let my wife, eluding watchful eyes,
Convey him in her bosom, bathed in
blood,

And hide him in the Temple with his
nurse,

I being sole accomplice of her theft.

JOASH.

Ah, how, my father, can I e'er repay
The kindness and the love so freely
giv'n?

JEHOIADA.

The time will come to prove that grati-
tude.
Look then upon your King, your only
hope!
My care has been to keep him for this
hour;
Servants of God, 'tis yours that care to
crown.
The child of Jezebel, the murderess
queen,
Inform'd that Joash lives, will soon be
here,
Opening for him the tomb a second
time,
His death determin'd, though himself
unknown.
Priests, 'tis for you her fury to forestall
And Judah's shameful slavery to end,
Avenge your princes slain, your Law
restore,
Make Benjamin and Judah own their
King.
The enterprise, no doubt, is dangerous,
Attacking a proud queen upon her
throne,
Who rallies to her standard a vast host
Of hardy strangers and of faithless
Jews:
But He who guides and strengthens me
is God.
Think, on this child all Israel's hope
depends.
The wrath of God already marks the
Queen;
Here have I muster'd you, in her despite,
Nor lack ye warlike arms as she believes.
Haste, crown we Joash, and proclaim
him King,
Then, our new Prince's valiant soldiers,
march,
Calling on Him with Whom all victory
lies,
And, waking loyalty in slumbering
hearts,
E'en to her palace track our enemy.
What hearts, so sunk in sloth's inglorious
sleep,

Will not be roused to follow in our
steps,
When in our sacred ranks they see
advance
A King whom God has at His altar fed,
Aaron's successor, and a train of priests
Leading to battle Levi's progeny,
And in those self-same hands, by all
revered,
The arms that David hallow'd to the
Lord?
Our God shall spread His terror o'er
His foes.
Shrink not from bathing you in heathen
blood;
Hew down the Tyrians, yea, and Jacob's
seed.
Are ye not from those famous Levites
sprung
Who, when inconstant Israel wickedly
At Sinai worship'd the Egyptian god,
Their dearest kinsmen slew with right-
eous zeal,
And sanctified their hands in traitors'
blood,
Gaining the honor, by this noble deed,
Of serving at the altars of the Lord?
But I perceive your zeal already fired;
Swear then upon this holy volume, first,
Before this King whom Heav'n restores
to-day,
To live, to fight, yea, or to die for him!

AZARIAH.

Here swear we, for ourselves and
brethren all,
To establish Joash on his father's throne,
Nor, having taken in our hands the
sword,
To lay it down till we have slain his
foes.
If anyone of us should break this vow,
Let him, great God, and let his children
feel
Thy vengeance, from Thine heritage
shut out,
And number'd with the dead disown'd
by Thee!

JEHOIADA.

And thou, my King, wilt thou not swear
to be
Faithful to this eternal Law of God?

JOASH.

How could I ever wish to disobey?

JEHOIADA.

My son—once more to call thee by that name—

Suffer this fondness, and forgive the tears

Prompted by too well founded fears for thee.

Far from the throne, in ignorance brought up

Of all the poisonous charms of royalty,
Thou knowest not th' intoxicating fumes
Of pow'r uncurb'd and flattery's magic spells;

Soon will she whisper that the holiest laws,

Tho' governing the herd, must kings obey;

A monarch owns no bridle but his will;
All else must bow before his majesty;
Subjects are rightly doom'd to toil and tears

And with a rod of iron should be ruled,
For they will crush him if they be not crush'd.

Thus will fresh pitfalls for your feet be dug,

New snares be spread to spoil your innocence,

Till they have made you hate the truth at last,

By painting virtue in repulsive guise.
Alas! our wisest king was led astray.

Swear on this book, before these witnesses,

That God shall be thy first and constant care;

Scourge of the evil, refuge of the good,
That you will judge the poor as God directs;

Rememb'ring how, in simple linen clad,
Thou wast thyself a helpless orphan child.

JOASH.

I promise to observe the Law's commands.

If I forsake Thee, punish me, my God.

JEHOIADA.

I must anoint thee with the holy oil.
Jehosheba, thou mayest show thyself.

SCENE IV.

JOASH, JEHOIADA, JEHOSHEBA, ZACHARIAH,
SALOME, AZARIAH, ISHMAEL,
THE THREE OTHER CHIEFS OF THE
LEVITES, THE CHORUS.

JEHOSHEBA (*embracing JOASH*).

My King, and son of David!

JOASH.

Mother, dear,
My only mother! Zachariah, come,
Embrace thy brother.

JEHOSHEBA (*to ZACHARIAH*).

Kneel before thy king.

(*ZACHARIAH casts himself at the feet of
JOASH.*)

JEHOIADA (*while they embrace one
another*).

My children be united ever thus!

JEHOSHEBA (*to JOASH*).

Thou knowest then whose blood has
giv'n thee life.

JOASH.

And who had robb'd me of it, but for
thee.

JEHOSHEBA.

I then may call thee Joash, thy true
name.

JOASH.

And thee shall Joash never cease to
love.

THE CHORUS.

Why, there is—

JEHOSHEBA.

Joash!

JEHOIADA.

Hear this messenger!

SCENE V.

JOASH, JEHOIADA, JEHOSHEBA, ZACHARIAH, SALOME, AZARIAH, ISHMAEL, THE THREE OTHER CHIEFS OF THE LEVITES, A LEVITE, THE CHORUS.

A LEVITE.

I know not what their impious plan may be,
But everywhere resounds the threatening trump,
And amid standards fires are seen to shine;
The Queen is doubtless mustering her troops;
Already, every way of succor closed,
The sacred mount on which the Temple stands
Insolent Tyrians on all sides invest;
And one of these blasphemers now brings word
That Abner is in chains, so can not help.

JEHOSHEBA (*to* JOASH).

Ah! dearest child, by Heav'n in vain restored,
Alas! for safety I can do no more.
God has forgotten David and his seed!

JEHOIADA (*to* JEHOSHEBA).

Dost thou not fear to draw the wrath divine
Down on thyself, and on the King thou lovest?
And e'en tho' God should snatch him from thine arms,
And will that David's house perish with him,
Art thou not here upon the holy hill,
Where Abraham our father raised his hand
Obediently to slay his blameless son,
Nor murmur'd as he to the altar bound
The fruit of his old age; leaving to God
Fulfillment of His promise, though this son
Held in himself the hope of all his race?
Friends, let us take our several posts:
the side
That looks towards the east let Ishmael guard;
Guard thou the north; thou, west; and
thou the south.

Take heed that no one, with imprudent zeal,
Levite or priest, unmasking my designs,
Burst forth in headlong haste before the time;
Let each, as with one common will inspired,
Wherever placed, till death his post maintain.
Our foes regard you, in their blinded rage,
As timid flocks for slaughter set aside,
And think that ye will scatter in dismay.
Let Azariah on the King attend.

(*To* JOASH.)

Come, precious scion of a vigorous stock,
And with fresh courage thy defenders fill;
Come, don the diadem before their eyes.
And die, if it, must be so, like a King.

(*To* JEHOSHEBA.)

Follow him, Princess.

(*To a* LEVITE.)

Give me thou those arms.

(*To the* CHORUS.)

Offer to God the tears of innocence.

SCENE VI.

SALOME, THE CHORUS.

ALL THE CHORUS *sings*.

Go forth, ye sons of Aaron, go:
Never did cause of greater fame
The spirit of your sires inflame.
Go forth, ye sons of Aaron, go:
'Tis for your God and King this day ye
strike the blow.

ONE VOICE (*alone*).

Hast Thou no shafts in store,
That Justice may let fly?
Art thou the jealous God no more,
No longer God of Vengeance throned
on high?

ANOTHER VOICE.

Where, God of Jacob, is Thy goodness fled?
 With horrors all around us pressing near,
 Have but our sins a voice which Thou canst hear
 Wilt Thou on us no more Thy pardon shed?

ALL THE CHORUS.

Where is Thine ancient lovingkindness fled?

ONE VOICE (*alone*).

'Tis against Thee that in this fray,
 The wicked set the arrow to the bow;
 "Let us destroy His feasts," say they,
 "No longer let the earth His worship show;
 Nor His vexatious yoke let mortals longer know.
 His altars overturn, His votaries slay,
 Till of His name and glory
 Remains not e'en the story;
 Of Him and His Anointed break the sway."

ALL THE CHORUS.

Hast Thou no shafts in store,
 That Justice may let fly?
 Art Thou the jealous God no more,
 No longer God of Vengeance throned on high?

ONE VOICE (*alone*).

Sad relic of our kings,
 Last precious blossom of a stem so fair,
 Ah! will the knife this time refuse to spare,
 Which to his breast a cruel parent brings?
 Tell us, sweet Prince, if o'er thy cradle hovered
 Some Angel that protected thee from death?
 Or did thy lifeless form in darkness covered,
 At God's awakening voice resume its breath?

ANOTHER VOICE.

Great God, dost Thou the guilt upon him lay,
 That his rebellious sires forsook Thy way?
 Is Thy compassion then clean gone for aye?

THE CHORUS.

Where, God of Jacob, is Thy goodness fled?
 Wilt Thou no more Thy gracious pardon shed?

ONE OF THE MAIDENS OF THE CHORUS
(*speaking, not singing*).

Dear sisters, cruel Tyrians hem us round,
 Do ye not hear their trumpets' dreadful sound?

SALOME.

Yea, and I hear them raise their savage cry,
 I tremble with alarm;
 Haste, let us to our place of refuge fly,
 Where God's Almighty Arm
 Shall in His Temple shelter us from harm.

ACT V.

SCENE I.

ZACHARIAH, SALOME, THE CHORUS.

SALOME.

What news, dear Zachariah, dost thou bring?

ZACHARIAH.

Double the fervor of your prayers to Heav'n!
 Sister, our latest hour perhaps draws nigh.
 For the dread conflict orders have been giv'n.

SALOME.

And what does Joash?

ZACHARIAH.

He has just been crown'd,
And by the High Priest with the holy
oil
Anointed. Oh, what joy in every eye
Welcomed a sovereign ransom'd from
the tomb,
A scar still showing where the dagger
fell!
There too might have been seen his
faithful nurse,
Who, almost hidden in a far recess,
Was watching her loved charge, tho'
none but God
And our dear mother witness'd her con-
cern.
Our Levites wept in tenderness and joy,
Mingling with sobs their cries of glad
delight:
He 'mid these transports, all untouch'd
by pride,
Gave gracious smiles, words, pressure
of the hand;
And, swearing to conform with their
advice,
This one his father, that his brother
call'd.

SALOME.

And has our secret reach'd the world
without?

ZACHARIAH.

'Tis known to none beyond the Temple
walls.
The sons of Levi, in divided bands,
Are ranged in solemn silence at the
doors,
All in an instant ready to rush forth
And raise the signal shout, "Long live
the King!"
But Azariah has been strictly charged
To guard the Prince's life from any
risk.
Meanwhile the scornful Queen, dagger
in hand,
Laughs at our frail defense of brazen
doors,
Awaits the engines that shall break them
down,
And threatens blood and ruin with each
breath.
Some priests, my sister, ventured to
advise
That in a crypt, dug in the days of old,

We should at least the precious Ark
conceal;
"Such fears insult our God," my father
said,
"Shall then the Ark that caused proud
tow'rs to fall,
That drove the waters of the Jordan
back,
And shatter'd to the earth Philistia's
gods,
Flee from before a shameless woman's
face!"
Our mother, standing near in mortal
dread,
Now to the Prince, now to the altar
turns
Her wavering glance, yielding to mute
alarm,
A sight to make a very savage weep.
From time to time the King, with fond
embrace,
Soothes her—Dear sisters, follow in my
steps,
And, if this day our King is doom'd to
die,
Let the same fate with him unite us all.

SALOME.

What rude hand knocks with quick re-
peated strokes?
What makes these Levites in confusion
run?
Why with such caution do they hide
their arms?
Say, is the Temple forced?

ZACHARIAH.

Your fears dispel,
God sends us Abner.

SCENE II.

JEHOIADA, JEHOSEBA, ZACHARIAH, SA-
LOME, ABNER, ISHMAEL, TWO
LEVITES, THE CHORUS.

JEHOIADA.

Can I trust mine eyes?
How did dear Abner find his way to us,
Right through the enemy's blockading
camp?
'Twas said that Athaliah, to insure
The execution of her cruel plots,
Had bound in iron chains thy generous
hands.

ABNER.

My lord, she fear'd my courage and my
zeal,
And worse than fetters gave me for
reward,
Confining me within a loathsome den,
To wait until the Temple should be
burn'd,
And she, unsated still with streams of
blood,
Should come to free me from an irk-
some life,
And cut short days, which sorrows to
survive
My princes should have ended long ago.

JEHOIADA.

What miracle procured thee thy release?

ABNER.

God only knows how works her cruel
heart.
She sent for me; and said with anxious
air—
"Thou seest this temple by my troops
beset:
Soon will the vengeful flames but ashes
leave,
In spite of all thy god can do to save.
Yet upon two conditions may his priests
Redeem their lives, but no time must be
lost,
That in my pow'r they place Eliakim,
With treasure known to them, and them
alone,
Amass'd by David when he reign'd of
yore,
And left a secret in the High Priest's
charge,
Go, tell them on these terms I let them
live."

JEHOIADA.

What course, dear Abner, thinkest thou
the best?

ABNER.

Give her the gold, if it indeed be true,
That in thy keeping David's treasure
lies,
And all besides, that from her greedy
hands

Thou hitherto hast saved, precious and
rare.
Give all; or thou wilt have vile mur-
derers come,
To break the altar, burn the cherubim,
And, on our sacred ark laying rude
hands,
Stain with thy priestly blood the inner
shrine.

JEHOIADA.

But, Abner, how can I in honor yield
To punishment a poor unhappy child,
Whom God Himself intrusted to my
care,
And save our lives by sacrificing his?

ABNER.

Would to Almighty God, Who sees my
heart,
That Athaliah might forget the boy,
And be content her cruelty to slake
With Abner's blood, thinking thereby to
soothe
Her angry gods! but what avails your
care?
If ye all perish, will he die the less?
Does God command what is impossible?
When, in obedience to a tyrant's law,
His mother trusted Moses to the Nile,
Almost as soon as born, condemn'd to
die;
Yet God, against all hope, his life pre-
served,
And made the King himself his child-
hood rear.
Who knows His purpose tow'rd Elia-
kim?
E'en such a lot may be for him in store,
And the fell murderess of the royal
seed
Be render'd sensitive to pity's touch.
Not long ago I saw steal o'er her face
A tender look, that by Jehosheba
Was mark'd as well, calming her wrath-
ful mood.
Princes, the hour of danger claims thy
voice!
What! Shall Jehoiada, with thy con-
sent,
For a mere stranger, let his son and
thee,
Yea, all this people, fruitlessly be slain,
And flames devour the only spot on
earth

Where God is worship'd? What could
ye do more
Were he the sole survivor of our Kings,
Your ancestors?

JEHOSHEBA (*aside to JEHOIADA*).

Thou seest his loyal heart;
Tell him the truth.

JEHOIADA.

The time is not yet come.

ABNER.

Time is more precious than thou thinkest,
Sir.

While thou art doubting what reply to
give,

Mattan, at Athaliah's ear, demands,
Burning with rage, a speedy massacre.
Must I fall prostrate at thy hallow'd
knees?

Now in the name of that Most Holy
Place,

Unseen by mortal eye save thine, where
dwells

God's glory; howsoever hard the task,
Let us think how to meet the sudden
blow.

I only beg a moment's breathing space:
To-morrow, yea to-night, I will secure
The Temple, and make outrage dan-
gerous.

But I perceive my words are lost on
thee,

Tears and entreaties pow'rless to per-
suade,

Too strict thy sense of duty to give way.
Well, find me then some weapon, spear
or sword,

And, where the foe await me, at these
gates,

Abner at least can die a soldier's death.

JEHOIADA.

I yield. Your proffer'd counsel I
embrace:

Abner, we will avert these threaten'd
ills.

'Tis true that David left a treasure here,
That to my charge was trusted, the last
hope

Left to the Jews in their calamities;

My watchful care bestowed it secretly,

But, since we can not hide it from your
Queen,

She shall be satisfied, and through these
doors

Enter, attended by her officers;
But from these altars let her keep afar
The savage fury of her foreign troops,
And spare the House of God from
pillage dire.

Arrange with her the number of her
train,

Children and priests can small suspicion
rouse.

Touching this child she dreads so much,
to thee,

Knowing thine upright heart, I will
unfold

The secret of his birth, when she can
hear;

And thou shalt judge between us, if I
must

Place this young boy in Athaliah's pow'r.

ABNER.

I take him under my protection now;
Fear naught, my lord. Back to the
Queen I haste.

SCENE III.

JEHOIADA, JEHOSEBA, ZACHARIAH, SA-
LOME, ISHMAEL, TWO LEVITES,
THE CHORUS.

JEHOIADA.

Great God! The hour is come that
brings Thy prey!

Hark, Ishmael.
(*He whispers in his ear.*)

JEHOSEBA.

Almighty King of Heav'n,
Place a thick veil before her eyes once
more,

As when, making her crime of none
effect,

Thou in my bosom didst her victim hide.

JEHOIADA.

Good Ishmael, go, there is no time to
lose;

Fulfil precisely this important task;
And, above all, take heed, when she
arrives

And passes, that no threatening signs
 be seen;
 Children, for Joash be a throne pre-
 pared;
 Let our arm'd Levites on his steps
 attend.
 Princess, bring hither too his trusty
 nurse,
 And dry the copious fountain of thy
 tears.

(To a LEVITE.)

Soon as the Queen, madly presumptuous,
 Has cross'd the threshold of the Temple
 gates,

Let all retreat be made impossible;
 That very moment let the martial trump
 Wake sudden terror in the hostile camp:
 Call all the people to support their
 King,

And make her ears ring with the won-
 drous tale
 Of Joash by God's providence preserved.
 He comes.

SCENE IV.

JEHOIADA, JEHOSHEBA, ZACHARIAH, SA-
 LOME, JOASH, AZARIAH, A BAND OF
 PRIESTS AND LEVITES, THE CHORUS.

JEHOIADA *continues*.

Ye Levites, and ye priests of God.
 Range yourselves round, but do not
 show yourselves;
 Leave it to me to keep your zeal in
 check,
 And tarry till my voice bids you appear.

(*They all hide themselves.*)

My King, methinks this hope rewards
 thy vows;
 Come, see thy foes fall prostrate at thy
 feet.

She who in fury sought thine infant life
 Comes hither in hot haste to slay thee
 now;

But fear her not: think that upon our
 side

Stands the destroying angel as thy
 guard.

Ascend thy throne—The gates are open-
 ing wide;

One moment let this curtain cover thee.
 (*He draws a curtain.*)
 Princess, thy color changes.

JEHOSHEBA.

Can I see
 Assassins fill God's house, and not grow
 pale?
 Why, look how numerous the retinue—

JEHOIADA.

I see them shut the Temple doors again.
 All is secure.

SCENE V.

JOASH, JEHOIADA, JEHOSHEBA, ABNER,
 ATHALIAH, AND HER ATTENDANTS.
 (*JOASH is hidden behind the curtain.*)

ATHALIAH (*to JEHOIADA*).

Deceiver, there thou art!
 Author of mischief, plots, conspiracies,
 Whose hopes are all upon disturbance
 based,

Inveterate foe of sovereign majesty!
 Dost thou still lean upon thy god's sup-
 port,

Or has that flimsy trust forsaken thee?
 He leaves thee and thy temple in my
 pow'r.

Well might I on the altar thou dost
 serve—

But no, thine offer'd ransom shall suf-
 fice;

Fulfill what thou hast promised. That
 young boy,

That treasure which thou must to me
 resign,

Where are they?

JEHOIADA.

Straight shalt thou be satisfied:
 I am about to show them both at once.

(*The curtain is drawn up. JOASH is discovered on his throne; his nurse is kneeling on his right; AZARIAH, sword in hand, is standing on his left; and near him ZACHARIAH and SALOME are kneeling on the steps of the throne; a number of LEVITES, with swords in their hands, are ranged on either side.*)

Appear, dear child, worthy of royal
sires.

Queen, dost thou recognize King David's
heir?

Observe at least these marks thy dagger
left:

Behold thine offspring, Ahaziah's son!
Welcome King Joash, Abner, people all.

ABNER.

Heav'ns!

ATHALIAH.

Traitor!

JEHOIADA.

See this faithful Jewess here,
Whose bosom, as thou knowest, nursed
him then.

Saved from thy fury by Jehosheba,
Within this temple God has guarded
him.

Lo, here is all of David's treasure left!

ATHALIAH.

Traitor, thy fraud will but destroy the
child:

Rid me, my soldiers, of this vile pre-
tense!

JEHOIADA.

Soldiers of God, draw near, defend your
King!

*(The back of the stage opens: the in-
terior of the temple is shown; and
armed LEVITES enter from all
around upon the stage.)*

ATHALIAH.

Treason! Oh, where am I, unhappy
Queen!

Weapons and enemies on every side!

JEHOIADA.

Thy search is vain, thou canst not 'scape
the toils

Cast round thee by the God whom thou
hast scorn'd.

Into our hands has He deliver'd thee;
Drunken with blood He calls thee to
His bar.

ATHALIAH.

My warriors are turn'd craven, numb
with fear!

Abner, is this thy coward's snare?

ABNER.

My Queen,

As God is witness—

ATHALIAH.

Never mind thy god,

Avenge me.

ABNER *(throwing himself at the feet of
JOASH)*.

Upon whom? Joash? My prince?

ATHALIAH.

He Joash! He thy King! Bethink you,
knaves,

That ye are still beleaguer'd by my
arms;

I hear my soldiers call me with loud
shouts.

Tremble, ye rebels! Succor is at hand.

SCENE VI.

JOASH, ATHALIAH, JEHOIADA, ISHMAEL,
*and all the actors in the
preceding scene.*

ISHMAEL *(to JEHOIADA)*.

My lord, our foes have left the Temple
free:

The foreigners are fled, the Jews submit.
As smoke is driv'n away before the
wind,

Th' Almighty's voice this army has dis-
persed.

Our Levites, high above the courts
around,

Have Ahaziah's son to all proclaim'd,
Told of his infant life saved from the
sword,

And Athaliah's fall into the snare.
The trumpets sounded from all sides at
once,

And, mingled with their cries, such
terror spread

Throughout the camp as struck with
wild dismay

Proud Midian at the flash of Gideon's sword.
 The Tyrians, casting arms and shields away,
 The first, in all directions disappear'd.
 Some Jews, in dazed confusion, shared their flight;
 The rest for Joash loudly have declared,
 Owing herein the guiding hand of God.
 Yea, all the people, with one heart inspired,
 Women, old men, and babes embrace with joy.
 Blessing Jehovah and the King He sends,
 And hymn the son of David raised to life.
 All in the holy city execrate
 The name of Baal, and destroy his shrine.
 Mattan is slain.

ATHALIAH.

Jehovah, thou hast won!
 Yes, it is Joash. Vain denial now!
 'Twas here I gave command to have him slain;
 He has the mien and features of his sire;
 I trace his kinship with the line I hate.
 Thus David triumphs, Ahab is destroy'd.
 Relentless god, this is thy work alone,
 With hopes of easy vengeance luring me,
 And twenty times a day setting my thoughts
 In conflict, now remorseful for this child,
 Now dazzled with the prospect of rich spoil,
 And loath to give it to devouring flames.
 Well, let him reign, thy care and handiwork!
 And, to inaugurate his sovereignty,
 Bid him direct this dagger to my heart!
 This for my grandson is my dying wish—
 My wish, nay more than wish, my trust and hope;
 That weary of thy law, thy yoke condemn'd,
 True to the blood of Ahab, drawn from me,

Following his grandsire's and his father's steps,
 He, David's heir, shall make himself abhorr'd,
 Profane thine altar, rob thee of thy rites,
 So avenge Ahab, Jezebel, and me!

(ATHALIAH goes out, the Levites follow her.)

JEHOIADA.

Out of the Temple precincts have her forth
 At once, nor be its holy courts profaned.
 Go, and avenge your princes massacred,
 Whose blood cries out till pacified by hers.
 If any venture to defend her cause,
 Him let the sword, along with her, devour.

SCENE VII.

JOASH, JEHOIADA, JEHOSEBA, ABNER,
 and all the actors in the preceding scene.

JOASH (after descending from his throne).

Thou seest, O Lord, the anguish of my soul,
 Oh, turn her malediction from me far,
 And never suffer it to be fulfill'd!
 Let Joash die ere he forgets his God!

JEHOIADA (to the Levites).

Call all the people, they shall see their King.
 Let them approach, and fresh allegiance swear.
 King, priests, and people, let us all confirm
 The covenant that Jacob made with God;
 Grateful for mercy, for our sins ashamed,
 And with new vows binding ourselves to Him.
 Abner, resume thy post beside the King.

SCENE VIII.

JOASH, JEHOIADA, A LEVITE, *and all the actors in the preceding scene.*

JEHOIADA (*to the Levite*).

Well, has that monster met with punishment?

THE LEVITE.

Her guilt has been atoned for with the sword.

Jerusalem, so long her fury's prey,
Relieved at last from her detested yoke,

With joy beholds her weltering in her blood.

JEHOIADA.

By this, the dreadful end her crimes
deserved,
Learn, King of Judah, nor this truth
forget:—

Kings have in Heav'n their Judge severe,
Who to the fatherless
Is Father, and will punish those who
innocence oppress!

JEAN BAPTISTE RACINE
(1639-1699).

Translated by ROBERT BRUCE BOSWELL.

THE
SONG OF SONGS

WHICH IS
SOLOMON'S



THE SONG OF SONGS

WHICH IS SOLOMON'S

DRAMATIS PERSONAE.

SOLOMON.

NOBLES OF ZION, *Attendant on the King.* Ch. vi. 13.

NOBLES OF ZION. Ch. iii. 11.

THE EGYPTIAN SPOUSE. Ch. i. 16.

CHORAL VIRGINS OF EGYPT. Ch. i. 5.

CHORAL VIRGINS OF JERUSALEM. Ch. i. 2.

VIRGINS OF JERUSALEM, *attendant on the Jewish Queen.* Ch. iii. 7.

CHORAL VIRGINS OF ZION. Ch. iv. 1.

CHAP. I. V. 1.

THE SONG OF SONGS, WHICH IS SOLOMON'S.

DAY THE FIRST.

SCENE. *A plain near the Habitation of Chimham, distant from Jerusalem about six miles, situate on the Confines of Judea, bordering on the Wilderness. The camp of Solomon in view.*

Processional songs by the Virgins of Jerusalem, advancing to meet the bride.

(Time—Evening.)

CANTO THE FIRST.

FIRST VIRGIN *sings (personating the Bride.)*

V. 2.

Let him on me the balmy kiss bestow,
With ruby mouth, whence honey'd accents flow:

For ah! those lips are fragrant as the
rose,

When on its head the purple orient
glows.

SECOND VIRGIN (*still personating the Bride.*)

To share the favor of thy love be mine;
Thy love, more precious than the
choicest wine.

CHORUS of VIRGINS *singing the praises of the Bridegroom.*

3.

Sweet is the scent of perfumes rare,
Exhaling on the ambient air;
Sweeter thy name—a perfume spread,
Unrivall'd o'er the royal head;
Therefore the virgins love thy name,
And join to celebrate thy fame.

SECOND VIRGIN (*of the Bridegroom.*)

4.

O draw me "*with thy pow'rful sweets,*"

CHORUS of VIRGINS.

And after thee we'll fly;
Our sense thy fragrant odour greets,
As gentle breezes waft it thro' the sky.

FIRST VIRGIN (*personating the Bride.*)

The King conducts me to the nuptial
bower,

Oh! deck the path where love delights
to stray:

Throw all around each fair delicious
flower

That opes its radiant beauties to the
day.

CHORUS of VIRGINS (*of the Bridegroom.*)

In thee we'll be glad and rejoice,
Extolling thy love more than wine;

The upright shall raise the loud voice
To swell the full chorus divine.

*VIRGINS of EGYPT preceding the Bride,
addressing themselves to the VIRGINS of
JERUSALEM.*

*FIRST VIRGIN of EGYPT sings (person-
ating the Bride.)*

5.

I'm brown as Kedar's tents, O virgin
train!
Which rise in one bold circle o'er the
plain;
But still my form's replete with native
grace,
And charms majestic dignify my face.
Comely am I, as yon pavilion rare,
Whose broider'd curtains wanton in
the air;
Whose splendid foldings mock the gloom
of night,
Tipt with gay beams of artificial light.

6.

O then, behold me with a partial eye!
Nor, nicely curious, casual faults de-
scry;
What nature gave—the blush of op'ning
day,
Is fled, is tarnish'd by the noontide ray;
Egypt's stern sons required my utmost
speed,
And me the keeper of their charge de-
creed;
Their int'rest dearer than my own I
prize—
And haste o'er desert plains, 'neath
summer's fervid skies.

*SECOND VIRGIN of EGYPT (inquiring
for the Bridegroom.)*

7.

Tell me, darling of my soul,
(Thou who can'st ev'ry wish control)
Tell me where thou feed'st—and where
Repose at noon thy princely care?
For why should I still darkling rove,
E'en by the tents of those I love?

FIRST VIRGIN of JERUSALEM (in reply).

8.

If thou know not, peerless maid,
Where thy royal shepherd's laid,
Mark the footsteps of this flock—
And winding gently 'neath the rock,
Feed thy fair kids these shepherds' tents
beside,
On the green margin of the mazy tide.

*SECOND VIRGIN of JERUSALEM (per-
sonating the Bridegroom, on the nearer
approach of the spouse and her attend-
ants).*

9.

Pleas'd, I compare thee, O my royal
love!
(Attended by thy gay, resplendent
train)
To stately coursers, which triumphant
move
O'er the smooth surface of th' Egyp-
tian plain;
Which, taught by skilful hands to
wield the car,
Advance, with plaudits, through th'
admiring throng,
When Pharaoh quits the fervid scene
of war,
And pours with regal majesty along.

*FIRST VIRGIN of JERUSALEM (of the
Bride).*

10.

Thy comely cheeks, adorn'd with rows
Of Orient pearls, I view,
And charm'd behold the chain that flows
O'er breasts of snowy hue!

CHORUS OF VIRGINS (of the Bride.)

11.

Thy roseate temples we'll enfold
In triple rows of verdant gold,
With studs of radiant silver dight,
Dispensing beams of varied light.

*FIRST VIRGIN of JERUSALEM (person-
ating the Bride).*

12.

Until the king receive me, shed

Unceasing odours on my head;
Lo! wrapt in majesty profound,
He waits, in yon capacious round,
Where circling tents superbly rise,
Aspiring boldly to the skies;
My spikenard now its sweets exhales,
Diffusing fragrance through the vales.

SECOND VIRGIN of JERUSALEM (*of the Bridegroom*).

13.

Precious as stacte is my love to me,
Which flows spontaneous from the parent tree;
In a gold casket artfully compressed
The choice perfume shall dwell upon
my breast.

FIRST VIRGIN of JERUSALEM (*of the Bridegroom*).

14.

A fragrant cluster is my royal love,
Cull'd from En-gedi's palm-encircled grove;
A fragrant cluster of al-hennah pale,
Whose high effluvia scent the sportive gale.

SCENE THE SECOND—*The Tent of Solomon.*

SOLOMON, *meeting the SPOUSE, as they are conducting her into the royal Pavilion.*

15.

Behold, thou'rt wond'rous fair, my love!
Behold, thou'rt wond'rous fair!
Thine eyes, than those of yonder dove
More mild, more tender are.

The SPOUSE (to SOLOMON).

16.

Behold, my best-belov'd is fair!
Yea, pleasant to the sight!
Our carpet's green, by nature's care
With flowrets gay bedight.

SOLOMON (*to the SPOUSE*).

17.

Our beams are cedar, and our ceilings
rise

(Of cypress form'd) magnificently high!
Where skillful artists taught the vivid dyes

With changeful hues t' attract the gazer's eye;
There chosen sentences effulgent glow,
Pouring instruction on the crowds below;
These shall my fair one view, and raptur'd own
That art, for once, has nature's self outdone.

END of CANTO the FIRST.

DAY THE SECOND.

SCENE—*A Garden belonging to the Palace of the Jewish Queen, in the Country.*

JEWISH QUEEN and her ATTENDANT VIRGINS, *the Daughters of Jerusalem.*

CANTO THE SECOND.

(*Time—Morning.*)

JEWISH QUEEN.

V. 1.

I'm now no more than Sharon's common rose,
That blooms neglected on the humble thorn,
Where many a flower with equal fragrance glows,
With equal fragrance scents the breezy morn.
I'm now the lily of the lonesome vale,
Whose maiden beauties die away unseen;
Whose sweets are wafted on th' unconscious gale
That sweeps the bosom of the desert green.

QUEEN *in contemplation, reheating to her attendants a conversation that had past lately, it should seem, between SOLOMON and herself.*

2.

"As shines," said he, "the lily 'mong the thorns,

"And with it's lustre the gay scene
adorns;
"So shines my love the fairest maids
among,
"Bright and conspicuous o'er the virgin
throng."

3.

As shines the *citron* 'mong th' ignoble
trees,
Where, tinged with light, they greet the
morning breeze;
So shines my Solomon the youths
among,
Beams through the crowd, and gilds th'
encircling throng.

*The QUEEN recounts some incidents
which had lately occurred—as SOLO-
MON'S taking her to the house of
wine—inviting her to the country,
etc.—and she concludes with wishing
his return before the next dawn of
light.*

I've sat beneath it's shadow with delight,
It's ample foliage waving o'er my head;
How sweet the fruit! how grateful to
the sight
The new fall'n blossoms o'er my carpet
spread.

4.

He brought me to the house of wine,
And bade the liquid rubies flow;
Bade melting harmony divine
Assuage my mind depress'd with woe;
To wake my soul to ecstasy they strove,
While o'er my head he placed the radi-
ant lamp of love.

5.

Support me, daughters of the warbling
string;
Your rich spic'd wine and cheering
citrons bring;
I'm sick of love!—minè eye abhors the
day;
Support me, maids, my fleeting spirits
stay.

6.

O! that his left hand now were laid
Under my sad desponding head!

And that his right hand did sustain.
Me, sinking 'neath my love-sick pain!

7.

I've charged you oft, O virgin throng!
By the nimbly bounding roes,
By the hinds that browse along
Where the warbling current flows,
To drop the cadence of your song,
Nor e'en your softest airs prolong,
But with cautious steps to move
And not disturb my sleeping love.

SCENE THE SECOND—*A Chiosk or Arbour
in the Garden of the Jewish Queen,
belonging to her Palace in the Coun-
try.*

JEWISH QUEEN and ATTENDANT
VIRGINS.

(Time—Evening.)

JEWISH QUEEN (to her Attendants.)

8.

The voice of love then struck my ear!
(The accents flow'd distinct and clear)
I look'd—when on the mountain's brow,

9.

Leaping like a wanton 'roe
Or youthful hart—behold my love!
Skipping o'er the cliffs above:
Now with agile feet he flew,
Mocking oft the transient view;
Then lo! he stood behind our verdant
wall,
Oft times attentive to the fountain's
fall;
Next from the windòws view'd the gar-
den's bloom,
Or through the lattice-work inhal'd
perfume:
When through the foliage beam'd his
roseate face.
Like some fair flower, he caught my
ravish'd eye,—
A flower expanding with unrivall'd
grace,
And its rich beauties opening to the sky.

10.

Lo! he spake—the voice of love
Warbled thro' the list'ning grove!
"Rise up, my love, without delay,
"Arise, my fair one, come away.

11.

"Behold the rigid winter's o'er,
"The brumal rains descend no more.

12.

"Now all around the teeming earth
"Pours forth her fair luxuriant birth,
"And laughing spring, with genial
showers,

"Awakes to life the blushing flowers;
"Hark! how the feather'd chorists sing,
"And, conscious, plume the trembling
wing:

"The nightingale, the thorns among,
"Sweetly warbling, trills her song:
"And now the turtle tells his tale,
"Soft cooing in the humid vale;
"Through every glade, through every
grove

"He pours the dulcet voice of love.

13.

"Behold the early figs appear,
"With virid surface bright and clear;
"The parent tree rich juice supplies,
"And swells the round to ampler size:
"The vines, besprent with argent dew,
"Present their tender grapes to view,
"With op'ning flowrets fresh and fair,
"Breathing fragrance through the air.
"Rise up, my love, without delay,
"Arise, my fair one, come away.

14.

"From yonder rocky clefts above,
"Look down on me, my turtle-dove;
"Awaken'd by th' impassion'd strain,
"Hear now thy tender mate complain;
"And deign, the secret stairs between,
"To let thy countenance be seen.
"Be mine thy dulcet voice to hear,
"Soft breathing on my list'ning ear;
"For sweet thy voice, when love inspires
"Thy soul with all its wonted fires;
"Then fall thy words with easy art,
"And melting mingle with the heart:
"Superior charms thy comely face adorn,
"Bright as the lustre of the rising morn!

15.

"Take us, my friends, the little foxes
take,

"That seize and trample on the fruitful
vines;

"In wanton sport they ev'ry tendril
break,

"That round the kindly-fost'ring elm in-
twines:

"For now, behold, the tender grapes are
seen

"In fragrant clusters peeping through
the green."

16.

My best-belov'd is truly mine,
And I am his!—O why incline
His roving steps, when ev'ning dews
prevail,
To feed among the lilies of the vale?

17.

Before the incense-breathing dawn
Shall chase the nightly shades away,
And all impurpled glows the lawn,
Emblazon'd by the orb of day—
Turn, my belov'd;—and be thou like
The youthful hart or roe,
Which bounding up the path oblique,
Leaves dusky vales below:
Which leads exulting on the topmost
height
Of Bethel's mountains, ting'd with orient
light.

END of CANTO the SECOND.

DAY THE THIRD.

SCENE—*The Palace of the Jewish Queen.*
Jewish Queen and Attendants.

CANTO THE THIRD.

(Time—Morning.)

JEWISH QUEEN to her Attendants, re-
lating an incident that had happened
(perhaps on the Night preceding
that on which SOLOMON set out from
Zion to meet the Bride.)

V. 1.

On my lone bed, one murky night,
I anxious sought my soul's delight,
Perplex'd with dire foreboding thought,
I sought him—but in vain I sought!

2.

I said, Behold, I'll instant rise,
Ere sleep invade my tear-swoll'n eyes;
About the city will I rove
Perchance, I there shall find my love:
I rose, perplex'd with anxious thought,
And sought him—but in vain I sought.

3.

The watchmen round the city rov'd,
To whom—"Saw ye my best-belov'd?"

4.

Scarce had I pass'd the nightly band
When lo my love!—his glowing hand
I raptur'd seiz'd; we mov'd along,
Unheeded by the jovial throng.
My mother's house appear'd in sight,
Conspicuous through the shades of night;
While lamps, from cypress-trees, around
Shed vivid lustres on the ground:
A secret chamber there he chose,
And pleas'd sunk down to calm repose;
Careful I watch'd him, as he slumb'ring
lay
Nor bade soft flutes announce returning
day:

5.

But charg'd you, O ye virgin throng,
By the nimbly-bounding roes,
By the hinds that browse along
Where the warbling current flows,
To drop the cadence of your song,
Nor e'en your softest airs prolong;
But with cautious steps to move,
And not disturb my sleeping love.

SCENE THE SECOND—*An Arbor on some eminence in the garden of the Jewish Queen, commanding a view of the wilderness.*

JEWISH QUEEN and Attendants.
(*Time—Night.*)

JEWISH QUEEN (*in surprise on seeing the bridal procession advancing to the city.*)

6.

Be still, my soul!—who's this ascends
From where the wilderness extends?
Lo! from gold censers fuming aloes rise,
In smoking columns, mingling with the
skies!
Pure myrrh and frankincense their
sweets exhale,
And foreign perfumes float along the
vale.

VIRGINS of JERUSALEM, *in reply (describing the carriage of Solomon.)*

7.

Behold, King Solomon's approaching
car
Irradiates through the thickest glooms
of night!
About it stand the valiant men of war,
Each in his rich effulgent armour dight;
Threescore of Israel's distinguished
band,
The brave protectors of this sacred land.

8.

They all hold swords; erected high,
Lo! how they flame and glitter to the
sky!
Anon, dependent from the baldrick,
throw
Quick-trembling flashes on the sands
below:
Each, in dread war expert, contemns the
fight,
And braves the horrors of terrific night.

9.

King Solomon a splendid carriage made
Of cedar-wood, with curious art inlaid;
There silver pillars, beauteous to behold,
Spring from a basis all of burnish'd
gold;
It's canopy with royal purple glows,
And the rich curtain kindles as it flows;
In full festoons it meets the dazzled
sight,
Or floats redundant on the brow of
night.
The midst thereof, with glowing love
inwrought,
Gives to the eye the animated thought;

There gilded characters in mottoes rise,
 From the gay ground of variegated
 dyes;
 Still as they swell the flow'r-wrought
 ground above,
 They shine, expressing the fair artist's
love:
 Salem's bright daughters plann'd the
 great design,
 And wrought in colours and in traits
 divine.

SCENE THE THIRD—*Zion, or the City of
 David.*

NOBLES OF ZION, to the CHORAL VIRGINS,
*ordering them to go forth to meet
 the Bridegroom, now drawing near
 the Holy City.*

11.

Go forth, go forth, O virgin throng!
 From Zion's sacred hill,
 The timbrels take, and aid the song
 With your harmonious skill.
 Go forth, your youthful King behold;
 His blooming temples, crown'd
 With triple rows of radiant gold,
 Cast mild effulgence round;
 Crown'd by his skilful mother's art,
 On this his spousal day,
 When beaming gladness through his
 heart
 Spreads it's all-cheering ray.

SCENE THE FOURTH—*The Royal City.*

*Processional Songs, by the Virgins of
 Zion, in Praise of the Bride.*

FIRST VIRGIN (*personating the Bride-
 groom.*)

V. 1.

Behold, thou'rt wondrous fair! my love,
 Behold, thou'rt wondrous fair!
 Thine eyes, as of the tender dove,
 Behind thy veil appear.
 Thine auburn hair in graceful tresses
 flows,
 Shading thy cheeks, more vermeil
 than the rose.

Such glossy locks Mount Gilead's goats
 adorn.
 As sleek ascending at the break of
 day,
 Refresh'd, they catch the balmy breeze
 of morn,
 And up the pointed rock with added
 vigour stray.

SECOND VIRGIN.

2.

Thy pearly teeth are like a new-shorn
 flock
 Of sheep, ascending from the argent
 tide,
 (Where, from the basis of the craggy
 rock,
 The rapid streams in brisk meandrings
 glide)
 Which all are twins, none mourns its
 fellow lost,
 Or drooping on the plain, or on the
 white wave tost.

FIRST VIRGIN.

3.

Thy lips are like a scarlet thread,
 Thy speech enchanting flows!
 Behind thy veil, what vivid red
 On each soft temple glows!
 So glows the gay pomegranate's purple
 hue,
 When the bright sections open to the
 view.

SECOND VIRGIN.

4.

Thy neck's like royal David's tow'r,
 For splendid arms designed:
 Like *that* it shews thy sov'reign pow'r,
 Thy empire o'er mankind:
 From *thence* are radiant shields dis-
 play'd,
 And bucklers rich with gold:
 Round thy white neck, O princely maid!
 The wond'ring crowds behold
 Arms more destructive; aim'd with
 surer art,
 They catch the eye, and penetrate the
 heart.

FIRST VIRGIN.

5.

Thy two fair breasts like two young
 roes appear,
 The tender daughters of the vernal year,
 Which 'mong the fragrant lilies love to
 stray,
 As pure, as soft, as exquisite as they!

SECOND VIRGIN (*personating the Bride-
 groom.*)

6.

Before the incense-breathing dawn
 Shall chase the nightly shades away,
 And all empurpled glows the lawn,
 Emblazon'd by the orb of day;
 I'll get me to this mountain, where
 Pure myrrh embalms the ambient air,
 And on the hills with joy repose,
 Where frankincense spontaneous grows.

FIRST VIRGIN.

7.

How fair art thou, how lovely is thy
 mien!
 In all thy form no envious spot is seen.

End of the PROCESSIONAL SONGS.

SCENE THE FIFTH—*The Palace of Sol-
 omon.*

SOLOMON (*to the Spouse.*)

8.

O come with me, from Lebanon away,
 My spouse—from Lebanon's exalted
 height
 Thine eyes avert, nor Amana survey,
 Nor Shenir's head, when deck'd with
 golden light,
 Nor Hermon's lofty brow, with glist'ring
 dews bedight.
 O look on me with tenderness and love!
 Shun, shun those heights where bears
 and tigers rove,
 Those humid dens, and deep sequester'd
 cells,

Where the fierce lioness securely dwells,
 Those mountains dire where spotted
 leopards stray,
 Darting ferocious on their trembling
 prey.

9.

From one bright eye a piercing dart
 Elanc'd, has vanquished all my heart;
 O how it struggles to be free!
 But still entangled with that chain,
 (Which idly from it's fellows straying,
 Now o'er thy snowy bosom's playing)
 In vain it sighs for liberty,
 For freedom still it pants in vain.

10.

My spouse, how beauteous is thy love,
 How excellent to me!
 The ruddy wines, that sparkling move,
 Less grateful are than thee:
 Far more delicious is thy love than
 wine,
 When the brisk liquors o'er the goblets
 shine:
 More sweet the scent thy precious per-
 fumes yield,
 Than all the spices of En-gedi's field.

11.

Thy rosy lips, O gentle spouse, dispense,
 In copious strains, enchanting elo-
 quence!
 Whene'er thou speak'st, the honey'd ac-
 cents all
 Awake the mind to rapture as they fall!
 Honey and milk thy tuneful tongue im-
 parts
 In melting language to our yielding
 hearts.
 Thy garments, sweet as Lebanon, ex-
 hale
 Their pow'rful odours on the buoyant
 gale.

END OF CANTO the THIRD.

DAY THE FOURTH.

SCENE—*A Royal Pavilion in the Palace
 Garden.*

SOLOMON and the SPOUSE.

CANTO THE FOURTH.

(Time—Morning.)

SOLOMON (to the SPOUSE.)

V. 12.

My sister-spouse is like a garden fair,
 Enclos'd. by nature's skill, with wondrous care;
 While on each side the shel't'ring mountains rise,
 (Shooting in rocky columns to the skies)
 Deep in the length'ning vale securely grows,
 Untouch'd by vulgar hand, the maiden rose,
 All pure art thou, as springs that glide unseen
 'Neath vaulted rocks, that bound the neighb'ring green;
 Which, safely seal'd, no foul pollution know,
 But rise translucent, and translucent flow;
 Chaste as the draught the secret fountain yields,
 When fervid summer blasts the sick'ning ing fields.

13.

Thy virtues, royal fair one! rise
 Like some sweet paradise, whose bloom,
 Expanding 'neath congenial skies,
 Breathes on the gale it's choice perfume;
 Within whose verdant borders we behold
 Pomegranates, ting'd with vegetable gold;
 Delicious fruits of varied hues,
 Besprent with artificial dews,
 When the dedal fountain pours
 Limpid drops, in trickling show'rs,
 Lighting on the *Hennah* pole;
 And spikenard trembling with the gale.

14.

Scented canes and saffron grow
 Where the gurgling streamlets flow;
 Spikenard and cinnamon we find,
 With other precious spices join'd;
 And, far remov'd from purly rill,
 Tall frankincense ascends the hill;
 The hill rich' myrrh and aloes love,

And mingling, graceful, form a grove;
 The grove, relax'd by southern breeze,
 Sheds sweets from aromatic trees.

15.

O spouse! delicious to thy lover's sight
 As bubbling fountains ting'd with noon-tide light,
 Whose living waters down the channels stray,
 Shining reflective in the solar ray,
 Whose waves derive from *Lebanon* their source,
 Winding through flow'ry vales their mazy course;
 First from the chasm in his awful side,
 The rude cascades in broken murmurs flow;
 Till all uniting in one ample tide,
 With melting warblings glides the stream below.

16.

Awake, O north! and come, thou southern gale!
 (Breathing propitious through the flow'ry vale)
 Bid trees, exuding, precious spices shed
 On vernal carpets, 'neath their umbrage spread;
 Call all the odours of my garden forth,
 Soft southern breezes, cool refreshing north.

SPOUSE (to SOLOMON).

Then come, my love; the genial breezes blow,
 The bark distends, the aromatics flow;
 Delicious fruits thy princely hand invite,
 And flowers, expanding, court thy curious sight.

SOLOMON (to the SPOUSE.)

V. 1.

I've viewed my garden's varied bloom,
 And pleas'd inhal'd it's rich perfume:
 I've cropt my myrrh with spices rare;
 The honey on my palate glows;
 I've drunk my wine, in vases fair,
 With milk commix'd with nicest care,
 Till o'er the brim brisk curdling masses rose.

SCENE THE SECOND—*A Pavilion in the Palace Garden.*

The Nuptial Banquet.

SOLOMON (*to his Friends, assembled at the banquet.*)

(*Time—Evening.*)

Eat, O my friends! and drink with me,
Quaff deep th' inspiring draught;
Till, lost in mirth and rapt'rous glee,
Confusion mingle with the rising thought:

Mark well the gen'rous wine—aright it moves;

Drink deep, my friends; drink to our plighted loves.

END of CANTO the FOURTH.

DAY THE FIFTH.

SCENE—*The Palace of the Jewish Queen in the Country.*

JEWISH QUEEN and Attendants.

CANTO THE FIFTH.

(*Time—Morning.*)

JEWISH QUEEN (*recounting to the Daughters of Jerusalem an Adventure that had happened on the preceding Night.*)

V. 2.

I slept—but O! my anxious mind,
To peaceful slumber disinclin'd,
Still brooded o'er its mighty woes,
And in my dream the shad'wy train arose;

When lo! a voice the mighty gloom pervades!

('Twas love's known voice that murmur'd thro' the shades.)

He knock'd—attent I caught the welcome sound,

And heard from vaulted domes thick answer'ing strokes rebound.

"Quick ope to me, my gentle love,

"My undefil'd, my turtle-dove:

"For ah! my head is fill'd with dew,
"My locks with drops of glist'ning hue."

3.

My vest (said I) is laid aside,
And ev'ry ornament of pride;
My feet are wash'd: How can I rise,
When midnight slumbers hover o'er my eyes?

4.

I spake: when lo! the hand of love
Retouch'd the sounding door;
Then all the tender passions strove
With force unfelt before!

5.

In haste I rose t' admit my royal guest,
While flush'd with hope my cheeks like roses bloom'd;
With unct'ous hand the yielding lock I press'd,
And pow'rful sweets the midnight air perfum'd;
Pure liquid myrrh my fragrant fingers shed,
And o'er the handles of the bolt it spread.

6.

I open'd to my royal love,
But he was far away;
My soul with sad emotions strove,
And fail'd with dire dismay!
His parting words, engraven on my mind,
Sunk deep, and left a lasting sting behind.
Long while, oppress'd with anxious thought,
I sought him—but in vain I sought!
I call'd him—but no kind reply
Return'd he to my plaintive cry.

7.

The watchmen found me; with relentless blows
They smote me, mocking at my silent woes;
Down from the tow'ring walls the keepers flew,
And the close veil from off my temples drew:
No more conceal'd I mock'd their prying sight,

But stood confest, 'mid gleams of bor-
row'd light;
For splendid lamps their trembling rays
display'd,
With varying lustres, through the mid-
night shade.

8.

I charge you, O ye virgin throng!
If my belov'd shou'd pass along,
While you around the city rove,
O tell him I am sick of love!

VIRGINS of JERUSALEM (*to the QUEEN*).

9.

What is thy beloved? say,
Thou fairest of the fair!
What sov'reign charms does he display,
That claim such earnest care?
What is thy beloved, say,
More than another's love?
Superiour darts his potent ray
Salem's bright sons above?
Stands he distinguish'd noble youths
among,
When fair perfection gilds the blooming
throng?

JEWISH QUEEN, *in reply (describing
the charms of her royal lover.)*

10.

My love is white, and ruddy as the morn,
Radiant as those whom bridal vests
adorn,
When silver lamps pour round their ful-
gid rays,
And tissued robes reflect the dazzling
blaze.

11.

As gold resplendent shines his royal
head,
His raven locks o'er his fair shoulders
spread,
The floating ringlets wanton in the
wind,
Salute his cheek, or, graceful, fall be-
hind.

12.

His eyes are as the eyes of milk-white
doves;
Which woo, by swelling streams, their
plumy loves;
Peaceful they sit the ample floods be-
side,
And cooing sip the waters as they glide.

13.

His downy cheeks are like a spicy bed,
Whence choicest aromatics rise,
Which, sweetly budding forth, unceas-
ing spread
Their rich effluvia through the skies.
His lips are lilies dropping honey-dew,
Ting'd with the ruby's animated hue.

14.

His hands are rings of gold, where daz-
zling glows
The yellow chrysolite in sparkling rows.
Like purest iv'ry, delicately white,
Appears his waist, with snowy tunick
dight;
The snowy tunick, edg'd with gold and
blue,
Like radiant sapphires glitters to the
view.

15.

His comely legs, like marble pillars
shine,
Round which, with art, the linen
draw'rs entwine;
Below the draw'rs rich sandals we be-
hold,
Like finished pedestals of burnish'd gold.
Majestic as those cedars that arise
From Lebanon's exalted height,
Pushing their verdant branches to the
skies,
With native excellence bedight,
Beams his fair countenance, with grace
replete,
Awfully mild, majestically sweet!

16.

His mouth is fragrance, such as flows.
When morning breathes, from dewy
rose;
Yea, he is lovely as the dawning day!

Such is my royal friend, ye tuneful
 throng,
 Such is my best-belov'd! O virgins, say,
 Mark'd ye such charms Salem's bright
 sons among?

VIRGINS of JERUSALEM.

V. 1.

O where is thy belovéd stray'd?
 Thou fairest of the fair!
 Say shall we seek him down the glade,
 And tell thy tender care?
 O whither is he turn'd aside?
 Perchance to hear the warbling stream-
 lets glide;
 Say, shall we seek him with thee there,
 When dews descending cool the sultry
 air?

JEWISH QUEEN (*to her Attendants*).

2.

My love is, doubtless, in his garden
 straying,
 Or 'neath thick trees, on beds of spices
 playing;
 Full oft 'tis his, when ev'ning shades
 prevail,
 To gather lilies in yon humid vale.

3.

I am my love's and he is mine!
 Why does he from truth's path decline?
 And roving seek, when ev'ning shades
 prevail,
 To feed among the lilies of the vale?

END of CANTO the FIFTH.

DAY THE SIXTH.

SCENE—*A Garden belonging to the royal
 Palace of Solomon.*

SOLOMON and the SPOUSE (*with their
 Attendants.*)

CANTO THE SIXTH.

(*Time—Morning*).

SOLOMON *to the SPOUSE.*

4.

O! Thou art beautiful, my love,
 As Tirzah, tow'ring o'er the grove
 New gilt with morning light;
 On her gay tow'rs the purple radiance
 plays,
 And kindling domes reflect the fulgent
 rays:
 Tirzah, the scene of pleasure and de-
 light!
 Graceful art thou as Salem to mine eye,
 (Salem, the seat of regal majesty)
 Whose fair perfection future bards shall
 sing,
 When all-inspir'd, they sweep the silver
 string.
 Dazzling, in these thy bridal vests ar-
 ray'd,
 Thou beam'st as lamps, resplendent
 through the shade.

5.

Avert thine eyes!—a fatal dart
 Has found, and vanquish'd all my heart!
 Ah! quick the tender passions rise!
 I die!—avert those piercing eyes.
 Thine auburn hair in graceful tresses
 flows,
 Shading thy cheeks, more vermeil than
 the rose;
 Such glossy locks Mount Gilead's goats
 adorn,
 As sleek, ascending at the break of day,
 Refresh'd, they catch the balmy breeze
 of morn,
 And up the pointed rocks with added
 vigour stray.

6.

Thy pearly teeth are like a snowy flock
 Of sheep, ascending from the argent tide,
 (Where, from the basis of the craggy
 rock,
 The rapid streams in brisk meandrings
 glide)
 Which all are twins, none mourns it's
 fellow lost,
 Or drooping on the plain, or on the
 white wave tost.

7.

Behind thy veil, what vivid red
Is o'er each radiant temple spread!
So glows the gay pomegranate's purple
hue,
When the bright sections open to the
view.

8.

I've threescore queens, of beauty bright,
And fourscore concubines, as fair,
With tuneful virgins clad in shining
white,
Who sweep the warbling strings, and
trill the dulcet air.

9.

But she, my dove, my undefil'd,
Admits no proud compeer;
Dear to my soul as is an *only child*
To her fond parent dear;
Alone she reigns within this ardent
breast,
A constant, pleasing, unremitting guest.
The virgin-daughters saw my love,
And blest her in their song;
The queens, amaz'd, beheld her move
With majesty along,
And join'd the concubines! One gen'ral
voice
Then rose to swell her praise, and cele-
brate my choice.

SCENE THE SECOND—*The Garden.*

*The Jewish Queen enters the Garden
with her Attendants, richly dressed
and ornamented.*

SOLOMON (*in surprise, on seeing his
JEWISH QUEEN approaching.*)

10.

But who is she that moves with princely
gait,
And onward comes in this majestic
state?
Clear as the morn, bedeckt with orient
light,
She shines confest, and radiates on the
sight!
Fair as the moon, in argent splendours
drest,

Bright as the sun, inrob'd in golden
vest!
Dazzling as brides, in nuptial pomp ar-
ray'd,
Beaming effulgent through the midnight
shade!
When flaming lamps with vivid lustres
blaze,
And tissued robes reflect the vary'd
rays;
When gold and gems, inkindling to the
sight,
With brilliant sparkles clear the brow
of night.

SOLOMON (*to his JEWISH QUEEN.*)

11.

Hither I come, the garden's bloom to
view;
Descending slowly through the
length'ning vale,
I mark it's fruits, enrich'd with morn-
ing dew,
While the light foliage trembles with
the gale:
If the flow'ring vine appear,
Peeping fost'ring boughs between,
Raptur'd, oft I find it here,
Scenting all the neighb'ring scene;
Here the pomegranates feel the
genial ray,
And swell the bud, expanding to
the day.

JEWISH QUEEN, *in reply (preparing to
quit the Garden.)*

12.

I knew it not! my weak unstable mind,
In quest of peace, to solitude inclin'd;
But now, convinced, my soul prepares
for flight;
Adieu! behold me hast'ning from thy
sight,
Quick as the chariot thunders o'er the
plain,
When Ammi-nadib holds the glowing
rein.

NOBLES of ZION (*to the QUEEN retiring.*)

13,

Return! return! O Shulamite, return!
Let not our hearts with expectation
burn;
Return! return! that we may look on
thee—

VIRGINS of JERUSALEM (*to the NOBLES.*)

What wish ye in the Shulamite to see?

NOBLES of ZION.

We wish to see two friendly troops
unite,
That each glad heart, replete with gay
delight,
May it's sensations chearfully impart,
And send them, glowing, to it's fellow
heart.

SCENE THE THIRD—*A Chiosk in the
Royal Garden.*

SOLOMON, the JEWISH QUEEN, and their
Attendants.

(*Time—Evening.*)

CHAP. VII.

V. 1.

SOLOMON.

How beautiful thy feet, O noble fair!
Adorn'd with sandals, wrought with
nicest care,
Where gold, and threads of variegated
hues,
Thy captiv'd lover all-inraptur'd views;
Thy stately legs the curious draw'rs in-
fold,
Deckt as with graven ornaments of gold,
Where by the toilsome artist's steady
hand
The mimic buds, and leaves and flow'rs
expand.

2.

Thy clasp is like a goblet round,
Where mingled liquors play,
When wines, with mantling rubies
crown'd,
Reflect the changeful ray:

Thy waist is like an heap of golden
grain,
With lilies bounded, rising from the
plain.

3.

Thy two fair breasts like two young
roes appear,
The tender daughters of the vernal year.

4.

Thy taper neck, inimitably fair!
Nature has form'd with more than usual
care;
From thy fine shoulders we behold it
rise
Like some white tow'r ascending from
the ground,
Whose lofty summit shoots into the
skies,
Still less'n'g to the view it's spiring
round.
Thy large full eyes with humid lustre
shine,
Like Heshbon's ample pools, unstain'd
and clear,

Serenely mild, and amiably benign,
The faithful tokens of a heart sincere.
Thy nose arises with resistless grace,
Diffusing majesty o'er all thy face:
Such grace adorns fam'd Lebanon's high
tow'r,

Whose just proportion charms the judg-
ing view,
Which stands a monument of regal
pow'r,
Rais'd with nice art, commensurate and
true.

5.

Thy stately head, majestically high!
With various flowrets elegantly grac'd,
Of ev'ry shade, and ev'ry vivid dye,
With wondrous skill and lively fancy
plac'd,
Appears like Carmel's top, with verdure
crown'd,
Where flow'rs, and plants, and od'rous
shrubs abound.

Thy plaited hair in gaudy tresses flows,
As in the crystal wave the royal purple
glows.

6.

How beautiful art thou, my love!
How charming to the sight!
More fragrant than the spicy grove,
And form'd for soft delight.

7.

Pleas'd, I behold thy graceful stature
rise,
As some straight palm-tree, of majestic
size:

8.

I said, with ardent love possess,
Up to this stately palm I'll go,
And clasp her clusters to my breast,
Her clusters rich, where dates luxuriant
grow:
Like clusters of the vine thy breasts ap-
pear
Through the light gauze, too exquisitely
clear!
More sweet the breath thy fragrant nose
exhales,
Than citron grove, refresh'd by morning
gales.

9.

Thy speech is like the choicest wine,
That moves itself aright,
When royal favourites incline
To revel through the night:
Full oft, when morning's ruddy beams
arise,
And pond'rous sleep weighs down their
glowing eyes,
The slumb'ers, warm with the inspiring
draught,
Pour forth, in mutt'ring sounds, the half-
form'd thought.

*The JEWISH QUEEN to SOLOMON (ex-
pressing great joy at the appear-
ance of his returning love.)*

10.

Yes, my beloved, I am thine,
He feels th' accustom'd fire!
His eyes with mild forgiveness shine,
Commixt with soft desire.

11.

Come then, my love, let's seek the field,
Where op'ning flow'rs their odours
yield;
Let us in some lone village rest,
With peace, and joy, and rapture blest.

12.

Then we'll rise at early dawn,

(Lightly tripping o'er the lawn)
Marking off the vineyard's bloom,
Breathing fresh it's rich perfume;
If the flow'rets on the vine,
Tipt with recent dew-drops shine;
If the tender grapes are seen,
Peeping through the foliage green;
If the pomegranates feel the genial ray,
And swell the bud, expanding to the day.
There, 'mid the umbrage of incircling
groves,
I mean to bless thee with my tend'rest
loves.

13.

The ripen'd mandrakes scent the air,
And near our gates are seen,
All precious plants, and flow'rets rare,
That blush along the green;
For thee, my love, these plants were
taught to rise,
These flow'rs to bloom in variegated
dyes.

END of CANTO the SIXTH.

DAY THE SEVENTH.

SCENE—*A Garden belonging to the
Royal Palace.*

JEWISH QUEEN and ATTENDANTS.

CANTO THE SEVENTH.

(Time—Morning.)

JEWISH QUEEN (*speaking of SOLOMON.*)

V. 1.

O that thou wert as my fond brother
near!
Whose kindred soul with mutual ar-
dour glows,
Whose glist'ning eye pours forth the
pitying tear,
Awake, and present to a sister's woes:
Then should I find thee in the public
street,
O! I would kiss thee with a sister's
kiss;
For sisters thus their darling brothers
greet,
Nor crouds, reproachful, judge the deed
amiss.

2.

Yea, I wou'd lead thee to my mother's
gate,
Void of pale jealousy and anxious fear;
There wou'dst thou freely all thy
thoughts relate,
Pouring instruction through my list'ning
ear;
While, grateful, I wou'd high-spiced wine
produce,
Refreshing cordial to the weary soul;
Or, if thy thirst require the acid juice,
Pomegranates tart should crown the
mantling bowl.

3.

O that his left hand now were laid
Under my sad desponding head;
And that his right hand did sustain
Me, sinking 'neath my love-sick pain!

*The QUEEN (addressing herself to the
DAUGHTERS of JERUSALEM.)*

4.

I've charg'd you oft, O virgin throng!
To drop the cadence of your song,
And still with cautious steps to move,
Lest ye shou'd wake my sleeping love.

SCENE *the SECOND—The Palace Garden.*

JEWISH QUEEN *and her ATTENDANTS.*

SOLOMON *and the SPOUSE approaching,
with the NOBLES of ZION, and
EGYPTIAN VIRGINS.*

(Time—Evening.)

JEWISH QUEEN.

5.

Be still, my soul!—lo! she ascends
From where the wilderness extends!
Again she comes! Behold the splendid
train,
With added pomp and dignity elate,
Advancing slowly o'er the neighb'ring
plain,
Lo! I behold her join her royal mate!

SOLOMON (*to the JEWISH QUEEN.*)

Peace, gentle fair one! in your citron-
grove,
Did I not thee excite to mutual love?
'Twas there, one morn, beneath our
fav'rite tree,
Thy prudent mother took a pledge for
thee;
'Twas there the darling boon she did im-
part,
And bound thee, blushing, to my panting
heart.

JEWISH QUEEN.

6.

O! set me as a signet on that breast,
And bid my name, in lasting lines im-
press
On some bright seal, in glowing traces
rise,
Beam from thine arm, and catch thy
roving eyes!
For mighty love is strong as death,
If jealousy, with fervid breath,
Impel the rising fire:
Fell jealousy is cruel as the grave,
None from it's fangs the tortur'd heart
can save.
Imprest with doubt, led on by soft de-
sire:
The darts thereof are fiery darts,
Quick they assail unguarded hearts,
And burn with veh'mence there:
So, quick the missive arrow flies,
Impulsive, through the yielding skies,
And with it's rapid motion kindles in the
air.

7.

When potent love assails the human
breast,
In vain for peace we seek, in vain for
rest;
Not mighty waters can it's pow'r con-
trol,
Nor floods impetuous mitigate it's force;
But unassuag'd, it vanquishes the soul.
And, unimpair'd, maintains it's furious
course;
Wou'd the rich man his ample wealth
impart,
To bind in golden chains the free-born
heart,

Still unavailing wou'd his treasures
prove;
"For love—love only—is the price of
love."

*The JEWISH QUEEN (speaking of the
SPOUSE.)*

8.

We have (you know) a little sister fair,
Whose infant worth demands our tender
care;
Though yet unform'd; no dawning beau-
ties glow,
On swelling hills of animated snow:
What shall we for this little sister do,
When royal lovers come (at length) to
woo?

SOLOMON (to the JEWISH QUEEN.)

9.

To us she is a guardian wall—
A bulwark to this realm of mine;
We'll build on her the turrets tall,
With burnisht silver taught to shine;
A door to us this sister's found,
Enclose her then with cedar round:
Through her, rich commerce opes her
hand,
And deals out plenty through the land.

The SPOUSE (to the JEWISH QUEEN.)

10.

I am indeed a guardian wall,
Adorn'd with turrets fair and tall;
For here, behold, twin beauties glow,
On hills of animated snow;
Therefore he markt me with the eye of
love.
And rais'd my head the envying crowds
above.

11.

Solomon has a vineyard rare,
In rich Baal-hamon's plain;
To keepers he assigns the care,
Who bring th' appointed gain:

Each, for the fruit thereof, to Salem's
King,
Must year by year a thousand shekels
bring.

12.

My vineyard, which ere-while was mine,
And blooms in yonder vale,
(But now, O Solomon! is thine)
A thousand brings, by tale;
Two hundred shekels more, to those
whose eyes
Watch the choice products as they an-
nual rise.

*SOLOMON (to the JEWISH QUEEN, de-
manding her final answer respect-
ing her future conduct towards him.)*

13.

O thou! that in the gardens seek'st to
dwell,
Haunting the grot, and solitary cell;
Speak now, the dictates of thy mind
declare,
The friendly company, prepar'd to hear,
In silence wrapt, await thy final voice;
Cause me to hear it; bid my soul re-
joice.

*JEWISH QUEEN (to SOLOMON, signifying
her firm resolution of keeping her
distance.)*

14.

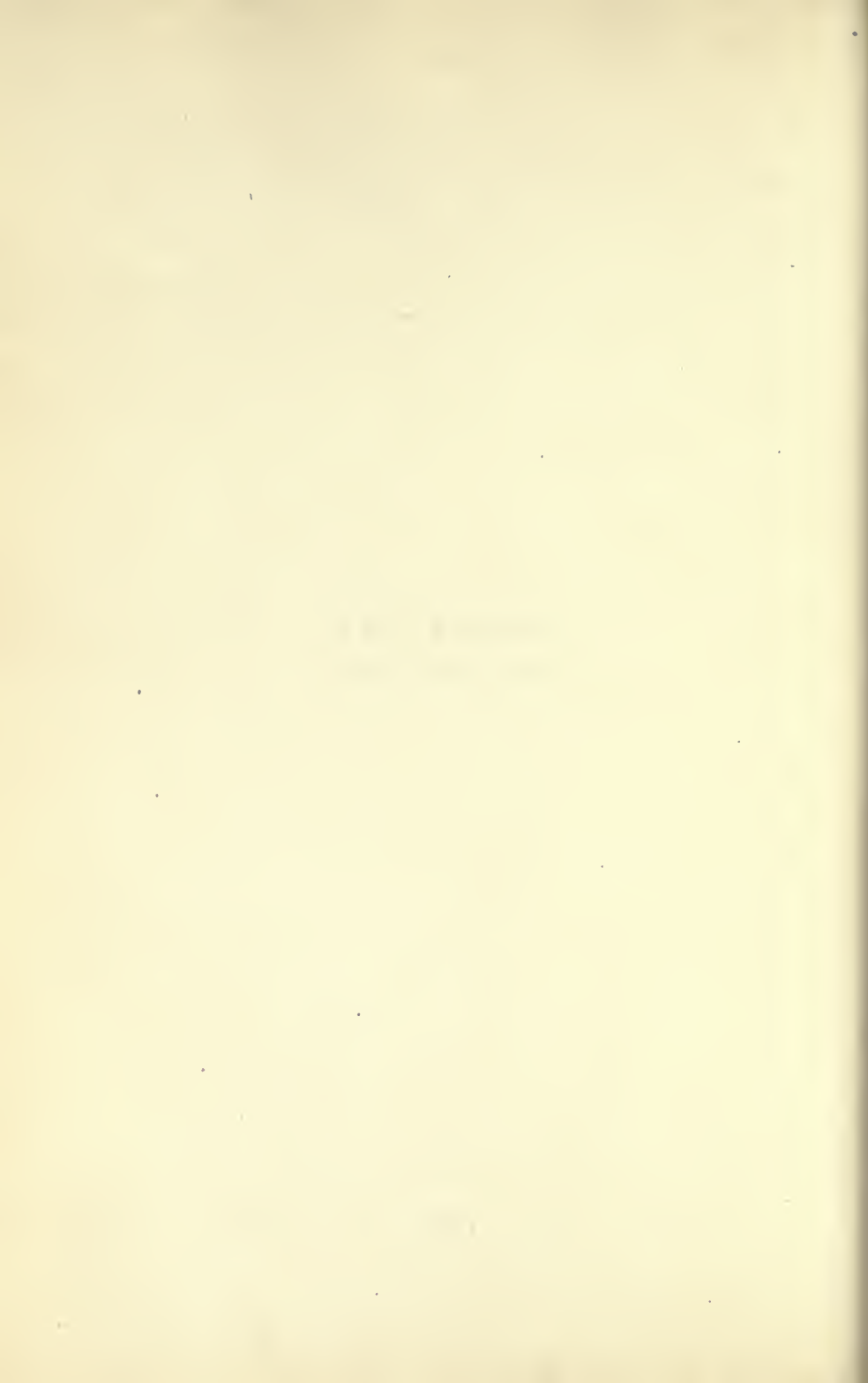
Flee, once-belov'd! quick hasten from
my sight,
New charms attract thee, and new joys
invite:
For me, alas! for me what now remains?
To roam neglected on far distant plains!
Flee, once-belov'd! quick hasten from
my sight,
Like a young hart, or like a bounding
roe,
Which climbs with agile feet the airy
height
Where od'rous plants in rich profusion
grow;
Where aromatic shrubs luxuriant bloom,
And trees balsamic shed their choice per-
fume.

ANN FRANCIS,
[Published London 1781.]



BELSHAZZAR

A DRAMATIC POEM



BELSHAZZAR

A DRAMATIC POEM.

CHARACTERS.

THE DESTROYING ANGEL.

BELSHAZZAR.

ARIOCH, *Captain of the Guard.*

SABARIS, *Chief Eunuch.*

KALASSAN, *High Priest of Bel.*

DANIEL,

IMLAH, *Jews.*

ADONIJAH.

NITOCRIS, *Mother of Belshazzar.*

NAOMI.

BENINA.

*Babylonian Nobles—Priests—Diviners—
Astrologers, &c.
Scene—Babylon.*

The City of Babylon—Morning.

THE DESTROYING ANGEL.

WITHIN the cloud-pavilion of my rest,
Amid the Thrones and Princedoms,
that await

Their hour of ministration to the Lord,
I heard the summons, and I stood with
wings

Outspread for flight, before the Eternal
Throne.

And, from the unapproachéd depth of
light

Wherein the Almighty Father of the
worlds

Dwells, from seraphic sight by glory
veil'd,

Came forth the soundless mandate,
which I felt

Within, and sprung upon my obedient
plumes.

But as I sail'd my long and trackless
voyage

Down the deep bosom of unbounded
space,

The manifest bearer of Almighty wrath,
I saw the Angel of each separate star
Folding his wings in terror, o'er his
orb

Of golden fire; and shuddering till I
pass'd

To pour elsewhere Jehovah's cup of
vengeance.

And now I stand upon this world of
man,

My wonted resting place.—But thou,
oh Earth!

Thou only dost endure my fatal pres-
ence

Undaunted. As of old, I hover o'er
This haughty city of Chaldean Bel,
That not the less pours forth her festal
pomp

To do unholy worship to her Gods,
That are not Gods, but works of mor-
tal hands.

Behold! the Sun hath burst the East-
ern gates,

And all his splendour floods the tower'd
walls,

Upon whose wide immeasurable circuit
The harnessed chariots crowd in long
array.

Down every stately line of pillar'd
street,

To each of the hundred brazen gates,
young men

And flower-crown'd maidens, lead the
mazy dance.

Here the vast Palace, whence yon airy
gardens

Spread round, and to the morning airs
hang forth

Their golden fruits and dewy opening
flowers;

While still the low mists creep, in lazy
folds,

O'er the house-tops beneath. In every
court,

Through every portal, throng, in servile haste,
 Captains and Nobles. There, before the Temple,
 On the far side of wide Euphrates' stream,
 The Priests of Bel their impious rites prepare:
 And cymbal clang, and glittering dulcimer,
 With shrill melodious salutation, hail
 The welcome morn, awakening all the City
 To the last dawn that e'er shall gladden her.
 Babylon! Babylon! that wak'st in pride
 And glory, but shalt sleep in shapeless ruin,
 Thus, with my broad and overshadowing wings,
 I do embrace thee for mine own; forbidding,
 Even at this instant, yon bright orient Sun,
 To shed his splendours on thy lofty streets.
 Oh, Desolation's sacred place, as now
 Thou'rt darken'd, shall the darkness of the dead
 Enwrap thee in its everlasting shade!
 Babylon! Babylon! upon the wreck
 Of that most impious tower your Fathers rear'd
 To scale the crystal battlements of Heaven,
 I set my foot, here take my gloomy rest
 Even till that hour be come, that comes full soon.

Before the Temple.

KALASSAN—THE PRIESTS.

FIRST PRIEST.

Didst thou behold it?

SECOND PRIEST.

What?

FIRST PRIEST.

'Tis gone, 'tis past—

And yet but now 'twas there, a cloudy darkness,
 That, swallowing up the rays of the orient Sun,
 Cast back a terrible night o'er all the City.

THIRD PRIEST.

Who stands aghast at this triumphant hour?
 I tell thee that our Dreamers have beheld
 their
 Majestic visions. The besieging Mede
 Was cast, with all his chariots, steeds,
 and men,
 Into Euphrates' bosom.

KALASSAN.

Do ye marvel
 But now that it was dark? yon orient Sun,
 The Lord of light, withdrew his dawning beams,
 Till he could see the glory of the world,
 Belshazzar, in his gilded galley riding
 Across Euphrates.

FIRST PRIEST.

Give command that all
 The brazen gates along the river side,
 Stand open to receive the suppliant train.

SECOND PRIEST.

Hark! with the trumpet sound their strong recoil
 Upon their grating hinges harshly mingles.

THIRD PRIEST.

Lo! how the bridge is groaning with the gifts
 Of the great King. The camels bow their heads
 Beneath the bright and odorous load they bear;
 The proud steeds toss their flower-enwoven manes,
 And the cars rattle with their ponderous sound;
 While, silent, the slow elephants pursue
 Their wondering way, and bear their crowded towers,
 Widely reflected on the argent stream.

FOURTH PRIEST.

How proudly do the waters toss and foam
 Before the barges, that with gilded prows
 Set the pale spray on fire! The rowers,
 clad
 In Egypt's finest tunics, as they strike
 The waters with their palmy oars,
 awake
 Sweet music, as it seems, from all the
 tide;
 So exquisitely to the dashing strokes
 Are the sweet lutes and floating haut-
 boys timed.

FIRST PRIEST.

Yon bark, in which, at times, the silken
 curtains
 Are by the courteous breezes fann'd
 aside,
 Is that in which the Mother of the
 mightiest,
 Nitocris, sits. Her presence seems to
 awe
 At once, and give a pride to those who
 row
 Her queenly state—

KALASSAN.

Behind—'tis he!—'tis he!—
 Belshazzar's self—the waters crowd
 around,
 As though ambitious to reflect their
 Sovereign;
 And all the throng'd and living shores,
 that now
 To the far limits of the City, pass'd
 His name in one long shout, have
 paused to hear
 Our loftier homage.—Are the Seventy
 here?

FIRST PRIEST.

All.

KALASSAN.

Lift we, then, the solemn strain, in
 praise
 Of the great King, and all the suppliant
 court
 Will answer us in praise of mightiest
 Bel.

SONG OF THE PRIESTS.

Where are the thousand-thronéd kings,
 Beneath whose empires' spacious wings,
 The wide earth lay in mute repose?
 He rose—Chaldea's King arose!
 And bow'd was every crownéd head,
 And every marshall'd army fled;
 Before his footstool bow'd they down,
 The all-conquering Lord of Babylon!

SONG OF THE SUPPLIANTS.

Where are the thousand-shrinéd Gods,
 Within whose temples' proud abodes
 The nations crowded to invoke?
 He woke, Chaldea's God awoke!
 And mute was every sumptuous feast,
 And rite, and song, and victim ceased;
 And every Fane was overthrown,
 Before the God of Babylon!

PRIESTS.

Ammon's crested pride lay low,
 And broke was Elam's hornéd bow;
 Damascus heard the ponderous fall
 Of old Benhadad's palace wall;
 The ocean reddened with the fire
 From the rock-built strengths of Tyre.
 False was fierce Philistia's trust,
 Desert Moab mourns in dust.
 Lo! in chains our Captains bring
 Haughty Zion's eyeless King.
 Kedar's tents are struck, her bands
 Scatter'd o'er her burning sands,
 And Egypt's Pharaoh quails before
 The Assyrian Lion's conquering roar.

THE SUPPLIANTS.

From his high Philistine fane,
 Sea-born Dagon fled amain;
 Moloch, he whose valley stood
 Deep with infant's blameless blood:
 Chemos, struck with pale affright,
 Left his foul unfinish'd rite.
 Her waning moon Astarte veil'd,
 When the Tyrian's sea-wall fail'd.
 In vain Damascus' children meet
 At lofty Rimmon's molten feet.
 And vain were Judah's prayers to him,
 Between the golden Cherubim;
 In vain the Arab, in his flight,
 Call'd on the glittering stars of night;
 In vain the Arab, in his flight,
 Call'd on the glittering stars of night;
 And vain Osiris' timbrels blew
 Over Egypt's maddening crew.

KALASSAN.

Lord of the world, and of the eternal
city,
That wear'st Chaldea's regal diadem
Wreath'd with Assyria's, wherefore art
thou here
Before the Temple of all-powerful Bel?

BELSHAZZAR.

Chief of the Seventy chosen Priests,
that serve
Within the Temple of our God, thou
know'st
That the rebellious Mede, confederate
With Ashkenaz and Elam, and the
might
Of Persia, hath begirt with insolent
siege
Our city walls, and I would know what
swift
And terrible vengeance is ordain'd on
high
For the revolted from Chaldea's sway?

KALASSAN.

Live thou, oh King, for ever! We are
holding
This day our solemn rite. Our Priests
and Seers
Each at his office stands throughout the
Temple;
And all our eight ascending towers that
rise,
Each above each, in heavenward range,
are throug'd
With those that strike the cymbal, and
with voice
And mystic music summon down the
Gods
To give us answer.

BELSHAZZAR.

Priests of Bel, and thou
High mitred Chief, Kalassan! Lo, I
bring
Gifts worthy of the Gods and of Bel-
shazzar;
All that the world in its vast homage
casts
Before our royal feet; the gold that
flows
In the red waters of the farthest East;

The fragrant balm that weeps from glit-
tering trees;
The ivory, and the thin and snowy
robes
Of Egypt; and the purple merchandize
Of Sidon; and the skins of beasts that
far
In the dark forests fly the sight of man.
Yet not so far but that Assyria's ser-
vants
Track them, and rend away their bloody
tribute;
And slaves of every hue, and every
age,
From all the kingdoms of our rule.

KALASSAN.

Great King,
What answer wouldst thou, which such
sumptuous offerings
May not compel!

BELSHAZZAR.

Declare ye to our Gods,
Thus saith Belshazzar: wherefore am I
call'd
The King of Babylon, the scepter'd heir
Of Nabonassar's sway, if still my sight
Must be infested by rebellious arms,
That hem my city round; and frantic
cries
Of onset, and the braying din of battle
Disturb my sweet and wonted festal
songs?

NITOCRIS.

In the Gods' name, and in mine own, I
answer!
When Nabonassar's heir shall take the
sword
Of Nabonassar in his valiant hand;
With the inborn awe of majesty appal
Into the dust Rebellion's crested front:
When for the gliding bark on the
smooth waters,
Whose motion doth but lull his silken
couch,
He mounts the rushing chariot, and in
arms
Asserts himself the lord of human kind.

SABARIS.

Will he endure it?

NITOCRIS.

Oh, my son! my son!
 Must I repent me of that thrill of joy
 I felt, when round my couch the slaves
 proclaim'd
 I had brought forth a man into the
 world,
 A child for empire born, the cradled
 Lord
 Of Nations—oh, my son!—and all the
 pride
 With which I saw thy fair and open
 brow
 Expand in beauteous haughtiness, com-
 manding
 Ere thou could'st speak? And with thy
 growth, thy greatness
 Still ripen'd: like the palm amid the
 grove
 Thou stood'st, the loftiest, at once, and
 comeliest
 Of all the sons of men. And must I
 now
 Wish all my pangs upon a shapeless off-
 spring,
 Or on a soft and dainty maiden wasted.
 That might have been, if not herself,
 like her
 Thy martial ancestress, Semiramis,
 Mightiest—at least the Mother of the
 Mighty?

BELSHAZZAR.

Queen of Assyria, Nabonassar's
 daughter!
 Wife of my royal father, Merodach!
 Greater than all, from whom myself
 was born!
 The Gods that made thee mother of
 Belshazzar,
 Have arm'd thee with a dangerous li-
 cence. Thou,
 Secure, may'st utter what from meaner
 lips
 Had call'd upon the head the indignant
 sword
 Of Justice. But to thee we deign re-
 ply.
 Is 't not the charge of the great Gods
 t' uphold
 The splendour of the world that doth
 them homage?
 As soon would they permit the all-
 glorious Sun

To wither from their palace vault in
 heaven,
 As this rich empire from the earth.

NITOCRIS.

And therefore
 Be as the Gods, Belshazzar, and stand
 forth
 To sweep away the desolating foe!
 As when the thunders scatter all abroad
 The lowering clouds at midnight, all
 the stars
 Look glittering through the bright pel-
 lucid sky,
 And in the glorious calm themselves
 have strew'd,
 Repose triumphant the great Gods.

BELSHAZZAR.

Oh, queen!
 The mother of Chaldea's royal lord
 Ne'er ask'd in vain. Myself this day
 will mount
 The car of battle, and along the walls
 Display my terrors, for Assyria's hosts
 To kindle into valour at my presence;
 And the pale rebels from their distant
 camp,
 Like hunters that have roused the sleep-
 ing lion,
 Snatch up their toils, and fly—

NITOCRIS.

Along the walls!
 And not along the dusty battle plain?
 Yet 'tis enough—the fire but sleeps
 within thee.
 And as the warhorse that hath sported
 long
 On the green meads, beholds the flash
 of arms
 Bright on the fountain where he bathes,
 and hears
 The martial trumpet sounding, start
 erect
 His kindling ears, his agitated mane
 Trembles; already on his back he feels
 The gorgeous trappings and the armed
 rider,
 And treads the sward as though he
 trampled down
 Whole hosts before him; thus Bel-
 shazzar's soul,
 At sight of Babylon's exulting foes,

Shall waken to the warrior's noble
wrath.

BELSHAZZAR.

Give instant order!

NITROCIS.

Oh, tiara'd Mede!
And thou fierce Persian that dost boast
thyself
As hardy as thy native mountains!
Thou,
The shepherd's' nursling, Cyrus! feel
ye not
A prescient terror of your coming con-
queror?

The towers with which ye have girt
your spacious camp,
Do they not rock even to their deep
foundations,
In conscious awe? But thou, my noble
son!

Thy mother's heart, that beat but in
thy presence,
Even when thou laid'st in soft inglori-
ous dalliance,
When home thou com'st, high plumed
with victory, hosts
In chains around thee, and the routed
armies

Crowding to gaze upon their conqueror.
As though it were a solace in their fall
That great Belshazzar stoop'd to over-
throw them;

When all the myriads of vast Babylon
Shout in the triumph of their kingly
lord;

That heart, my son, with such excess
of pride

Will swell, that it will burst. Even
now it fills

My woman's eyes with tears: when I
should wear

A brow all rapture, I can only weep.

KALASSAN.

Lord of the Nations! with our richest
rites

Do we propitiate the eternal Gods.

Upon the golden altar, never wet

Save with the immaculate blood of
yearling lambs

We sacrifice—and on our topmost
tower,

Where, on his couch, amid his native
clouds,

The God reposes, must the chosen Vir-
gin,
Whom to our wandering search he
first presents,
Await the bright descending Deity.

BELSHAZZAR.

What then!—the Gods hold festival to-
night!

And shall the courts of great Chaldea's
palace

Be silent of the festal song? At eve
Our banquet shall begin; and dusky
night,

Astonish'd at our splendour, think his
reign

Usurp'd as by a brighter day. Kalas-
san!

Whence are those golden vessels richly
carved,

And bossy with enchased fruits and
flowers;

Goblets, and lavers, and tall chandeliers,
That, like to blossoming almond trees,
branch out

In knots of glittering silver?—meet
were they

To minister at great Belshazzar's feast.

KALASSAN.

King of the Universe! those vessels
stood

Erst in the Temple of the Hebrew's
God;

But when Chaldea's arms laid waste the
City,

And from their Temple, with destroy-
ing fire,

Scar'd the unresisting Deity, the spoils
Were seiz'd, and consecrate to mightier
Bel.

BELSHAZZAR.

Let them be borne to grace our feast!

KALASSAN.

Most honour'd
Were they by such a noble profanation!
Give ye the order—

Ha! what frantic shriek
Peals through the courts?

PRIEST.

The slaves that girt themselves
To bear those vessels, on a sudden, all,

As though by viewless lightnings struck
to earth,
Lie groveling on the pavement, and
they clench
Their vacant hands in horror.

KALASSAN.

Raise them up,
And lash them to their duty.

SECOND PRIEST.

King of Earth!
The armed statue of thy ancestor,
Great Nabonassar, on its firm-set pedestal
Shakes, and its marble panoply resounds
Like distant thunder!

KALASSAN.

How! the pavement rocks
Beneath our feet, like a tempestuous
sea!

BELSHAZZAR.

What! are Belshazzar's mandates thus
delay'd
For the pale fear of slaves, and idle
sounds
That shake the earth, but not his kingly
soul?
Away with them! we will not brook
remonstrance
From vanquish'd men or Gods!—Away!
I say—

CHORUS.

Sovereign of all the streams that flow
From hills of everlasting snow,
Through vast Chaldea's fertile reign,
Down to the red and pearly main;
And ere thy giant course is done,
Through all imperial Babylon;
By stately towers and palace fair,
And blooming gardens hung in air;
By every glowing brazen gate,
Rollest thy full exulting state.
Proud River! strew thy waves to rest,
And smooth to peace thy azure breast,
While slowly o'er thy willing tide,
Belshazzar's gilded galleys ride.
Hear, King of Floods! Euphrates, hear!
And pay the homage of thy fear.

CHORUS OF SUPPLIANTS.

Sovereign of all the lamps that shine
In yon empyreal arch divine,
That roll'st through half the fiery day,
O'er realms that own Chaldea's sway;
O'er thrones whose monarchs wear her
yoke,
And cities by her conquest broke;
Thou Sun, whose morning splendours
dwell
Upon the Temple towers of Bel,
The quiver of thy noontide rays
Exhaust in all their fiery blaze,
Upon the cloud-aspiring throne
Where rests the God of Babylon!
So shall the God in glory come
Down to his sumptuous earthly home.
Hear! Monarch of the Planets! hear—
And pause upon thy fleet career.

The Quarter of the Jewish Slaves.

IMLAH, NAOMI, BENINA.

BENINA.

Father! dear Father! said'st thou that
our feet
Shall tread the glittering paths of Sion's
hill;
And that our lips shall breathe the fra-
grant airs
That blow from dewy Hermon, and the
fount
Of Siloe flow in liquid music by us?

IMLAH.

Oh, daughter of captivity, and born
To eat the bitter bread of servitude,
Benina, child of sadness!—yet the
dearer
Because thou art the joy of desolate
hearts
That have no joy but thee!—what
knowest thou
Of that fair city where our fathers
dwelt
While unforsaken by their God?

BENINA.

My father!
Have I not seen my mother and thy-
self
Sit by the river side, and dwell for ever
On Salem's glories, and the Temple's
pride,

Till tears have choked your sad though
pleasant speech?
In the deep midnight, when our lords
are sleeping,
I've seen the Brethren from the wil-
lows take
Their wind-caress'd harps, their half-
breath'd sounds
Scarce louder than the rippling river
dash
Around the matted sedge; and still they
pour'd
Their voices down the stream, as
though they wish'd
Their songs to pass away to other
lands
Beyond the bounds of their captivity.
I've listen'd in an ecstasy of tears,
Till purer waters seem'd to wander
near me,
And sweeter flowers to bloom beneath
my feet,
And towers of fairer structure to arise
Under the moonlight; and I felt the joy
Of freedom in my light and sportive
limbs.

IMLAH.

My sweetest child, and thou that gav'st
to me
This dearest treasure, Naomi, thyself,
Even as thou wert in virgin loveliness
My plighted bride, renewed to tender-
est youth!
I will not say I hope not (though my
fears
And conscience of our ill desert re-
prove me)
That God even now prepares the prom-
ised hour,
When Israel shall shake off Assyria's
chains,
And build long-wasted Sion's lovely
walls.
The sands of the appointed years are
run;
The signs break out, as in the cloudy
night
The stars; and buried Prophets' voices
seem
As from their graves to cry aloud, and
mark
The hour that labours with our Israel's
glory;
And, more than all, but yesterday I saw
The holy Daniel—

NAOMI.

Daniel! what of him,

Dear Imlah?

IMLAH.

Till but lately he was girt
With sackcloth, with the meagre hue of
fasting
On his sunk cheek, and ashes on his
head;
When, lo! at once he shook from his
gray locks
The attire of woe, and call'd for wine;
and since
He hath gone stately through the won-
dering streets
With a sad scorn. Amid the heaven-
piercing towers,
Through cool luxurious courts, and in
the shade
Of summer trees that play o'er crystal
fountains,
He walks, as though he trod o'er moss-
grown ruins,
'Mid the deep desolation of a city
Already by the almighty wrath laid
waste.
And sometimes doth he gaze upon the
clouds,
As though he recognized the viewless
forms
Of arm'd destroyers in the silent skies.
And it is said, that at the dead of night
He hath pour'd forth thy burden, Baby-
lon,
And loud proclaim'd the bowing down
of Bel,
The spoiling of the spoiler. Even our
lords,
As conscious of God's glory gathering
around him,
Look on him with a silent awe, nor
dare
To check his motion, or reprove his
speech.

NAOMI.

Oh, Imlah! shall our buried bones re-
pose
In our own land?

BENINA.

Speak on, my dearest Father,

Thy words are like the breezes of the west,
That breathe of Canaan's honey-flowing land.

IMLAH.

My child! my child! thy nuptials shall not be
With song suppress'd, and dim half curtain'd lamp,
Stol'n from the observance of our jealous lords,
As mine and thy fond mother's were.—
Who's here?

BENINA.

'Tis Adonijah: he hath heard thee name him,
And he will see the burning on my cheek,
And so detect our cause of fond discourse.

IMLAH.

I named him not—

BENINA.

Nay, father, now thou mock'st me.

IMLAH.

Alas! poor deer, thou'rt deeply stricken!
Well—
It is a noble boy, that dares to fear
His God, nor makes his youth a privilege
For license, and intemperate scorn of rule.

THE ABOVE, ADONIJAH.

IMLAH.

Whence com'st thou, Adonijah, with thy brow
Elate, and full of pride, that scarce
beseems
A captive?

ADONIJAH.

Imlah! from the dawn of day
I have been gazing from the walls,
and saw

The Persian reining in his fiery squadrons.

Like ostriches they swept the sandy plain,
As though they would outstrip the tardy winds;
And paus'd and wheel'd, and through the clouds of dust
That rose around them, as round terrible Angels,
Their scimitars in silver radiance flash'd.

Oh, will it ever be, that once again
The Lord of Hosts will lift the Lion banner
Of Judah, and her sons go forth to war
Like Joshua, or like him whose beardless strength
O'erthrew the giant Philistine!

BENINA.

Ah, me!

And would'st thou, Adonijah, seek the war,
The ruthless, murtherous, and destroy-
ing war?

ADONIJAH.

Why, yes! nor would Benina love me less
For bringing home the spoil of God's proud foes,
To hang within his vindicated Temple.

BENINA.

So thou didst bring thyself unharm'd, unchanged,
Benina were content.

ADONIJAH.

Heaven's blessings on thee!

IMLAH.

Hear me, young Adonijah; thou dost love
My child: Benina, shall I say, or leave it
To thine own lips or eloquent eyes to tell,
How well thou lov'st the noble Adonijah?

But, youth, I seek not to delay thy joy
 With the cold envious prudence of old
 age,
 That never felt the boiling blood of
 youth;
 For if I did, there's one would chide me
 here
 For my forgetfulness of hours like
 these.
 But yet I would not have my daughter
 wed
 With the sad dowry of a master's
 stripes;
 I would not, Adonijah, on the eve
 Of our deliverance, that the wanton
 Gentile
 Should pass his jest on our cold enter-
 tainment,
 And all the cheerless joy when captives
 wed,
 To breed a race, whose sole inheritance
 Shall be their parents' tasks and heavy
 bondage
 Our father Jacob served seven tardy
 years
 For beautiful Rachel, but I tax not
 thee
 With such a weary service.

ADONIJAH.

Be they ages,
 So the life beat within this bounding
 heart,
 The love shall never fail!

IMLAH.

Here's one would trust thee,
 Youth, should my cautious age be slow.
 Come hither,
 Thou tender vine, that need'st a noble
 stem:
 Thou not repin'st because I wed thee
 not
 To this fair elm, until the gentle airs
 Of our own land, and those delicious
 dews
 That weep like angels' tears of love,
 o'er all
 The hill of Sion, gladden your sweet
 union,
 And make you bear your clustering
 fruits in joy.
 So now, enough, thou dost accept the
 terms,

And in the name of Him that rules on
 high,
 I thus betroth the noble Adonijah
 To soft Benina.—

Now, to him that hears
 The captive's prayer. How long—oh,
 Lord!—how long
 Shall strangers trample down thy beau-
 teous Sion?
 How long shall Judah's hymns arise to
 thee
 On foreign winds, and sad Jerusalem
 On all her hills be desolate and mute?

God of the Thunder! from whose
 cloudy seat

The fiery winds of Desolation flow:
 Father of Vengeance! that with purple
 feet,

Like a full winepress, tread'st the
 world below.

The embattled armies wait thy sign to
 slay,

Nor springs the beast of havoc on his
 prey,

Nor withering Famine walks his blasted
 way,

Till thou the guilty land hast seal'd
 for woe.

God of the Rainbow! at whose gracious
 sign

The billows of the proud their rage
 suppress:

Father of Mercies! at one word of
 thine

An Eden blooms in the waste wilder-
 ness!

And fountains sparkle in the arid sands,
 And timbrels ring in maidens' glancing
 hands,

And marble cities crown the laughing
 lands,

And pillar'd temples rise thy name
 to bless.

O'er Judah's land thy thunders broke—
 oh, Lord!

The chariots rattled o'er her sunken
 gate,

Her sons were wasted by the Assyrian
 sword,

Even her foes wept to see her fallen
 state;

And heaps her ivory palaces became,

Her Princes wore the captive's garb of
shame,
Her Temple sank amid the smouldering
flame,
For thou didst ride the tempest cloud
of fate.

O'er Judah's land thy rainbow, Lord,
shall beam,
And the sad City lift her crownless
head;
And songs shall wake, and dancing foot-
steps gleam,
Where broods o'er fallen streets the
silence of the dead.
The sun shall shine on Salem's gilded
towers,
On Carmel's side our maidens cull the
flowers,
To deck, at blushing eve, their bridal
bowers,
And angel feet the glittering Sion
tread.

Thy vengeance gave us to the stranger's
hand,
And Abraham's children were led
forth for slaves;
With fetter'd steps we left our pleasant
land,
Envyng our fathers in their peaceful
graves.
The stranger's bread with bitter tears
we steep,
And when our weary eye should sink
to sleep,
'Neath the mute midnight we steal forth
to weep,
Where the pale willows shade Eu-
phrates' waves.

The born in sorrow shall bring forth
in joy;
Thy mercy, Lord, shall lead thy chil-
dren home;
He that went forth a tender yearling
boy,
Yet, ere he die, to Salem's streets
shall come.
And Canaan's vines for us their fruits
shall bear,
And Hermon's bees their honied stores
prepare;

And we shall kneel again in thankful
prayer,
Where, o'er the cherub-seated God,
full blaz'd th' irradiate dome.

THE WALLS OF BABYLON.

BELSHAZZAR IN HIS CHARIOT, NITOCRIS,
ARIOCH, SABARIS, ETC.

BELSHAZZAR.

For twice three hours our stately cars
have roll'd
Along the broad highway that crowns
the walls
Of mine imperial City, nor complete
Our circuit by a long and ample space.
And still our eyes look down on gilded
roofs,
And towers and temples, and the
spreading tops
Of cedar groves, through which the
fountains gleam;
And everywhere the countless multi-
tudes,
Like summer insects in the noontide
sun,
Come forth to bask in our irradiate
presence.
Oh, thou vast Babylon! what mighty
hand
Created thee, and spread thee o'er the
plain
Capacious as a world; and girt thee
round
With high tower'd walls, and bound thy
gates with brass;
And taught the indignant river to en-
dure
Thy bridge of cedar and of palm, high
hung
Upon its marble piers? What voice
proclaim'd,
Amid the silence of the sands, "Arise!
And be earth's wonder?" Was it not
my fathers?
Yea, mine entomb'd ancestors awake,
Their heads uplift upon their marble
pillows;
They claim the glory of thy birth. Thou
hunter,
That didst disdain the quarry of the
field,

Choosing thee out a nobler game of
 man,
 Nimrod! and thou that with unfem-
 inine hand
 Didst lash the coursers of thy battle-
 car
 O'er prostrate thrones, and necks of
 captive kings,
 Semiramis! and thou whose kingly
 breath
 Was like the desert wind, before its
 coming
 The people of all earth fell down, and
 hid
 Their humble faces in the dust! that
 mad'st
 The pastime of a summer day t' o'er-
 throw
 A city, or cast down some ancient
 throne;
 Whose voice each ocean shore obey'd,
 and all
 From sable Ethiopia to the sands
 Of the gold-flowing Indian streams;—
 oh! thou
 Lord of the hundred thrones, high Nab-
 onassar!
 And thou my father, Merodach! ye
 crown'd
 This City with her diadem of towers—
 Wherefore?—but prescient of Belshaz-
 zar's birth,
 And conscious of your destin'd son, ye
 toil'd
 To rear a meet abode. Oh, Babylon!
 Thou hast him now, for whom through
 ages rose
 Thy sky-exalted towers—for whom yon
 palace
 Rear'd its bright domes, and groves of
 golden spires;
 In whom, secure of immortality
 Thou stand'st, and consecrate from
 time and ruin,
 Because thou hast been the dwelling
 of Belshazzar!

NITOCRIS.

I hear thy words: like thine, thy
 mother's heart
 Swells, oh, my son! to see thy seat of
 empire.
 But will the Lord of Babylon endure,

What in yon plain beneath offends our
 sight,
 The rebel Persian?

BELSHAZZAR.

Gave we not command,
 To Tartan and to Artamas, to sweep
 Yon tribes away, or ere our car ap-
 proach'd
 The northern wall?

ARIOCH.

They hasted forth, oh, King!
 But Tartan came not back, nor Arta-
 mas.

BELSHAZZAR.

Slaves! did they dare fall off from their
 allegiance?

ARIOCH.

To the dominion they fell off of him
 That hath the empire o'er departed
 souls.

NITOCRIS.

Look down! look down! where, proud
 of his light conquest,
 The Persian rides—it is the youthful
 Cyrus;
 How skillfully he winds through all the
 ranks
 His steed, in graceful ease, as though
 he sate
 Upon a firm-set throne, yet every mo-
 tion
 Obedient to his slack and gentle rein,
 As though one will controll'd the steed
 and rider;
 Now leaps he down, and holds a brief
 discourse
 With yon helm'd captain; like a stoop-
 ing falcon,
 Now vaults he to the patient courser's
 back.
 Happy the mother of that noble youth!

BELSHAZZAR.

Now, by great Bel! thou dost abuse our
 patience.
 Is that the rebel king to whom Bel-
 shazzar

Should veil his pride, and stoop to be
his foe;
Him with the brazen arms, that, dimly
bright,
Scarce boast distinction from the
meaner host?
Where are his golden attributes of
power,
The glorious ensigns of his sovereignty;
The jewel'd diadem, the ivory sceptre,
The satrap circled throne, the kneeling
hosts?—

NITOCRIS.

Dost ask, my son, his marks of sov-
ereignty?
The armies that behold his sign, and
trust
Their fate upon the wisdom of his rule,
Confident of accustom'd victory;
The unconquerable valour, the proud
love
Of danger, and the scorn of silken ease;
The partnership in suffering and in
want,
Even with his meanest follower; the
disdain
Of wealth, that wins the spoil but to
bestow it.
Content with the renown of conquering
deeds.

BELSHAZZAR.

By all our Gods!—

SABARIS.

Great Queen! it ill beseems
The lowest of Chaldea's slaves to op-
pose
The mother of our king with insolent
speech;
But my bold zeal for him that rules
the world
Has made me dauntless. Is it not
heaven's will,
Written in the eternal course of human
things,
Some kings are born to toil, and some
to enjoy;
Some to build up the palace domes of
power,
That in their glowing shade their sons
may sit
Transcendent in luxurious ease, as they

In conquest? 'Tis the privilege of the
chosen,
The mark'd of fate, and favourites of
the Gods,
To find submissive earth deck'd out, a
fair
And summer garden house, for one
long age
Of toilless pleasure, and luxurious revel.

BELSHAZZAR.

The slave speaks well: and thee, oh,
queen Nitocris!
This eve will we compel, with gracious
violence,
To own our loftier fate. This sacred
eve
We'll have an army wide as yon that
spreads
Its tents on the hot sands; and they
shall feast
Around me, all reclin'd on ivory
couches,
Strew'd with Sidonian purple, and soft
webs
Of Egypt; fann'd by bright and glitter-
ing plumes
Held in the snowy hand of virgin
slaves;
And o'er their turban'd heads shall
lightly wave
The silken canopies, that softly tremble
To gales of liquid odour; all the courts
Shall breathe like groves of cassia and
of nard.
And every paradise of golden fruits,
The forests and the tributary streams,
In this one banquet shall exhaust their
stores
Of delicates; the swans and Phasian
birds,
And roes and deer from off a thousand
hills,
Serv'd in the spices of the farthest
East.
And we will feast to dulcimers and
lutes,
And harps and cymbals, and all instru-
ments
Of rapturous sound, till it shall seem
the stars
Have stoop'd the nearer to our earth,
to crown
Our banquet with their heavenly con-
cert. There,

Our captains and our counsellors, our
wives
And bright-ey'd concubines, through all
the palace
Th' array of splendour shall prolong—
while I,
In state supreme, and glory that shall
shame
The setting sun amid his purple clouds,
Will on my massy couch of gold re-
cline:
Then shalt thou come, and seeing thy
son the orb
And centre of this radiance, even thy-
self
Shalt wonder at thy impious speech,
that dared
To equal aught on earth to great Bel-
shazzar.
And now, lead on!—

THE ABOVE, BENINA, IMLAH, ADONIJAH,
PRIESTS.

BENINA.

Ah, save me! save me!

ARIOCH.

Peace!

Before the king!—

BELSHAZZAR.

What frantic maid is this,
That shrieks and flies, with loose and
rending garments,
And streaming hair?—And who are
these that circle her,
And sing around her?

SABARIS.

Live oh king, for ever!
Chaldea's priests, that seek this even-
ing's bride
For mightiest Bel.

PRIESTS.

Beauteous damsel! chosen to meet
First our wandering heaven-led feet.
Spotless virgin! thee alone
The great God of Babylon,
From his starry seat above,
Hath beheld with looks of love.
Bride of him that rules the sky!

Cast not down thy weeping eye.
Daughter of the captive race!
For thine high and blissful place,
In the heaven-hung chamber laid,
Many a Babylonian maid
To the voiceless midnight air,
Murmurs low her bashful prayer.
With enamour'd homage see,
Round and round we circle thee;
Round and round each dancing foot
Glitters to the breathing lute.

SABARIS.

Why dost thou struggle thus, fond
slave?

BENINA.

My father!—
My dearest Adonijah! speak to him—
The panting breath swells in my throat,
my words
Can find no utterance, save to thee.

IMLAH.

Great king!
They rend away my child, mine only
child!—

BELSHAZZAR.

Peace! she is borne to serve the God
of Babylon:
And ye should fall, and kiss their gar-
ment hems,
And bless them for the glory that
awaits
The captive maiden—

ADONIJAH.

Glory! call ye it,
To be the lustful prey—

BENINA.

Sweet youth! no more.
Oh, speak not!—by the love thou bear-
est me—
By all our hopes—alas! what hopes
have we?—
Let me endure no sufferings but my
own.

BELSHAZZAR.

Priests, to your office!—

BENINA.

Oh! no mercy—none—
Not even in thee, that wear'st a wom-
an's form,

But all the cold, relentless pride of
man—
Mightiest of queens!—would I might
add most gracious—

IMLAH.

God of our fathers! that alone canst
save,
Look down upon this guileless innocent.
Lo! pale and fainting, like a wounded
fawn
She hangs upon their arms—death
scarce could throw
A sadder paleness, or more icy torpor,
Over that form, whose loveliness is now
its bane, and stamps it for the worst
of misery.

ADONIJAH.

Oh, for a Median scimitar!

ARIOCH.

What said he?

BENINA.

Nought—nought—

ARIOCH.

The slave forgets that scourges hang
Upon our walls—

IMLAH.

And we had fondly thought
The bitter dregs of our captivity
Drank out! Farewell, my child! thou
dost not hear me—
Thou liest in cold and enviable sense-
lessness,
And we might almost fear, or hope,
that death—
Compassionate death—had freed thee
from their violence.
What now, my child?

ADONIJAH.

Oh, beautiful Benina!
Why do thy timorous dove-like eyes
awake,
And glow with scorn? why dost thou
shake away

The swoon of bashful fear, and stand
erec't,
Thou, that didst hang, but now, like a
loose woodbine,
Trailing its beauteous clusters in the
dust?

BENINA.

Give place, and let me speak unto my
father,
And to this youth—
Fierce men! your care is vain—
I will not stoop to fly.

IMLAH.

My soul is lost
In wonder; yet I touch thee once again,
And that is rapture.

BENINA.

Did ye not behold him
Upon the terrace top,—the Man of
God!
The anointed Prophet!

IMLAH.

Daniel!

BENINA.

He whose lips
Burn with the fire from heaven! I saw
him, father:
Alone he stood, and in his proud com-
passion
Look'd down upon this pomp that blaz'd
beneath him,
As one that sees a stately funeral.

IMLAH.

He spoke not?—

BENINA.

No:—like words articulate,
His looks address'd my soul, and said—
oh, maid,
Be of good cheer—and, like a robe of
light,
A rapture fell upon me, and I caught
Contagious scorn of earthly power; and
fear

And bashful shame are gone, and in the
 might
 Of God, of Abraham's God, our father's
 God,
 I stand, superior to the insulting
 heathen.

BELSHAZZAR.

What! wait ye still to lead the Gods
 their slave,
 And thus delay Belshazzar's course?

BENINA.

Your Gods!

Whom I disdain to honour with my
 dread.

BELSHAZZAR.

Off with her! and advance our royal
 car:—
 Set forward.—

[*Belshazzar departs with his train.*]

BENINA.

Ye shall need no force to drag me.
 My father!—Adonijah!—gaze not thus,
 Blaspheming, with your timorous
 doubts, the arm
 Of the Most High, that waves above
 mine head
 In silent might unseen!—

And thou—go on,
 Go on thy stately course—Imperial Lord
 Of golden Babylon! the scourge that
 lash'd

The Nations, from whose mantling cup
 of pride
 Earth drank, and with the fierce intoxi-
 cation
 Scoff'd at the enduring heavens.

Go on, in awe
 And splendour, radiant as the morning
 star,

But as the morning star to be cast
 down
 Into the deep of deeps. Long, long the
 Lord

Hath bade his Prophets cry to all the
 world,
 That Babylon shall cease! Their words
 of fire

Flash round my soul, and lighten up the
 depths
 Of dim futurity! I hear the voice

Of the expecting grave!—I hear abroad
 The exultation of unfetter'd earth!—
 From East to West they lift their tram-
 pled necks,

Th' indignant nations: earth breaks out
 in scorn;

The valleys dance and sing; the moun-
 tains shake

Their cedar-crown'd tops! The stran-
 gers crowd

To gaze upon the howling wilderness,
 Where stood the Queen of Nations. Lo!
 even now,

Lazy Euphrates rolls his sullen waves
 Through wastes, and but reflects his
 own thick reeds.

I hear the bitterns shriek, the dragons
 cry;

I see the shadow of the midnight owl
 Gliding where now are laughter-echoing
 palaces!

O'er the vast plain I see the mighty
 tombs

Of kings, in sad and broken whiteness
 gleam

Beneath the o'ergrown cypress—but no
 tomb

Bears record, Babylon, of thy last lord;
 Even monuments are silent of Belshaz-
 zar!

PRIEST.

Still must we hear it?—

BENINA.

Yea, ye must!—the words
 Of God will find a voice in every wind;
 The stones will speak, the marble walls
 cry out!

PRIEST.

Maid, in Bel's appointed bride
 We must brook the words of pride;
 Mortal voice may ne'er reprove
 Whom the bright immortals love;
 Nor hand of mortal violate
 Her, the chosen immortal's mate.

BENINA.

Oh, Adonijah! soothe my mother's
 tears;
 Be to my father what I should have
 been;

And now farewell! Forget not her
 whose thoughts,
 In terror and in rapture, still will dwell
 On thee: in prayer, at morn and eve,
 forget not
 Her who will need prayers worthier
 than her own.

BEFORE THE HOUSE OF IMLAH.

IMLAH, ADONIJAH.

IMLAH.

We are here at length:—we two have
 glided on
 Like voiceless ghosts, along the crowd-
 ed streets.
 The miserable pour their tale of an-
 guish
 Into the happy ear, and feel sweet so-
 lace
 From his compassion; but the wretched
 find
 No comfort from imparting mutual bit-
 terness.
 I know I ought to feel that God pro-
 tects
 My child—I can but think that heathen
 arms
 Have torn her from my bleeding heart!
 I know
 I ought to kindle with the heavenly fire
 Of her rapt spirit, to dauntlessness like
 hers.
 I can but tremble for her tender loveli-
 ness,
 That us'd to cling to me for its sup-
 port,
 Like a soft lily, for the world's rude
 airs
 Too frail.

ADONIJAH.

Scarce dare I speak, lest I speak rashly.
 I have rebuked and struggled with my
 sorrow,
 Till I detected in my secret heart
 A proud reproach, that I was born a
 son
 Of Abraham, to be trampled in the dust
 Like a base worm, that dare not turn
 to sting
 The insulting foot.

IMLAH.

Oh cool decline of day,
 That wert the captive's hour of joy, his
 tasks
 Fulfill'd, his master's wayward pride
 worn out,
 How wert thou wont to lead my weary
 foot
 To such a blissful home,—I've oft for-
 got
 It was a captive's. Naomi, my wife,
 I never fear'd to meet thy loving looks
 Till now.

THE ABOVE, NAOMI.

So, Imlah, thou'rt return'd:—and thou,
 My son, I'll call thee.—Sweet it is t'
 anticipate,
 And make the fond tongue thus familiar
 With words that it so oft must use.
 Stay, stay,
 Beloved! and I'll call forth, or ere ye
 enter,
 My child, whose welcome will be
 sweeter to you
 Than the cold babbling of her aged
 mother:—
 I had forgot—she went abroad with
 you.

IMLAH.

Have mercy, Heaven!

NAOMI.

Now, whither is she gone?
 To seek for thee the cup of sparkling
 water
 With which she used to lave thy burn-
 ing brow;
 Or gather thee the rosy fruit, that
 gain'd
 Fresh sweetness to thy taste, from that
 dear hand
 That offer'd it. She ever thought—
 though weary
 Herself and wanting food—of minis-
 tering
 First to the ease and joy of those she
 lov'd.—
 Ha! tears upon thy brow, thy noble
 brow,
 Which I have seen endure—

IMLAH.

Go in!—no, stay
Without! I cannot venture where some
mark
Of her fond duty and officious care,
Will be the first thing mine eyes see.—
My wife,
Why dost thou tear thine hair, and
clasp thy brain?
I have not told thee—

NAOMI.

What has thou to tell me?
Thou'rt here without her:—thou and
this brave youth
Have eyes that burst with tears. She's
lost!—she's dead!

IMLAH:

Would that she were!

NAOMI.

Unnatural father! wretch,
That hast no touch of human pity in
thee,
To tell a mother thou canst wish her
child
Where her fond arms can never fold
her more!—
Oh, Imlah! Imlah! tell me—tell me all—
Ye cannot tell me more than what I
fear.

IMLAH.

They tore her from us, for a paramour
For their false Gods—

NAOMI.

'Tis ever thus:—most bless'd
But to be made most wretched!

IMLAH.

Pardon her,
Oh Lord! oh, we can chide on others'
lips,
What our own burn to utter!

NAOMI.

All my care,
My jealous, vigilant, and restless care,

To veil her from the eyes of man, to
keep her
Like a sweet violet, that the airs of
heaven
Scarcely detect in its secluded shade,
All waste and vain! I was so proud,
to think
I had conceal'd our treasure from the
knowledge
Of our rude masters—and I thought
how envied
I should return among our barren
mothers,
To Salem.

IMLAH.

Dearest! she beheld—she felt
The arm of Israel's God protecting her.
Thou canst not think with what a beau-
teous scorn
Our soft and timorous child o'erawed
the spoiler—
How nobly she reprov'd our fears.

NAOMI.

Poor fool!
To be deluded by those tender arts
She ever used—her only arts—to spare
Our bleeding hearts from knowing
when she suffer'd.
What! she look'd fearless, did she? She
in the arms
Of sinful men, that trembled at heaven's
airs,
When they came breathing o'er her
blushing cheek.
And ye—thou, Adonijah, that dost know
Her timorous nature, wert deceiv'd?—
cold comfort!
Have ye no better?

IMLAH.

Oh, weep! weep, my wife!
Look not upon me with those stony
eyes!
Oh, think—the cup is bitter, but the
Lord
May change it:—think of him that lost
so many,
His sons and daughters, at their jocund
feast,
All at one blow—and said*—God gave,
and God
Hath taken away.

*Job i: 21.

NAOMI.

Had he but one, like ours;
One that engross'd his undivided love;
One such as ne'er before blest human
heart,

Would he have said so?

Wilt not tell me, too,
How Sarah in her old age bore a child,
To be a joy within her desolate house?
Go on—go on—recount each act of love,
Each merciful miracle, that we may
know

How gracious God hath been to all—
but us.

IMLAH.

Hear her not, God of Israel!—oh, my
son!

We must distract this phrensy, or 'twill
blight

Heaven's hop'd for blessings to a bar-
ren curse,

And intercept some soft descending
mercy.

What shall we do?—what say?—to dis-
sipate

Her brooding thoughts? We'll take the
harps that hang

Around us, and are us'd to feel the
hand

Of sorrow trembling on their mournful
strings.

When ye demand sweet Sion's songs to
mock them,

Proud strangers, our right hands forget
their cunning.

But ye revenge you, wringing from our
hearts

Sounds that might melt your senseless
stones to pity.

HYMN.

Oh, thou that wilt not break the bruised
reed,

Nor heap fresh ashes on the mourn-
er's brow,

Nor rend anew the wounds that inly
bleed,

The only balm of our afflictions thou,
Teach us to bear thy chastening wrath,
oh God!

To kiss with quivering lips—still humbly
kiss thy rod!

We bless thee, Lord, though far from
Judah's land;

Though our worn limbs are black
with stripes and chains;

Though for stern foes we till the burn-
ing sand;

And reap, for others' joy, the summer
plains;

We bless thee, Lord, for thou art gra-
cious still,

Even though this last black drop o'er-
flow our cup of ill!

We bless thee for our lost, our beaute-
ous child;

The tears, less bitter, she hath made
us weep;

The weary hours her graceful sports
have 'guiled,

And the dull cares her voice hath
sung to sleep!

She was the dove of hope to our lorn
ark;

The only star that made the strangers'
sky less dark!

Our dove is fall'n into the spoiler's net;
Rude hands defile her plumes, so

chastely white;

To the bereaved their one soft star is
set,

And all above is sullen, cheerless
night!

But still we thank thee for our transient
bliss—

Yet, Lord, to scourge our sins re-
main'd no way but this?

As when our Father to Mount Moriah
led

The blessing's heir, his age's hope and
joy,

Pleased, as he roam'd along with danc-
ing tread,

Chid his slow sire, the fond, officious
boy,

And laugh'd in sport to see the yellow
fire

Climb up the turf-built shrine, his des-
tined funeral pyre—

Even thus our joyous child went lightly
on;

Bashfully sportive, timorously gay,
Her white foot bounded from the

pavement stone

Like some light bird from off the quiv-
 'ring spray;
 And back she glanced, and smiled, in
 blameless glee,
 The cars, and helms, and spears, and
 mystic dance to see.

By thee, Oh Lord, the gracious voice
 was sent
 That bade the Sire his murtherous
 task forego:
 When to his home the child of Abra-
 ham went
 His mother's tears had scarce begun
 to flow.
 Alas! and lurks there, in the thicket's
 shade,
 The victim to replace our lost, devoted
 maid?

Lord, even through thee to hope were
 now too bold;
 Yet 'twere to doubt thy mercy to
 despair.
 'Tis anguish, yet 'tis comfort, faint
 and cold,
 To think how sad we are, how blest
 we were!
 To speak of her is wretchedness, and
 yet
 It were a grief more deep and bitterer
 to forget!

Oh Lord our God! why was she e'er
 our own?
 Why is she not our own—our treas-
 ure still?
 We could have pass'd our heavy years
 alone.
 Alas! is this to bow us to thy will?
 Ah, even our humblest prayers we make
 repine,
 Nor, prostrate thus on earth, our hearts
 to thee resign.

Forgive, forgive—even should our full
 hearts break;
 The broken heart thou wilt not, Lord,
 despise:
 Ah! thou art still too gracious to for-
 sake,
 Though thy strong hand so heavily
 chastise.
 Hear all our prayers, hear not our mur-
 murs, Lord;

And, though our lips rebel, still make
 thyself ador'd.

THE FRONT OF THE TEMPLE.

PRIESTS WITHIN.

Hark! what dancing footsteps fall
 Light before the Temple wall?
 Who are ye that seek to pass
 Through the burnish'd gate of brass?
 Come ye with the gifts of Kings,
 With the peacock's bright-eyed wings?
 With the myrrh and fragrant spice?
 With the spotless sacrifice?
 With the spoils of conquer'd lands?
 With the works of maidens' hands,
 O'er the glittering loom that run,
 Underneath the orient sun?
 Bring ye pearl, or choicest gem,
 From a plunder'd diadem?
 Ivory wand, or ebony
 From the sable Indian tree?
 Purple from the Tyrian shore;
 Amber cup, or coral store,
 From the branching trees that grow
 Under the salt sea-water's flow?

PRIESTS, WITH BENINA.

With a fairer gift we come
 To the God's majestic home
 Than the pearls the rich shells weep
 In the Erythrean deep.
 All our store of ebony
 Sparkles in her radiant eye.
 Whiter far her spotless skin
 Than the gauzy vestures thin,
 Bleach'd upon the shores of Nile;
 Grows around no palmy isle
 Coral like her swelling lips,
 Whence the gale its sweetness sips,
 That upon the spice-tree blown
 Seems a fragrance all its own;
 Never yet so fair a maid
 On the bridal couch was laid;
 Never form beseem'd so well
 The immortal arms of Bel.

PRIESTS [*leading her in*].

Mid the dashing fountains cool,
 In the marble vestibule,
 Where the orange branches play,
 Freshen'd by the silver spray,

Heaven-led virgin, take thy rest,
While we bear the silken vest
And the purple robe of pride
Meet for Bel's expected bride.

ALL THE PRIESTS.

Bridelike now she stands array'd!
Welcome, welcome, dark-hair'd maid!
Lead her in, with dancing feet,
Lead her in, with music sweet.
With the cymbals glancing round,
And the hautboy's silver sound.
See the golden gates expand,
And the Priests, on either hand,
On their faces prone they fall
Entering the refulgent Hall.
With the tread that suits thy state,
Glowing cheek, and look elate,
With thine high unbending brow,
Sacred maiden, enter thou.

FIRST PRIEST.

Chosen of Bel, thou stands't within the
Temple,
Within the first and lowest of our Halls,
Yet not least sumptuous. On the jas-
per pavement,
Each in his deep alcove, Chaldea's
Kings
Stand on their carv'd pedestals. Be-
hold them!
Their marble brows still wear the con-
scious awe
Of sovereignty—the mightiest of the
dead,
As of the living. Eminent, in the centre,
The golden statue stands of Nabonassar,
That in the plain of Dura, to the sound
Of harp, and lute, and dulcimer, re-
ceived
The homage of the world. The Scythi-
an hills,
The margin of the Syrian sea, the Isles
Of Ocean, their adoring tribes cast
down;
And the high sun, at noonday, saw no
face
Of all mankind turn'd upward from the
dust,
Save the imperial brow of Nabonassar,
That rose in lonely loftiness, as now
Yon awe-crown'd image.

BENINA.

Have ye wrought him, too,
As when he prowl'd the plain, th' asso-
ciate
Of the brute herd that browsed around,
nor own'd
The dread of a superior presence, beat
By the uncourtly rains and wintry
winds
Upon the undiadem'd head?

PRIEST.

Cease, cease, nor tempt
The loving patience of the God too far!
Advance! and wind along the aspiring
stair.

PRIESTS.

Haste! the fading light of day
Scarce will gild our lofty way.
Haste, nor tremble, tender maid!
To the sculptur'd balustrade
Cling not thus with snowy hand;
None but slaves around thee stand,
On thy footsteps proud to wait:
Hark! the slow-recoiling gate
Opens at our trumpet's call;
Enter, now, our second Hall.

SECOND PRIEST.

Well mayst thou hold thine alabaster
hand,
Through which the rosy light so softly
shines,
Before thine eyes, oh! maiden, as thou
enterest
The Chamber of the Tribute. Here
thou seest
The wealth of all the subject world,
piled up
In order—from its multitude that seems
Confusion: in each deep, receding vault,
O'er all the spacious pavement, 'tis the
same;
The flaming gold, and ivory, and the
gems—
If all mankind were Kings, enough to
crown
Each brow with an imperial diadem!

BENINA.

Oh! rapt Isaiah, were they not thy words—
 How hath she ceased—the golden city
 ceased!
 Will all that wealth but ransom thee an
 hour,
 Or bribe the impartial and undazzled
 Ruin
 One instant to suspend its swooping
 wing?

PRIESTS.

Breathe again the clear blue air;
 Mount again the marble stair:
 Still we mount—on high—on high,
 To the exulting harmony!
 Hark! the strain of triumph rings
 In the Hall of Captive Kings.

THIRD PRIEST.

Now pause again: yon chained images
 Are those that ruled the world, or ere
 the Lord
 Of great Chaldea took the all-ruling
 sceptre
 Into his iron hand, and laid the pride
 Of all the kingdoms prostrate at his
 feet.

BENINA.

Oh! King of Judah, thou art there! Thy
 foes,
 In charitable cruelty, did quench
 Thy sightless eyes, lest thou should'st
 see the dwelling
 Which thou had'st chang'd for Sion's
 beauteous hill;
 Lest thou should'st more than hear thy
 sorrowing people
 Doom'd by thy sins, and by their own,
 to bondage.
 Thou, Zedekiah, did'st desert thy God,
 And wert of God deserted;—nor to
 thee
 Is given, withdrawn into a foreign
 grave,
 To feel again soft Canaan's fragrant
 gales
 On thy blind brow, almost persuading
 thee
 That, in thy darkness, thou canst still
 behold

Some once-lov'd spot, or dim-remem-
 ber'd scene.
 The glad deliverance that comes to
 Judah
 Comes not to thee. Alas! to sad Be-
 nina,
 Oh, gracious God of Abraham, will it
 come?

PRIESTS.

Maid, again we lift the song;
 Thy soft feet have rested long;
 Nearer, nearer as we climb
 To the highest Hall sublime,
 Bride of the Immortal, thee
 All the city throngs to see,
 Floating, like a snowy dove,
 In the azure clouds above.
 Lo! the fourth of our abodes,
 Chamber of the captive Gods!

BENINA.

Oh, Lord of Hosts! I dare not gaze
 around me,
 Lest in yon heaps of monstrous forms
 uncouth
 The scaly Dagon, and the brute Osiris,
 Moon-crown'd Astarte, or the Sun-like
 Mithra,
 Some shape I should behold by the blind
 Gentile
 Held worthy to enclose th' Illimitable
 That fills the Heaven and Earth. The
 Cherubim,
 Perchance, are here, behind whose
 golden wings
 Thy fiery presence dwelt, but dwells no
 more.
 I know that danger waits me on yon
 height,
 But thither haste I rather than behold
 Profaning Heathens scorn what thou
 hast glorified.
 Lead on—

PRIESTS.

Half thy journey now is past;
 Who shall wonder at thine haste:—
 Dost not wish for wings to fly
 To thy blissful destiny?
 Yet, oh tread with footstep light
 As the falling dews of night;
 Like the gliding serpent creep
 Where the gifted Dreamers sleep;

Fold thou close thy fluttering dress,
 Even thv panting breath suppress,
 Lest some glorious dream we break:—
 Lo! 'tis vain—they move—they wake!

THE DREAMERS.

Hark! hark! the foot—we hear the
 trembling foot,
 With motion like the dying wind upon
 a silver lute:
 Upon our sleep it came, as soft itself
 as sleep;
 It shone upon our visions like a star
 upon the deep.

Lo! lo! the form, the graceful form we
 see
 That seem'd, through all the live-long
 night, before our eyes to be:
 Above, the eyes of sparkling jet, the
 brow like marble fair;
 And down, and o'er the snowy breast,
 the dark and wandering hair.

Hark! hark! the song—we hear the
 bridal song—
 Amid the listening stars it flows the
 sounding heavens along!
 It follows the Immortal'down from his
 empyreal sky.
 Descending to his mortal bride in full
 divinity!

BENINA.

What! are your dreams so soft; and
 saw ye nought
 Of midnight flames, that clomb the pal-
 ace walls,
 And ran along the terrace colonnades,
 And pour'd the liquid walls in torrent
 flames
 Of dark asphaltus?—Heard ye not the
 wail
 Of wounded men, and shrieks of flying
 women;
 And the carv'd Gods dash'd down in
 cumbrous ruin
 On their own shrines?

PRIESTS.

Great Bel avert the omen!

PRIESTS.

Hurry on, nor more delay;
 Shadows darken on our way;
 Only in the hall we tread;
 Ask of those the stars that read,
 Catching every influence
 Their all-ruling orbs dispense.
 From those silent Prophets bright
 That adorn the vault of night,
 Watchers of the starry sky,
 Know ye, feel ye, who is nigh?

ASTROLOGERS.

What planet rolls its pearly car,
 What orb of mild or angry hue?
 The star of love, the silver star,
 Glides lonely through yon depth of
 blue.
 We see her sailing motion calm;
 We hear the music of her sound;
 We drink Mylitta's breathing balm,
 In odorous clouds distill'd around.
 And calm, and musical, and sweet
 Is she that star's mild influence leads—
 The maid that, with her snowy feet,
 Even now the sacred pavement treads.

BENINA.

Enough of this! Oh! chaste and quiet
 stars,
 And pure, as all things from infecting
 Earth
 Remov'd, and near the throne of God;
 whose calm
 And beautiful obedience to the laws
 Of your great Maker is a mute re-
 proach
 To the unruly courses of the world,
 Would they debase you to the minis-
 ters
 And guilty favourers of their sinful
 purpose?

PRIESTS.

Now our toil is all but done;
 Now the height is all but won;
 By the High Priest's lonely seat,
 By Kalassan's still retreat,
 Where, in many a brazen fold,
 The slumbering Dragon lies outroll'd,
 Pass we on, nor pause. Nor thou

Gaze, oh Priest, with wondering brow!
 Lovelier though her cheek appears
 For her toil and for her tears;
 And the bosom's vest beneath
 Heaves the quick and panting breath.

KALASSAN.

More beautiful ne'er trod our marble
 stairs!

PRIESTS.

None!—but still the maid dismiss
 To her place of destined bliss:—
 That no mortal eye may see—
 On! we may not follow thee:
 Only with our music sweet
 We pursue thy mounting feet.
 Now, upon the topmost height,
 Thou art lost to mortal sight!
 Lo! the couch beside thee spread,
 Where the Heaven-loved maids are wed.
 Till the bridal midnight deep
 Bow thy head in balmy sleep—
 Sleep that shall be sweetly broken
 When the God his bride hath woken.

BENINA.

Alone! alone upon this giddy height!
 Yet, better thus than by that frantic
 rout
 Encircled; yet a while, and I shall
 breathe
 With freedom. Oh! thou cool, delicious
 silence,
 How grateful art thou to the ears that
 ring
 With that wild music's turbulent dis-
 sonance!
 By slow degrees the starlight face of
 things
 Grows clear around my misty, swim-
 ming eyes.
 Oh, Babylon! how art thou spread be-
 neath me!
 Like some wide plain, with rich pa-
 vilions set
 Mid the dark umbrage of a summer
 grave.
 Like a small rivulet, that from bank to
 bank
 Is ruffled by the sailing cygnet's breast,
 Euphrates seems to wind. Oh! thou
 vast city,

Thus dwindled to our human sight,
 what art thou
 To Him that from his throne, above
 the skies,
 Beyond the circuit of the golden Sun,
 Views all the subject world!

The parting day
 To twilight and the few faint early
 stars
 Hath left the city. On yon western
 lake
 A momentary gleam is lingering still.
 Thou'rt purpling now, oh Sun, the vines
 of Canaan,
 And crowning, with rich light, the cedar
 top
 Of Lebanon, where—but oh! without
 their daughter—
 Soon my sad parents shall return.
 Where are ye,
 Beloved? I seek in vain the lonely light
 Of our dear cabin on Euphrates' side,
 Amid yon kindling fires. And have ye
 quench'd it,
 That all your dwelling be as darkly sad
 As are your childless hearts?—And
 thou—mine own,
 I thought this morn, and called thee—
 Adonijah,
 Art thou, too, thinking of that hour like
 this;
 The balmy, tranquil, and scarce star-
 light hour,
 When the soft Moon had sent her
 harbinger,
 Pale Silence, to foreshow her coming
 presence;
 To hush the winds, and smooth the
 clouds before her?
 That hour, that, with delicious treach-
 ery, stole
 The secret from Benina's lips she
 long'd,
 From her full heart, t' unburthen?
 Better, now,
 Had it been buried in eternal darkness,
 Than thus have kindled hopes that
 shone so softly—
 Were quench'd so soon, so utterly.—
 Fond heart,
 These soft, desponding, yet delightful
 thoughts,
 Must not dissolve thee to mistrust in
 him

That fill'd thee as with fire, and
 touch'd my lips
 With holy scorn of all the wealth and
 pride
 That blazed around my path. Even now
 I feel
 My trembling foot more firm; and, like
 the eagle's,
 Mine eyes familiar with their cloudy
 height—
 What's here?—an hurried tread—
 What art thou? speak!

KALASSAN.

The honour'd of the God that honours
 thee.
 Oh, miracle of beauty! I beheld thee,
 And strove with my impatient spirit
 within
 To wait th' appointed hour;—but, as
 the pilgrim
 Sees the white fountain in the palmy
 shade,
 Nor brooks delay, even thus my thirsty
 eyes
 Demand their instant feast.

BENINA.

Thou should'st have brought
 The sage Diviners to unfold the mean-
 ing
 Of this dark language.

KALASSAN.

Loveliest bashfulness!
 Or is it but the sportive ignorance
 That laughs beneath the dark and glit-
 tering eyelids,
 At the delighted dupe of its dis-
 sembling?

BENINA.

Peace, and avaunt!

KALASSAN.

Oh maid! that art so beauteous
 That yon bright Moon is rising, all in
 haste,
 To gaze on thee, or to display thy
 grace

To him, that, lost in wonder, scarce hath
 melted
 To love.

The snowy light falls where she
 treads,
 As 'twere a sacred place! in her loose
 locks
 It wanders, even as with a sense of
 pleasure!
 And trembles on her bosom, that hath
 caught
 Its gentle restlessness, and trembles,
 too,
 Harmonious.

BENINA.

Must mine ears endure thee still?

KALASSAN.

And know'st thou not why thou art
 here; what bliss,
 What bridal rapture waits thee?

BENINA.

There are sins
 Whose very dread infects the virgin's
 soul,
 Tainting the fountain of her secret
 thoughts;
 I'm here to suffer evil—what, I know
 not,
 But will remain in holy ignorance,
 Till my dark hour of trial.

KALASSAN.

Hast thou never,
 Soft maid, when fervid moon bathes all
 the world
 In silence, in thy fond and wandering
 thoughts,
 Beheld a noble bridegroom seated near
 thee,
 And heard him, 'mid sweet falls of
 marriage-music,
 Whispering what made thy pale cheek
 burn?

BENINA.

Away!—
 And must he see my tears? and think
 me weak,
 And of my God abandon'd?

KALASSAN.

Lo! the couch
 Bestrewn with flowers, whose fragrance
 and whose hues
 Shall not have faded, till great Bel come
 down
 Beneath that dimly canopied alcove—

BENINA.

There 's that within thy words I ought
 to fear:
 But it should seem, that with the earth
 I've left
 All earthly fears beneath me. I defy
 Thee and thy Gods alike.

KALASSAN.

Alike in truth;
 For sometimes doth the Mightiest not
 disdain
 To veil his glories in a mortal shape,
 Even great Kalassan's. Look on me,
 and say
 If he could choose a nobler.

BENINA.

What! and fear'st not
 Thine own false Gods—thou worse than
 Idol worshipper?
 Why, even the senseless wood and stone
 might wake
 To indignation, and their fiery ven-
 geance
 Break forth from Heaven. Alas! and
 what have they
 Whose name thou dost usurp to cloke
 thy sin,
 To do with Heaven more than thy
 loathsome self?

KALASSAN.

Thine eyes, albeit so full of scorn, sur-
 vey not
 My form in vain. I tell thee, Maid, I
 tread
 This earth so conscious that the best of
 Deity,
 The power and majesty reside within
 me,
 That I but stoop to win myself a bride
 Beneath another name: here 'mid the
 clouds

I stand, as in mine own appropriate
 place.

BENINA.

The darkest pit of Tophet were too light
 For thine offense.

KALASSAN.

Oh! soft and musical voice,
 Art thou so lavish of injurious words?
 Erewhile thou'lt be as prodigal of fond-
 ness;
 So now prepare thee: ere two hours are
 past
 Thou wedd'st Kalassan, or Kalassan's
 God.
 Or both, or either, which thou wilt.
 Farewell
 A little while: but I beseech thee, wear
 When I return, this soft, becoming
 pride;
 Nor imitate, as yet, the amorous slaves
 That weary with officious tenderness.
 Be as thou seem'st, a kindred spirit with
 mine,
 And we will mate like eagles in the
 Heavens,
 And give our children an immortal heri-
 tage
 To bathe their plumage in the fiery sun.

BENINA (*alone*).

Did the earth bear thee, monster! or art
 thou
 Th' Eternal Enemy in the human shape?
 Oh! 'tis the innocent's best security,
 That the unrighteous pluck the thunder-
 bolt
 With such resistless violence on their
 heads.
 Lord of the insulted Heavens! thou
 canst not strike
 This impious man, without delivering
 me;
 Me, else unworthy of thy gracious
 mercy.
 But lo! what blaze of light beneath
 me spreads
 O'er the wide city. Like von galaxy
 Above mine head, each long and spa-
 cious street
 Becomes a line of silver light. the trees
 In all their silent avenues break out

In flowers of fire. But chief around
 the Palace
 Whiten the glowing splendour; every
 court
 That lay in misty dimness indistinct,
 Is traced by pillars and high architraves
 Of crystal lamps that tremble in the
 wind:
 Each portal arch gleams like an earthly
 rainbow,
 And o'er the front spreads one entabla-
 ture
 Of living gems of every hue, so bright
 That the pale Moon, in virgin modesty,
 Retreating from the dazzling and the
 tumult,
 Afar upon the distant plain reposes
 Her unambitious beams, or on the bo-
 som
 Of the blue river, ere it reach the walls.
 Hark! too, the sounds of revelry and
 song
 Upon the pinions of the breeze come up
 Even to this height. No eye is closed
 in sleep;
 None in vast Babylon but wakes to
 joy—
 None—none is sad and desolate but I.
 Yet over all, I know not whence or
 how,
 A dim oppression loads the air, and
 sounds
 As of vast wings do somewhere seem
 to brood
 And hover on the winds; and I that
 most
 Should tremble for myself, the appoint-
 ed prey
 Of sin, am bow'd, as with enforced
 compassion,
 To think on sorrows not mine own, to
 weep
 O'er those whose laughter and whose
 song upbraids
 My prodigality of mis-spent pity.
 I will go rest, if rest it may be call'd—
 Not, Adonijah—not to think of thee.
 Oh! bear a brief, unwilling banishment
 From thine own home, my heart; I can
 not cope
 With thy subduing image, and be strong.

CHORUS OF BABYLONIANS BEFORE THE
 PALACE.

Awake! awake! put on thy garb of
 pride,
 Array thee like a sumptuous royal
 bride,
 O festal Babylon!
 Lady, whose ivory throne
 Is by the side of many azure waters!
 In floating dance, like birds upon the
 wing,
 Send tinkling forth thy silver-sandal'd
 daughters;
 Send in the solemn march,
 Beneath each portal arch,
 Thy rich-robed lords to crowd the ban-
 quet of their King.
 They come! they come from both the
 illumined shores;
 Down each long street the festive
 tumult pours;
 Along the waters dark
 Shoots many a gleaming hark,
 Like stars along the midnight welkin
 flashing,
 And galleys, with their masts en-
 wreath'd with light,
 From their quick oars the kindling wa-
 ters dashing;
 In one long moving line
 Along the bridge they shine
 And with their glad disturbance wake
 the peaceful night.
 Hang forth, hang forth, in all your
 avenues,
 The arching lamps of more than rain-
 bow hues,
 Oh! gardens of delight!
 With the cool airs of night
 Are lightly waved your silver-foliaged
 trees,
 The deep-embower'd yet glowing blaze
 prolong
 Height above height the lofty terraces;
 Seeing this new day-break,
 The nestling birds awake,
 The nightingale hath hush'd her sweet
 untimely song.
 Lift up, lift up your golden-valv'd
 doors,
 Spread to the glittering dance your
 marble floors.

Palace! whose spacious halls,
And far-receding walls,
Are hung with purple like the morning
skies;
And all the living luxuries of sound
Pour from the long out-stretching gal-
leries;

Down every colonnade
The sumptuous board is laid,
With golden cups and lamps and bossy
chargers crown'd.

They haste, they haste! the high-
crown'd Rulers stand,
Each with his sceptre in his kingly
hand;

The bearded Elders sage,
Though pale with thought and
age;

Those through whose bounteous and
unfailing hands
The tributary streams of treasure flow
From the rich bounds of earth's re-
motest lands;

All but the pomp and pride
Of battle laid aside,
Chaldea's Captains stand in many a glit-
tering row.

They glide, they glide! each, like an
antelope,

Bounding in beauty on a sunny slope,
With full and speaking eyes,
And graceful necks that rise
O'er snowy bosoms in their emulous
pride,

The chosen of earth's choicest loveli-
ness;

Some with the veil thrown timidly
aside,
Some boastful and elate
In their majestic state

Whose bridal bed Belshazzar's self hath
deign'd to bless.

Come forth! come forth! and crown
the peerless feast,

Thou whose high birthright was the ef-
fulgent east!

On th' ivory seat alone.

Monarch of Babylon!

Survey the interminable wilderness
Of splendour, stretching far beyond the
sight;

Nought but thy presence wants there
now to bless:

The music waits for thee,
Its fount of harmony,
Transcending glory thou of this thrice
glorious night!

Behold! behold! each gem-crown'd
forehead proud

And every plume and crested helm is
bow'd,

Each high-arch'd vault along
Breaks out the blaze of song,
Belshazzar comes! nor Bel, when he re-
turns

From riding on his stormy thunder-
cloud,

To where his bright celestial palace
burns,

Alights with loftier tread,
More full of stately dread,
While under his fix'd feet the loaded
skies are bow'd.

THE HALL OF BANQUET.

CHORUS.

Mightiest of the sons of man!
The lion in his forest lair,
The eagle in the fields of air,
Amid the tumbling waves Leviathan,
In power without or peer or mate,
Hold their unviolable state:
Alone Belshazzar stands on earth,
Pre-eminent o'er all of human birth,
Mightiest of the sons of man!

Richest of the sons of man!
For thee the mountains teem with
gold,
The spicy groves their bloom un-
fold,

The bird of beauty bears its feathery
fan,

And amber paves the yellow seas,
And spread the branching coral
trees,

Nor shrouds the mine its deepest
gem,

Ambitious to adorn Belshazzar's dia-
dem,

Richest of the sons of man!

Fairest of the sons of man!
Tall as the cedar towers thine head,

And fleet and terrible thy tread,
As the strong coursers in the battle's
van;

An Eden blooms upon thy face;
Like music, thy majestic grace
Holds the mute gazer's breath sup-
press'd,
And makes a tumult in the wondering
breast,
Fairest of the sons of man!

Noblest of the sons of man!
The first a kingly rule that won,
Wide as the journey of the sun,
From Nimrod thine high-sceptred race
began;
And gathering splendor still, went
down
From sire to son the eternal crown
Till full on great Belshazzar's crest
Its high meridian glory shone confest,—
Noblest of the sons of man!

Happiest of the sons of man!
In wine, in revel, and in joy
Was softly nursed the imperial boy;
His golden years like Indian rivers ran.
And every rapturous hour surpast
The glowing rapture of the last,
Even till the plenitude of bliss
Did overflow and centre all in this,
Happiest of the sons of man!

SABARIS.

Peace! peace! the king vouchsafes his
gracious speech.
Sit ye like statues silent! ye have
quaff'd
The liquid gladness of the blood-red
wine,
And ye have eaten of the golden fruits
That the sun ripens but for kingly lips,
And now ye are about to feast your
ears
With great Belshazzar's voice.

ARIOCH.

The crowded hall
Suspense, and prescient of the coming
joy,
Is silent as the cloudless summer skies.

BELSHAZZAR.

Oh ye, assembled Babylon! fair youths
And hoary Elders, Warriors, Counsel-
lors,
And bright eyed Women, down my
festal board
Reclining! oh ye thousand living men,
Do ye not hold your charter'd breath
from me?

And I can plunge your souls in wine
and joy;
Or by a word, a look, dismiss you all
To darkness and to shame: yet, are ye
not
Proud of the slavery that thus enthrals
you?

What king, what ruler over subject man
Or was, or is, or shall be like Bel-
shazzar?

I summon from their graves the
sceptred dead
Of elder days, to see their shame. I
cry

Unto the cloudy Past, unfold the
thrones
That glorified the younger world: I call
To the dim Future—lift thy veil and
show

The destined lords of humankind: they
rise,
They bow their veil'd heads to the dust,
and own

The throne whereon Chaldea's Monarch
sits,
The height and pinnacle of human
glory.

Oh ancient cities, o'er whose streets
the grass
Is green, whose name hath wither'd
from the face

Of earth! Oh ye by rich o'erflowing
Nile,
Memphis, and hundred-gated Thebes—
and thou,

Assyria Nineveh, and ye golden tow-
ers

That redden o'er the Indian streams,
what are ye

To Babylon—Eternal Babylon!

That's girt with bulwarks strong as
adamant,

O'er whom Euphrates' restless waves
keep watch,

That, like the high and everlasting
Heavens,
Grows old, yet not less glorious? Yes,
to you
I turn, oh azure-curtain'd palaces!
Whose lamps are stars, whose music,
the sweet motion
Of your own spheres, in whom the
banqueters
Are Gods, nor fear my Babylonian halls,
Even with your splendours to com-
pare.

Bring wine!
I see your souls are jocund as mine
own:
Pour in yon vessels of the Hebrews'
God
Belshazzar's beverage—pour it high.
Hear, earth!
Hear, Heaven! my proud defiance!—
Oh, what man,
What God—

SABARIS, AND MANY VOICES.

The king! the king! look to the king!

ARIOCH.

Where? I can see nor king nor people—
nothing
But a bewildering, red, and gloom-like
light
That swallows up the fiery canopy
Of lamps.

SABARIS.

Hath blindness smitten thee?

ARIOCH.

I know not;
But all things swim around me in a
darkness
That dazzles—

SABARIS.

See, his shuddering joints are
loosen'd,
And his knees smite each other; such
a face
Is seen in tombs:—what means it?

ARIOCH.

See'st not thou
That taunted'st me but now—upon the
wall—
There—there—it moves—

BELSHAZZAR.

Oh dark and bodiless hand,
What art thou—thus upon my palace
wall
Gliding in shadowy, slow, gigantic
blackness?
Lo! fiery letters, where it moves, break
out:
'Tis there—'tis gone:—'tis there again—
no, nought
But those strange characters of flame,
that burn
Upon the unkindled wall:—I cannot
read them—
Can ye?
I see your quivering lips that speak
not—
Sabaris—Arioch—Captains—Elders—all
As pale and horror-stricken as myself!
Are there no wiser? Call ye forth
the Dreamers,
And those that read the stars, and every
priest,
And he that shall interpret best shall
wear
The scarlet robe and chain of gold, and
sit
Third ruler of my realm. Away!—No
—leave me not
To gaze alone;—alone, on those pale
signs
Of destiny—the unextinguishable,
The indelible—Strew, strew my couch
where best
I may behold what sears my burning
eyeballs
To gaze on—and the cold blood round
my heart
To stand, like snow. No—ache mine
eyes, and quiver
My palsied limbs—I cannot turn away—
Here am I bound as by thrice link'd
brass,
Here, till the burthen of mine ignorance
Be from my loaded soul taken off, in
silence
Deep as the midnight round a place of
tombs.

The Summit of the Temple.

BENINA.

How long, O Lord! how long must I
endure

This restlessness of danger?—I have wish'd

That even the worst were come, I am so sick

And weary with suspense: I have sate and gazed

Upon the silent moon, as she pursued Her journey to yon blue celestial height. Pilgrim of Heaven! the white translucent clouds,

Through which she wanders, fall away, nor leave

A taint upon her spotless orb: Shall I, O Lord! emerge in purity as stainless From the dark clouds that dim mine earthly course?

And sometimes as a whispering sound came up,

Though but the voice of some light breathing wind

Along the stair, I felt my trembling heart,

And I grew guilty of a timorous doubt In Him, whose guardian hand is o'er me.

Hark!

Hark! all around—above—beneath—it bursts,

The long deep roll of—in yon cloudless skies:

It cannot be God's thunder, and the fires,

Blue as the sulphurous lightning, rise from earth,

Not Heaven. Oh madly impious! dare ye thus

Mimic the all-destroying arms that rage Against the guilty? the vast temple shakes,

And all the clouded atmosphere is red With the hell-born tempest—like to

rushing chariots

Upon a stony way, like some vast forest Ablaze with an heaven-kindled con-

flagration,

It comes, it comes—as in a tent of clouds,

Rent at each moment by the flashing light,

The gloom rolls back—it bursts. Speak! —who art thou,

Whose robes are woven as from the starry Heavens?

What means that sceptre, and the wreaths, like mist,

'That turban thy dusk brow?—I know thee now—

I see it grow into a hideous likeness—Kalassan!

KALASSAN.

Oh most sweet humility,
That doth disdain the modest palliation
Of being a Deity's enforced bride;
Her fond detection pierces every veil,
And springs in raptures to her mortal lover.

BENINA.

Oh can I wonder that thou dost bely
The innocent helpless virgin, when thy falsehood

Aspires with frantic blasphemy t' attain
The immaculate Heavens?

KALASSAN.

Roll on! I say,—roll on
My bridal music! the ear-stunning tam-
bour—

Blaze forth my marriage fires!

BENINA.

Avaunt!—My cries—

KALASSAN.

Thy cries! Thou might'st as well, on
Taurus' brow

Call to the shipman on the Caspian Sea!
See'st thou how far thou art from earth?

BENINA.

How near to Heaven? See'st thou

KALASSAN.

To Heaven! behold, the stars
Pierce not the cool pavilion, where soft
Darkness,

Our handmaid, hangs her nuptial
canopy,

At times illumin'd by the flashing light
That loves to linger on thy kindling
beauty.

BENINA.

'Tis as he says!—nor sound, nor gleam
of succour—
Thy bride—oh, Adonijah!—ah, no bride
Of thine!—lost—lost to thee—would
'twere by death!
Is't for the sin of loving thee too fondly
I am deserted!—Spare me, Man of Ter-
ror,
And prayers for thee (they say, God
loves the prayers
Of the undefiled) shall rise as con-
stantly
As summer-dews at eve.

KALASSAN.

Now louder! louder!
Let there be triumph in your martial
sounds.

BENINA.

Oh God! oh God! I have condemn'd
myself,
And fallen from the faith. Ah, not for
me!
For thine own glory suffer not the
Heathen
To boast of—Ha!—all silence, and all
gloom—
I tremble—but he trembles too—

KALASSAN.

With wrath!
Slaves! wherefore have ye quenched
mine earthly light,
And still'd my storm?

VOICE BELOW.

Kalassan!

KALASSAN.

Slaves!

VOICE.

Kalassan!

BENINA.

Thou'rt call'd—

VOICE.

Kalassan! to Belshazzar's presence

We are summon'd:—Priest, Diviner,
Seer, thyself;—
If thou delay'st, stern Arioch's sword
must sever
The disobedient head!

BENINA.

With tears, not words,
I bless thee, Lord!

KALASSAN.

Is this thy God?

BENINA.

My God,
In his omnipotence, doth make the
wrath
Of hurricanes and desolating fires
His ministers—why not the breath of
Kings?

KALASSAN.

The hour will come in which to tame
thy scorn!

BENINA.

The hour is come that frees me from
thy presence:
Haste, haste—

VOICE.

Kalassan!

KALASSAN.

Slaves! I come.

BENINA.

Away!
Thou'lt pardon me my fond solicitude,
Impatient of thy lingering.

KALASSAN.

Fare thee well

Till I return.

BENINA.

Till thou return'st—He's gone!
I did not think that I could hear his
tread,
His angry tread, with such a deep de-
light.

Oh! my fond parents! when we meet
again,
We shall not meet with strange averted
looks:
Ye will not, in sad pity, take me back
A shamed and blighted child to your
cold bosoms.
And thou, betroth'd, belov'd—I shall
endure
To stand before thy face, nor wish the
earth
To shroud me from thine unrepublishing
gaze;
For were I all I fear'd, thou had'st
ne'er reproach'd me!
And oh, sweet Siloe! oh, my Fathers'
land!
Land where the feet may wander where
they will—
Land where the heart may love without
a fear!
I feel that I shall tread thee; for the
Lord
Pours not his mercies in a sparing
measure.
This is the earnest of his love—the seal
With which he marks us for his own,
his blest,
His ransom'd! Oh! fair Zion, lift thou
up
Thy crown, that glitters to the morning
Sun!
They come—thy lost, thy banish'd chil-
dren come—
And thy streets rise to sounds of mel-
ody!

*The Hall of Banquet, with the Fiery
Letters on the Wall.*

ARIOCH.

Hath the King spoken?

SABARIS.

Not a word: as now,

He hath sate, with eyes that strive to
grow familiar

With those red characters of fire: but
still

The agony of terror hath not pass'd
From his chill frame. But, if a word,
a step,

A motion, from those multitudes re-
clined
Down each long festal board; the burst-
ing string
Of some shrill instrument; or even the
wind,
Whispering amid the plumes and shak-
ing lamps,
Disturb him—by some mute, imperious
gesture,
Or by his brow's stern anger, he com-
mands
All the vast Halls to silence.

ARIOCH.

Peace! he hears
Our murmur'd speech.

SABARIS.

No.

ARIOCH.

Did ye not observe him,
When his hand fell upon the all-ruling
sceptre,
The bitter and self-mocking laugh that
pass'd
O'er his pale cheek?

SABARIS.

His lips move, but he speaks not!
All still again—

ARIOCH.

They are here:—the Priests and
Seers;
Their snowy garments sweep the Hall.

SABARIS.

Behold!
He motions them to advance and to
retreat
At once—and pants, yet shudders, to
demand
Their answer.

BELSHAZZAR.

Oh! Chaldea's worshipp'd Sages—
Oh! men of wisdom, that have pass'd
your years—
Your long and quiet, solitary years,

In tracing the dim sources of th' events
 That agitate this world of man—oh! ye
 That in the tongues of every clime dis-
 course;
 Ye that hold converse with the eternal
 stars,
 And, in their calm prophetic courses,
 read
 The destinies of empires; ye whose
 dreams
 Are thron'd with the predestined
 images
 Of things that are to be; to whom the
 Fates
 Unfold their secret councils; to whose
 sight
 The darkness of Futurity withdraws,
 And one vast Present fills all Time—
 behold
 Yon burning characters! and read and
 say
 Why the dark Destinies have hung their
 sentence
 Thus visible to the sight, but to the mind
 Unsearchable?—Ye have heard the rich
 reward;
 And I but wait to see whose neck shall
 wear
 The chain of glory—
 Ha! each pale fallen lip
 Voiceless! and each upon the other
 turns
 His wan and questioning looks.—
 Kalassan! thou
 Art like the rest, and gazest on thy fel-
 lows
 In blank and sullen ignorance.—Spurn
 them forth!
 Ye wise! ye learned! ye with Fate's
 mysteries
 Entrusted! Spurn, I say, and trample
 on them!
 Let them be outcast to the scorn of
 slaves!
 Let children pluck their beards, and ev-
 ery voice
 Hoot at them as they pass!
 Despair! Despair!
 This is thy palace now! No throne, no
 couch
 Beseems the King, whose doom is on
 his walls
 Emblazed—yet whose vast empire finds
 not one

Whose faithful love can show its mystic
 import!
 Low on the dust, upon the pavement-
 stone,
 Belshazzar takes his rest!—Ye hosts
 of slaves,
 Behold your King! the Lord of Baby-
 lon!—
 Speak not—for he that speaks, in other
 words
 But to expound those fiery characters,
 Shall ne'er speak more!

NITOCRIS (*entering*).

As thou did'st give command,
 My son, I'm here to see the all-glorious
 feast
 That shames the earth, and copes with
 Heaven!
 Great Powers!
 Is't thus? Oh! look not with that mute
 reproach,
 More terrible than anger, on thy moth-
 er!
 Oh, pardon my rash taunts!—my son!
 my son!
 Thou art but now the beauteous, smil-
 ing child,
 That from my bosom drank the flow-
 ing life;
 By whom I've pass'd so many sleepless
 nights
 In deeper joy than slumber e'er could
 give!
 The sole refreshment of my weary
 spirit
 To gaze on thee!—Alas! 'twas all my
 crime:—
 I gave to thy young lips the mantling
 cup
 Of luxury and pride; I taught thee first
 That the wide earth was made for thee,
 and man
 Born for thy uses!

BELSHAZZAR.

And thou wilt give me, then, a life more
 precious
 Than that I once received of thee.

NITOCRIS.

'Twas he;
 I saw him as I pass'd along the courts,

The Hebrew, that, when visions of the night
Shook the imperial soul of Nabonassar,
Like one to whom the dimly-peopled
realms
Of sleep were clear as the bright noon-
tide Heavens,
Spake—

BELSHAZZAR.

With the speed of lightning call him
hither.
No more, my mother—till he comes, no
more.

ARIOCH.

King of the world, he's here.

BELSHAZZAR.

Not yet! not yet!
Delay him! hold him back!—My soul's
not strung
To the dire knowledge.

Up the voiceless hall

He moves; nor doth the white and
ashen fear,
That paints all faces, change one line
of his.

Audacious slave! walks he erect and
firm,

When kings are groveling on the earth?
—Give place!

Why do ye crowd around him? Back!
I say.

Is your king heard—or hath he ceased
to rule?

NITOCRIS.

Alas! my son, fear levels kings and
slaves.

BELSHAZZAR.

Art thou that Daniel of the Hebrew
race,

In whom the excellence of wisdom
dwells

As in the Gods? I have heard thy fame:
—behold

Yon mystic letters, flaming on the wall,
That, in the darkness of their fateful
import,

Baffle the wisest of Chaldea's sages!
Read, and interpret; and the satrap robe

Of scarlet shall invest thy limbs; the
chain
Of gold adorn thy neck; and all the
world

Own thee third ruler of Chaldea's
realm!

DANIEL.

Belshazzar, be thy gifts unto thyself,
And thy rewards to others. I, the serv-
ant

Of God, will read God's writing to the
King.

The Lord of Hosts to thy great An-
cestor,

To Nabonassar, gave the all-ruling scep-
tre

O'er all the nations, kingdoms, lan-
guages;

Lord paramount of life and death, he
slew

Where'er he will'd; and where he will'd
men lived;

His word exalted, and his word de-
based;

And so his heart swell'd up; and, in its
pride,

Arose to Heaven! But then the Lord
of earth

Became an outcast from the sons of
men—

Companion of the browsing beasts! the
dews

Of night fell cold upon his crownless
brow,

And the wild asses of the desert fed
Round their unenvied peer! And so he
knew

That God is Sovereign o'er earth's
sceptred Lords.

But thou, his son, unwarn'd, untaught,
untamed,

Belshazzar, hast arisen against the Lord,
And in the vessels of his house hast
quaff'd

Profane libations, 'mid thy slaves and
women,

To gods of gold, and stone, and wood;
and laugh'd

The King of Kings, the God of Gods,
to scorn.

Now hear the words, and hear their se-
cret meaning—

"Number'd!" twice "Number'd!"
Weigh'd! Divided!" King,

Thy reign is number'd, and thyself art
weigh'd,
And wanting in the balance, and thy
realm
Sever'd, and to the conquering Persian
given!

ARIOCH.

What vengeance will he wreak? The
pit of lions—
The stake—

BELSHAZZAR.

Go—lead the Hebrew forth, array'd
In the proud robe, let all the city hail
The honour'd of Belshazzar. Oh! not
long

Will that imperial name command your
awe!

And, oh! ye bright and festal halls,
whose vaults

Were full of sweet sounds as the sum-
mer groves,

Must yet be changed for chambers,
where no tone

Of music sounds, nor melody of harp,
Or lute, or woman's melting voice?—

My mother!—

And how shall we two meet the coming
ruin?

In arms! thou say'st; but with what
arms, to front

The Invisible, that in the silent air
Wars on us? Shall we seek some place
of silence,

Where the cold cypress shades our
Father's tombs,

And grow familiar with the abode of
Death?

And yet how calm, how fragrant, how
serene

The night!—When empires fall, and
Fate thrusts down

The monarchs from their ancient
thrones, 'tis said,

The red stars meet, with ominous, hos-
tile fires;

And the dark vault of Heaven flames
all across

With meteors; and the conscious earth
is rock'd;

And foaming rivers burst their shores!
But now,

Save in my soul, there is no prescient
dread:—

Nought but my fear-struck brow is
dark and sad.

All sleeps in moonlight silence: ye can
wave,

Oh happy gardens! in the cool night
airs

Your playful branches; ye can rise to
Heaven,

And glitter, my unconscious palace-tow-
ers;

No gliding hand, no Prophet's voice,
to you

Hath rent the veil that hides the awful
future!

Well, we'll go rest once more on kingly
couches.

My mother, and we'll wake and feel that
earth

Still trembles at our nod, and see the
slaves

Reading their fate in our imperial
looks!

And then—and then—Ye Gods! that
I had still

Nought but my shuddering and distract-
ing fears;

That those dread letters might resume
once more

Their dark and unintelligible brightness;
Or that 'twere o'er, and I and Babylon

Were—what a few short days or hours
will make us!

Above the City.

THE DESTROYING ANGEL.

The hour is come! the hour is come!
With voice

Heard in thy inmost soul, I summon
thee,

Cyrus, the Lord's anointed! And thou
River,

That flow'st exulting in thy proud ap-
proach

To Babylon, beneath whose shadowy
walls

And brazen gates, and gilded palaces,
And groves, that gleam with marble

obelisks,
Thy azure bosom shall repose, with
lights

Fretted and chequer'd like the starry
heavens:

I do arrest thee in thy stately course.

By Him that pour'd thee from thine
 ancient fountain,
 And sent thee forth, even at the birth
 of Time,
 One of his holy streams, to lave the
 mounts
 Of Paradise. Thou hear'st me: thou
 dost check
 Abrupt thy waters, as the Arab chief
 His headlong squadrons. Where the
 unobserved
 Yet toiling Persian breaks the ruining
 mound,
 I see thee gather thy tumultuous
 strength;
 And, through the deep and roaring
 Naharmalcha,
 Roll on, as proudly conscious of ful-
 filling
 The Omnipotent command! While, far
 away,
 The lake, that slept but now so calm,
 nor moved
 Save by the rippling moonshine, heaves
 on high
 Its foaming surface, like a whirlpool
 gulf,
 And boils and whitens with the unwont-
 ed tide.
 But silent as thy billows used to flow,
 And terrible the hosts of Elam move,
 Winding their darksome way profound,
 where man
 Ne'er trod, nor light e'er shone, nor air
 from Heav'n
 Breathed. Oh! ye secret and unfath-
 om'd depths,
 How are ye now a smooth and royal
 way
 For th' army of God's vengeance! Fel-
 low slaves,
 And ministers of the Eternal purpose,
 Not guided by the treacherous injured
 sons
 Of Babylon, but by my mightier arm,
 Ye come, and spread your banners, and
 display
 Your glittering arms as ye advance, all
 white
 Beneath th' admiring moon. Come on!
 the gates
 Are open!—I see on either side o'er-
 flow
 The living deluge of arm'd men, and
 cry

Begin, begin, with fire and sword begin
 The work of wrath. Upon my shadowy
 wings
 I pause and float a little while to see
 Mine human instruments fulfil my task
 Of final ruin. Then I mount, I fly,
 And sing my proud song, as I ride the
 clouds,
 That stars may hear, and all the hosts
 of worlds,
 That live along the interminable space,
 Take up Jehovah's everlasting triumph!

The Streets of Babylon.

ADONIJAH, IMLAH.

ADONIJAH.

Imlah! this way he motion'd me to pass.

IMLAH.

My son! (alas! I ever call thee son,
 Though my old childless heart but
 bleeds the more
 At that fond name), the broad Euphra-
 tes lies
 That way, nor boat nor bark is wont to
 moor
 By that inhospitable pier; he meant
 Toward the Temple—that way leads not
 thither.

ADONIJAH.

Father, the Lord will make a way,
 where'er
 His Prophets do direct our feet. Thou
 saw'st not
 As I; they led him at the king's com-
 mand
 Along the streets, in scarlet clad, and
 made
 Their trumpets clamour, and their voices
 shout
 Before great Daniel; but it seem'd he
 mark'd
 Nor trumpet sound, nor voice of man:
 the garb,
 Th' array, the triumph touch'd not him:
 he held
 A strange, elate, and voiceless inter-
 course
 With some dark being in the clouds;
 for now

I saw him, as the torches shone upon
 him—
 His brow like some crown'd warrior's,
 when his hosts
 Are spreading, in their arm'd magnif-
 icence,
 Over a conquer'd realm; and now he
 seem'd
 To count impatient the slow time; and
 now
 He look'd, where in the distant darkness
 rose
 The Temple, now where still the palace
 shone
 With its rich festal light, as though he
 watch'd
 And listen'd for some earthquake to
 o'erthrow them.
 His ominous looks were terrible with
 ruin;
 The majesty of God's triumphant ven-
 geance
 Was in his tread: even thus the Patri-
 arch look'd,
 When, mounting in his ark, he saw the
 deluge
 Come sweeping o'er the doom'd yet
 heedless world.
 Something, be sure, the hand of God
 prepares
 To rescue, to revenge.

IMLAH.

Too late! too late!
 Oh that last night!

ADONIJAH.

My father!

IMLAH.

Thou art right;
 'Twas rashly, madly spoken—but my
 spirit
 Is wrung almost to find a deadly pleas-
 ure
 In madly uttering what the heart ab-
 hors.
 I'll on with thee.

ADONIJAH.

He motion'd me alone. .

IMLAH.

He did—and he must be obey'd: fare-
 well,
 Dear youth—dear son! if thou should'st
 meet with her
 Cast forth in scorn, and groveling on
 the earth,
 Chide her not, Adonijah—speak not to
 her,
 Let thy compassion seem to mock her
 shame:
 But, pray thee, lead her to the old man's
 home—
 To the old man's heart, that will not
 love her less,
 Though his love have less of pride and
 more of sorrow.
 Farewell, and prosper!
 I'll go wander on
 Through the dusk streets. Poor Naomi!
 I left thee,
 Thy wretchedness had wrought its own
 relief,
 Asleep. Oh thou, if thou should'st never
 wake,
 Thrice bless'd. Belovéd, I should mourn
 for thee,
 But envy while I mourn'd.
 Great King of vengeance,
 God of my fathers! thou art here at
 length.
 Behold! behold! from every street the
 flames
 Burst out, and armed men, proud, con-
 quering men,
 Move in the blaze they've kindled to
 destroy.
 Are ye the avenging Spirits of the Lord,
 Descended on the blast, and clouding
 o'er
 The Heavens, as ye come down, with
 that red cope
 Deeper than lightning? No—it is the
 Mede,
 The ravaging, the slaughtering, merci-
 less Mede.
 This way they fly, with shrieks, and
 clashing arms,
 And multitudes that choke th' impas-
 sable streets,
 Till the fierce conqueror hew his ruth-
 less way.
 Shall not I fly? and wherefore? Oh!
 waste on,

And burn, triumphant stranger! trample
down
Master and slave alike!—there is one
house
Thou canst not make more desolate:
thou canst not
Pour ills on any of these guilty roofs,
So hateful as have burst on mine.—
Who comes?

NITOCRIS, IMLAH.

NITOCRIS.

My son! my son! I heard the cries—I
saw
The flames; I rush'd through all the
shrieking palace
To seek him—and I found him not: and
sprang
To find him, where I thought not, where
I knew not.
One moment do I plunge into the gloom
Of some dark court, to shun the foe—
the next,
I bless the angry and destroying light,
Because I think it may disclose the face,
The beauteous face of mine Imperial
Boy.
I've pass'd by widows, and by frantic
mothers,
That howl and tear their hair o'er their
dead children:
I cannot find my child, even to perform
That last sad duty of my love—to
mourn him.
I've cried aloud, and told them I'm their
queen;
They gaze on me, and mock me with
their pity,
Showing that queens can be as desolate
As slaves: and sometimes have I paused
and stoop'd
O'er dying faces, with a hideous hope
Of seeing my son! I dare not cry Bel-
shazzar,
Lest he should hear me, and come forth
and meet
The slaughtering sword. Ye Gods! his
very beauty
And majesty will mark him out for
slaughter:

And the fierce Persian, that in weary
pride
May scorn to flesh his sword on meaner
heads,
Will win himself an everlasting glory,
By slaying th' unarm'd, the succourless
Belshazzar.
Here's one—hast seen him? Slave, I'll
give thee gold,
I'll give thee kingdoms—ah! what gold
or kingdoms
Hath the sad queen of captive Babylon
To give? but thou hast haply known the
love
That parents bear to those who have
been a part
Of their own selves; whose lives are
twined with theirs
So subtly, that 'twere worse than death
to part them.
Hast seen the king—my son—the pride
of kings—
My peerless son?

IMLAH.

I had a child this morn,
Beautiful as the doe upon the moun-
tains,
Pure as the crystal of the brook she
drinks;
And when they rent her from her
father's heart,
To death—oh no!—to deeper woe than
death,
The queen of Babylon swept proudly by,
Nor stoop'd to waste her pity on the
childless.

NITOCRIS.

Oh ye just Gods! but cruel in your
justice!
And never met ye more?

IMLAH.

No more!

NITOCRIS.

Great Heaven!
I own your equal hand: the bitter
chalice
That we have given to others' lips, our
own

Must to the dregs drink out. So, never
more
Shall I behold thee—not to wind thy
corpse—
To pour sweet ointments on thy clay
cold limbs.
Alas! and what did Nabonassar's daugh-
ter
In the dark streets alone? when there
were men
To rally, arms to array—my voice, my
look,
The hereditary terror that is said
To dwell on mine imperial brow, had
pour'd
Dismay and flight upon the conquering
Mede.
Semiramis, for empire, cast away
The woman, and went forth in brazen
arms.
I could not for my son!

My naked feet

Bleed where I move; and on my crown-
less head
(For what have I to do with crowns?)
beat cold
The chilling elements; till but now I
felt not
My loose, and thin, and insufficient rai-
ment.
Well, there's enough to shroud the dead;
and thee
To colder nakedness, my son! my son!
The spoiler will have stripp'd—

IMLAH.

God pardon me

For taunting her distress! Rest here,
oh queen!
Under this low and wretched roof thou
art safe;
The plunderer wars upon the gilded
palace,
Not the base hovel. There's a mother
there
As sad as thou, and sleep may be as
merciful
To thee as her.

NITOCRIS.

Sleep! sleep! with Babylon
In flames around me; Nabonassar's
realm,

The city of earth's sovereigns rushing
down,
The pride of countless ages, and the
glory,
By generations of triumphant kings
Rear'd up—my sire's, my husband's, and
my son's,
And mine own stately birthplace perish-
ing:
The summer gardens of my joy cut
down;
The ivory chambers of my luxury,
Where I was wed, and bore my beaute-
ous son,
Howl'd through by strangers! No—
I'll on, and find
Death or my son, or both! My glorious
city!
My old ancestral throne! thou'lt still
afford
A burial fire. I've lived a queen, the
daughter
Of kings, the wife, the mother—and
will die
Queen-like, with Babylon for my fu-
neral pile!

Before the Temple.

BENINA.

Oh thou dread night! what new and
awful signs
Crowd thy portentous hours, so calm
in heav'n,
With all thy stars and full-orb'd moon
serene
Sleeping on crystal and pellucid clouds!
How terrible on earth! as I rush'd down
The vacant stair, nor heard a living
sound,
Save mine own bounding footstep, all
at once
Methought Euphrates' rolling waters
sank
Into the earth; the gilded galleys rock'd.
And plunged and settled in the sandy
depths;
And the tall bridge upon its lengthening
pier
Seem'd to bestride a dark, unfathom'd
gulf.
Then, where blue waters and the ivory
decks
Of roval vessels, and their silver prows,

Reflected the bright lights of heav'n,
 they shone
 Upon the glancing armour, helms, and
 spears
 Of a vast army: then the stone-paved
 walls
 Rang with the weight of chariots, and
 the gates
 Of brass fell down with ponderous
 clang: then sank
 O'er the vast city one sepulchral silence,
 As though the wondering conqueror
 scarce believed
 His easy triumph. But ye revellers
 That lay at rest upon your festal gar-
 ments,
 The pleasant weariness of wine and
 joy,
 And the sweet dreams of your scarce-
 ended pleasures,
 Still hanging o'er your silken couches!
 ye
 Woke only, if ye woke indeed, to see
 The Median scimitar that, red with
 blood,
 Flash'd o'er you, or the blaze of fire
 that wrapt
 In sulphurous folds the chambers of
 your rest.
 Oh Lord of Hosts! in thine avenging
 hour
 How dreadful art thou! Pardon if I
 weep
 When all my grateful heart should beat
 with joy
 For my deliverance.

KALASSAN, BENINA.

KALASSAN.

All is lost! Great Bel,
 Thus, thus dost thou avenge thy broken
 rite!
 Now, by thy thunders, 'tis the beaute-
 ous bride—
 Thou givest her to me yet.

BENINA.

Miscreant! what mean'st thou?

KALASSAN.

'Twas love before; and now 'tis love
 and vengeance;

And I will quaff the doubly-mantling
 cup,
 In all its richness.

BENINA.

Guilty man! look round,
 Thou seest my God, the God of Gods,
 reveal'd
 In yon wide fires! Nor thou, nor one
 of those
 That walk the death-doom'd streets of
 Babylon,
 Have even an hour to live.

KALASSAN.

Then I've no hour
 To waste. 'Tis said the Indian widows
 mount
 In pride and joy their husbands' funeral
 pyres;
 Thou, in thy deep devotion, shalt excel
 them,
 And wed thy bridegroom for the loftier
 glory
 Of dying by his side.

BENINA.

Oh mercy!

KALASSAN.

Mercy!
 Ask of the Babylonian maids and wives,
 If they find mercy?

BENINA.

Ah! and I presumed
 To speak of pitying others!

KALASSAN.

Come—What's here?

KALASSAN, BENINA, ADONIJAH.

ADONIJAH.

With unwet foot I trod the river
 depths:
 It is the privilege of Israel's sons
 To walk through seas as on dry land.

BENINA.

Oh stranger!
That bear'st a Persian scimitar—No
stranger!
Is it his angel, with his beauteous brow?
His eyes, his voice—his clasping arms
around me!—
Mine own, my brave, my noble Adoni-
jah!
Too bounteous Heaven!

KALASSAN.

Fond slave! unclasp thine arms.

ADONIJAH.

What—must I rob the Persian of his
victim?
Oh! not in vain this bright and wel-
come steel
Glitter'd to court my grasp! What!
the first foe
My warrior arm hath met retreat before
me?
I'll follow thee to earth's remotest
verge.

BENINA.

Oh! I could shriek, and weary Heaven
with cries
For my sad self—for thee—for thee!
My lips
Are parched to silence; and my throat—
Come back!
Their swords clash—some one falls—
and groans:—he calls not
Upon the God of Israel.—Ha! per-
chance
He cannot cry! All's dark.—Ah me!
how strong,
How dreadful was the Heathen in his
strength!
He's here!—I dare not ask, which art
thou? which—
Alas, prophetic spirit hast thou left me
To ask? Oh Love! thou used to know
his tread
'Mong thousands!

ADONIJAH.

Sweet! where art thou?

BENINA.

On thy bosom.

ADONIJAH.

The Lord hath triumph'd by his ser-
vant's hands:
He lies in death, blaspheming his own
Gods.

BENINA.

Merciful! I almost thank thee for the
dread
And danger of this night, that closes
thus
In such o'erpowering joy!

ADONIJAH.

Hast suffer'd nought
But dread and danger?

BENINA.

What?

ADONIJAH.

Thou'st been where evil
Riots uncheck'd, untamed!

BENINA.

Oh Adonijah!

I have endured thy lip upon my cheek,
And I endure thine arms clasp'd fondly
round me.
And on thy bosom I recline, and look
Upon thy face with eyes suffused with
tears,
But not of shame. What would'st thou
more?

ADONIJAH.

Nought, nought.
Oh pardon that my jealous fears mis-
doubted
Thy pure, thy proud, thy holy love!
Come on!
Come to thy parents' home that wait
for thee,
And change the voiceless house of deso-
lation
To an abode of joy, as mute.
Come! come!
Beauteous as her that with her timbrel
pass'd

Along the Red Sea depths, and cast her
 song—
 Upon the free airs of the wilderness—
 The song of joy, of triumph, of deliv-
 erance!

The Streets of Babylon in Flames.

BELSHAZZAR.

I cannot fight nor fly: where'er I move,
 On shadowy battlement, or cloud of
 smoke,
 That dark unbodied hand waves to and
 fro,
 And marshals me the way to death—
 to death
 That still eludes me. Every blazing
 wall
 Breaks out in those red characters of
 fate;
 And when I raised my sword to war,
 methought
 That dark-stoled Prophet stood be-
 tween, and seem'd
 Rebuking Heaven for its slow consum-
 mation
 Of his dire words.
 I am alone: my slaves
 Fleed at the first wild outcry; and my
 women
 Closed all their doors against me—for
 they knew me
 Mark'd with the seal of destiny: no
 hand,
 Though I have sued for water, holds a
 cup
 To my parch'd lips; no voice, as I pass
 on,
 Hath bless'd me; from the very festal
 garments,
 That glitter'd in my halls, they shake
 the dust:
 Ev'n the priests spurn'd me, as ab-
 horr'd of Heaven.
 Oh! but the fiery Mede doth well avenge
 me!
 They're strew'd beneath my feet—
 though not in worship!
 Oh death! death! death! that art so
 swift to seize
 The conqueror on his triumph day, the
 bride
 Ere yet her wedding lamps have waned,
 the king

While all mankind are kneeling at his
 footstool—
 Thou'rt only slow to him that knows
 himself
 Thy fated prey, that seeks within the
 tomb
 A dark retreat from wretchedness and
 shame.
 From shame!—the heir of Nabonassar's
 glory!
 From wretchedness!—the Lord of
 Babylon—
 Of golden and luxurious Babylon!
 Alas! through burning Babylon! the
 fallen,
 The city of lamentation and of slaugh-
 ter!
 A fugitive and outcast, that can find,
 Of all his realm, not even a grave!—
 so base,
 That even the conquering Mede dis-
 dains to slay him!

Before the House of Imlah.

IMLAH, ADONIJAH, BENINA, NAOMI.

IMLAH.

Naomi! Naomi! look forth—she's here!

NAOMI.

I know she is—in dreams: through all
 the night
 I've seen her, gliding from the fountain
 side
 With the pure urn of water, or with
 lips
 Apart, and bashful voice, that faintly
 breath'd
 One of her country's songs! I've seen
 her kneeling
 In prayer, alas! that ne'er was heard
 on high!
 And thou hast scared my vision's joys
 away—
 To see—all heav'n on fire, and the vast
 city—
 Imlah! what mean those massy clouds
 of smoke,
 Those shrieks and clashings?—and—
 that youth and maid,

Why stand they there? we need no sad
remembrancers
Of our deep desolation!

BENINA.

Doth my mother
With such cold salutation welcome
home
Her child?

NAOMI.

No! no! ye can no more delude me!
Twice have I woken, and heard that
voice, and stretch'd
My arms—

BENINA.

But hast not folded to thy bosom,
As thus, thy child, thy lost, thy loved
Benina!

NAOMI.

'Tis living flesh! it is a breathing lip!
And the heart swells like—Oh no!—
not like mine!
Oh! thou twice born! the sorrow and
the joy
That I endured to bring my beauteous
babe
Into the world were nought to this!

BENINA.

Dear mother,
May I ne'er cost thee bitterer tears
than these—

IMLAH.

My father's God, thou show'dst thyself
of old,
By smiting water from the stony rock,
And raining manna on the desert sands!
Here is thy best—most gracious mir-
acle!
Making the childless heart to laugh with
gladness;
The eyes that had forgot to weep o'er-
flow
With tears delicious! Thou hast rais'd
the dead,
And to the widow given her shrouded
child!
But what was that pale boy to her that
stands

So beautiful before us? What was
death
To her dark trial? And she's here—
and life
Bounds in her bosom—the young doves
that erst,
Ere yet the cold air soil'd their snowy
plumes,
Were offer'd in thy Temple not so pure!

NAOMI.

How cam'st thou hither?

BENINA.

Ask of him that led me—
Of him—that all but I seem to have for-
gotten.

ADONIJAH.

Love, I shall take a sweet revenge here-
after,
Resuming to myself the boon that now
They have no time to thank me for.—
What's he,
That rushes where proud War disdains
to spoil?
That tread was wont to move in marble
halls,
To sounds of music. Round his limbs,
that shake
And quiver, as with pain, he wraps his
robes,
Like one men wont to gaze on. Even
despair
On such a brow looks noble!—Hark!
he speaks—

THE ABOVE, BELSHAZZAR.

BELSHAZZAR.

'Tis come at last! the barbéd arrow
drinks
My life-blood. Mid the base abode of
slaves
I seem to stand: not here—my fathers
set
Like suns in glory! I'll not perish here,
And stifle like some vile, forgotten
lamp!
Oh, dreadful God! is't not enough?—
My state
I equall'd with the Heavens—and wilt
thou trample me

Beneath these—What are ye that crowd
around me?

I have a dim remembrance of your
forms

And voices. Are ye not the slaves that
stood

This morn' before me? and—

IMLAH.

Thou spurn'dst us from thee.

BELSHAZZAR.

And ye'll revenge you on the clay-cold
corpse.

IMLAH.

Fear not: our God, and this world's
cruel usage,

Hath taught us early what kings learn
too late.

BELSHAZZAR.

Ye know me, then—ye know the King
of Babylon—

The King of dust and ashes? for what
else

Is now the beauteous city—earth's de-
light?

And what the King himself but—dust
and ashes?

BENINA.

He faints—support him, dearest Adoni-
jah!

BELSHAZZAR.

Mine eyes are heavy, and a swoon, a
sleep

Swims o'er my head:—go, summon me
the lutes,

That us'd to soothe me to my balmiest
slumbers;

And bid the snowy-handed maidens fan
The dull, hot air around me. 'Tis not

well—

This bed—'tis hard and damp. I gave
command

I would not lie but on the softest
plumes

That the birds bear. Slaves! hear ye
not?—'tis cold—

'Tis piercing cold!

BENINA.

Alas! he's little used

To feel the night winds on his naked
brow:

He's breathing still—spread o'er him
that bright mantle;

A strange, sad use for robes of sov-
ereignty.

THE ABOVE, NITOCRIS.

NITOCRIS.

Why should I pass street after street,
through flames

That make the hardy conqueror shrink;
and stride

O'er heaps of dying, that look up and
wonder

To see a living and unwounded being?
Oh! mercifully cruel, they do slay

The child and mother with one blow!
the bride

And bridegroom! I alone am spar'd, to
die

Remote from all—from him with whom
I've cherished

A desperate hope to mingle my cold
ashes!

'Tis all the daughter of great Nabonas-
sar

Hath now to ask!—I'll sit me down
and listen,

And through that turbulent din of clat-
tering steel,

And cries of murder'd men, and smoul-
dering houses,

And th' answering trumpets of the
Mede and Persian,

Summoning their bands to some new
work of slaughter,

Anon one universal cry of triumph
Will burst; and all the city, either host,

In mute and breathless admiration, lie
To hear the o'erpowering clamour that

announces

Belshazzar slain!—and then I'll rise and
rush

To that dread place—they'll let me weep
or die

Upon his corpse!—Old man, thou'st
found thy child.

IMLAH.

I have—I have—and thine. Oh! rise
not thus,
In thy majestic joy, as though to mount
Earth's throne again. Behold the King!

NITOCRIS.

My son!
On the cold earth—not there, but on my
bosom—
Alas! that's colder still. My beauteous
boy,
Look up and see—

BELSHAZZAR.

I can see nought—all's darkness!

NITOCRIS.

Too true: he'll die, and will not know
me! Son!
Thy mother speaks—thy only kindred
flesh,
That lov'd thee ere thou wert; and,
when thou'rt gone,
Will love thee still the more!

BELSHAZZAR.

Have dying kings
Lovers or kindred? Hence! disturb me
not.

NITOCRIS.

Shall I disturb thee, crouching by thy
side
To die with thee? Oh! how he used to
turn
And nestle his young cheek in this full
bosom,
That now he shrinks from! No! it is
the last
Convulsive shudder of cold death. My
son,
Wait—wait, and I will die with thee—
not yet—
Alas! yet this was what I pray'd for—
this—
To kiss thy cold cheek, and inhale thy
last—
Thy dying breath.

IMLAH.

Behold! behold, they rise;
Feebly they stand, by their united
strength
Supported. Hath yon kindling of the
darkness,
Yon blaze, that seems as if the earth
and heaven
Were mingled in one ghastly funeral
pile,
Arous'd them? Lo, the flames, like a
gorg'd serpent,
That slept in glittering but scarce-mov-
ing folds,
Now, having sprung a nobler prey,
break out
In tenfold rage.

ADONIJAH.

How like a lioness,
Robb'd of her kingly brood, she glares!
She wipes
From her wan brow the gray discolour'd
locks,
Where used to gleam Assyria's diadem;
And now and then her tenderest glance
recurs
To him that closer to her bleeding heart
She clasps, as self-reproachful that
aught earthly
Distracts her from her one maternal
care.

IMLAH.

More pale, and more intent, he looks
abroad
Into the ruin, as though he felt a pride
Even in the splendour of the desolation!

BELSHAZZAR.

The hand—the unbodied hand—it moves
—look there!
Look where it points!—my beautiful
palace—

NITOCRIS.

Look—
The Temple of great Bel—

BELSHAZZAR.

Our halls of joy!

NITOCRIS.

Earth's pride and wonder!

IMLAH.

Ay, o'er both the fire
Mounts like a conqueror: here, o'er spa-
cious courts,
And avenues of pillars, and long roofs,
From which red streams of molten gold
pour down,
It spreads, till all, like those vast fab-
rics, seem
Built of the rich clouds round the set-
ting sun—
All the wide heavens, one bright and
shadowy palace!
But terrible here—th' Almighty's wrath-
ful hand
Everywhere manifest!—There the Tem-
ple stands,
Tower above tower, one pyramid of
flame;
To which those kingly sepulchres by
Nile
Were but as hillocks to vast Caucasus!
Aloof, the wreck of Nimrod's impious
tower
Alone is dark; and something like a
cloud,
But gloomier, hovers o'er it. All is
mute:
Man's cries, and clashing steel, and
braying trumpet—

The only sound the rushing noise of
fire!

Now, hark! the universal crash—at
once

They fall—they sink—

ADONIJAH.

And so do those that rul'd them!
The Palace, and the Temple, and the
race
Of Nabonassar, are at once extinct!
Babylon and her kings are fallen for
ever!

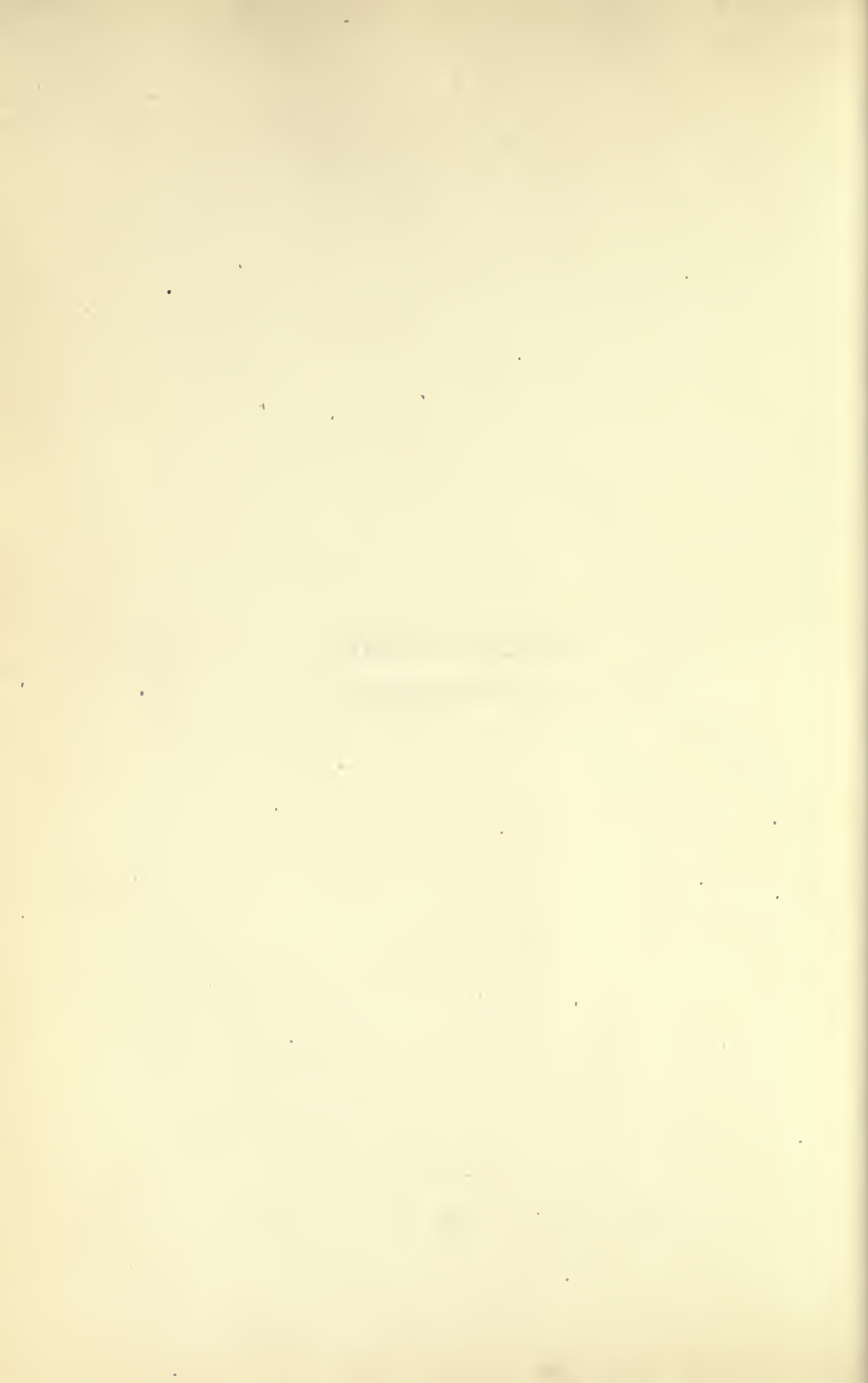
IMLAH.

Without a cry, without a groan, behold
them,
Th' Imperial mother and earth-ruling
son
Stretch'd out in death! Nor she with-
out a gleam
Of joy expiring with her cheek on his:
Nor he unconscious that with him the
pride
And terror of the world is fallen—th'
abode
And throne of universal empire—now
A plain of ashes 'round the tombless
dead!—
Oh, God of hosts! Almighty, Ever-
lasting!
God of our Fathers, thou alone art
great!

HENRY HART MILMAN (1791-1868).



BELSHAZZAR
A SACRED DRAMA



BELSHAZZAR

A SACRED DRAMA.

*How art thou fallen from Heaven,
O Lucifer, son of the morning! How
art thou cut down to the ground, who
didst weaken the nations!—Isaiah.*

PERSONS OF THE DRAMA.

BELSHAZZAR, king of Babylon.

NITOCRIS, the queen mother.

DANIEL, the Jewish Prophet.

Courtiers, Astrologers, Parasites.

Captive Jews, etc., etc.

Scene—Babylon.

Time—Night.

The subject is taken from the fifth chapter of the Prophet Daniel.

PART I.

Scene—Near the palace of Babylon.

DANIEL AND CAPTIVE JEWS.

DANIEL.

Parent of Life and Light! Sole Source
of Good!

Whose tender mercies through the tide
of time,

In long successive order, have sustain'd,
And sav'd the sons of Israel! Thou
whose power

Deliver'd righteous Noah from the flood,
The whelming flood, the grave of human
kind!

Oh thou whose guardian care and out-
stretch'd hand

Rescued young Isaac from the lifted
arm,

Rais'd, at thy bidding, to devote a son,
An only son, doom'd by his sire to die:
O saving faith, by such obedience
prov'd!

O blest obedience, hallow'd thus by
faith!

Thou, who in mercy sav'dst the chosen
race

In the wild desert, and didst there sus-
tain them

By wonder-working love, though they
rebell'd

And murmur'd at the miracles that sav'd
them!

O hear thy servant Daniel! hear and
help!

Thou, whose almighty power did after
raise

Successive leaders to defend our race;
Who sentest valiant Joshua to the field,
The people's champion, to the conquer-
ing field,

Where the revolving planet of the night,
Suspended in her radiant round, was
stay'd;

And the bright sun arrested in his
course,

Stupendously stood still!

CHORUS OF JEWS.

I.

What ail'd thee, that thou stood'st still,
O sun! nor did thy flaming orb decline!
And thou, O moon! in Ajalon's low vale,
Why didst thou long before thy period
shine?

II.

Was it at Joshua's dread command,
The leader of the Israelitish band?
Yes—at a mortal bidding both stood
still;
'Twas Joshua's word, but 'twas Jeho-
vah's will.

III.

What all-controlling hand had force
To stop eternal Nature's constant
course?
The wand'ring moon to one fix'd spot
confine,

But His whose fiat gave them first to
shine?

DANIEL.

O Thou! who, when thy discontented
host,
Tir'd of Jehovah's rule, desir'd a king,
In anger gav'st them Saul; and then
again
Didst wrest the regal sceptre from his
hand
To give it David—David, best belov'd!
Illustrious David! poet, prophet, king;
Thou who did'st suffer Solomon the wise
To build a glorious Temple to thy
name,—

O hear thy servants, and forgive us, too!
If by severe necessity compell'd,
We worship here—we have no temple
now:

Altar or sanctuary none is left.

CHORUS OF JEWS.

O Judah! let thy captive sons deplore
Thy far-fam'd temple's now no more!
Fall'n is thy sacred fane, thy glory
gone!

Fall'n is thy temple, Solomon!
Ne'er did Barbaric kings behold,
With all their shining gems, their bur-
nish'd gold,

A fane so perfect, bright and fair:
For God himself was wont t' inhabit
there.

Between the cherubim his glory stood,
While the high-priest alone the dazzling
splendour view'd.

How fondly did the Tyrian artist strive,
His name to latest time should live!
Such wealth the stranger wonder'd to
behold:

Gold were the tablets, and the vases
gold.

Of cedar such an ample store,
Exhausted Lebanon could yield no more.
Bending before the Ruler of the sky,
Well might the royal founder cry,
Fill'd with an holy dread, a rev'rend
fear,

Will God in very deed inhabit here?
The heaven of heavens beneath his feet,
Is for the bright inhabitant unmeet:
Archangels prostrate wait his high
commands,

And will he deign to dwell in temples
made with hands?

DANIEL.

Yes, Thou art ever present, Pow'r Su-
preme,
Not circumscrib'd by time, nor fix'd to
space,
Confin'd to altars, nor to temples bound.
In wealth, in want, in freedom, or in
chains,
In dungeons or on thrones, the faithful
find Thee!
E'en in the burning caldron Thou wast
near
To Shadrach and the holy brotherhood:
The unhurt martyrs bless'd Thee in the
flames,
They sought, and found Thee; call'd,
and Thou wast there.

FIRST JEW.

How chang'd our state! Judah, thy
glory's fallen!

Thy joys for hard captivity chang'd:
And thy sad sons breathe the polluted
air

Of Babylon, where deities obscene
Insult the living God; and to his serv-
ants,

The priests of wretched idols made with
hands,

Show contumelious scorn.

DANIEL.

'Tis heaven's high will.

SECOND JEW.

If I forget thee, O Jerusalem!
If I not fondly cherish thy lov'd image,
E'en in the giddy hour of thoughtless
mirth;

If I not rather view thy prostrate walls
Than haughty Babylon's imperial tow'rs,
Then may my tongue refuse to frame
the strains

Of sweetest harmony, my rude right
hand

Forget, with sounds symphonious, to ac-
cord

The harp of Jesse's son to Sion's song.

FIRST JEW.

Of on Euphrates' ever verdant banks
 Where drooping willows form a mourn-
 ful shade
 With all the pride which prosp'rous for-
 tunes give,
 And all th' unfeeling mirth of happy
 men,
 Th' insulting Babylonians ask a song;
 Such songs as erst in better days were
 sung
 By Korah's sons, or heav'n-taught Asaph
 set
 To loftiest measures; then our bursting
 hearts
 Feel all their woes afresh; the galling
 chain
 Of bondage crushes then the free-born
 soul
 With wringing anguish from the trem-
 bling lip.
 Th' unfinished cadence falls; and the big
 tear,
 While it relieves, betrays the wo-fraught
 soul.
 For who can view Euphrates' pleasant
 stream,
 Its drooping willows and its verdant
 banks,
 And not to wounded memory recall
 The piny groves of fertile Palestine,
 The vales of Solyma, and Jordan's
 stream!

DANIEL.

Firm faith and deep submission to high
 heaven
 Will teach us to endure without a mur-
 mur
 What seems so hard. Think what the
 holy host
 Of patriarchs, saints, and prophets have
 sustain'd,
 In the blest cause of truth! And shall
 not we,
 O men of Judah! dare what these have
 dar'd
 And boldly pass through the refining
 fire
 Of fierce affliction? Yes, be witness,
 Heaven!
 Old as I am, I will not shrink at death,
 Come in what shape it may, if God so
 will,

By peril to confirm and prove my faith.
 Oh! I would dare yon den of hungry
 lions,
 Rather than pause to fill the task as-
 sign'd
 By wisdom Infinite. Nor think I boast,
 Not in myself, but in Thy strength I
 trust,
 Spirit of God!

FIRST JEW.

Prophet, thy words support,
 And raise our sinking souls.

DANIEL.

Behold yon palace;
 There proud Belshazzar keeps his wan-
 ton court!
 I knew it once beneath another lord,
 His grandsire,* who subdu'd Jehoiachin,
 And hither brought sad Judah's captive
 tribes;
 And with them brought the rich and
 precious relics
 Of our fam'd temple; all the holy treas-
 ure,
 The golden vases, and the sacred cups,
 Which grac'd in happier times, the sanc-
 tuary.

SECOND JEW.

May He to whose blest use they were
 devoted,
 Preserve them from pollution; and once
 more,
 In His own gracious time restore the
 temple!

DANIEL.

I, with some favour'd youths of Jewish
 race
 Was lodg'd in the king's palace, and
 instructed
 In all the various learning of the East;
 But He, on whose great name our fathers
 call'd,
 Preserv'd us from the perils of a court,
 Warn'd us to guard our youthful appe-
 tites,
 And still with holy fortitude reject
 The pamp'ring viands Luxury presented;
 Fell Luxury; more perilous to youth

*Nebuchadnezzar.

Than storms or quicksands, poverty or chains:

SECOND JEW.

He who can guard 'gainst the low baits of sense,
Will find Temptation's arrows hurtless strike

Against the brazen shield of Temperance.
For 'tis th' inferior appetites enthrall
The man, and quench th' immortal light within him;

The senses take the soul an easy prey,
And sink th' imprison'd spirit into brute.

DANIEL.

Twice,* by the Spirit of God, did I expound

The visions of the king; his soul was touch'd,

And twice did he repent, and prostrate fall

Before the God of Daniel: yet again,
Pow'r, flattery, and prosperity, undid him.

When from the lofty ramparts of his palace

He view'd the splendours of the royal city,

That magazine of wealth, which proud Euphrates

Wafts from each distant corner of the earth;

When he beheld the adamantine tow'rs,
The brazen gates, the bulwarks of his strength,

The pendant gardens, Art's stupendous work,

The wonder of the world! the proud Chaldean,

Mad with th' intoxicating fumes which rise

When uncontroll'd ambition grasps at once

Dominion absolute, and boundless wealth,
Forgot he was a man, forgot his God!

'This mighty Babylon is mine,' he cry'd;

'My wond'rous pow'r, my godlike arm achiev'd it.

I scorn submission; own no Deity

Above my own.'—While the blasphemerspoke,

*Daniel, chap. ii and iv.

The wrath of Heav'n inflicted instant vengeance;

Stripp'd him of that bright reason he abus'd;

And drove him from the cheerful haunts of men,

A naked, wretched, helpless, senseless thing;

Companion of the brutes, his equals now.

FIRST JEW.

Nor does his impious grandson, proud Belshazzar,

Fall short of his offences; nay, he wants The valiant spirit and the active soul

Of his progenitor; for Pleasure's slave,
Though bound in silken chains, and only tied

In flowery fetters, seeming light and loose,

Is more subdu'd than the rash casual victim

Of anger or ambition; these indeed Burn with a fiercer, but a short-lived fire;

While pleasure with a constant flame consumes,

War slays her thousands, but destructive Pleasure,

More fell, more fatal, her ten thousands slays:

The young luxurious king she fondly woos

In ev'ry shape of am'rous blandishment;

With adulation smooth ensnares his soul;

With love betrays him, and with wine inflames.

She strews her magic poppies o'er his couch,

And with delicious opiates charms him down,

In fatal slumbers bound. Though Babylon

Is now, invested by the warlike troops

Of royal Cyrus, Persia's valiant prince;

Who, in conjunction with the Median king,

Darius, fam'd for conquest, now prepares

To storm the city: not the impending horrors

Which ever wait a siege have pow'r to wake

To thought or sense th' intoxicated
king.

DANIEL.

E'en in this night of universal dread,
A mighty army threat'ning at the gates;
This very night, as if in scorn of danger,
The dissolute Belshazzar holds a feast
Magnificently impious, meant to honour
Belus, the fav'rite Babylonish idol.

Lewd parasites compose his wanton
court,

Whose impious flatt'ries sooth his mon-
strous crimes:

They justify his vices and extol
His boastful phrase, as if he were some
god:

Whate'er he says, they say; what he
commands,

Implicitly they do; they echo back
His blasphemies with shouts of loud
acclaim;

And when he wounds the tortur'd ear
of Virtue,

They cry "All hail! Belshazzar live for-
ever!"

To-night a thousand nobles fill his hall,
Princes, and all the dames who grace
the court;

All but his virtuous mother, sage Nitoc-
ris:

Ah! how unlike the impious king, her
son!

She never mingles in the midnight fray,
Nor crowns the guilty banquet with her
presence.

The royal fair is rich in every virtue
Which can adorn the queen or grace the
woman.

But for the wisdom of her prudent
counsels

This wretched empire had been long
undone.

Not fam'd Semiramis, Assyria's pride,
Could boast a brighter mind or firmer
soul;

Beneath the gentle reign of Merodach,*
Her royal lord, our nation tasted peace.

Our captive monarch, sad Jehoiachin,
Grown gray in a close prison's horrid
gloom,

He freed from bondage; brought the
hoary king

To taste once more the long-forgotten
sweets

Of liberty and light, sustain'd his age,
Pour'd in his wounds the lenient balm
of kindness,

And blest his setting hour of life with
peace.

[*Sound of trumpets is heard at a dis-
tance.*]

FIRST JEW.

That sound proclaims the banquet is
begun.

SECOND JEW.

Hark! the licentious uproar grows more
loud,

The vaulted roof resounds with shouts
of mirth,

And the firm palace shakes! Retire, my
friends;

This madness is not meet for sober ears.
If any of our race were found so near,

'Twould but expose us to the rude at-
tack

Of ribaldry obscene and impious jests
From these mad sons of Belial, more
inflam'd

To deeds of riot by the wanton feast.

DANIEL:

Here part we then! but when again to
meet

Who knows, save heaven? Yet, O my
friends! I feel

An impulse more than human stir my
breast.

Wrapt in prophetic vision,* I behold
Things hid as yet from mortal sight.

I see
The dart of vengeance tremble in the
air,

Ere long to pierce the impious king.
E'en now

The desolating angel stalks abroad,
And brandishes aloft the two-edg'd

sword

Of retribution keen; he soon will strike,
And Babylon shall weep as Sion wept.

Pass but a little while, and you shall
see

* See the Prophecies of Isaiah, chap. xlvi, and others.

* II Kings, chap. xxiv.

This queen of cities prostrate on the earth.
 This haughty mistress of the kneeling world,
 How shall she sit dishonour'd in the dust,
 In tarnish'd pomp and solitary wo!
 How shall she shroud her glories in the dark,
 And in opprobrious silence hide her head!
 Lament, O virgin daughter of Chaldea!
 For thou shalt fall! imperial queen,
 shalt fall!
 No more Sidonian robes shall grace thy limbs.
 To purple garments sackcloth shall succeed,
 And sordid dust and ashes shall supply
 The od'rous nard and cassia. Thou,
 who said'st
 I AM, and there is none beside me: thou,
 E'en thou, imperial Babylon, shalt fall!
 Thy glory quite eclips'd! The pleasant sound
 Of viol and of harp shall charm no more;
 Nor' song of Syrian damsels shall be heard,
 Responsive to the lute's luxurious note:
 But the loud bittern's cry, the raven's croak,
 The bat's fell scream, the lonely owl's dull plaint,
 And ev'ry hideous bird, with ominous shriek,
 Shall scare affrighted Silence from thy walls:
 While Desolation, snatching from the hand
 Of Time the scythe of ruin, sits aloft,
 Or stalks in dreadful majesty abroad.
 I see th'exterminating fiend advance,
 E'en now I see her glare with horrid joy,
 See towers imperial mould'ring at her touch;
 She glances on the broken battlement,
 She eyes the crumbling column, and enjoys
 The work of ages prostrate in the dust—
 Then pointing to the mischiefs she has made,
 Exulting cries, This once was Babylon!

PART II.

Scene—the court of Belshazzar. The king seated on a magnificent throne. Princes, nobles, and attendants. Ladies of the court. Music—A superb banquet.

FIRST COURTIER [*rises and kneels*].

Hail mighty king!

SECOND COURTIER.

Belshazzar, live forever!

THIRD COURTIER.

Sun of the world, and light of kings,
 all hail!

FOURTH COURTIER.

With lowly rev'rence, such as best becomes
 The humblest creatures of imperial power,
 Behold a thousand nobles bend before thee!
 Princes far fam'd, and dames of high descent:
 Yet all this pride of wealth, this boast of beauty,
 Shrinks into nought before thine awful eye!
 And lives or dies as the king frowns or smiles!

BELSHAZZAR.

This is such homage as becomes your loves,
 And suits the mighty monarch of mankind.

FIFTH COURTIER.

The bending world should prostrate thus before thee;
 And pay not only praise, but adoration!

BELSHAZZAR (*rises and comes forward*).

Let dull Philosophy preach self-denial;
 Let envious Poverty and snarling Age
 Proudly declaim against the joys they know not.

Let the deluded Jews, who fondly hope

Some fancied heaven hereafter, mortify,
And lose the actual blessings of this
world

To purchase others which may never
come.

Our gods may promise less, but give us
more

Ill could my ardent spirit be content
With meagre abstinence and hungry
hope.

Let those misjudging Israelites who want
The nimble spirits and the active soul,
Call their blunt feelings virtue: let them
drudge,

In regular progression, through the
round

Of formal duty and of daily toil;
And when they want the genius to be
happy,

Believe their harsh austerity is good-
ness.

If there be gods, they meant we should
enjoy:

Why give us else these tastes and appet-
ites?

And why the means to crown them with
indulgence?

To burst the feeble bonds which hold
the vulgar,

Is noble daring.

FIRST COURTIER.

And is therefore worthy
The high imperial spirit of Belshazzar.

SECOND COURTIER.

Behold a banquet which the gods might
share!

BELSHAZZAR.

To-night, my friends, your monarch shall
be blest

With ev'ry various joy; to-night is ours;
Nor shall the envious gods, who view
our bliss,

And sicken as they view, to-night dis-
turb us.

Bring all the richest spices of the East;
The od'rous cassia and the dropping
myrrh,

The liquid amber and the fragrant gums,
Rob Gilead of its balms, Belshazzar
bids,

And leave the Arabian groves without
an odour.

Bring freshest flow'rs, exhaust the
blooming spring,

Twine the green myrtle with the short-
liv'd rose;

And ever, as the blushing garland fades,
We'll learn to snatch the fugitive de-
light,

And grasp the flying joy ere it escapes
us.

Come—fill the smiling goblet for the
king;

Belshazzar will not let a moment pass
Unmark'd by some enjoyment! The full
bowl

Let ev'ry guest partake!

[*Courtiers kneel and drink.*]

FIRST COURTIER.

Here's to the King!
Light of the world, and glory of the
earth,

Whose word is fate!

BELSHAZZAR.

Yes; we are likest gods
When we have pow'r, and use it. What
is wealth

But the rich means to gratify desire?
I will not have a wish, a hope, a thought,
That shall not know fruition. What is
empire?

The privilege to punish and enjoy:
To feel our pow'r in making other's fear
it;

To taste of Pleasure's cup till we grow
giddy,
And think ourselves immortal! This
is empire!

My ancestors scarce tasted of its joys:
Shut from the sprightly world, and all
its charms,

In cumbrous majesty, in sullen state
And dull unsocial dignity they liv'd;

Far from the sight of an admiring world,
That world, whose gaze makes half the
charms of greatness;

They nothing knew of empire but the
name,

Or saw it in the looks of trembling
slaves;

And all they felt of royalty was care.

But I will see, and know it of myself:

Youth, Wealth and Greatness court me
to be blest,
And Pow'r and Pleasure draw with
equal force
And sweet attraction; both I will embrace
In quick succession; this is Pleasure's
day;
Ambition will have time to reign here-
after;
It is the proper appetite of age.
The lust of pow'r shall lord it uncon-
troll'd,
When all the gen'rous feelings grow
obtuse,
And stern Dominion holds, with rigid
hand,
His iron reign, and sits and sways alone.
But youth is Pleasure's hour!

FIRST COURTIER.

Perish the slave
Who, with official counsel would oppose
The king's desire, whose slightest wish
is law!

BELSHAZZAR.

Now strike the loud-ton'd lyre and softer
lute;
Let me have music, with the nobler aid
Of poesy. Where are those cunning
men
Who boast, by chosen sounds, and
measur'd sweetness,
To set the busy spirits in a flame,
And cool them at their will? who know
the art
To call the hidden powers of numbers
forth,
And make that pliant instrument, the
mind,
Yield to the pow'rful sympathy of sound,
Obedient to the master's artful hand,
Such magic is in song! Then give me
song;
Yet not at first such soul-dissolving
strains
As melt the soften'd sense; but such
bold measures
As may inflame my spirit to despise
Th' ambitious Persian, that presum-
ptuous boy,
Who rashly dares e'en now invest our
city,

And menaces th' invincible Belshazzar.

[*A grand concert of music, after which
an ode.*]

In vain shall Persian Cyrus dare
With great Belshazzar wage unequal
war:

In vain Darius shall combine,
Darius, leader of the Median line;
While fair Euphrates' stream our walls
protects,
And great Belshazzar's self our fate
directs.

War and famine threat in vain,
While this demi-god shall reign!
Let Persia's prostrate king confess his
pow'r,
And Media' monarch dread his vengeful
hour.

On Dura's* ample plain behold
Immortal Belus,† whom the nations
own;

Sublime he stands in burnish'd gold,
And richest offerings his bright altars
crown.

To-night his deity we here adore,
And due libations speak his mighty
pow'r.

Yet Belus' self not more we own
Than great Belshazzar on Chaldea's
throne.

Great Belshazzar like a god,
Rules the nations with a nod!
To great Belshazzar be the goblet
crown'd!
Belshazzar's name the echoing roofs re-
bound!

* *Daniel, chap. iii.*

† *See a very fine description of the
temple of this idol.*

— *The tow'ring fane
Of Bel, Chaldean Jove, surpassing far
That Doric temple, which the Elean
chiefs
Rais'd to their thunderer from the
spoils of war,
Or that Ionic, where th' Ephesian
bow'd
To Dian, queen of heaven. Eight
towers arise,
Each above each, immeasurable height,
A monument at once of eastern pride,
And slavish superstition, etc.
Judah Restored, b. i.*

BELSHAZZAR.

Enough! the kindling rapture fires my
brain,
And my heart dances to the flattering
sounds,
I feel myself a god! Why not a god!
What were the deities our fathers wor-
ship'd?
What was great Nimrod, our imperial
founder?
What greater Belus, to whose pow'r
divine
We raise to-night the banquet and the
song
But youthful heroes, mortal, like myself,
Who, by their daring earn'd divinity?
They were but men: nay some were
less than men,
Though now rever'd as gods. What was
Anubis,
Whom Egypt's sapient sons adore? A
dog!
And shall not I, young, valiant, and a
king,
Dare more? do more? exceed the bold-
est flights
Of my progenitors?—Fill me more wine,
To cherish and exalt the young idea.
(*he drinks.*)
Ne'er did Olympian Jupiter himself
Quaff such immortal draughts.

FIRST COURTIER.

What could that Canaan,
That heaven in hope, that nothing in
possession,
That air-built bliss of the deluded Jews,
That promis'd land of milk and flowing
honey,
What could that fancy'd Paradise be-
stow
To match these generous juices?

BELSHAZZAR.

Hold—enough!
Thou hast rous'd a thought. By Heav'n
I will enjoy it;
A glorious thought! which will exalt to
rapture
The pleasure of the banquet, and bestow
A yet untasted relish of delight.

FIRST COURTIER.

What means the king?

BELSHAZZAR.

The Jews! said'st thou the Jews!

FIRST COURTIER.

I spoke of that undone, that outcast
people,
Those tributary creatures of thy pow'r,
The captives of thy will, whose very
breath
Hangs on the sovereign pleasure of the
king.

BELSHAZZAR.

When that abandoned race was hither
brought,
Were not the choicest treasures of their
temple,
(Devoted to their God, and held most
precious)
Among the spoils which grac'd Nebas-
sar's* triumphs,
And lodg'd in Babylon?

FIRST COURTIER.

O king! they were.

SECOND COURTIER.

The Jews, with superstitious awe, behold
These sacred symbols of their ancient
faith:
Nor has captivity abated aught
The rev'rend love they bear these holy
reliques.
Though we deride their law, and scorn
their persons,
Yet never have we yet to human use
Devoted these rich vessels set apart
To sacred purposes.

* *The name of Nebuchadnezzar not being reducible to verse, I have adopted that of Nebassar, on the authority of the ingenious and learned Author of "Judah Restored."*

BELSHAZZAR.

I joy to hear it!
Go—fetch them hither. They shall grace
our banquet.
Does no one stir? Belshazzar disobey'd?
And yet you live? Whence comes this
strange reluctance?
This new-born rev'rence for the helpless
Jews?
This fear to injure those who can't re-
venge it?
Send to the sacred treasury in haste,
Let all be hither brought;—who answers
dies.

[*They go out.*]

The mantling wine a higher joy will
yield,
Pour'd from the precious flaggons which
adorn'd
Their far-fam'd temple, now in ashes
laid.
Oh! 'twill exalt the pleasure into trans-
port,
To gall those whining, praying Israelites!
I laugh to think what wild dismay will
seize them
When they shall learn the use that has
been made
Of all their holy trumpery!

[*The vessels are brought in.*]

SECOND COURTIER.

It comes;
A goodly show! how bright with gold
and gems!
Far fitter for a youthful monarch's board
Than the cold shrine of an unheeding
God.

BELSHAZZAR.

Fill me that massy goblet to the brim.
Now, Abraham! let thy wretched race
expect
The fable of their faith to be fulfill'd;
Their second temple and their promis'd
King!
Now will they see the God they vainly
serve
Is impotent to help; for had He pow'r
To hear and grant their pray'r, He
would prevent
This profanation.

[*As the king is going to drink, thunder
is heard: he starts from the throne,
spies a hand, which writes on the wall
these words, MENE, MENE, TEKEL,
UPHARSIN. He lets fall the goblet, and
stands in an attitude of speechless
horror. All start and seem terrified.*]

FIRST COURTIER [*after a long pause*].

Oh, transcendent horror!

SECOND COURTIER.

What may this mean? The king is
greatly mov'd!

THIRD COURTIER.

Nor is it strange—who unappall'd can
view it?
Those sacred cups! I doubt we've gone
too far!

FIRST COURTIER.

Observe the fear-struck king! his start-
ing eyes
Roll horribly. Thrice he essay'd to
speak,
And thrice his tongue refus'd.

BELSHAZZAR [*in a low, trembling voice*].

Ye mystic words!
Thou semblance of an hand! illusive
forms!
Ye wild, fantastic images, what are ye?
Dread shadows, speak! Explain your
dark intent!
Ye will not answer me—Alas! I feel
I am a mortal now—My failing limbs
Refuse to bear me up. I am no god!
Gods do not tremble thus—Support me,
hold me:
These loosen'd joints, these knees which
smite each other,
Betray I'm but a man—a weak one,
too!

FIRST COURTIER.

In truth, 'tis passing strange, and full
of horror!

BELSHAZZAR.

Send for the learn'd magicians, every
sage
Who deals in wizard spells and magic
charms.

[*Some go out.*]

FIRST COURTIER.

How fares my lord the king?

BELSHAZZAR.

Am I a king?

What pow'r have I? Ye lying slaves,
I am not.

Oh, soul-distracting sight! but is it
real?

Perhaps 'tis fancy all, or the wild dream
Of mad distemperature, the fumes of
wine!

I'll look on it no more!—So—now I'm
well!

I am a king again, and know not fear.
And yet my eyes will seek that fatal
spot,

And fondly dwell upon the sight that
blasts them!

Again, 'tis there! it is not fancy's work,
I see it still! 'tis written on the wall!

I see the writing, but the viewless writer,
Who! what is he! Oh, horror! horror!
horror!

It cannot be the God of these poor
Jews;

For what is He, that He can thus afflict?

SECOND COURTIER.

Let not my lord the king be thus dis-
may'd.

THIRD COURTIER.

Let not a phantom, an illusive shade
Disturb the peace of him who rules the
world.

BELSHAZZAR.

No more, ye wretched sycophants! no
more!

The sweetest note which flatt'ry now
can strike,

Harsh and discordant grates upon my
soul.

Talk not of pow'r to one so full of fear,
So weak, so impotent! Look on that
wall;

If thou would'st soothe my soul explain
the writing,

And thou shalt be my oracle, my God!
O tell me whence it came, and what it
means,

And I'll believe I am again a king!

Friends! princes! ease my troubled
breast, and say

What do the mystic characters portend?

FIRST COURTIER.

'Tis not in us, O king, to ease thy
spirit;

We are not skill'd in those mysterious
arts

Which wait the midnight studies of the
sage:

But of the deep diviners thou shalt
learn.

The wise astrologers, the sage magi-
cians,

Who, of events unborn, take secret note,
And hold deep commerce with the un-
seen world.

[*Enter astrologers, magicians, etc.*]

BELSHAZZAR.

Approach, ye sages, 'tis the king com-
mands.

[*They kneel.*]

ASTROLOGERS.

Hail, mighty king of Babylon!

BELSHAZZAR.

Nay, rise:

I do not need your homage, but your
help;

The world may worship, you must coun-
sel me.

He who declares the secret of the king,
No common honours shall await his
skill;

Our empire shall be tax'd for his reward,
And he himself shall name the gift he
wishes.

A splendid scarlet robe shall grace his
limbs,

His neck a princely chain of gold adorn:

Meet honours for such wisdom: He shall rule
The third in rank throughout our Babylon.

SECOND ASTROLOGER.

Such recompense becomes Belshazzar's bounty;
Let the king speak the secret of his soul;
Which heard, his humble creatures shall unfold.

BELSHAZZAR [*points to the wall*].

Be't so—look there—behold those characters!
Nay, do not start, for I will know their meaning!
Ha! answer; speak, or instant death awaits you!
What, dumb! all dumb! where is your boasted skill?

[*They confer together.*]

Keep them asunder—no confederacy—
No secret plots to make your tales agree,
Speak, slaves, and dare to let me know the worst!

[*They kneel.*]

FIRST ASTROLOGER.

O, let the king forgive his faithful servants!

SECOND ASTROLOGER.

O mitigate our threatened doom of death;
If we declare, with mingled grief and shame,
We cannot tell the secret of the king,
Nor what these mystic characters pretend!

BELSHAZZAR.

Off with their heads! Ye shall not live an hour!
Curse on your shallow arts, your lying science!

'Tis thus you practice on the credulous world,
Who think you wise because themselves are weak!
But, miscreants, ye shall die! the pow'r to punish
Is all that I have left me of a king.

FIRST COURTIER.

Great sire, suspend their punishment awhile;
Behold Nitocris comes, thy royal mother!

[*Enter Queen.*]

QUEEN.

O my misguided son!
Well may'st thou wonder to behold me here:
For I have ever shunn'd this scene of riot,
Where wild intemperance and dishonour'd mirth
Hold festival impure. Yet, O Belshazzar!
I could not hear the wonders which befel,
And leave thee to the workings of despair:
For, spite of all the anguish of my soul
At thy offences, I'm thy mother still!
Against the solemn purpose I had form'd
Never to mix in this unhallow'd crowd,
The wondrous story of the mystic writing,
Of strange and awful import, brings me here;
If hap'ly I may show some likely means
To fathom this dark mystery.

BELSHAZZAR.

Speak, O queen!
My list'ning soul shall hang upon thy words,
And prompt obedience follow them!

QUEEN.

Then hear me.
Among thy captive tribes which hither came
To grace Nebassar's triumph, there was brought

A youth nam'd Daniel, favour'd by high
Heav'n

With pow'r to look into the secret page
Of dim Futurity's mysterious volume.
The spirit of the holy gods is in him:
No vision so obscure, so deeply hid,
No sentence so perplex'd but he can
solve it:

He can unfold the dark decrees of fate,
Can trace each crooked labyrinth of
thought,

Each winding maze of doubt, and make
it clear

And palpable to sense. He twice ex-
plain'd

The monarch's mystic dreams. The holy
seer

Saw, with prophetic spirit, what befel
The king long after. For his wond'rous
skill

He was rewarded, honour'd, and
caress'd,

And with the rulers of Chaldea rank'd:
Though now, alas! thrown by, his serv-
ices

Forgotten or neglected.

BELSHAZZAR.

Send with speed

A message to command the holy man
To meet us on the instant.

NITOCRIS.

I already

Have sent to ask his presence at the
palace,

And lo! in happy season see he comes.

[Enter Daniel.]

BELSHAZZAR.

Welcome, thrice venerable sage! ap-
proach.

Art thou that Daniel whom my great
forefather

Brought hither with the captive tribes
of Judah?

DANIEL.

I am, O king!

BELSHAZZAR.

Then, pardon, holy prophet;
Nor let a just resentment of thy wrongs,

And long neglected merit, shut thy heart
Against a king's request, a suppliant
king!

DANIEL.

The God I worship teaches to forgive.

BELSHAZZAR.

Then let thy words bring comfort to
my soul.

I've heard the spirit of the gods is in
thee;

That thou can'st look into the fates of
men,

With prescience more than human!

DANIEL.

Hold, O king!

Wisdom is from above; 'tis God's own
gift,

I of myself am nothing; but from Him
The little knowledge I possess, I hold:
To Him be all the glory!

BELSHAZZAR.

Then, O Daniel!

If thou indeed dost boast that wond'rous
gift,

That faculty divine, look there, and tell
me!

O say, what mean those mystic charac-
ters?

Remove this load of terror from my
soul,

And honours, such as kings can give,
await thee.

Thou shalt be great beyond thy soul's
ambition,

And rich above thy wildest dream of
wealth:

Clad in the scarlet robe our nobles
wear,

And grac'd with princely ensigns thou
shalt stand

Near our own throne, and third within
our empire.

DANIEL.

O mighty king, thy gifts with thee re-
main

And let thy high rewards on others
fall.

The princely ensign, nor the scarlet robe,

Nor yet to be the third within thy realm,
 Can touch the soul of Daniel. Honour, fame,
 All that the world calls great, thy crown itself,
 Could never satisfy the vast ambition
 Of an immortal spirit; I aspire
 Beyond thy pow'r of giving; my high hopes
 Reach also to a crown—but 'tis a crown
 Unfading and eternal.

FIRST COURTIER.

Wond'rous man!
 Our priests teach no such notions.

DANIEL.

Yet, O king!
 Though all unmov'd by grandeur or by gift,
 I will unfold the high decree of Heaven,
 And straight declare the mystery.

BELSHAZZAR.

Speak, O prophet!

DANIEL.

Prepare to hear what kings have seldom heard;
 Prepare to hear what courtiers seldom tell,
 Prepare to hear the Truth. The mighty God,
 Who rules the sceptres and the hearts of kings,
 Gave thy renown'd forefather* here to reign,
 With such extent of empire, weight of pow'r,
 And greatness of dominion, the wide earth
 Trembled beneath the terror of his name,
 And kingdoms stood or fell as he decreed.
 Oh! dangerous pinnacle of pow'r supreme!
 Who can stand safe upon its treach'rous top,
 Behold the gazing prostrate world below,

* *Nebuchadnezzar.*

Whom depth and distance into pigmies shrink,
 And not grow giddy! Babylon's great king
 Forgot he was a man, a helpless man,
 Subject to pain, and sin, and death, like others!
 But who shall fight against Omnipotence?
 Or who hath hardened his obdurate heart
 Against the Majesty of Heav'n, and prosper'd?
 The God he hath insulted was aveng'd;
 From empire, from the joys of social life,
 He drove him forth; extinguish'd reason's lamp;
 Quench'd that bright spark of deity within;
 Compell'd him with the forest brutes to roam
 For scanty pasture; and the mountain dews
 Fell, cold and wet, on his defenseless head,
 Till he confess'd,—Let men, let monarchs hear!
 Till he confess'd, PRIDE WAS NOT MADE FOR MAN.

NITOCRIS.

O awful instance of divine displeasure!

BELSHAZZAR.

Proceed! my soul is wrapt in fix'd attention!

DANIEL.

O king! thy grandsire not in vain had sinn'd,
 If, from his error thou hadst learnt the truth.
 The story of his fall thou oft has heard,
 But has it taught thee wisdom? Thou, like him,
 Hast been elate with pow'r, and mad with pride,
 Like him, thou hast defy'd the living God.
 Nay, to bold thoughts hast added deeds more bold.
 Thou hast outwrought the pattern he bequeath'd thee,

And quite outgone example; hast profan'd

With impious hand, the vessels of the temple:

Those vessels sanctify'd to holiest use,
Thou hast polluted with unhallow'd lips,
And made the instruments of foul debauch,

Thou hast ador'd the gods of wood and stone,

Vile, senseless deities, the work of hands:

But HE, THE KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS,

In whom exists thy life, thy soul, thy breath,

On whom thy being hangs, thou hast deny'd.

FIRST COURTIER [*aside to the others*].

With what an holy boldness he reproves him!

SECOND COURTIER.

Such is the fearless confidence of virtue,
And such the righteous courage those maintain

Who plead the cause of truth. The smallest word

He utters had been death to half the court.

BELSHAZZAR.

Now let the mystic writing be explain'd
Thrice venerable sage!

DANIEL.

O mighty king!

Hear then its awful import: *Heav'n has number'd*

Thy days of royalty, and soon will end them.

Our God has weigh'd thee in the even balance

Of His own holy law, and finds thee wanting:

And last, *thy kingdom shall be wrested from thee.*

And know, *the Mede and Persian shall possess it.*

BELSHAZZAR [*starts up*].

Prophet, when shall this be?

DANIEL.

In God's own time;
Here my commission ends; I may not utter

More than thou'st heard; but oh! remember king!

Thy days are number'd: hear, repent and live.

BELSHAZZAR.

Say, prophet, what can penitence avail
If Heaven's decrees are immutably fix'd?
Can pray'rs avert our fate?

DANIEL.

They change our hearts,
And thus dispose Omnipotence to mercy.
'Tis man that alters; God is still the same.

Conditional are all Heav'n's covenants:
And when th' uplifted thunder is withheld,

'Tis pray'r that deprecates th' impending bolt.

Good Hezekiah's* days were numbered, too;

But penitence and faith were mighty pleas:

At Mercy's throne they never plead in vain.

[*He is going.*]

BELSHAZZAR.

Stay, prophet, and receive thy promis'd gift;

The scarlet robe and princely chain are thine

And let my herald publish through the land

That Daniel stands, in dignity and pow'r,
The third in Babylon. These just rewards

Thou well may'st claim, though sad thy prophecy!

* II Chron. chap. xxxiii. Isaiah, chap. xxxviii.

QUEEN.

Be not deceiv'd, my son! nor let thy
soul
Snatch an uncertain moment's treach'rous
rest,
On the dread brink of that tremendous
gulf
Which yawns beneath thee.

DANIEL.

O unhappy king,
Know what *must* happen once *may* hap-
pen soon.
Remember that 'tis terrible to meet
Great evils unprepar'd! and, O Belshaz-
zar!
In the wild moment of dismay and
death,
Remember thou wast warn'd! and, O
remember,
Warnings despis'd are condemnations
then.

[*Exeunt Daniel and Queen.*]

BELSHAZZAR.

'Tis well—my soul shakes off its load
of care:
'Tis only the obscure is terrible.
Imagination frames events unknown,
In wild fantastic shapes of hideous ruin,
And what it fears creates!—I know the
worst;
And awful is that worst as fear could
feign:
But distant are the ills I have to dread!
What is remote may be uncertain, too!—
Ha! princes! hope breaks in!—This may
not be.

FIRST COURTIER.

Perhaps this Daniel is in league with
Persia;
And brib'd by Cyrus to report these
horrors,
To weaken and impede the mighty plans
Of thy imperial mind.

BELSHAZZAR.

'Tis very like.

SECOND COURTIER.

Return we to the banquet.

BELSHAZZAR.

Dare we venture?

THIRD COURTIER.

Let not this dreaming seer disturb the
king.
Against the pow'r of Cyrus and the
Mede
Is Babylon secure. Her brazen gates
Mock all attempts to force them. Proud
Euphrates,
A wat'ry bulwark, guards our ample
city
From all assailants. And within the
walls
Of this stupendous capital are lodg'd
Such vast provisions, such exhaustless
stores,
As a twice ten years' siege could never
waste.

BELSHAZZAR [*embraces him*].

My better genius! Safe in such resources,
I mock the prophet.—Turn me to the
banquet!

[*As they are going to resume their
places at the banquet, a dreadful up-
roar is heard, tumultuous cries, and
warlike sounds. All stand terrified.
Enter soldiers with their swords
drawn and wounded.*]

SOLDIER.

Oh, helpless Babylon! Oh, wretched
king!
Chaldea is no more, the Mede has con-
quer'd!
The victor Cyrus, like a mighty torrent
Comes rushing on, and marks his way
with ruin!
Destruction is at hand; escape or perish.

BELSHAZZAR.

Impossible! Villain and slave thou ly'st!
Euphrates and the brazen gates secure
us.
While those remain, Belshazzar laughs
at danger.

SOLDIER.

Euphrates is diverted from its course;
The brazen gates are burst, the city's
taken;
Thyself a pris'ner, and thy empire lost.

BELSHAZZAR.

Oh, prophet! I remember thee, indeed!

[*He runs out. They follow in the
utmost confusion.*]

[*Enter several Jews, Medes, and
Babylonians.*]

FIRST JEW.

He comes, he comes! the long-predicted
prince,
Cyrus, the destin'd instrument of
Heaven,
To free our captive nation, and restore
JEHOVAH'S temple. Carnage marks his
way,
And Conquest sits upon his plume-
crown'd helm.

SECOND JEW.

What noise is that?

FIRST JEW.

Hark! 'tis Belshazzar's voice!

BELSHAZZAR [*without*].

O soldier, spare my life, and aid my
flight!
Such treasures shall reward the gentle
deed
As Persia never saw. I'll be thy slave;
I'll yield my crown to Cyrus; I'll adore
His gods and thine—I'll kneel and kiss
thy feet,
And worship thee.—It is not much I
ask—
I'll live in bondage, beggary and pain,
Do thou but let me live.

SOLDIER.

Die, tyrant, die!

BELSHAZZAR.

O Daniel! Daniel! Daniel!

[*Enter Soldier.*]

SOLDIER.

Belshazzar's dead!
The wretched king breathed out his
furious soul
In that tremendous groan.

FIRST JEW.

Belshazzar's dead!
Then, Judah, art thou free! The tyrant's
fallen!
Jerusalem, Jerusalem is free!

PART III.

[*Enter Daniel and Jews.*]

DANIEL.

Bel boweth down,* and haughty Nebo
stoops!
The idols fall; the god and worshiper
Together fall; together they bow down!
Each other, or themselves they cannot
save.
O, Babylon where is thy refuge now?
Thy wisdom and thy knowledge, meant
to save,
Pervert thee, and thy blessing is thy
bane!
Where are thy brutish deities, Chaldea?
Where are thy gods of gold?—Oh, Lord
of life!
Thou very God! so fall thy foes before
thee!

FIRST JEW.

So fell beneath the terrors of Thy name
The idol Chemosh, Moab's empty trust;
So Ammonitish Moloch sunk before
Thee;
So fell Philistine Dagon: so shall fall,
To time's remotest period, all thy foes,
Triumphant Lord of Hosts!

* *Isaiah, chap. xlvi.*

DANIEL.

How chang'd our fate!
 Not for myself, O Judah! but for thee
 I shed these tears of joy. For I no
 more
 Must view the cedars which adorn the
 brow
 Of Syrian Lebanon; no more shall see
 Thy pleasant stream, O Jordan! nor the
 flocks
 Which whiten all the mountains of
 Judea;
 No more these eyes delighted shall re-
 view
 Or Carmel's heights, or Sharon's flow'ry
 vales.
 I must remain in Babylon! So Heav'n,
 To whose awards I bow me, has decreed.
 I ne'er shall see thee, Salem! I am old;
 And few and toilsome are my days to
 come.
 But we shall meet in those celestial
 climes,
 Compar'd with which created glories
 sink;
 Where sinners shall have pow'r to harm
 no more,
 And martyr'd Virtue rests her weary
 head.
 Though ere my day of promis'd grace
 shall come,
 I shall be tried by perils strange and
 new;
 Nor shall I taste of death, so have I
 learn'd,
 Till I have seen the captive tribes re-
 stor'd.

FIRST JEW.

And shall we view, once more, thy
 hallow'd towers,
 Imperial Salem?

DANIEL.

Yes, my youthful friends!
 You shall behold the second temple
 rise,*
 With grateful ecstasy; but we, your
 sires,
 Now bent with hoary age; we, whose
 charm'd eyes

*Ezra, chap. i.

Beheld the matchless glories of the first,
 Should weep, remembering that we once
 had seen
 That model of perfection!

SECOND JEW.

Never more
 Shall such a wondrous structure grace
 the earth!

DANIEL.

Well have you borne affliction, men of
 Judah!
 Well have sustain'd your portion of dis-
 tress:
 And, unrepining, drank the bitter dregs
 Of adverse fortune! Happier days await
 you.
 O guard against the perils of success!
 Prosperity dissolves the yielding soul,
 And the bright sun of shining fortune
 melts
 The firmest virtue down. Beware, my
 friends,
 Be greatly cautious of prosperity!
 Defend your sliding hearts; and, trem-
 bling, think
 How those, who buffeted Affliction's
 waves
 With vig'rous virtue, sunk in Pleasure's
 calm.
 He,* who of special grace had been
 allow'd
 To rear the hallow'd fane to Israel's
 God,
 By wealth corrupted, and by ease de-
 bauch'd,
 Forsook the God to whom he rais'd the
 fane;
 And, sunk in sensual sloth, consum'd his
 days
 In vile idolatrous rites.—Nor think, my
 sons,
 That virtue in sequester'd *solitude*
 Is always found. Within the inmost
 soul
 The hidden tempter lurks; nor less be-
 trays
 In the still seeming safety of retreat,
 Than where the world her snares en-
 tangling spreads,

*Solomon.

More visible to sense. Guard every
 thought:
 Who thinks himself secure is half un-
 done;
 For Sin, unwatch'd, may reach the sanc-
 tuary:
 'Tis not the place preserves us. Right-
 eous Lot
 Stem'd the strong current of Corruption's
 tide,
 E'en in polluted Sodom; safe he liv'd,
 While circumspective Virtue's watchful
 eye
 Was anxiously awake: but in the shade,
 Far from the obvious perils which
 alarm
 With palpable temptation, secret sin
 Ensnar'd his soul; he trusted in himself;
 Security betray'd him, and he fell.

SECOND JEW.

Thy prudent counsels in our hearts shall
 live,
 As if a pen of adamant had grav'd
 them.

FIRST JEW.

The dawn approaches; let us part, my
 friend,
 Secure of peace, since tyranny is fallen.

DANIEL.

So perish all thine enemies, O Lord;
 So mighty God, shall perish all who
 seek
 Corrupted pleasures in the turbid waves
 Of life's polluted stream, and madly quit
 The living fountain of perennial grace!

HANNAH MORE.
 (1745-1833.)



THE JEWISH CAPTIVES



THE JEWISH CAPTIVES

ACT I.

SCENE I.—*A Private Garden in Babylon.*

ELI.

My gentle Eva, tune thy harp, and sing
Till these blind eyes see old Judea's
hills,
And feel the captive's comfort of a tear.

EVA.

Oh! father, in these strings still sleeps
a spell
To charm away each sorrow from thy
soul,
But my sad touch can wake no music
now;
When circling hawks cast shadows on
its nest,
The bird to Heav'n trills not its morn-
ing joy.

ELI.

I love to hear the songs of thy young
life;
More sad my gloom, more deep my soli-
tude,
Without thy harp and lip to give me
cheer.

EVA.

'Tis soul, and not the sound, melts grief
away;
Song loves liberty as the birds love light,
And when the cage is still the grove
bursts forth.
Just as the heart is bound the lip is cold.
But, father, on yon willow let me hang
My silent harp, and tell to thee my
dream,
And when my cloud has pass'd my song
may flow.

ELI.

My Eva, take my hand, and lead me
where
Oft with thy mother I have stood and
gazed;
Her image there, she whispers through
my gloom.

[*EVA guides ELI to the willow, against
which she places her harp, when
they sit under the shade on a
grassy bank.*]

EVA.

Father, would thou couldst see yon
golden sky
Where paints the sun his crimson on
the clouds;
The light and shadow chasing o'er the
grass;
These oaks that join their patriarchal
limbs
Across yon stream, bright-flashing when
'tis seen,
Yet murmuring music though its way
be hid,
And teaching us, if dark our path, to
sing!

ELI.

No light for these poor eyes shut up in
gloom,
But morn and noon and night to me
the same.
When blindness came, at first my heart
grew hard;
Oh! now within a sun, no more to set,
Outshining him who fills the earth and
sky.
Quick, Eva, tell thy dream!

EVA.

My mother's voice
 Comes back like angel-whispers in the
 eve,
 As she once told the story of thy home
 That smiled 'mid bloom above the temple
 hill.
 My memory hears around Jerusalem
 The tramp of men, the thunder-bursting
 yells,
 And blows upon the gates—along the
 streets
 The clang of hoofs and the wild noise
 of war,
 While flames I see that from the temple
 roll,
 And glare o'er heav'n, as when my
 mother spoke.
 I feel again the pain of your long
 march,
 To reach a captive's place where false
 gods rule.
 Father, in dreams last night I saw your
 dear
 Old home wrapp'd round with fire, and
 forth I rose,
 It seem'd, out from the flames, when,
 as I flew,
 Some monster clasp'd me shrieking
 round my waist
 And bore me high o'er clouds, until we
 dropp'd
 Within a palace-hall of Babylon.

ELI.

My Eva, cease this tale which pains
 my ear;
 Some midnight magic has call'd forth
 bad dreams,
 Or fever in thy brain wakes shapes of
 fire;
 Or evil angels have lurk'd o'er thy
 couch.
 Not from the Source of Good wild
 phantoms come.

EVA.

Father, this dream leaves on my breast
 a weight
 Like some cold stone, while in my head
 whirls fire.

Enter ABNER and ONO.

ELI.

Ha! lads, I know your steps, and my
 old ear
 Grows quick to hear how goes the city's
 siege.

ABNER.

Thy prophets, father, have deceived us
 Jews
 With words as false and frail as painted
 mists;
 Thy priests must now the light from
 Heav'n bring back
 By death-drops from the heart of some
 poor lamb
 Whose pangs should blast, not bless its
 murderers.

ELI.

My son, speak not in scorn of things
 now hid
 Behind the cloud that veils thy Maker's
 plans!

ABNER.

Jehovah sleeps while Baal crowns his
 sons;
 They sit in purple and we weep in dust.

ONO.

The captive's wail shall turn to triumph
 song.
 With Him who rules a cycle is a day;
 We wait, or trust, or strike as He may
 say.

ABNER.

The two-leaved gates defy the Persian's
 blows:
 Her walls like mountains stand round
 Babylon.
 Here fields and gardens bloom, and
 Plenty smiles
 With stores piled up to Heav'n, while
 gaunt without
 The troops of Cyrus stalk like skeletons,
 And boys and women mock them from
 the towers.
 Their very banners hang with sickly
 droop

As if they shrank away from vigorous winds.
 Factions divide, the hungry nations jar;
 And men thy prophets said would break our chains
 Will see their armies soon like clouds dissolve.

ONO.

Cousin, despair and youth should never wed,
 More than the frost should marry with the fire;
 Let Faith and Hope smile angels on our path,
 And they will nerve our hearts for victory.

ELI.

Yes! through my gloom a cloud of glory gleams
 Bright o'er thy rebuilt towers, Jerusalem!
 Belshazzar's gorgeous piles shall shake and fall!
 O'er them shall darkness brood, and hoot the owl,
 And the lean fox lone o'er their ruins look,
 While Zion's hill stands in eternal light!

[Here EVA, who has retired behind the trees, takes her harp and sings.]

EVA.

Brother, trust! 'tis God hath spoken!
 Israel soon will cease to roam!
 Brother, trust! each battle-token
 Soon will show us near our home!

God has call'd—the nations hearken;
 Round our walls their banners fly;
 Over earth their armies darken;
 Send their shouts into the sky.

Hark! on stones a hoof is ringing!
 Arms on arms! I hear the clash!
 Up to Heav'n the flames are springing!
 Wild o'er Babylon their flash!

There I see a monarch lying!
 Blazes round a banquet's light!
 Blood is on him, gasping, dying—
 Torn his crown and gone his might!

One king lies there grim and gory,
 Crown'd his victor I behold!
 Over Zion bursts new glory!
 Stands her temple as of old!

SCENE II.—*A room in the house of ELI overlooking a garden.*

ONO.

Captivity makes gloom, and tries our hearts;
 Yet morn shall come from night with sun and song.

ABNER.

But ere the dawn my youth in me is dead:—
 My life a void, and yet an agony.
 I hate myself, and oft my Maker hate,
 And feel that I would hurl Him from His throne.

'Twas He, not I, who made me thus for pain.

Who forges chains, and wakes the pangs of war,
 And stains with blood a world He strews with graves,

Forcing from man this universal wail?
 I, a mortal, would relieve the woe,
 While He who can, you say, nor hears, nor helps.

ONO.

Thy youth is aged, thy hair is early grey
 With bitterness, which, not thy years, makes old.

What robs the eye of fire, and blood of joy
 With nature wars—of evil root ill fruit.

ABNER.

Ono, we have enough to craze our souls.
 See on the throne of Babylon a fool,
 Yet flashing in his splendour like a god,
 Whose nod can make the streets run with our blood,

And hang a dangling Jew from every tree,

Then cut us down, and turn us o'er to dogs!

Yes! Eli is a slave—Belshazzar, king;
 Virtue in chains and tyranny in gold.

A life like ours can't find a grave too soon.

ONO.

Belshazzar is a captive to his lusts,
And Eli 'monarch by his goodness
crown'd,
In wisdom rich and throned in hearts
he loves.

ABNER.

I'm tired of this old tale, and life's dull
pain;
Weary with heart-beats and the load I
bear.
Along our streets the boys shout out,
"A Jew!"
The simpering girl will smirk and whis-
per, "Jew!"
The beggar sneering cries, "A Jew!
A Jew!"
The slave will mutter as he mocks us,
"Jew!"
Could God thus curse his sons, and bless
their foes?
His throne seems void, His universe a
blank.

ONO.

Thy thoughts in words but make the
pang more sharp;
The stem that feels the knife gives
brightest bloom,
Fields torn with ploughs wave with the
richest gold,
And loudest tempests leave the sweet-
est calm.

ABNER.

Ono, mere words; the thorn will pierce
thee, too;
There is in each some spot most sensi-
tive
Which will resent the steel. Cut *other*
flesh,
The man is still; touch *that*, and he
will smite.

ONO.

There is from Heaven a help to those
who trust.

ABNER [*pointing through a window to
EVA leading ELI through the gar-
den*].

Behold a sight that should draw tears
from rocks.
And ask if it will bring one drop from
Heaven?

See Innocence lead Age along yon walk!
'Tis Beauty helping Wisdom on in love.
Think of that angel in Belshazzar's
arms!

Ha! thou dost start! the point is in
thine heart;

The pallor of thy cheek shows me thy
faith.

ONO.

Jehovah, save her from the monster's
clasp!

Ne'er let him blast the bloom of my
sweet flower!

ABNER.

Pray not, but strike—strike to the ty-
rant's heart;

Thy sword will save her better than thy
trust.

ONO.

There is a time to suffer and to slay;
When Heaven will have us smite it
shows the way.

*Enter GORGAS and ATYS, Officers of
BELSHAZZAR.*

ABNER.

Whence do ye come, and what your er-
rand here?

Who hear our words by stealth must
feel our swords.

ATYS.

Be calm, brave Jew, and hold us as
thy friends!

We, too, have felt at last the tyrant's
heel;

Goaded too deep, the ass himself rebels.

ABNER.

Made near by common wrongs, we wel-
come you!

My hope revives! A cloud lifts from
our race;

I feel the blush of shame for my despair.
Light hence with us—with Babylon the
gloom!

ONO.

But tell us, princes, why ye seek us
here,
And we will swear with you to right
our wrongs.

GORGAS.

Both crime and folly shake Belshazzar's
throne;
Within, oppression drains the empire's
veins,
Without, 'tis destiny has arm'd our foe.
The gorgeous pile nods o'er the brink
of fate,
And needed but one touch to dash it
down.
Atys, recount the tyrant's last mad
blow!
My gasping son would choke my words
with groans.

ATYS.

The park ye know, in which, high o'er
our walls,
The terraced garden mounts amid the
clouds;
Well, near its base of bloom, on flying
steeds
We chased a boar; Belshazzar led the
way.
In his swift flight the tusky monster
turn'd;
Belshazzar hur'l'd his spear with girlish
arm,
And headlong sprawl'd on earth beneath
his horse
Close to the glaring boar, which rush'd
on him,
When, quick, Ozona's sword was in the
beast,
That sent its spouting blood to stain the
king;
And then, ye gods, the tyrant struck the
lad,
Who fell down dead beneath his father's
feet!

ONO.

That blow sounds out the knell of Baby-
lon,

Beats down her walls and shakes her
shatter'd throne,
The Persian crowns, and sends the Jew
forth free
To build again Jerusalem, our joy!

ABNER.

Princes, we will dare all to burst our
chains!
But tell us how that we can give you aid.

ATYS.

Cyrus, we hear, grows weary with the
siege,
His troops desert, his stores and hopes
are low;
Fame says ye have a scroll that gives
his name,
Foretelling, ages since, his victory;
To him we'd bear the book, and nerve
his heart.

Enter ELI, led by EVA.

ABNER.

My father see—this blind old man who
comes!
That book he deems the gift of Heav'n
to us;
Nor could a kingdom buy it from his
grasp.

ELI.

The winds have borne strange voices to
mine ear,
And in their breath I scent some com-
ing joy.

ONO.

Here, uncle, stand two princes next the
throne,
Who, outraged by the king, his ruin
plan.

ELI.

Hail, blest of Heav'n! Our deliverers,
hail!
O'er these blind eyes hope streams pro-
phetic light.
But what your plans?

ONO.

Our Holy book
They would to Cyrus bear, and show his
name,
And where 'tis said he'll pass the two-
leaved gates.

ELI.

Never shall Gentile hands the Word
profane
If Israel linger here to die in chains!
But ye, my children, ye shall take the
scroll!
Oh! Heav'n guard well the gift be-
stow'd on me!

[ELI is led by EVA to a golden chest,
and, unlocking it, he lifts out a
large parchment.]

Accept the trust, and unto blood defend,
And swear that ye will bring it to these
hands!

Ono, swear!

ONO.

I swear!

ELI.

Abner, thou!

ABNER.

I swear!

ELI.

Can ye unbar your gates, and scale your
walls
To Cyrus reach?

GORGIAS.

A passage deep beneath
Our streets will lead us, devious, to the
plain,
And near the Persian camp, while here
its keys—
My family trust!

ELI.

Go, with my blessing, go!
Jehovah guide you through the cavern'd
earth!
Jehovah move the Persian's royal soul!

These feet shall touch the land I may
not see!
These ears shall hear the song on Zion's
hill
When to the skies our temple lifts its
head!

GORGIAS.

But now, good Jew, we must pierce
to thy heart,
To save from worse than death one
thou dost love.

ELI.

This breast has felt the storm so fierce
and oft
That, like a trunk scarr'd on the moun-
tain's top,
It dreads no blast that roars to make
it fall.

GORGIAS.

Thy daughter, Jew, thy daughter should
retire,
That we may speak to thee.

EVA.

Heav'n in my dreams
Has show'd it me, when I, borne in
mid-air,
Was by a monster clasp'd—Belshazzar,
he.

ATYS.

Too true, too true! He marks thee for
his own!
The tiger's spring less sure than his foul
lust,
Whose snares would lure thy beauty to
his arms.

EVA.

Father, speak not, nor roll thine eyes
in pain!
Nor, Abner, grasp thy sword, and glare
so fierce!
My Ono, stand not like despair in stone!
Now in this hour which tests my faith
in Heav'n
I feel within the might of virtue lives
To breathe a conquering vigour through
my soul;
And oh! a shield so strong is over me

That its bright face will dazzle my foul
foe.
No stain shall ever mar my virgin
bloom,
But from Belshazzar I will come as
pure
As the fresh leaf of my own morning
rose,
Which knows no kiss save of the dew
and breeze.
Omnipotent the might of virtue's power;
A true, pure heart is an immortal flower.

SCENE III.—*A Piazza on the Hanging
Garden.*

BELSHAZZAR.

A whim, Atossa, call it what thou wilt,
Me like a bubble lures, and I do chase
The glittering thing, since 'tis my des-
tiny.

ATOSSA.

My royal insect, say, o'er what flower
next,
To sip its sweets, wilt wave thy brilliant
wings?
Soon from this world its honey suck'd,
the gods
Must make a better one; and then for
thee,
When each is stale, a brighter than the
old,
And thus for ever on.

BELSHAZZAR.

Immortal jest!

Wit, mirth, wine, women, feasts and
priests in turn
Have to my hours tied wings and painted
them,
Till they would fly like clouds to leave
me blank.

ATOSSA.

Thou king of kings, what phantom lures
thee now,
Since thou dost look like some sick lad
in love?

BELSHAZZAR.

Atossa, laugh, and I'll endure thy jests,
For thou art but myself in woman's
form;
Nor polish'd steel thine image gives
more true
Than thou art mirror'd in thy brother's
soul.

ATOSSA.

While Cyrus girdles round thy throne
with war,
Would I could lead thee off from vir-
gins' breasts
To stand with men in battle for thy
crown!

BELSHAZZAR.

War is the work of fools—to wear a
helm
And plume, and live shut up in brass,
And thirst, and starve, and stagger
'neath your toil,
Then hack and kill to pile o'er plains
with men
Whose flesh shall fatten dogs, and for
your pay
A rabble's shout, *this* glory's vaunted
prize
Which Cyrus loves, and can have for
himself
While last my stores, and walls resist
his blows.
With wine and love I still will brighten
life,
My crown esteem just for the joys it
brings,
And when these die, the bauble give my
foe.

ATOSSA.

A boy art thou, Belshazzar, not a king.
But now the secret that doth load thy
heart!

BELSHAZZAR.

Sister, I love, in truth at last I love;
The snarer snared—and more, I would
be loved,
And if not loved I'm lost, and at an end
This insect life, stifled by its gay
threads.

ATOSSA.

Nay, brother, nay! the royal whim will pass,
And thou wilt lie, flower-crown'd, on beauty's breast,
Or sit gay-garlanded where flows the wine,
And song floats out with harp and dulcimer.

BELSHAZZAR.

A rose of Sharon in my palace blooms
More dear to me than crowns, and on my breast
I'll wear my Jewish flower, or die accursed.
The soul was in me once to make a man,
But I was born a king—*that* blasted it
'Tis love must turn my blight to bloom, and fit
Me for my diadem; or, oh! ye flowers,
Ye trees on terraces piled into heav'n
By my great ancestor—ye walls he rear'd
O'ertopping clouds—thou watch-tower lone of stars—
Ye palaces and trophied monuments,
Built from a plunder'd world to blaze our fame,
But stain'd with tears and blood, link'd with you all
By fate, must I, too, fall and share your curse?
Death's pulse beats in my life as oft I hear
Wild shrieks drown mirth beneath my battlements.
A sword waves o'er yon towers, and round my crown
A serpent coils, and sins of ages flame,
Until I seem like that last mountain-pine
Whose shroud of fire is the whole forest's blaze.

ATOSSA.

What means thy mood and tones of prophecy?
This feather see, whose history I will tell!
As I stood here to view the Persian camp

Whose arms and banners glitter'd in the sun,
On a white horse rode Cyrus grandly forth,
And while I gazed, a brilliant bird flash'd by,
On which down from the clouds an eagle swoop'd,
With beak to bear aloft the crested thing,
When circling to my feet this feather fell.

BELSHAZZAR.

Give me the painted plume—sign of myself,
The sport of winds—to place it in my crown
Above mine empire's gems, a type of fate!
But hark, a hell-bird comes to croak my doom!

ATOSSA.

I will retire, nor hear our mother rage.

[ATOSSA *exit*.]

BELSHAZZAR.

I will not fear, but pay her with her own;
This plume stuck in my crown will madden her.

Enter NITOCRIS and MADETES.

NITOCRIS.

A feather in thy cap—fit diadem
For thee, thou king of mighty Babylon!

BELSHAZZAR.

'Tis this I wear which to my nature suits
That I did suck out from those queenly breasts.

NITOCRIS.

Nay! from thy nurse thy folly flow'd to thee;
Nor blood nor milk of mine made such a son.

But play no more the boy! that plume
 take off!
 Put on thy helm, and grasp thy sword
 and shield!
 Where harps and moonlit pipes now
 soothe thy sense
 Let trumpets peal the battle-blast of
 war!
 Thy robes of silk exchange for links of
 steel!
 The smiles of women for fierce blows
 with men!
 Thy feasts for fasts, thy shame for vic-
 tory!

BELSHAZZAR.

Cease, mother, cease!

NITOCRIS.

Arm, Belshazzar, arm!
 Down from this height your leaguer'd
 city view,
 Her glory circled by eternal walls!
 Earth's crown is now for thee to hold
 or lose.
 Where stood thine ancestor with kingly
 eye
 To see arise his work, there wilt thou
 stand
 To see it fall? the towers he built, wilt
 thou
 Look hence on them while Persians hurl
 them down?
 Say, came from me, my son, a soul like
 that?

BELSHAZZAR.

I beg thee, stop!

NITOCRIS.

And I do beg thee *fight!*

MADETES.

Low on the earth I crawl and grasp
 thy knees;
 Thy faithful eunuch prays thee save thy
 crown.

BELSHAZZAR.

'Tis ye, if Cyrus wear it, are the cause.

NITOCRIS.

This is thy folly now to madness
 turned!
 Give me thy diadem! Thine armour fit
 Around thy mother's form! Above her
 brow
 Thy helm should wave its plume! Her
 hand will hurl
 For thee amid the battle's shock thy
 spear;
 And when our foe shall fly it shall be
 told
 Along our streets, and thunder'd up to
 clouds,
 That thine old mother saved for thee
 thy realm,
 While thou, bedeck'd with flowers, and
 lull'd by lutes,
 Didst on thy couches feast with concu-
 bines.

BELSHAZZAR.

Insult me not—thy king as well as son!
 I blame thee for a mother's too fond
 love.
 My youth was flush'd with noble dreams
 of war,
 The trumpet stirr'd my pulses into fire,
 Until I sought the field to be a king.
 Thy coward love did hedge me in with
 boys,
 Where Pleasure tied me with her silken
 cords,
 And took the manhood from my pam-
 per'd soul;
 But who has power to win will keep his
 crown;
 Brave men will scorn weak kings, and
 hurl them down.
 Thus those to empire born dig their
 own graves,
 While enterprise takes strength from
 wave and storm,
 To crush voluptuous heirs and mount
 their thrones.
 I see the truth too late to shun my
 doom;
 Eternal Fate mine empire sinks in
 gloom.

ACT II.

SCENE I.—*The Camp of Cyrus before Babylon.*

CYRUS.

First, destiny I trust, and then the gods,
And last, myself.

ABRADATES.

Forgive our doubt, O king,
And that we tire of this dull, dragging
siege;
Despair looks from the faces of our
men.

Better our armies move by thy com-
mand,
Than troops of thine steal home like
fugitives.

GYGES.

'Tis two years since 'mid shouts thy
hand did give
Our banner to the winds before these
walls.
While we are lank, flush'd Plenty smiles
within,
And those unshaken towers laugh at
our rams.

ABRADATES.

The clash of arms 'mid battle's breath
of fire
And tug of death, we love—not idle
war.

CYRUS.

True soldiers wait, or fight as gods
decree,
Whose smile alone points on to victory.

ABRADATES.

Never since first my wheels in battle
rush'd
Have whirl'd my steeds my chariot from
the foe:
Yet now I'd hear the trumpet sound re-
treat.

CYRUS.

Such blast, my friend, will never please
thine ear.
With beauty robed, as Panthea smiles
on thee,
So Babylon, my queen, still lures me on
To bind the crown of Persia on her
brow.

ABRADATES.

Fast as my steeds, whose fire is from
the sun,
Can draw my grateful wheels, I'll go
with thee.

CYRUS.

Despairing Cræsus, too, I tell thee now,
So sure as thou wast pluck'd from cruel
fire,
I'll mount yon tower whose head strikes
on the stars,
And fling from thence my flag o'er
Babylon.

CROESUS.

O king, I yield to thee, and doubt no
more;
What Cyrus wills in war is destiny.
But give, we beg, the reasons of thy
faith.

CYRUS.

True men have one prime object of
their lives
Which Heaven helps on, and all below
are steps
Like climbing stairs that circle round a
tower
To gain its top, and give us prospect
wide.
Up to one grand event which caps the
whole
Mounts every step of my predestin'd
past.
My Persian birth, the breath of liberty,
The discipline that nerved both flesh
and soul,
And throned as lord of all my will:
The royal splendours then of Media's
court,

Nay! e'en my grandsire's polish'd luxury;
 Each after-move on this chess-board of life,
 Where Fate ranged men around me as their king,
 But bore me on to fix my banner here.
 My dreams in youth were flush'd with Babylon,
 And when they troop'd like gorgeous clouds along
 She was the sun that lit their splendours up.
 My manhood now stands center'd in her light;
 Take her away, my path is all a gloom,
 My life a chaos of discordant plans;
 With her in view, one blaze of victory!
 As day's consenting beams meet in the sun,
 So all my being ends in Babylon.

Enter GORGIAS and ATYS, with ABNER and ONO, guarded by Persian soldiers.

Say, who are these with beards and hair forlorn,
 And hunger lean, and garments soil'd by earth?
 In these I seem to see our way made plain.

OFFICER.

We heard, O king! beneath the ground
 a cry
 Suppress'd and faint, as shook the soil
 with blows;
 We seized our spades, and digg'd down
 to a stone,
 Which, lifted, show'd these weak and groping men,
 Whom dazzled by the light we led to thee.

[Officer retires.]

GORGIAS.

O king, is Gorgias so begrimed and vile
 Thy royal eye cannot discern his face?

CYRUS.

Thy voice recalls thee now—I know thee well.
 Thou art the prince I met in Lydia once,

Whose spear did save me from a lion's mouth.

GORGIAS.

O king, I must not say that but for me
 The crown of Babylon could ne'er be thine.

CYRUS.

I'll tell what thou wilt not—my life thou saved,
 And since, I've worn in token of my thanks

A lion on my crest with rampant paws.
 Thou art, I trust, my friend, and not my foe.

GORGIAS.

Atys, O king, my brother's son, with me,
 And these young Jews, here pledge thee swords and souls.

[All kneel, and kiss the hand of CYRUS.]

CYRUS.

Stand up, my friends! Long may I call you such;
 Now tell what brought you here in such a plight!

GORGIAS.

I seek my vengeance for my first-born's blood—
 My noble boy struck by the tyrant dead;
 Atys joins with me to avenge his kin;
 These Jews would from their country burst her chains.

CYRUS.

Thanks to the gods, your guides to bring you here!

GORGIAS.

We heard, O king, thy hopes had sunk, and soon
 Thy baffled army would to Persia turn.
 These Jews have brought that which will nerve thy soul.
 Inspire thy men, and give thee Babylon.

CYRUS.

I see, good Jews, ye bear an ancient scroll
Which seems to wake strange throbbings
in my breast.

ABNER.

Within our temple, 'neath a cloud of light,
An ark of gold once held this sacred book
Which the Jehovah wrote on Sinai's side,
And gave to Moses that our race might guard.
When blazed Chaldean flames about the place,
A priest, my sire, to save this holy scroll,
Rush'd through the fire, and caught it to his breast,
But came out blind who brought to us such light.
The sightless man has kept his treasure hid,
Till now he sends us here to show thy name
Writ down before thy birth, and for this hour,
To gird thee on with strength to Babylon.
Here read that thou shalt pass the gates of brass,
Chaldea's treasures seize, and set us free.
We hail thee, Cyrus, our predestin'd king!

ALL.

We hail thee Lord of lords, and King of kings!

[ABNER and ONO kneel before CYRUS with the open scroll.]

CYRUS.

I read in Jewish characters my name,
And my prophetic work by Heav'n foretold;
A flash from destiny thus lights me on
To drain the river and creep 'neath the walls.

I saw in dreams one standing on a hill
Against the sky, and circled round with rays,
While glitter'd in his hand for me a crown.
All things do point us on to Babylon.

SCENE II.—*A room in the palace of babylon.*

EVA [alone].

I shall not fall, since o'er me is His shield,
Who doth make pure the virgin lily's bloom,
And the bright stars, and the sweet breath of Heav'n.
We bruise the rose to get its scented drop,
And out from me will trial fragrance fling.
'Tis Battle by its blows keeps Valour strong,
While Pleasure, flush and full, smiles Virtue down,
And bribes the guards about her citadel.
In hue and shape here beauty lives, here music breathes,
And odours charm, till I swim in such dreams
As fancy paints in evening's magic tints;
The senses these may please, not buy the heart.
True woman's love cannot be had for crowns;
Be he a slave or king, it seeks a man;
And ere it find it is a humming bird
To glance from flower to flower, but, nested once,
A nightingale that thrills out constant songs.

Enter BELSHAZZAR in his crown and royal robes.

BELSHAZZAR.

A witch by Jewish law is judged to flames,
And she who scorches me should burn herself.

EVA.

Why seek the fire that never goes to thee?

Thy parrot singed avoids the harmful
blaze.

BELSHAZZAR.

Thou art the lamp, and I the moth that
flies
To fall upon the bosom of the flame.

EVA.

Nay! be no more an insect but a king;
Seek thou to wed from thine own royal
rank,
One who will bind thy monarch-limbs
in steel,
And urge thee drive the Persian from
thy walls.

BELSHAZZAR.

Girl, I'm a fool to beg a captive's love
When I could force thee to my clasp-
ing arms,
Where beauty o'er my realm but
pants to lie.
Yet 'tis my wish to hear thee say "I
love,"
And see thee at my side a willing wife.
I would not break the stem that holds
the flower,
Or spoil by force the bloom that is its
pride;
Give me thy heart and I will be a man.

EVA.

I cannot, king, since 'tis another's right!
His, sign'd and seal'd by an eternal
pledge,
Which, broke by me, would worthless
make myself—
A ring whose holes do show the jewel
gone.

BELSHAZZAR.

To bless cannot be wrong, and thy pure
love
Would make my nature new, my pas-
sions tame,
Start in my breast the pulses of true
life,
Enplume my brow, and case my limbs
in mail,

Till I by valour earn'd the crown I
wear.

EVA.

What I have sign'd away I cannot give.
Could I pierce him I love with mortal
pain,
His vows betray, and trample on his
heart,
And blast his faith in me till I would
live
No more his star, but in his soul a blot?
Thou art too noble, king, to ask me
this.

BELSHAZZAR.

Proud slave, I'll plead no more, nor let
thee fling
My empire's crown away like some
worn toy.
The monarch of the world kneels down
to thee,
And wilt thou say another has thy love,
Spurning thy king as if he bark'd, thy
cur?
My nod an empire shakes, and it would
bring
Ten thousand here whose beauty rivals
thine.

EVA.

Belshazzar, let them come where I will
not.
Say, can thy sceptre force the rose to
bloom,
And fill the morning with its scented
breath?
A king may crush the flower, not make
it live,
And take from hearts their blood, but
not their love.

BELSHAZZAR.

Slave, I can pluck the honey from thy
flesh,
And leave a stain to make thy lover
loathe—
Make thee in thine own eyes a thing
despoil'd.

EVA.

Thou canst not, king! I in thy palace
stand,

Thy guards around with points of flashing steel,
An empire thine, yet in Jehovah safe.
Old Eli's prayer is stronger than thy throne,
And holds o'er me Omnipotence, my shield.

BELSHAZZAR.

Girl, that there is in thee I may not touch:
Some spell doth keep thee stronger than my lust,
And better guards thee than would warrior's mail.
Repulsed by thee I rush on to my doom;
The curse of ages thunders in my breast,
And round my brow fall shadows from my fate.

[Exit BELSHAZZAR.]

EVA.

Belshazzar, sad thy doom to be a king!
Oh! had thy gifts been nursed in poverty,
Made hard by toil, and large by enterprise,
Thy crown by its own weight had kept thy brow;
Ancestral power has sunk thee to a boy,
Inviting daring to thy tottering realm,
Where Cyrus soon will build a vigorous state.
I pity thee! am thankless for myself.
Thou who dost still the storm and lay the wave,
And teach all evil to work out Thy will,
I bless Thee for Thy help in peril's hour!
When hung a cloud to flash on me its curse,
And blast my life with one eternal pang,
Thy breath dispell'd, and I stood crown'd with light.

ACT III.

SCENE I.—*A Room in the Palace of Babylon.*

BELSHAZZAR.

Ten wild beasts caged and fighting for their food,
Less mad than priests who quarrel o'er their gods;
I'll prove that ye love me e'en more than them.
Speak, Smerdis, first, and answer what I urge.

SMERDIS.

I kiss thy royal feet, and pray the sun
To dart his radiant wisdom through thy mind.

BELSHAZZAR.

Priest! I will put thy faith to my own test.
This image see of wood! Is that thy god?

SMERDIS.

Dazzling and vast, our Baal is yon sun,
Whose universal light gives life to all;
Yet in this statue doth his glory shine.

BELSHAZZAR.

Thy god, the king of heaven, can guard himself,
And blast the arm that hence would hurl him down!

SMERDIS.

Far as his splendid beams can reach his power,
And in their light all wisdom stands reveal'd.

BELSHAZZAR.

Now let thy god have care! I strike his head!
There see it roll, and rumble on the floor!
This trunk is left, which I do thus push o'er,
And order to the fire and roast thy god.
First on his neck I place my kingly foot;
A mortal here insults immortal power,
Nor feels its vengeance thunder on his brow.

Renounce thy lies, or else renounce thine ears!

SMERDIS.

O'er me, O King, thy wisdom hath prevail'd.

If Baal will not care, then care not I;
Let thou mine ears be mine, my god a lie!

BELSHAZZAR.

Smerdis, enough! I see how deep's thy faith!

Far better, my Madetes, is our creed!

MADETES.

From light and darkness I think all doth spring.

To shrines and statues I will nothing bring;

On altars I good flesh will never throw,
Since from his god the priest will steal I know.

The earth our temple is, hung round by air,

Yon heav'n its dome, the sun, its lamp,
shines there;

Our world eternal in itself doth stand,
Nor skies, nor stars need a supporting hand;

From nothing we do come, to nothing go,

And hence short lives should gild with pleasure's glow.

Each flower we want, we pluck, nor ask a god

What we shall think or feel beneath the sod.

BELSHAZZAR.

To me most loyal truth, who will not own,

On earth, in heav'n, a power above my throne.

Since I myself of all am only king,
Hence to the winds all fears and cares I fling;

Let Cyrus gather glory from his toil,
'Tis pleasure's bloom I snatch, and make my spoil!

MADETES.

Majestic lord of all, stand firm by this—

Make this world sure, and thou art sure of bliss.

BELSHAZZAR.

Old Eli, thy calm face doth trouble me;
Down at my feet, blind Jew, and own me god!

ELI.

O king, I worship Him who spread the skies,

The earth holds up, and lights the sun and stars,

And kindles in each soul its spark of life.

BELSHAZZAR.

Stop, Jew, beware! An empire's weight on thee

Shall crush thy faith and bend thee to my will.

ELI.

Tear out this tongue, O king, and rend these limbs,

Torture my flesh with flames, my soul send forth

From this poor body scarr'd or burn'd by thee!

Like Baal's image thus far I am thine;
There stops thy power! Beyond, I am mine own,

Nor can thy royal might my spirit force;

Jehovah first and last I will adore.

Thy records read! Learn how the Hebrew youth

Walk'd harmless in the fire that burn'd their bonds;

An angel's hand was Daniel's shield from death!

BELSHAZZAR.

The lies of priests but by their dupes believed!

Where is thy temple, Jew? thine altars where?

And where Jehovah's prophets and his kings?

Thy God, omnipotent, deserts His own,
And leaves His city to the flames of
foes!

See in thyself how silly is thy trust!
Blind, and captive, Eli, curse thy God!

ELI.

'Tis for his sin, O king, that Israel
serves;
This wreathes our yoke, and robes our
lives in gloom;
When flow true tears then grace to us
will flow;
Our chains will then drop off, our temple
rise,
While we on our own soil will kneel
and praise.
Firm as Himself Jehovah's word shall
stand!

BELSHAZZAR.

Ha, Jew! A thought flies flashing o'er
my brain!
I'll test thy God! Down 'neath our
Baal's tower,
Thy sacred things which in thy temple
stood,
Begirt by lamps and priests, now guard-
ed lie;
Thy God I'll dare, and bring them up
from thence,
And they shall glitter on my festal
board.
Better serve me than rust beneath the
ground!
Thy God's own lamps shall shine, and
see me drink
From His blest goblets our bright Baal's
wine:
And mark it, Jew, and grave it on thy
soul,
Then tell it to thy God, and ask His
help,
Which thou wilt need—hear, Jew, whom
I do hate
Next to thy God—thou from Jehovah's
cups
Shalt drink with me, or I will torture
thee,
Then fling thee o'er our walls to Per-
sian dogs,
And see how well thy God will guard
His Priest.

SCENE II.—*The Tower of Belus.*

BELSHAZZAR.

I loathe to live, and yet dread more to
die.

To hide the past I'd blot the future out,
But from the void of nothingness shrink
back.

I'm like some mount whose ice hides
eating flames.

This sightless Jew a devil stirs in me
Who wakes above an Eye that looks me
through.

One shatter'd god I've turn'd by fire to
smoke,
And here will prove Jehovah, too, a lie.

Enter MADETES.

Madetes, brave old man, in time for
work!

MADETES.

O King, I go alone—risk not thy life!

BELSHAZZAR.

By Baal, no! down I will walk with thee
If shakes the earth; and Heav'n shall
fall on me

I'll crown my feast, and dare what
Cyrus dreads;
He offers to the gods whom I defy.

MADETES.

Maybe this thundering storm should
make thee pause.

BELSHAZZAR.

Dost thou draw back? Madetes proved
a boy,

And in his lingering breast a fear of
gods!

Does this tower shake, and nod against
the winds?

Do yon skies roar, and quiver on the
clouds

Quick-flashing fires? Groans this world
now in death?

'Tis in the din of such tempestuous war
I will descend, and beard this Jewish
god.

[They pass down a dark stairway, leading through a subterranean aisle, to the place of the sacred things.]

MADETES.

A dim and lonely place! Yet will we on!
The storm's mad noise here soon will die away.

BELSHAZZAR.

Madetes, stop! that song most wild and strange!

MADETES.

I hear no sound save the far tempest's voice,
Whose roarings sink to whispers in this gloom.

FIRST SPIRIT.

From realms where ne'er can flash the light
I come, I come who make the night,
And soon, Belshazzar, soon I'll roll
Eternal gloom around thy soul.

BELSHAZZAR.

My pulse is calm! no drop is on my brow!
And yet I swear I heard the words as plain
As if they murmur'd from Atossa's lip.

SECOND SPIRIT.

The Spirit of sound is o'er thee, King,
Thro' earth, and thro' heav'n whose thunders ring;

By this loud peal I do warn thee now
To fly, or feel my blight on thy brow.

BELSHAZZAR.

'Tis not my terror shapes such words in air,
As I to mortal ears may ne'er repeat.

MADETES.

Nay! here all's still, howe'er the tower may rock.

BELSHAZZAR.

For me, not thee, these warning angels sing,
And hence the aisles of sound in thee are shut.

THIRD SPIRIT.

I flashing come, the Soul of fire;
I hurl the lightnings in mine ire,
To blast along the sea
And on the land to kill;
So terrible their glee,
So fierce to do my will.

Back, false Belshazzar, whence thou came!

On thee I'll dart my zig-zag flame.

BELSHAZZAR.

All elements combine—earth, air and fire—
And Hades rises here to drive me back.

MADETES.

Nay, oh my king, 'tis but thy fancy hears;
Since round us broods the silence of the night,
And scarce I note our footfall on the stones.

FOURTH SPIRIT.

I'm the Spirit of Power, the Spirit of Power,
To hurl down the ship, and to shake down the tower;
'Tis grim Death at my side that rideth with me,
As I rush o'er the land and dash o'er the sea.

I'm the Spirit of Power, the Spirit of Power,
And, Belshazzar, go back, or short is thine hour!

BELSHAZZAR.

Could I be turn'd, these words would drive me off.

But see the gleam of yonder glittering
lamps
Which kindle in my breast resolve so
strong,
Jehovah's breath can never put it out!

FIFTH SPIRIT.

Thy blood, Belshazzar, from me flows,
Who won the crown that round thee
glows;
Thy kingdom stands built by my hand,
Thy scepter sways by my command.
Now by the flesh and by the bones
Of all our kings beneath these stones;
Now by their souls which death holds
here,
And all their hope and all their fear,
I warn thee, son, away! away!
And seek the realms where shines the
day;
Else on thy brow Fate writes thy doom,
And soon will hurl thee to thy tomb,
While on thy name and line a blot,
And on thy soul eternal spot.
Thy foe upon thy throne shall sit,
Then Ruin o'er his empire flit;
The bat shall fly, and hoot the owl,
The fox shall lurk, the wolf shall prowl,
While Babylon beneath the ground
Lies ages hid in dust, to be by strangers
found.

BELSHAZZAR.

Thou father of our line, dost thou speak
this?
I hurl thy curses back upon thy head,
And still will on where tempts our
bright'ning prize!

MADETES.

The priests asleep, behold the sacred
things
Most brilliant in the blaze of watchful
lamps!
These holy curs snore well beneath the
ground!
Pierce thou that Jew, O King, and I
will this!

[BELSHAZZAR and MADETES each kills
a priest.]

BELSHAZZAR.

No thunders burst, nor lightnings may
flash here;
These vessels in our grasp, we'll dare
their God!

MADETES.

The dastard priests I'll strip, and in
their robes
Will tie our prize and take it up to light.

BELSHAZZAR.

Madetes, well! I'll help thee bear thy
load
Nor let Jehovah pluck it from my arms!
A watchful God when we can slay his
priests,
Their garments take, and rob him of
his gold!
He sleeps, or feels that I'm the stronger
king.
His arm is powerless, or he'd crush
me now;
Immortal glory lights Belshazzar's brow.

ACT IV.

SCENE.—*The Banqueting-hall of the Palace; BELSHAZZAR in purple robes, crowned and sceptered on his throne, before him a table with a goblet of wine on the mercy-seat of the Jewish temple. ELI on one side, and SAMMO, an ape, opposite, dressed as High Priest, SMERDIS and MADETES sitting just below BELSHAZZAR; the Lords of the Empire at a table extending around the room, and near its middle a pile of the Jewish sacred utensils, while a hundred spearmen stand in a square around ELI.*

BELSHAZZAR.

My Lords, I'm king by merit, and by
birth,
Since I worse perils braved than Per-
sia's wars,
And ventured down where Cyrus dared
not go.
These splendid gifts I from Jehovah
took,

While rock'd our frighten'd tower up
 into heav'n,
 And thunder, storm, and fire 'mid cav-
 ern'd gloom,
 With warning spirits, strove to keep
 me back.
 Hence I sit god of Earth! take Heav'n
 who will!

MADETES.

From Jewish cups we pour to thee our
 wine!

SMERDIS.

Once priest of sun and moon, I worship
 thee!

COURTIERS.

Hail! thou Belshazzar, hail! our king
 and god.

BELSHAZZAR.

Am I not better than a power unseen—
 A phantom born of fear and hence
 despised—

My crown can flash its glory in your
 eyes;

My scepter ye behold grasp'd by my
 hand,

As I impurpled sit on earth my throne;
 A god in flesh, and not in wood or
 stone.

ALL.

We worship thee, Belshazzar, only thee!

BELSHAZZAR.

And Sammo there, with grave and
 mitred brow,

In sacerdotal robes, I name my priest!
 Gone now my faith in gods, I turn to

brutes,
 And feel a glowing brotherhood with
 them.

Sammo has eyes, and what have we men
 more?

He hears, feels, smells, and tastes, and
 so do we.

He knows, and loves, and hates just like
 ourselves,

In blood, and bone, and food, and flesh
 the same,

While death will turn us into common
 dust.

See Sammo as he drains Jehovah's cup,
 And my true priest, pours out his wine
 to me!

Eli, my ape more loyal is than thee.

ELI.

Blasted the hand and lip that mock my
 God!

BELSHAZZAR.

Ha! thou dost curse me, Jew, and curse
 my priest!

Yet better he than thee! The ape has
 eyes,

While blind the Jew! The ape doth
 love his king;

The Jew doth hate! The ape will rever-
 ence

Where the Jew blasphemes! Blest by
 me the ape:

Thou, Jew, my slave, and old and sight-
 less, too!

Forsake thy god who leaves thee thus
 to me:

To Sammo I more kind than he to thee.

ELI.

Clouds on His throne, above yet all is
 bright;

Him I adore Who is Eternal Light.

BELSHAZZAR.

Around me here my splendid empire
 sits,

And in this blaze of lamps, Jew, thou
 shalt kneel

Before my lords, and own Belshazzar
 god.

Draw closer, guards! Point at his breast
 your spears!

ELI.

Thee I defy, but welcome give thy steel!

BELSHAZZAR.

Thy lips have fixed thy doom! Be
 ready, slaves!

Each aim his weapon true, and to the heart!—
 But stay your spears! What writes on yonder wall?
 A phantom-hand moves there beneath a cloud,
 And traces mystic characters of fire!
 It tells my tottering empire's fate and mine!
 Jehovah is the god, and this his hand!
 Apostate Priests, explain those words, or die!
 Ye tremble and are dumb! Guards, pierce them through!
 No mercy beg! Your agonies are vain!
 If I am damn'd, I thus make sure your doom!
 Jew, thou art free, and by Jehovah saved!
 Throned, crown'd, and scepter'd, here I'll meet my fate.

ELI.

Lo! Daniel comes! He'll read these words for thee—
 May be through penitence may give thee life!

Enter DANIEL, who kneels before the throne and then slowly rises.

BELSHAZZAR.

By Heav'n's kind guidance brought now near this place,
 Thou, prophet of Jehovah, art my hope!
 What mean those blazing words that blast my sight?

DANIEL.

These vessels sacred to our temple's use
 By thee profaned have waked Jehovah's wrath.
 Weigh'd in His balance thou art wanting found:
 The Medes and Persians will thine empire take.

BELSHAZZAR.

Jew, on thy brow plays Heav'n's own holy fire,
 And I thy words believe that seal my fate.

About thy neck I hang this chain of gold,
 And robe thee with the scarlet badge of kings.

Yea! all too late I offer to thy God,
 Before whose eye we monarchs are but dust!

There bursts the storm! I hear the clash of arms!

Lo! over Babylon the glare of flames!
 I'll die a king and near mine empire's throne!

Enter GORGIAS, ATYS, ABNER, and ONO, with Persian soldiers, who kill BELSHAZZAR, bravely fighting.

GORGIAS.

Ye Princes, and ye Lords of Babylon!
 The troops of Cyrus o'er your palace swarm,

Your city hold, your gates and towers possess.

See there your king discrown'd, and in his blood—

Last of a race who steep'd a world in tears!

Heavy on him the sins of ages press!
 These sacred gifts, profaned, his madness show;

Yon Jew, and mitred ape his blasphemy.
 Your plunder'd wealth, your persons scarr'd by wounds,

Your state by taxes drain'd, and eunuchs robb'd,

Your murder'd sons, your wives and daughters stain'd,

Have doomed this bloated empire to its death.

Both Heav'n and Earth combine to end such rule,

And hide in night the star of Babylon,
 Which, o'er the throne of Cyrus now will rise,

And like a sun will bless a subject world.

ACT V.

SCENE I.—*A Hall in the Palace of Babylon—CYRUS in purple robes, crowned and sceptered on his throne, surrounded by courtiers.*

CYRUS.

Princes and Lords, our throne made strong and sure,
We will inquire what touches our wide realm.
Regions remote by highways now drawn near,
Make Babylon our mighty empire's heart,
That pulses out its life to each far part.
Tell, Atys, how our posts our kingdoms join!

ATYS.

So swift from town to town, and state to state
Our riders rushing fly, that in ten days,
As borne on winds, our capital has news
From India's plains of fire, and Scythia's snows,
And Tigris with the Ganges seems to talk,
And North to South, and East to West
are bound.
Our doves bear over heav'n, as wing'd by it,
What speediest we would hear, until our realm
Is like a room where whispering sounds grow loud.

CYRUS.

Atys, thou hast done well, and proved me wise.
A monarch's glory is to choose fit men,
Each for his sphere, and then his empire is
One body moved, and order'd by one soul.
My Gorgias, are our Satrapies well fill'd?
Our rulers should be mirrors of ourselves,
As we do image forth the King of day,
Who sends his blest and bounteous beams on all.

GORGAS.

Each satrap to thine empire's farthest bound
By me is chosen from the land he rules,
That knit to it by birth and blood and speech,
His acts may be with knowledge, and in love.
States to thy throne are held like anchor'd ships,
Whose cables keep them from the tossing sea.

CYRUS.

Most cheering this! Till Peace war's wounds has heal'd,
And from her horn pour'd plenty o'er our realm,
Let Egypt doze, and dream along her Nile!
When ready, we leviathan will wake,
And lay his carcass rotting on his shores.

GORGAS.

A noble Jew would seek thy presence,
King,
If thee it please, and plead his nation's cause.

CYRUS.

Let him draw near: I owe his race a debt.
In a dark hour one brought a light to me
Whose ray led on to this Chaldean throne,
And stream'd around my brow immortal beams.

Enter ELI, led by ABNER and ONO.

That form I know, and that most princely face!
I've seen it in my boyhood's morning dreams
On Persia's hills, and in the Median groves,
Till it seems link'd to all my life by fate.
Old Jew, my father's self not better known
Than thou, who waved me on to Babylon

Like some bright angel standing in the
sun.
My life's long dream, I clasp thee to
my heart!

CYRUS embraces ELI.

These younger Jews I know, and wel-
come them!
Ye bore the Holy Book which brought
me here!
Ask, Eli, what thou wilt, and it is thine,
E'en to the jewels sparkling in my
crown.

ELI.

Most gracious King, from Heav'n thy
matchless gifts!
Jehovah watch'd thy youth, thy man-
hood led,
And throned thee here to give us
liberty.
Jerusalem is low, tears on her cheeks,
And sorrow in her heart, widow'd and
lone,
And sitting in the dust weigh'd down by
chains.
Our fetters break, and send us to our
land
That we may build on Zion's holy hill
Our temple high, crown'd with the light
of Heav'n!

CYRUS.

Good Jew, 'tis done! My scribes,
record my will!
Gold thou shalt have, and make thy city
shine
In glory worthy of King David's line.

ELI.

Thanks to thee, King, and to Jehovah,
praise!
My eyes see not, but oh! my heart can
feel,
And I can drop a tear to show my joy.
An old man's blessing rest on thee and
thine;
Thine empire live while sun and moon
may shine!

CYRUS.

Ye Princes and ye Lords of Babylon,
But in eternal right can stand our
throne,

By Love and Justice clasped, while
Heav'n smiles down!
If kings oppress, the people will rebel,
And hurl at last base tyrants from their
seats.

Rulers who grind the poor to pamper
lust

Like monstrous wild beasts should be
chased to death.

Good Jew, I've done what Justice
claim'd as due;

Jehovah guard my realm, and Israel
bless!

SCENE II.—*A Cloister of the Temple of
Jerusalem, which alone had survived
the fire of the Chaldeans.*

ELI.

So keen my sense, that when across the
moon

The evening bat on leaden wing may
flit,

I feel its shadow moving o'er mine eyes;
And I can hear the velvet-footed fox
Who lurks and looks along the broken
wall.

Such added pain and power my blind-
ness gives,

Since one sense lost, the rest its life
receive.

Oh, in this cloister'd spot, saved from
the fire

If blacken'd by its breath, I'd rather be
Than on the throne of purple Babylon.
Thank Heav'n I have no mem'ries here
from sight!

My last glance saw our temple robed in
flames,

Each dying glory heighten'd in their
blaze;

Nor did I see Belshazzar's face, or land,
And bless the night that veil'd them
from mine eyes.

Oh here, Jehovah, let thy servant die—
From here mine eyes be open'd on thy
face!

And here my flesh lie down to take its
rest,

Then borne out hence to our dear moun-
tain-tomb!

But I hear Abner's step upon the stones!

Enter ABNER.

What news, my son, from our long-
building wall?
I have not heard since morn the trowel's
clink.
Instead, there rose one burst of sudden
joy,
That spent itself, and deeper silence left.

ABNER.

Father, the wall is done—our city saved,
And we have raised an altar on this hill
To have at morn and eve the sacrifice.
Our shouts thou heardst, that burst
from heart to lip,
While the calm skies look'd down and
smiled their love.

ELI.

To Israel's God the praise! His name
I bless!
He led us through our night to glory's
dawn!
This day's immortal—tell me more of it!

ABNER.

The wall was built, except a corner'd
part,
When up on us Samaria hurl'd a troop
With one last desp'rate shock to stop
our work;
Like some mad stream that foams o'er
mountain rocks
Our Ono charged the foe, their leader
struck,
Who headless from his horse fell to the
earth,
And then the Jews, made bold, rush'd
on with shouts,
Flash'd high their swords, and drove
the robbers back,
While all the hill was ghastly with their
dead.
I then call'd round our men to end their
work,
And ere the sun could mark one linger-
ing hour,
So hot their zeal, they shouted it was
done.

ELI.

Oh, I can see Jerusalem again
Climb down these vales, and gleam
along our hills,

And in her midst our pillar'd temple
rise!
Here, son, the mantle of my priesthood
take,
And, mitred, slay for me the evening
lamb.
My work is o'er—my office hence be
thine!

ABNER.

Like our false sires when Moses smote
the rock,
For living streams, I had the murmuring
lip.
Cleansed now my stain, but not by me
forgot,
I vow that I will wed my priestly work,
And to Jehovah's glory give my life!

Enter ONO and EVA.

ELI.

My children, blest by Heaven, and in
yourselves
I thought I heard your voices mur-
muring near;
Ono, thine arm proves royal as thy
blood,
And fit thy brow to wear King David's
crown:
Our Eva happy, shelter'd at thy side!
Happy your home, hung round by fra-
grant bloom!
Oh, lead me where my own long wedded
years
Flew wing'd with joy, and tell me as
we go
How looks in brilliant beauty forth our
land,
Which on these longing eyes may smile
no more!

[*ONO and EVA kiss and embrace ELI,
and conduct him to their home,
while ABNER remains in the clois-
ter.*]

How sweet the breath of this fresh
evening air
That whispering lifts the locks from
my old brow!

EVA.

How Olivet doth glow, tipp'd by the sun,

While gorge and cliff flash back his
golden light!

ELI.

In boyhood oft I climbed his hoary
sides,
And chased from rock to rock the
brown gazelle.

ONO.

And there, like one long line of waving
gold,
The queen of seas lies waiting for the
stars,
That soon will find a mirror in her face.

ELI.

Once those same waves I saw from
Carmel's top
Where our Elijah knelt and open'd
heaven.

EVA.

One fitful gleam shows where the Dead
Sea sleeps,
Then settles o'er the South a hiding
haze.

ELI.

Oft on those shores, still as my grave
will be
And void of life, I've bent my musing
steps—
While mem'ry saw the flames roll o'er
in doom.

ONO.

Sweet in his silver Jordan winds along,
Bloom on his banks, and music in his
song;
Soon o'er his hills will climb the clus-
tering vine:
Soon in his vales will golden harvests
shine.
Judea's life is from his murmuring flow,
Where hope now brightens in yon sunset
glow.

ELI.

Oh, that these eyes could see the beauty
there!
Yet memory still recalls the scenes so
fair,

Where my young manhood led my bril-
liant bride
Bright as the roses on the river's side.

EVA.

The sun's last glance is on Siloam's
pool,
That seems a glittering gem in emerald
set,

While Cedron dashes on in mountain
glee;

The temple-hill shines with resplendent
glow,

As when Jehovah gleam'd there through
His cloud.

From our new altar its first flash of
fire!

Lo, o'er its smoke a rainbow smiling
bends,

And down on Israel sheds the light of
hope.

ELI.

I weary grow, and on some stone must
rest:

Here I will sit, and tell my dream to
you.

As I lay sleeping in my cloister'd nook,
I thought I saw our temple rise once
more.

Low linger'd in mine ear that chanted
psalm

Sung oft responsive by our white-robed
choirs,

Where comes the King of Glory from
his gates.

Soothed by the warbled sounds, I smiled
with joy.

Its altar earth, and the starr'd heaven
its dome,

Jehovah's house grew to the universe.
Then One, who was our God, and yet
was man,

Died 'mid a gloom that rolled our shak-
ing world;

But soon burst from his grave, and rose
to Heaven,

Resplendent there, and everlasting
Priest:

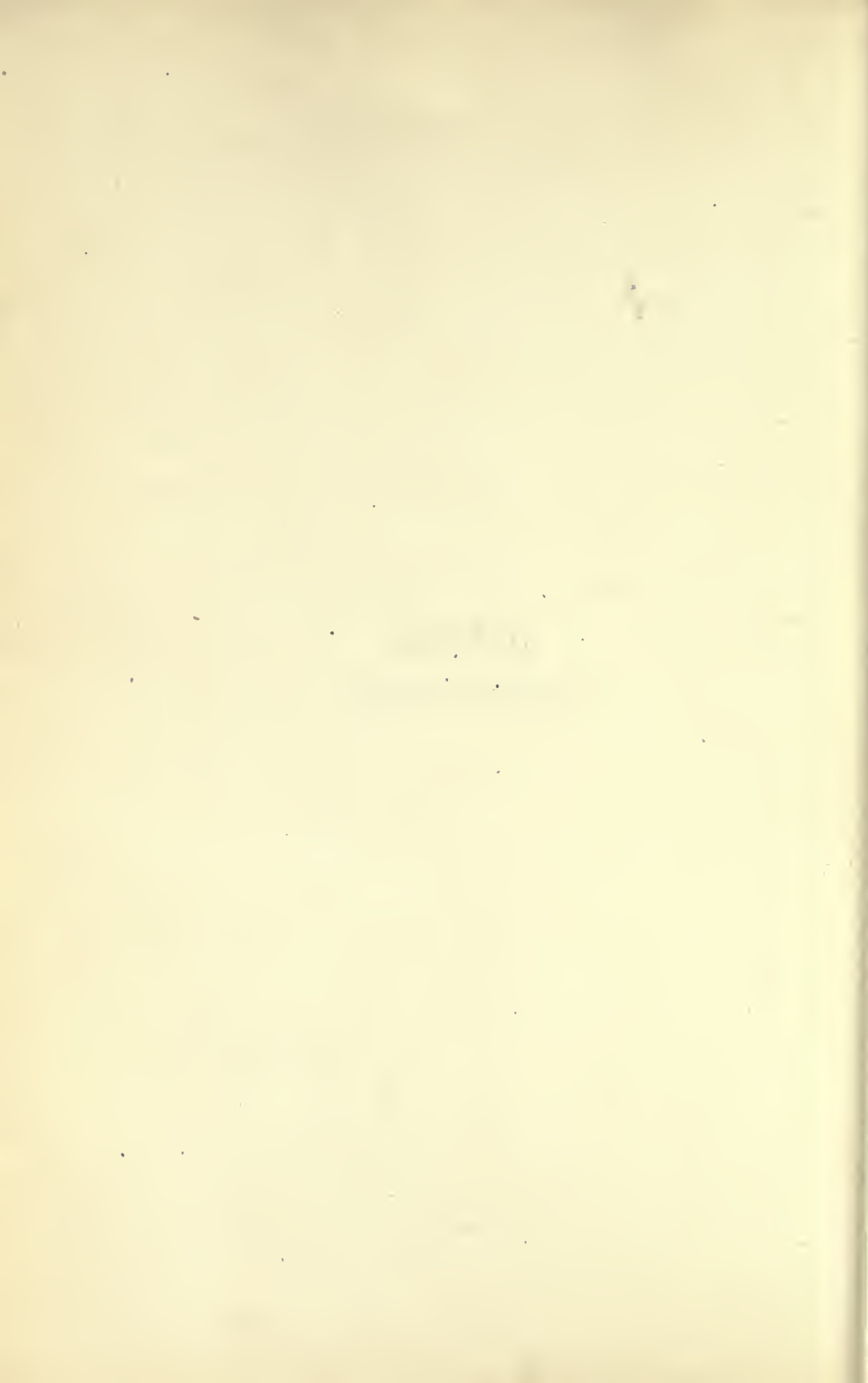
Anon, on clouds He came, 'mid angels
throned,
In flashing might, to sit majestic Judge;
Last, earth was wrapp'd in fire, and
from the blaze
A new world rose in an immortal bloom,

And saints and cherubim with songs
adored
Him, ever King, both Human and
Divine.

JOHN M. LEAVITT
(*Published New York, 1876.*)



DANIEL
A SACRED DRAMA



DANIEL

A Sacred Drama.

*The righteous is delivered out of trouble,
and the wicked cometh in his stead.*
—Proverbs of Solomon.

*On peut des plus grands rois surprendre
la justice,*

*Incapable de tromper,
Ils ont peine a s'échapper
Des pièges de l'artifice.*

*Un coeur noble ne peut soupçonner en
autrui*

*La bassesse et la malice
Qu'il ne sent point en lui.*

—*Esther. Tragedie de Racine.*

PERSONS OF THE DRAMA.

DARIUS, king of Media and Babylon.

PHARNACES, } courtiers, enemies to Daniel.
SORANUS, }

ARASPES, a young Median lord, friend
and convert to Daniel.

DANIEL.

SCENE—*The city of Babylon.*

*The subject is taken from the sixth
chapter of the prophet Daniel.*

PART I.

PHARNACES, SORANUS.

PHARNACES.

YES!—I have noted with a jealous eye.
The pow'r of this new fav'rite! Daniel
reigns,
And not Darius! Daniel guides the
springs
Which move this mighty empire. High
he sits,

Supreme in favour with both prince and
people.

Where is the spirit of our Median lords,
Tame to crouch and bend the supple
knee

To this new god! By Mithras, 'tis too
much!

Shall great Arbaces' race to Daniel bow!
A foreigner, a captive, and a Jew?

Something must be devis'd, and that
right soon,
To shake his credit.

SORANUS.

Rather hope to shake
The mountain pine, whose twisting fibres
clasp

The earth, deep rooted! Rather hope to
shake

The Scythian Taurus from his central
base!

No—Daniel sits too absolute in pow'r,
Too firm in favour, for the keenest shaft
Of nicely-aiming jealousy to reach him.

PHARNACES.

Rather he sits too high to 'sit securely,
Yes! he has reached that pinnacle of
pow'r

Which closely touches on depression's
verge.

Hast thou then liv'd in courts? hast thou
grown gray

Beneath the mask a subtle statesman
wears,

To hide his secret soul, and dost not
know

That of all fickle Fortune's transient
gifts,

Favour is most deceitful? 'Tis a beam,
Which darts uncertain brightness for a
moment!

The faint precarious, fickle shine of
 pow'r;
 Giv'n without merit, by caprice with-
 drawn.
 No trifle is so small as what obtains,
 Save that which loses favour, 'tis a
 breath,
 Which hangs upon a smile! A look, a
 word,
 A frown, the air-built tower of fortune
 shakes,
 And down the unsubstantial fabric falls!
 Darius, just and clement as he is,
 If I mistake not, may be wrought upon
 By prudent wiles, by Flattery's pleasant
 cup,
 Administer'd with caution.

SORANUS.

But the means?
 For Daniel's life (a foe must grant him
 that)
 Is so replete with goodness, so adorn'd
 With every virtue so exactly squar'd
 By wisdom's nicest rules, 'twill be most
 hard
 To charge him with the shadow of of-
 fence.
 Pure is his fame as Scythia's mountain
 snows,
 When not a breath pollutes them! O
 Pharnaces,
 I've scann'd the actions of his daily life
 With all th' industrious malice of a foe;
 And nothing meets mine eye but deeds
 of honour!
 In office pure; for equitable acts
 Renown'd: in justice and impartial truth,
 The Grecian Themis is not more severe.

PHARNACES.

By yon bright sun, thou blazon'st forth
 his praise
 As if with rapture thou did'st read the
 page
 Where these fair deeds are written!

SORANUS.

Thou mistak'st.
 I only meant to show what cause we
 have
 To hate and fear him. I but meant to
 paint

His popular virtues and eclipsing merit.
 Then for devotion and religious zeal,
 Who so renown'd as Daniel? Of his
 law
 Observant in th' extreme. Thrice ev'ry
 day
 With prostrate reverence, he adores his
 God:
 With superstitious awe his face he turns
 Tow'rds his belov'd Jerusalem, as if
 Some local, partial God, might there be
 found
 To hear his supplication. No affair
 Of state, no business so importunate,
 No pleasure so alluring, no employ
 Of such high import, to seduce his zeal
 From this observance due!

PHARNACES.

There, there he falls!
 Enough, my friend! His piety destroys
 him.
 There, at the very footstool of his
 God,
 Where he implores protection, there I'll
 crush him.

SORANUS.

What means Pharnaces?

PHARNACES.

Ask not what I mean,
 The new idea floating in my brain
 Has yet receiv'd no form. 'Tis yet too
 soon
 To give it body, circumstance, or breath.
 The seeds of mighty deeds are lab'ring
 here,
 And struggling for a birth! 'Tis near
 the hour
 The king is wont to summon us to
 council:
 Ere that, this big conception of my
 mind
 I'll shape to form and being. Thou,
 meanwhile,
 Convene our chosen friends: for I shall
 need
 The aid of all your councils, and the
 weight
 Of grave authority.

SORANUS.

Who shall be trusted?

PHARNACES.

With our immediate motive none, except

A chosen band of friends, who most
repine

At Daniel's exaltation.—But the scheme
I meditate must be disclos'd to all

Who bear high office; all our Median
rulers,

Princes and captains, presidents and
lords;

All must assemble. 'Tis a common
cause:

All but the young Araspes: he inclines
To Daniel and his God. He sits attent,

With ravish'd ears, to listen to his lore.
With rev'rence names Jerusalem, and

reads
The volume of the law. No more he

bows
To hail the golden Ruler of the Day.

But looks for some great Prophet,
greater far,

So they pretend, than Mithras! From
him, therefore,

Conceal whate'er of injury is devis'd
'Gainst Daniel. Be it to thy care to-
day

To keep him from the council.

SORANUS.

'Tis well thought.

'Tis now about the hour of Daniel's
prayer.

Araspes, too, is with him! and to-day
They will not sit in council. Haste we
then.

Designs of high importance, once con-
ceiv'd

Should be accomplish'd! Genius which
discerns,

And courage which achieves, despise the
aid

Of ling'ring Circumspection! The keen
spirit

Seizes the prompt occasion, makes the
thought

Start into instant action, and at once
Plans and performs, resolves and ex-
ecutes!

PART II.

SCENE—*Daniel's House.*

DANIEL, ARASPES.

ARASPES.

Proceed, proceed, thrice venerable sage,
Enlighten my dark mind with this new
ray,

This dawning of salvation! Tell me
more

Of this expected King! this Comforter!
This Promise of the nations! this great
Hope

Of anxious Israel! This unborn
Prophet!

This wonderful, this mighty Counsel-
lor!

This everlasting Lord! this Prince of
Peace!

This balm of Gilead, which shall heal
the wounds

Of universal nature! this Messiah!
Redeemer, Saviour, Sufferer, Victim,
God!

DANIEL.

Enough to animate our faith, we know,
But not enough to soothe the curious
pride

Of vain philosophy! Enough to cheer
Our path we see, the rest is hid in
clouds;

And heaven's own shadows rest upon
the view!

ARASPES.

Go on, blest sage! I could for ever hear,
Untir'd, thy admonition! tell me how
I shall obtain the favour of that God

I but begin to know, but fain would
serve.

DANIEL.

By deep humility, by faith unfeign'd,
By holy deeds, best proof of living faith!

O Faith,* thou wonder-working prin-
ciple,

Eternal substance of our present hope,
Thou evidence of things invisible!

What cannot man sustain, sustain'd by
thee!

* *Hebrews, chap. xi.*

The time would fail, and the bright star
of day
Would quench his beams in ocean, and
resign
His empire to the silver queen of night;
And she again descend the steep of
heaven,
If I should tell what wonders Faith
achiev'd
By Gideon, Barak, and the holy seer,
Elkanah's son; the pious Gileadite,
Ill-fated Jephthah! He of Zorah, too*
In strength unequal'd; and the shep-
herd-king
Who vanquish'd Gath's fell giant! Need
I tell
Of holy prophets, who by conquer'ing
Faith,
Wrought deeds incredible to mortal
sense;
Vanquish'd contending kingdoms, quell'd
the rage
Of furious pestilence, extinguish'd fire!
Victorious Faith! others by thee en-
dur'd
Exile, disgrace, captivity, and death!
Some uncomplaining, bore (nor be it
deem'd
The meanest exercise of well-try'd
Faith)
The cruel mocking, and the bitter taunt,
Foul obloquy, and undeserv'd reproach:
Despising shame, that death to human
pride!

ARASPES.

How shall this faith be sought?

DANIEL.

By earnest prayer.
Solicit first the wisdom from above;
Wisdom, whose fruits are purity and
peace!
Wisdom! that bright intelligence, which
sat
Supreme, when with his golden com-
passes†
Th' Eternal plann'd the fabric of the
world,
Produc'd his fair idea into light,

*Samson.

†See *Paradise Lost*, book vii, line 225.
Proverbs, chap. viii, ver. 27.

And said, that all was good! Wisdom,
blest beam!
The brightness of the everlasting light!
The spotless mirror of the power of
God!
The reflex image of th' all perfect Mind!
A stream translucent, flowing from the
source
Of glory infinite! a cloudless light!
Defilement cannot touch nor sin pollute
Her unstain'd purity! Not Ophir's gold,
Nor Ethiopia's gems can match her
price!
The ruby of the mine is pale before
her!
And, like the oil Elisha's bounty bless'd,
She is a treasure which doth grow by
use,
And multiply by spending! She con-
tains,
Within herself the sum of excellence.
If riches are desir'd, wisdom is wealth!
If prudence, where shall keen Inven-
tion find
Artificer more cunning? If renown,
In her right hand it comes! If piety,
Are not her labours virtues? If the
lore
Which sage Experience teaches, lo! she
scans
Antiquity's dark truths; the past she
knows,
Anticipates the future; not by arts
Forbidden, of Chaldean sorcerer,
But from the piercing ken of deep Fore-
knowledge.
From her sure science of the human
heart
She weighs effects with causes, ends
with means;
Resolving all into the sovereign will.
For earthly blessings moderate be thy
pray'r
And qualified; for light, for strength,
for grace,
Unbounded thy petition.

ARASPES.

Now, O prophet!
Explain the secret doubts which rack
my mind,
And my weak sense confound. Give
me some line
To sound the depths of Providence!
O say,

Why the ungodly prosper? why their
 root
 Shoots deep, and their thick branches
 flourish fair,
 Like the green bay tree? why the right-
 eous man,
 Like tender plants to shiv'ring winds
 expos'd,
 Is strip'd and torn, in naked Virtue
 bare,
 And nipp'd by cruel Sorrow's biting
 blast?
 Explain, O Daniel, these mysterious
 ways
 To my faint apprehension! For as'
 yet
 I've much to learn. Fair Truth's im-
 mortal sun
 Is sometimes hid in clouds; not that
 her light
 Is in itself defective; but obscur'd
 By my weak prejudice, imperfect Faith,
 And all the thousand causes which ob-
 struct
 The growth of goodness.

DANIEL.

Follow me, Araspes.
 Within thou shalt peruse the sacred
 page,
 The book of life eternal! *that* will show
 thee
 The end of the ungodly; thou wilt own
 How short their longest period; wilt
 perceive
 How black a night succeeds their
 brightest day!
 Thy purg'd eye will see God is not
 slack,
 As men count slackness, to fulfil His
 word.
 Weigh well this book; and may the
 Spirit of grace,
 Who stamp'd the seal of truth on the
 bless'd page,
 Descend into thy soul, remove thy
 doubts,
 Clear the perplex'd, and solve the in-
 tricate,
 Till faith be lost in sight, and hope
 in joy!

PART III.

DARIUS *on his throne*—PHARNACES,
 SORANUS, *princes, presidents, and*
courtiers.

PHARNACES.

Hail! king Darius, live for ever!

DARIUS.

Welcome!

Welcome, my princes, presidents, and
 friends!
 Now tell me, has your wisdom aught
 devis'd
 To aid the commonwealth? In our new
 empire,
 Subdu'd Chaldea, is there aught re-
 mains
 Your prudence can suggest to serve the
 state,
 To benefit the subject, to redress
 And raise the injur'd, to assist the op-
 press'd,
 And humble the oppressor? If you
 know,
 Speak freely, princes! Why am I a
 king,
 Except to poise the awful scale of jus-
 tice
 With even hand; to minister to want;
 To bless the nations with a lib'ral rule,
 Vicegerent of th' eternal Oromasdes?

PHARNACES.

So absolute thy wisdom, mighty king,
 All counsel were superfluous.

DARIUS.

Hold, Pharnaces!

No adulation; 'tis the death of virtue;
 Who flatters is of all mankind the
 lowest,
 Save he who courts flattery. Kings are
 men,
 As feeble and as frail as those they
 rule,
 And born like them, to die. The Lydian
 monarch,
 Unhappy Croesus, lately sat aloft,
 Almost above mortality; now see him!
 Sunk to the vile condition of a slave,

He swells the train of Cyrus! I, like
 him,
 To misery am obnoxious. See this
 throne;
 This royal throne the great Nebassar
 fill'd;
 Yet hence his pride expell'd him! Yonder
 wall,
 The dread terrific writing to the eyes
 Of proud Belshazzar show'd; sad monu-
 ments
 Of Heav'n's tremendous vengeance! and
 shall I,
 Unwarn'd by such examples, cherish
 pride?
 Yet to their dire calamities I owe
 The brightest gem that glistens in my
 crown,
 Sage Daniel. If my speech have aught
 of worth,
 Or if my life with aught of good be
 grac'd,
 To him alone I owe it.

SORANUS [*aside to Pharnaces*].

Now Pharnaces,
 Will he run o'er and dwell upon his
 praise,
 As if we ne'er had heard it; nay, will
 swell
 The nauseous catalogue with many a
 virtue
 His own fond fancy coins.

PHARNACES.

O, great Darius!
 Let thine unworthy servant's words find
 grace,
 And meet acceptance in his royal ear,
 Who subjugates the east! Let not the
 king
 With anger hear my pray'r.

DARIUS.

Pharnaces, speak;
 I know thou lov'st me; I but meant to
 chide
 Thy flatt'ry, not reprove thee for thy
 zeal.
 Speak boldly, friends, as man should
 speak to man.
 Perish the barb'rous maxims of the
 east,

Which basely would enslave the free-
 born mind,
 And plunder man of the best gift of
 Heav'n,
 His liberty of soul.

PHARNACES.

Darius, hear me.
 Thy princes, and the captains of thy
 bands,
 Thy presidents, the nobles who bear
 rule
 O'er provinces, and I, thine humble
 creature.
 Less thn the least in merit, but in love,
 In zeal, and duty, equal with the first,
 We have devis'd a measure to confirm
 Thy infant empire, to establish firmly
 Thy pow'r and new dominion, and se-
 cure
 Thy growing greatness past the pow'r of
 change.

DARIUS.

I am prepar'd to hear thee. Speak,
 Pharnaces.

PHARNACES.

The wretched Babylonians long have
 groan'd
 Beneath the rule of princes, weak or
 rash.
 The rod of pow'r was sway'd alike
 amiss,
 By feeble Merodach and fierce Belshaz-
 zar.
 One let the slacken'd reins too loosely
 float
 Upon the people's neck, and lost his
 pow'r
 By nerveless relaxation. He, who fol-
 low'd,
 Held with a tyrant's hand the cruel
 curb,
 And check'd the groaning nation till it
 bled;
 On different rocks they met one common
 ruin.
 Their edicts were irresolute, their laws
 Were feebly plann'd, their counsels ill-
 advis'd;
 Now so relax'd, and now so overstrain'd,
 That the tir'd people, wearied with the
 weight

They long have borne, will soon dis-
dain controul,
Tread on all rule, and spurn the hand
that guides 'em.

DARIUS.

But say what remedy?

PHARNACES.

That, too, O king!
Thy servants have provided. Hitherto
They bare the yoke submissive. But to
fix

Thy pow'r and their obedience, to reduce
All hearts to thy dominion, yet avoid
Those deeds of cruelty thy nature starts
at,

Thou should'st begin by some imperial
act

Of absolute dominion, yet unstain'd
By aught of barbarous. For know, O
king!

Wholesome severity, if wisely fram'd
With sober discipline, procures more
reverence

Than all the lenient counsels and weak
measures

Of frail irresolution.

DARIUS.

Now proceed

To thy request.

PHARNACES.

Not I, but all, request it.
Be thy imperial edict issued straight,
And let a firm decree be this day
pass'd,

Irrevocable as our Median laws.
Ordain, that for the space of thirty
days

No subject in thy realm shall aught
request

Of God or man, except of thee, O
king!

DARIUS.

Wherefore this strange decree?

PHARNACES.

'Twill fix the crown
With lasting safety on thy royal brow,

And by a bloodless means, preserve th'
obedience

Of this new empire. Think how much
'twill raise

Thy high renown! 'Twill make thy
name rever'd,

And popular beyond example. What!
To be as Heav'n, dispensing good and
ill

For thirty days! With thine own ears
to hear

Thy people's wants, with thine own
lib'ral hands

To bless thy suppliant subjects! O,
Darius!

Thou'lt seem as bounteous as a giving
God!

And reign in ev'ry heart in Babylon
As well as Media! What a glorious
state,

To be the sovereign arbiter of good!

The first efficient cause of happiness!

To scatter mercies with a plenteous
hand,

And to be blest thyself in blessing others!

DARIUS.

Is this the gen'ral wish?

[*Princes and courtiers kneel.*]

CHIEF PRESIDENT.

Of one, of all.

Behold thy princes, presidents and lords,
Thy counselors, and captains! See,
O king!

[*Presents the edict.*]

Behold the instrument our zeal has
drawn;

The edict is prepar'd. We only wait
The confirmation of thy gracious word,
And thy imperial signet.

DARIUS.

Say, Pharnaces,

What penalty awaits the man who dares
Trangress our mandate?

PHARNACES.

Instant death, O king!
This statute says; "Should any subject
dare
Petition, for the space of thirty days,
Of God or man, except of thee, O king!
He shall be thrown into yon dreadful
den
Of hungry lions!"

DARIUS.

Hold! Methinks a deed
Of such importance should be wisely
weigh'd.

PHARNACES.

We have resolv'd it, mighty king! with
care,
With closest scrutiny. On us devolve
Whatever blame occurs!

DARIUS.

I'm satisfy'd.
Then to your wisdom I commit me,
princes.
Behold the royal signet: see 'tis done.

PHARNACES [*aside*].

There Daniel fell! That signet seal'd
his doom.

DARIUS [*after a pause*].

Let me reflect—Sure I have been too
rash!
Why such intemp'rate haste? But you
are wise;
And would not counsel this severe de-
cree
But for the wisest purpose. Yet, me-
thinks,
I might have weigh'd, and in my mind
resolv'd
This statute, ere, the royal signet
stamp'd,
It had been past repeal. Sage Daniel,
too!
My counsellor, my guide, my well-try'd
friend,
He should have been consulted; he,
whose wisdom
I still have found oracular!

PHARNACES.

Mighty king!
'Tis as it should be. The decree is
past
Irrevocable, as the steadfast law
Of Mede and Persian, which can never
change.
Those who observe it live, as is most
meet,
High in thy grace;—who violate it, die.

PART IV.

SCENE—DANIEL'S *house*.

DANIEL, ARASPES.

ARASPES.

OH, holy Daniel! prophet, father, friend,
I come the wretched messenger of ill!
Thy foes complot thy death. For what
can mean
This new-made law, extorted from the
king
Almost by force? What can it mean,
O Daniel,
But to involve thee in the toils they
spread
To snare thy precious life?

DANIEL.

How! was the king
Consenting to this edict?

ARASPES.

They surpris'd
His easy nature; took him when his
heart
Was soften'd by their blandishments.
They wore
The mask of public virtue to deceive
him.
Beneath the specious name of general
good,
They wrought him to their purposes:
no time
Allow'd him to deliberate. One short
hour,
Another moment, and his soul had gain'd
Her natural tone of virtue.

DANIEL.

That great Power
Who suffers evil only to produce
Some unseen good, permits that this
should be:
And HE permitting, I, well pleas'd re-
sign.
Retire, my friend: this is my second
hour.
Of daily pray'r. Anon we'll meet again.
Here in the open face of that bright
sun
Thy fathers worshipp'd, will I offer up,
As is my rule, petitions to my God,
For thee, for me, for Solyma, for all!

ARASPES.

Oh, stay! what mean'st thou! sure thou
hast not heard
The edict of the king? I thought but
now,
Thou knew'st its purport. It expressly
says,
That no petition henceforth shall be
made,
For thirty days save only to the king;
Nor pray'r nor intercession shall be
heard
Of any God or man, but of Darius.

DANIEL.

And think'st thou then my reverence
for the king,
Good as he is, shall tempt me to re-
nounce
My sworn allegiance to the King of
kings?
Hast thou commanded legions? strove
in battle,
Defy'd the face of danger, mock'd at
death
In all its frightful forms, and tremblest
now?
Come learn of me; I'll teach thee to be
bold,
Though sword I never drew! Fear not,
Araspes,
The feeble vengeance of a mortal man,
Whose breath is in his nostrils: for
wherein
Is he to be accounted of? but fear
The awaken'd vengeance of the living
Lord,

He who can plunge the everlasting soul
In infinite perdition!

ARASPES.

Then, O Daniel!
If thou persist to disobey the edict,
Retire and hide thee from the prying
eyes
Of busy malice!

DANIEL.

He who is asham'd
To vindicate the honour of his God,
Of him the living Lord shall be asham'd
When He shall judge the tribes!

ARASPES.

Yet, O remember,
Oft have I heard thee say, the secret
heart
Is fair devotion's temple; there the saint,
E'en on that living altar, lights the
flame.
Of purest sacrifice, which burns un-
seen,
Not unaccepted.—I remember, too,
When Syrian Naaman* by Elisha's hand,
Was cleans'd from foul pollution, and
his mind
Enlighten'd by the miracle, confess'd
The Almighty God of Jacob: that he
deem'd it
No flagrant violation of his faith
To bend at Rimmon's shrine; nor did
the seer
Forbid the rite external.

DANIEL.

Know, Araspes,
Heav'n designs to suit our trials to our
strength,
A recent convert, feeble in his faith:
Naaman, perhaps, had sunk beneath the
weight
Of so severe a duty. Gracious Heav'n
Forbears to bruise the reed, or quench
the flax
When feeble and expiring. But shall I,
Shall Daniel, shall the servant of the
Lord,
A vet'ran in his cause—long train'd to
know

*II Kings, chap. v.

And do His will—long exercis'd in wo,
 Bred in captivity and born to suffer;
 Shall I, from known, from certain duty
 shrink
 To shun a threaten'd danger? O,
 Araspes!
 Shall I, advanc'd in age, in zeal decline?
 Grow careless as I reach my journey's
 end
 And slacken in my pace, the goal in
 view?
 Perish discretion, when it interferes
 With duty! Perish the false policy
 Of human wit, which would commute
 our safety
 With God's eternal honour! Shall His
 law
 Be set at nought, that I may live at
 ease?
 How would the Heathen triumph,
 should I fall
 Through coward fear! How would
 God's enemies
 Insultingly blaspheme!

ARASPES.

Yet, think a moment.

DANIEL.

No.
 Where evil may be *done*, 'tis right to
 ponder;
 Where only *suffer'd* know the shortest
 pause
 Is much too long. Had great Darius
 paus'd,
 This ill had been prevented. But for
 me,
 Araspes, to deliberate is to sin.

ARASPES.

Think of thy pow'r, thy favour with
 Darius:
 Think of thy life's importance to the
 tribes,
 Scarce yet return'd in safety. Live!
 O, live!
 To serve the cause of God!

DANIEL.

God will Himself
 Sustain His righteous cause. He knows
 to raise

Fit instruments to serve Him. Know,
 Araspes,
 He does not need our crimes to help His
 cause,
 Nor does His equitable law permit
 A sinful act, from the prepost'rous plea
 That good may follow it. For me, my
 friend,
 The spacious earth holds not a bait to
 tempt.
 What would it profit me, if I should
 gain
 Imperial Ecbatan, th' extended land
 Of fruitful Media, nay, the world's wide
 empire,
 If mine eternal soul must be the price?
 Farewell, my friend! time presses. I
 have stol'n
 Some moments from my duty to con-
 firm
 And strengthen thy young faith! Let
 us fulfil
 What Heav'n enjoins, and leave to
 Heav'n th' event!

PART V.

SCENE—*The Palace.*

PHARNACES, SORANUS.

PHARNACES.

'Tis done—success has crown'd our
 scheme, Soranus;
 And Daniel falls into the deep-laid toils
 Our prudence spread.

SORANUS.

That he should fall so soon,
 Astonishes e'en me! what! not a day!
 What! not a single moment to defer
 His rash devotions? Madly thus to
 rush
 On certain peril quite transcends belief!
 When happen'd it, Pharnaces?

PHARNACES.

On the instant:
 Scarce is the deed accomplish'd. As he
 made

His ostentatious pray'r, e'en in the face
Of the bright god of day, all Babylon
Beheld the insult offer'd to Darius.
For, as in bold defiance of the law,
His windows were not clos'd. Our
chosen bands,
Whom we had plac'd to note him,
straight rush'd in,
And seiz'd him in the warmth of his
blind zeal,
Ere half his pray'r was finish'd. Young
Araspes,
With all the wild extravagance of grief,
Prays, weeps, and threatens. Daniel,
silent stands,
With patient resignation, and prepares
To follow them.—But see, the king ap-
proaches!

SORANUS.

How's this? deep sorrow sits upon his
brow,
And stern resentment fires his angry
eye!

[Enter Darius.]

DARIUS.

O, deep-laid stratagem! O, artful wile!
To take me unprepar'd, to wound my
heart,
E'en where it feels most tenderly, in
friendship!
To stab my fame! to hold me up a
mark
To future ages, for the perjur'd prince
Who slew the friend he lov'd! O Daniel,
Daniel,
Who now shall trust Darius? Not a
slave
In my wide empire, from the Indian
main
To the cold Caspian, but is more at ease
Than I, his monarch! Yes! I've done a
deed
Will blot my honour with eternal stain!
Pharnaces! O, thou hoary sycophant!
Thou wily politician! thou hast snar'd
Thy unsuspecting master!

PHARNACES.

Great Darius,
Let not resentment blind thy royal eyes.

In what am I to blame? who could sus-
pect
This obstinate resistance to the law?
Who could foresee that Daniel would
perforce
Oppose the king's decree?

DARIUS.

Thou, thou foresaw'st it!
Thou know'st his righteous soul would
ne'er endure
So long an interval of pray'r. But I,
Deluded king! 'twas I should have fore-
seen
His steadfast piety. I should have
thought
Your earnest warmth had some morë
secret source,
Something that touch'd you nearer than
your love,
Your well-feign'd zeal for me.—I should
have known
When selfish politicians, hackney'd long
In fraud and artifice, affect a glow
Of patriot fervour, or fond loyalty,
Which scorns all show of interest, that's
the moment
To watch their crooked projects.—Well
thou know'st
How dear I held him; how I priz'd his
truth.
Did I not choose him from a subject
world,
Unbless'd by fortune, and by birth un-
grac'd,
A captive and a Jew? Did I not love
him?
Was he not rich in independent worth?
And great in native goodness? That
undid him!
There, there he fell! If he had been
less great,
He had been safe. Thou could'st not
bear his brightness;
The lustre of his virtues quite obscur'd,
And dimm'd thy fainter merit. Rash old
man!
Go, and devise some means to set me
free
From this dread load of guilt! Go
set at work
Thy plotting genius to redeem the life
Of venerable Daniel!

PHARNACES.

'Tis too late.
He has offended 'gainst the new de-
-cree;
Has dared to make petition to his God,
Although the dreadful sentence of the
-act
Full well he knew. And by th' estab-
-lish'd law
Of Media, by that irrevocable,
Which he has dar'd to violate, he dies!

DARIUS.

Impiety! presumption! monstrous law!
Irrevocable? Is there aught on earth
Deserves that name? Th' eternal laws
-alone

Of Oromasdes are unchangeable!
All human projects are so faintly fram'd,
So feebly plann'd, so liable to change,
So mix'd with error in their very form,
That mutable and mortal are the same.
But where is Daniel! Wherefore comes
-he not

To load me with reproaches? to upbraid
-me

With all the wrongs my barbarous haste
has done him!

Where is he?

PHARNACES.

He prepares to meet his fate.
This hour he dies, for the act so de-
-crees.

DARIUS.

Suspend the bloody sentence. Bring
-him hither.

Or rather let me seek him and implore
His dying pardon, and his parting pray'r.

—

PART VI.

SCENE—*Daniel's house.*

DANIEL, ARASPES.

ARASPES.

Still let me follow thee; still let me
-hear

The voice of Wisdom, ere the silver
-cord
By death's cold hand be loosen'd.

DANIEL.

Now I'm ready!
No grief, no woman's weakness, good
-Araspes
Thou should'st rejoice my pilgrimage is
-o'er,
And the blest heaven of repose in view.

ARASPES.

And must I lose thee, Daniel? must
-thou die?

DANIEL.

And what is death, my friend, that I
-should fear it?

To die! why 'tis to triumph; 'tis to join
The great assembly of the good and
-just;

Immortal worthies, heroes, prophets,
-saints!

Oh! 'tis to join the band of holy men,
Made perfect by their sufferings! 'Tis
-to meet

My great progenitors! 'Tis to behold
Th' illustrious patriarchs; they with
-whom the Lord

Deign'd hold familiar converse. 'Tis to
-see

Bless'd Noah and his children, once a
-world!

'Tis to behold, oh, rapture to conceive!
Those we have known, and lov'd and
-lost below!

Bold Azariah, and the band of brothers,
Who sought, in bloom of youth, the
-scorching flames!

Nor shall we see heroic men alone,
Champions who fought the fight of faith
-on earth;

But heavenly conquerors, angelic hosts,
Michael and his bright legions, who
-subdu'd

The foes of truth! To join their blest
-employ

Of love and praise! to the high melodies
Of choirs celestial to attune my voice,
Accordant to the golden harps of saints!
To join in blest hosannahs to their
-King!

Whose face to see, whose glory to behold,
 Alone were heaven, though saint or seraph none
 Should meet our sight, and only God were there!
 This is to die! Who would not die for this?
 Who would not die, that he might live for ever?

DARIUS, DANIEL, ARASPES.

DARIUS.

Where is he? where is Daniel?—Let me see him!
 Let me embrace that venerable form,
 Which I have doom'd to glut the greedy maw
 Of furious lions!

DANIEL.

King Darius, hail!

DARIUS.

O, injur'd Daniel, can I see thee thus!
 Thus uncomplaining! can I bear to hear
 That when the ruffian ministers of death
 Stopp'd thy unfinish'd pray'r, thy pious lips
 Had just invoc'd a blessing on Darius,
 On him who sought thy life? Thy murderers drop
 Tears of strange pity. Look not on me thus
 With mild benignity! O! I could bear
 The voice of keen reproach, or the strong flash
 Of fierce resentment; but I cannot stand
 That touching silence, nor that patient eye
 Of meek respect.

DANIEL.

Thou art my master still.

DARIUS.

I am thy murderer! I have sign'd thy death!

DANIEL.

I know thy bent of soul is honourable:
 Thou hast been gracious still! Were it not so,
 I would have met the appointment of high Heaven
 With humble acquiescence; but to know
 Thy will concurr'd not with thy servant's fate,
 Adds joy to resignation.

DARIUS.

Here I swear
 By him who sits enthron'd in yon bright sun,
 Thy blood shall be aton'd! On these thy foes,
 Thou shalt have ample vengeance.

DANIEL.

Hold, O king!
 Vengeance is mine, th' eternal Lord hath said;
 Myself will recompense with even hand,
 The sinner for the sin. The wrath of man
 Works not the righteousness of God!

DARIUS.

I had hop'd
 We should have trod this busy stage together
 A little longer, then have sunk to rest
 In honourable age! Who now shall guide
 My shatter'd bark in safety? who shall now
 Direct me? O, unhappy state of kings!
 'Tis well the robe of majesty is gay,
 Or who would put it on? A crown! what is it?
 It is to bear the miseries of a people!
 To hear their murmurs, feel their discontentments,
 And sink beneath a load of splendid care!
 To have your best success ascrib'd to Fortune,
 And Fortune's failures all ascrib'd to you!
 It is to sit upon a joyless height,
 To every blast of changing fate expos'd!

Too high for hope! too great for hap-
piness!
For friendship too much fear'd! To all
the joys
Of social freedom, and th' endearing
charm
Of lib'ral interchange of soul unknown!
Fate meant me an exception to the rest,
And though a monarch, bless'd me with
a friend;
And I—have murder'd him!

DANIEL.

My hour approaches;
Hate not my mem'ry, king: protect Aras-
pes:
Encourage Cyrus in the holy work
Of building ruin'd Solyma. Farewell!

DARIUS.

With most religious strictness I'll fulfil
Thy last request. Araspes shall be next
My throne and heart. Farewell!

[*They embrace.*]

Hear, future kings!
Ye unborn rulers of the nation, hear!
Learn from my crime, from my mis-
fortune learn,
Never to trust to weak or wicked hands,
That delegated pow'r which Oromasdes
Invests in monarchs for the public good.

PART VII.

SCENE—*The court of the palace—The
sun rising.*

DANIEL, ARASPES.

DARIUS.

Oh, good Araspes! what a night of hor-
ror!
To me the dawning day brings no return
Of cheerfulness or peace! No balmy
sleep
Has seal'd these eyes, no nourishment
has past

These loathing lips, since Daniel's fate
was signed!
Hear what my fruitless penitence re-
solves—
That thirty days my rashness had de-
creed
The edict's force should last, I will de-
vove
To mourning and repentance, fasting,
pray'r
And all due rites of grief. For thirty
days
No pleasant sound of dulcimer or harp,
Sackbut or flute, or psaltery, shall charm
My ear, now dead to ev'ry note of
joy!

ARASPES.

My grief can know no period!

DARIUS.

See that den!
There Daniel met the furious lion's rage!
There were the patient martyr's man-
gled limbs
Torn piece-meal! Never hide thy tears,
Araspes,
'Tis virtuous sorrow, unalloy'd like mine,
By guilt and fell remorse! Let us ap-
proach:
Who knows but that dread Pow'r to
whom he pray'd
So often and so fervently, has heard
him!

[*He goes to the mouth of the den.*]

O Daniel, servant of the living God!
He whom thou hast serv'd so long, and
lov'd so well,
From the devouring lions' famish'd jaws,
Can he deliver thee?

DANIEL [*from the bottom of the den.*]

He can—He has!

DARIUS.

Methought I heard him speak!

ARASPES.

O, wond'rous force
Of strong imagination! were thy voice
Loud as the trumpet's blast, it could not
wake him
From that eternal sleep!

DANIEL [*in the den*].

Hail, king Darius!
The God I serve has shut the lions'
mouths,
To vindicate my innocence.

DARIUS.

He speaks!

He lives!

ARASPES.

'Tis no illusion: 'tis the sound
Of his known voice.

DARIUS.

Where are my servants? Haste,
Fly, swift as lightning, free him from
the den;
Release him, bring him hither! break
the seal
Which keeps him from me! See, Aras-
pes! look!
See the charm'd lions!—Mark their mild
demeanor:
Araspes, mark!—they have no pow'r to
hurt him!
See how they hang their heads and
smooth their fierceness
At his mild aspect!

ARASPES.

Who that sees this sight,
Who that in after times shall hear this
told,
Can doubt if Daniel's God be God in-
deed?

DARIUS.

None, none, Araspes!

ARASPES.

Ah, he comes, he comes!

[*Enter DANIEL, followed by multitudes.*]

DANIEL.

Hail, great Darius!

DARIUS.

Dost thou live indeed!
And live unhurt?

ARASPES.

O, miracle of joy!

DARIUS.

I scarce can trust my eyes! How didst
thou 'scape?

DANIEL.

That bright and glorious Being, who
vouchsaf'd
Presence divine, when the three martyr'd
brothers
Essay'd the caldron's flame, supported
me!
E'en in the furious lions' dreadful den,
The prisoner of hope, even there I turn'd
To the strong hold, the bulwark of my
strength,
Ready to hear, and mighty to redeem!

DARIUS [*to Araspes.*]

Where is Pharnaces? Take the hoary
traitor!
Take, too, Soranus, and the chief abet-
tors
Of this dire edict: let not one escape.
The punishment their deep-laid hate de-
vis'd
For holy Daniel, on their heads shall
fall
With tenfold vengeance. To the lion's
den
I doom his vile accusers! All their
wives,
Their children, too, shall share one com-
mon fate!
Take care that none escape—Go, good
Araspes.

[*ARASPES goes out.*]

DANIEL.

Not so, Darius!
O spare the guiltless; spare the guilty,
too!
Where sin is not, to punish were un-
just;

And where sin is, O king, there fell
remorse
Supplies the place of punishment!

DARIUS.

No more!
My word is past! Not one request, save
this,
Shalt thou e'er make in vain. Approach,
my friends;
Araspes has already spread the tale,
And see what crowds advance!

PEOPLE.

Long live Darius!
Long live great Daniel, too, the people's
friend!

DARIUS.

Draw near, my subjects. See this holy
man!
Death had no pow'r to harm him. Yon
fell band
Of famish'd lions, soften'd at his sight,
Forgot their nature, and grew tame be-
fore him.
The mighty God protects his servants
thus!
The righteous thus he rescues from the
snare,
While Fraud's artificer himself shall fall
In the deep gulf his wily arts devise
To snare the innocent!

A COURTIER.

To the same den
Araspes bears Pharnaces and his
friends:
Fallen is their insolence! With prayers
and tears
And all the meanness of high-crested
pride,
When adverse fortune frowns, they beg
for life.
Araspes will not hear. "You heard not
me,"
He cries, "When I for Daniel's life im-
plor'd;
His God protected him! see now if
yours
Will listen to your cries!"

DARIUS.

Now hear,
People and nations, languages and
realms,
O'er whom I rule! Peace be within
your walls!
That I may banish from the minds of
men
The rash decree gone out; hear me
resolve
To counteract its force by one more
just.
In ev'ry kingdom of my wide-stretch'd
realm
From fair Chaldea to the extremest
bound
Of northern Media, be my edict sent,
And this my statute known. My her-
alds haste,
And spread my royal mandate through
the land,
That all my subjects bow the ready knee
To Daniel's GOD—for HE alone is LORD.
Let all adore, and tremble at HIS name,
Who sits in glory unapproachable
Above the heavens—above the heaven of
heavens!
His pow'r is everlasting; and HIS
throne,
Founded in equity and truth, shall last
Beyond the bounded reign of time and
space
Through wide eternity! With HIS right
arm
HE saves, and who opposes? HE de-
fends,
And who shall injure? In the perilous
den
HE rescu'd Daniel from the lions'
mouths;
His common deeds are wonders; all HIS
works
One ever-during chain of miracles!

[Enter Araspes.]

ARASPES.

All hail, O king! Darius, live for ever!
May all thy foes be as Pharnaces is!

DARIUS.

Araspes, speak!

ARASPES.

O, let me spare the tale!—
 'Tis full of horror! Dreadful was the
 sight!
 The hungry lions, greedy for their prey,
 Devour'd the wretched princes ere they
 reach'd
 The bottom of the den.

DARIUS.

Now, now confess
 'Twas some superior hand restrain'd
 their rage,
 And tam'd their furious appetites.

PEOPLE.

'Tis true.
 The God of Daniel is a mighty God!
 HE saves and HE destroys.

ARASPES.

O, friend! O, Daniel!
 No wav'ring doubts can ever more dis-
 turb
 My settled faith.

DANIEL.

To GOD be all the glory!

HANNAH MORE,
 (1745-1833.)



JUDAS MACCABAEUS

EXTRACTS



JUDAS MACCABAEUS

[EXTRACTS.]

ACT I.

The Citadel of Antiochus at Jerusalem.

SCENE I.—ANTIOCHUS; JASON.

ANTIOCHUS. O Antioch, my Antioch,
my city!
Queen of the East! my solace, my delight!
The dowry of my sister Cleopatra
When she was wed to Ptolemy, and
now
Won back and made more wonderful
by me!

I love thee, and I long to be once more
Among the players and the dancing
women
Within thy gates, and bathe in the
Orontes,
Thy river and mine. O Jason, my High-
Priest,

For I have made thee so, and thou art
mine,
Hast thou seen Antioch the Beautiful?
JASON. Never, my Lord.

ANTIOCHUS. Then hast thou never
seen
The wonder of the world. This city of
David

Compared with Antioch is but a village,
And its inhabitants compared with
Greeks
Are mannerless boors.

JASON. They are barbarians,
And mannerless.

ANTIOCHUS. They must be civilized.
They must be made to have more gods
than one;
And goddesses besides.

JASON. They shall have more.
ANTIOCHUS. They must have hippo-
dromes, and games, and baths,
Stage-plays and festivals, and most of
all
The Dionysia.

JASON. They shall have them all.

ANTIOCHUS. By Heracles! but I should
like to see
These Hebrews crowned with ivy, and
arrayed
In skins of fawns, with drums and
flutes and thyrsi,
Revel and riot through the solemn
streets
Of their old town. Ha, ha! It makes
me merry
Only to think of it!—Thou does not
laugh.

JASON. Yea, I laugh inwardly.

ANTIOCHUS. The new Greek leaven
Works slowly in this Israelitish dough!
Have I not sacked the Temple, and on
the altar
Set up the statue of Olympian Zeus
To Hellenize it?

JASON. Thou hast done all this.

ANTIOCHUS. As thou wast Joshua once
and now art Jason,
And from a Hebrew hast become a
Greek,
So shall this Hebrew nation be trans-
lated,
Their very natures and their names be
changed,
And all be Hellenized.

JASON. It shall be done.

ANTIOCHUS. Their manners and their
laws and way of living
Shall all be Greek. They shall unlearn
their language,
And learn the lovely speech of Antioch.
Where hast thou been to-day? Thou
comest late.

JASON. Playing at discus with the
other priests
In the Gymnasium.

ANTIOCHUS. Thou hast done well.
There's nothing better for you lazy
priests

Than discus-playing with the common people.

Now tell me, Jason, what these Hebrews call me

When they converse together at their games.

JASON. Antiochus Epiphanes, my Lord;

Antiochus the Illustrious.

ANTIOCHUS. O, not that; That is the public cry; I mean the name

They give me when they talk among themselves,

And think that no one listens; what is that?

JASON. Antiochus Epimanes, my Lord!

ANTIOCHUS. Antiochus the Mad!

Ay, that is it.

And who hath said it? Who hath set in motion

That sorry jest?

JASON. The Seven Sons insane Of a weird woman, like themselves insane.

ANTIOCHUS. I like their courage, but it shall not save them.

They shall be made to eat the flesh of swine,

Or they shall die. Where are they?

JASON. In the dungeons

Beneath this tower.

ANTIOCHUS. There let them stay and starve,

Till I am ready to make Greeks of them,

After my fashion.

JASON. They shall stay and starve.— My Lord, the Ambassadors of Samaria Await thy pleasure.

ANTIOCHUS. Why not my displeasure? Ambassadors are tedious. They are men

Who work for their own ends, and not for mine;

There is no furtherance in them. Let them go

To Apollonius, my governor

There in Samaria, and not trouble me. What do they want?

JASON. Only the royal sanction

To give a name unto a nameless temple Upon Mount Gerizim.

ANTIOCHUS. Then bid them enter. This pleases me, and furthers my designs.

The occasion is auspicious. Bid them enter.

ACT II.

The Dungeons in the Citadel.

SCENE I.—THE MOTHER of the SEVEN SONS alone, listening.

THE MOTHER. Be strong, my heart! Break not till they are dead,

All, all my Seven Sons; then burst asunder,

And let this tortured and tormented soul

Leap and rush out like water through the shards

Of earthen vessels broken at a well.

O my dear children, mine in life and death,

I know not how ye came into my womb;

I neither gave you breath, nor gave you life,

And neither was it I that formed the members

Of every one of you. But the Creator, Who made the world, and made the heavens above us,

Who formed the generations of mankind,

And found out the beginning of all things,

He gave you breath and life, and will again

Of his own mercy, as ye now regard Not your own selves, but his eternal law.

I do not murmur, nay, I thank thee. God,

That I and mine have not been deemed unworthy

To suffer for thy sake, and for thy law, And for the many sins of Israel.

Hark! I can hear within the sound of scourges!

I feel them more than ye do, O my sons!

But cannot come to you. I, who was wont

To wake at night at the least cry ye made,

To whom ye ran at every slightest hurt,—

I cannot take you now into my lap
And soothe your pain, but God will
take you all

Into his pitying arms, and comfort you,
And give you rest.

A VOICE (*within*). What wouldst
thou ask of us?

Ready are we to die, but we will never
Transgress the law and customs of our
fathers.

THE MOTHER. It is the voice of my
first-born. O brave
And noble boy! Thou hast the privi-
lege

Of dying first, as thou wast born the
first.

THE SAME VOICE (*within*). God look-
eth on us, and hath comfort in us;
As Moses in his song of old declared,
He in His servants shall be comforted.

THE MOTHER. I knew thou wouldst
not fail!—He speaks no more,
He is beyond all pain!

ANTIOCHUS (*within*). If thou eat not
Thou shalt be tortured throughout all
the members

Of thy whole body. Wilt thou eat then?

SECOND VOICE (*within*). No.

THE MOTHER. It is Adaiah's voice. I
tremble for him.

I know his nature, devious as the wind,
And swift to change, gentle and yield-
ing always.

Be steadfast, O my son!

THE SAME VOICE (*within*). Thou,
like a fury,

Takest us from this present life, but
God,

Who rules the world, shall raise us up
again

Into life everlasting.

THE MOTHER. God, I thank thee
That thou hast breathed into that timid
heart

Courage to die for thee. O my Adaiah,
Witness of God! if thou for whom I
feared

Canst thus encounter death, I need not
fear;

The others will not shrink.

THIRD VOICE (*within*). Behold these
hands

Held out to thee, O King Antiochus,
Not to implore thy mercy, but to show

That I despise them. He who gave
them to me

Will give them back again.

THE MOTHER. O Avilan,
It is thy voice. For the last time I
hear it;

For the last time on earth, but not the
last.

To death it bids defiance and to torture.
It sounds to me as from another world,
And makes the petty miseries of this
Seem unto me as naught, and less than
naught.

Farewell, my Avilan; nay, I should
say

Welcome, my Avilan; for I am dead
Before thee. I am waiting for the
others.

Why do they linger?

FOURTH VOICE (*within*). It is good,
O King,

Being put to death by men, to look for
hope

From God, to be raised up again by
him.

But thou—no resurrection shalt thou
have

To life hereafter.

THE MOTHER. Four! already four!
Three are still living; nay, they all are
living,

Half here, half there. Make haste,
Antiochus,

To reunite us; for the sword that
cleaves

These miserable bodies makes a door
Through which our souls, impatient of
release,

Rush to each other's arms.

FIFTH VOICE (*within*). Thou hast the
power;

Thou doest what thou wilt. Abide
awhile,

And thou shalt see the power of God,
and how

He will torment thee and thy seed.

THE MOTHER. O hasten;
Why dost thou pause? Thou who hast
slain already

So many Hebrew women, and hast hung
Their murdered infants round their
necks, slay me;

For I too am a woman, and these boys
Are mine. Make haste to slay us all,
And hang my lifeless babes about my
neck.

SIXTH VOICE (*within*). Think not,
Antiochus, that takest in hand
To strive against the God of Israel,
Thou shalt escape unpunished, for his
wrath
Shall overtake thee and thy bloody
house.

THE MOTHER. One more, my Sirion,
and then all is ended.
Having put all to bed, then in my turn
I will lie down and sleep as sound as
they.

My Sirion, my youngest, best beloved!
And those bright golden locks, that I
so oft
Have curled about these fingers, even
now
Are foul with blood and dust, like a
lamb's fleece,
Slain in the shambles.—Not a sound I
hear.

This silence is more terrible to me
Than any sound, than any cry of pain,
That might escape the lips of one who
dies.

Doth his heart fail him? Doth he fall
away
In the last hour from God? O Sirion,
Sirion,
Art thou afraid? I do not hear thy
voice.

Die as thy brothers died. Thou must
not live!

ACT III.

SCENE IV.—JUDAS MACCABAEUS; CAP-
TAINS and SOLDIERS.

JUDAS. The hour is come. Gather
the host together
For battle. Lo, with trumpets and with
songs
The army of Nicanor comes against us.
Go forth to meet them, praying in your
hearts,
And fighting with your hands.

CAPTAINS. Look forth and see!
The morning sun is shining on their
shields
Of gold and brass; the mountains glis-
ten with them,
And shine like lamps. And we who
are so few
And poorly armed, and ready to faint
with fasting,

How shall we fight against this multi-
tude?

JUDAS. The victory of a battle stand-
eth not
In multitudes, but in the strength that
cometh
From heaven above. The Lord forbid
that I
Should do this thing, and flee away
from them.

Nay, if our hour be come, then let us
die;

Let us not stain our honor.

CAPTAINS. 'T is the Sabbath.
Wilt thou fight on the Sabbath, Mac-
cabæus?

JUDAS. Ay; when I fight the battles
of the Lord,
I fight them on His day, as on all
others.

Have ye forgotten certain fugitives
That fled once to these hills, and hid
themselves

In caves? How their pursuers camped
against them
Upon the Seventh Day, and challenged
them?

And how they answered not, nor cast
a stone,
Nor stopped the places where they lay
concealed,

But meekly perished with their wives
and children,
Even to the number of a thousand
souls?

We who are fighting for our laws and
lives

Will not so perish.

CAPTAINS. Lead us to the battle!
JUDAS. And let our watchword be,
"The Help of God!"

Last night I dreamed a dream; and in
my vision

Beheld Onias, our High-Priest of old,
Who holding up his hands prayed for
the Jews.

This done, in the like manner there
appeared

An old man, and exceeding glorious,
With hoary hair, and of a wonderful
And excellent majesty. And Onias
said:

"This is a lover of the Jews, who
prayeth

Much for the people and the Holy
City,—

God's Prophet Jeremias." And the prophet
Held forth his right hand and gave unto me
A sword of gold; and giving it he said:
"Take thou this holy sword, a gift from God,
And with it thou shalt wound thine adversaries."

CAPTAINS. The Lord is with us!
JUDAS. Hark! I hear the trumpets
Sound from Beth-horon; from the battle-field
Of Joshua, where he smote the Amorites,
Smote the Five Kings of Eglon and of Jarmuth,
Of Hebron, Lachish, and Jerusalem,
As we today will smite Nicanor's hosts,
And leave a memory of great deeds behind us.

CAPTAINS and SOLDIERS. The Help of God!
JUDAS. *Be Elohim Yehovah!*
Lord, thou didst send thine Angel in the time
Of Ezekias, King of Israel,
And in the armies of Sennacherib
Didst slay a hundred fourscore and five thousand.
Wherefore, O Lord of heaven, now also send
Before us a good angel for a fear,
And through the might of thy right arm, let those
Be stricken with terror that have come this day
Against thy holy people to blaspheme!

ACT IV.

SCENE III.—JASON, alone.

JASON. Through the Gate Beautiful
I see them come
With branches and green boughs and leaves of palm,
And pass into the inner courts. Alas!
I should be with them, should be one of them,
But in an evil hour, an hour of weakness,
That cometh unto all, I fell away
From the old faith, and did not clutch the new,

Only an outward semblance of belief;
For the new faith I cannot make mine own,
Not being born to it. It hath no root
Within me. I am neither Jew nor Greek,
But stand between them both, a renegade

To each in turn; having no longer faith
In gods or men. Then what mysterious charm,

What fascination is it chains my feet,
And keeps me gazing like a curious child

Into the holy places, where the priests
Have raised their altar?—Striking stones together,

They take fire out of them, and light the lamps

In the great candlestick. They spread the veils,

And set the loaves of shrewbread on the table.

The incense burns; the well-remembered odor

Comes wafted unto me, and takes me back

To other days. I see myself among them

As I was then; and the old superstition
Creeps over me again!—A childish fancy!—

And hark! they sing with citherns and with cymbals

And all the people fall upon their faces,
Praying and worshipping!—I will away

Into the East to meet Antiochus
Upon his homeward journey crowned with triumph.

Alas! today I would give everything
To see a friend's face or to hear a voice
That had the slightest tone of comfort
in it!

ACT V.

SCENE II.—ANTIOCHUS; PHILIP, a messenger.

PHILIP (*reading*). "We pray thee hasten thy return. The realm
Is falling from thee. Since thou hast gone from us

The victories of Judas Maccabæus

Form all our annals. First he over-
threw
Thy forces at Beth-horon and passed
on,
And took Jerusalem, the Holy City.
And then Emmaus fell; and then
Bethsura;
Ephron and all the towns of Galaad,
And Maccabæus marched to Carnion.”
ANTIOCHUS. Enough, enough! Go
call my chariot-man;
We will drive forward, forward without
ceasing,
Until we come to Antioch. My cap-
tains,
My Lysias, Gorgias, Seron, and Nica-
nor,
Are babes in battle, and this dreadful
Jew
Will rob me of my kingdom and my
crown.
My elephants shall trample him to dust;
I will wipe out his nation, and will
make
Jerusalem a common burying-place,
And every home within its walls a
‘tomb!

*(Throws up his hands, and sinks into
the arms of attendants, who lay him
upon a bank.)*

PHILIP. Antiochus! Antiochus!
Alas!
The King is ill! What is it, O my
Lord?

ANTIOCHUS. Nothing. A sudden and
sharp spasm of pain,
As if the lightning struck me, or the
knife

Of an assassin smote me to the heart.
’T is passed, even as it came. Let us
set forward.

PHILIP. See that the chariots be in
readiness;
We will depart forthwith.

ANTIOCHUS. A moment more.
I cannot stand. I am become at once
Weak as an infant. Ye will have to
lead me.

Jove or Jehovah, or whatever name
Thou wouldst be named,—it is alike to
me,—

If I knew how to pray, I would entreat
To live a little longer.

PHILIP. O my Lord,
Thou shalt not die; we will not let thee
die!

ANTIOCHUS. How canst thou help
it, Philip? O the pain!
Stab after stab. Thou hast no shield
against

This unseen weapon. God of Israel,
Since all the other gods abandon me,
Help me. I will release the Holy City,
Garnish with goodly gifts the Holy
Temple.

Thy people, whom I judged to be un-
worthy

To be so much as buried, shall be equal
Unto the citizens of Antioch.

I will become a Jew, and will declare
Through all the world that is inhabited
The power of God!

PHILIP. He faints. It is like death.
Bring here the royal litter. We will
bear him

Into the camp, while yet he lives
ANTIOCHUS. O Philip,
Into what tribulation am I come!

Alas! I now remember all the evil
That I have done the Jews; and for
this cause

These troubles are upon me, and be-
hold

I perish through great grief in a strange
land.

PHILIP. Antiochus! my King!
ANTIOCHUS. Nay, King no longer.
Take thou my royal robes, my signet-
ring,

My crown and sceptre, and deliver
them

Unto my son, Antiochus Eupator;
And unto the good Jews, my citizens,
In all my towns, say that their dying
monarch

Wisheth them joy, prosperity, and
health.

I who puffed up with pride and arro-
gance,

Thought all the kingdoms of the earth
mine own,

If I would but outstretch my hand and
take them,

Meet face to face a greater potentate,
King Death—Epiphanes—the illus-
trious! *(Dies.)*

HENRY WADSWORTH LONGFELLOW
(1807-1882).

THE FALL OF JERUSALEM
A DRAMATIC POEM
[ABRIDGED]



THE FALL OF JERUSALEM

A Dramatic Poem.
[Abridged.]

CHARACTERS.

Romans.

TITUS.

CAIUS PLACIDUS.

TIBERIUS ALEXANDER.

TERENTIUS RUFUS.

DIAGORAS, *a Stoic philosopher.*

JOSEPH (*the Historian*) *with the Roman army.*

Soldiers, etc.

Jews in the City.

SIMON, *the Assassin.*

JOHN, *the Tyrant.*

ELEAZAR, *the Zealot.*

AMARIAH, *son of John.*

The HIGH-PRIEST.

BEN CATHLA, *leader of the Edomites.*

AARON, *a Levite.*

ABIRAM, *a false Prophet.*

Many Jews.

JAVAN, *a Christian, by birth a Jew.*

MIRIAM and SALONE, *daughters of Simon.*

THE HOUSE OF SIMON— BREAK OF DAY.

SIMON.

The air is still and cool. It comes not yet:

I thought that I had felt it in my sleep
Weighing upon my choked and labouring
breast,

That did rejoice beneath the stern oppression;

I thought I saw its lurid gloom o'er-spreading

The starless waning night. But yet it comes not,

The broad and sultry thundercloud, wherein

The God of Israel evermore pavilions
The chariot of his vengeance. I look out,

And still, as I have seen, morn after morn,

The hills of Judah flash upon my sight

The accurséd radiance of the Gentile arms.

But oh! ye sky-descending ministers,
That on invisible and noiseless wing

Stoop to your earthly purposes, as swift

As rushing fire, and terrible as the wind

That sweeps the tentless desert—Ye that move

Shrouded in secrecy as in a robe,

And gloom of deepest midnight the vaunt-courier

Of your dread presence! Will ye not reveal?

Will ye not one compassionate glimpse vouchsafe,

By what dark instruments 'tis now your charge

To save the Holy City?—Lord of Israel!

Thee too I ask, with bold yet holy awe,
Which now of thy obsequious elements

Choolest thou for thy champion and thy combatant?

For well they know, the wide and deluging Waters,

The ravenous Fire, and the plague-breathing Air,

Yea, and the yawning and wide-chasmed Earth,

They know thy bidding, by fix'd habit bound

To the usage of obedience. Or the
rather,
Look we in weary yet undaunted hope
For Him that is to come, the Mighty
Arm,
The Wearer of the purple robe of
vengeance,
The Crowned with dominion? Let him
haste;
The wine-press waits the trampling of
his wrath,
And Judah yearns t'unfurl the Lion
banner
Before the terrible radiance of his
coming.

SIMON, JOHN, ELEAZAR, *the* HIGH-
PRIEST, AMARIAH, ETC., ETC.

JOHN.

How, Simon! have we broken on thy
privacy!
Thou wert discoursing with the spirits
of air.
Now, Eleazar, were not holy Simon
The just, the merciful, the righteous
Simon,
A vessel meet for the prophetic trance?
Methinks 'tis on him now!

SIMON.

Ha! John of Galilee,
Still in the taunting vein? Reserv'st
thou not
The bitter overflowings of thy lips
For yon fierce Gentiles?—But I will en-
dure.

JOHN.

And then perchance 'twill please the
saintly Simon,
When he hath mumbled o'er his two-
hour prayers,
That we do ope our gates, and sally
forth
To combat the uncircumcised—

SIMON.

Thy scoffs
Fall on me as the thin and scattering
rain
Upon our Temple. If thou art here to
urge

That, with confederate valiant resolu-
tion,
We burst upon the enemies of Jerusa-
lem;
The thunder followeth not the light-
ning's flash
More swiftly than my warlike execu-
tion
Shall follow the fierce trumpet of thy
wrath!

JOHN.

But hast thou ponder'd well, if still
there be not
Some holy fast, new moon, or rigid
sabbath,
Which may excuse a tame and cow-
ard peace
For one day longer to your men of
Edom?

HIGH-PRIEST.

Oh! 'tis unwise, ye sworded delegates
Of Him who watcheth o'er Jerusalem,
Thus day by day in angry quarrel
meeting
To glare upon each other, and to waste
In civil strife the blood that might pre-
serve us.
The Roman conquers, but by Jewish
arms.
The torrent, that in one broad chan-
nel rolling
Bears down the labour'd obstacles of
man,
The o'erstriding bridge, the fix'd and
ponderous dam,
Being sever'd, in its lazy separate
course
Suffers control, and stagnates to its
end.
And so ye fall, because ye do disdain
To stand together—like the pines of
Lebanon,
That when in one vast wood they
crown the hill,
From their proud heads shake off the
uninjuring tempest;
But when their single trunks stand
bare and naked
Before the rushing whirlwind, one by
one
It hurls the uprooted trunks into the
vale.

ELEAZAR (*apart.*)

Curse on his words of peace! fall John,
fall Simon,
There falls an enemy of Eleazar.

SIMON.

Now, John of Galilee, the High-Priest
speaks wisely.

JOHN.

Why, ay, it is the privilege of their
office,
The solemn grave distinction of their
ephod.
Even such discourse as this, so calm,
so sage,
Did old Mathias hold; and therefore
Simon,
Unwilling that the vantage of his wis-
dom
Should rob our valour of its boasted
fame,
Did slay him with his sons upon our
wall!

SIMON.

Peace, son of Belial! or I'll scourge thee
back
To the harlot chambers of thy loose
adulteries.
I slew my foe, and where's the armed
man
That will behold his enemy at his feet,
And spare to set his foot upon his
neck?
The sword was given, and shall the
sword not slay?—

HIGH-PRIEST.

Break off! break off! I hear the Gen-
tile horn
Winding along the wide entrenched
line.
Hear ye it not? hill answers hill, the
valleys
In their deep channels lengthen out the
sound.
It rushes down Jehoshaphat, the depths
Of Hinnom answer. Hark! again they
blow,

Chiding you, men of Judah, and insult-
ing
Your bare and vacant walls, that now
oppose not
Their firm array of javelin-hurling
men,
Slings, and pourers of the liquid fire.

AMARIAH.

Blow! Blow! and rend the heavens,
thou deep-voiced horn!
I hear thee, and rejoice at thee. Thou
summoner
To the storm of battle, thou that dost
invite
With stern and welcome importunity
The warrior soul to that high festival,
Where Valour with his armed hand ad-
ministers
The cup of death!

JOHN.

Again, again it sounds;
It doth demand a parley with our
chiefs.

AMARIAH.

Ay, father! and let Israel's chiefs re-
ply
In the brave language of their javelin
showers,
And shouts of furious onset.

JOHN.

Hold, hot boy!
That know'st not the deep luxury of
scorn.
We'll meet them, Simon, but to scoff
at them;
We'll dally with their hopes of base
surrender,
Then mock them, till their haughty
captain writhe
Beneath the keen and biting contumely.
Now, Eleazar, lead the way; brave
Simon,
I follow thee—Come. men of Israel,
come.

THE WALLS OF THE CITY.

Below—TITUS, *the Roman Army, JOSEPH of Jotapata, &c.*

Above—SIMON, JOHN, ELEAZAR, AMARIAH, *Jews.*

TITUS.

Men of Jerusalem! whose hardy zeal
And valiant patience in a cause less
desperate
Might force the foe to reverence and
admire;
To you thus speaks again the Queen of
Earth,
All-conquering Rome!—whose king-
dom is, where'er
The sunshine beams on living men; be-
neath
The shadow of whose throne the world
reposes,
And glories in being subjected to her,
Even as 'tis subject to the immortal
gods—
To you, whose mad and mutinous re-
volt
Hath harrow'd all your rich and pleas-
ant land
With fiery rapine; sunk your lofty
cities
To desolate heaps of monumental
ashes;
Yet with that patience, which becomes
the mighty,
The endurance of the lion, that dis-
dains
The foe whose conquest bears no glory
with it,
Rome doth command you to lay down
your arms,
And bow the high front of your proud
rebellion
Even to the common level of obedi-
ence,
That holds the rest of humankind. So
doing,
Ye cancel all the dark and guilty past:
Silent Oblivion waits to wipe away
The record of your madness and your
crimes;
And in the stead of bloody Vengeance
claiming
Her penal due of torture, chains, and
death,
Comes reconciling Mercy.

JOHN.

Mercy! Roman!

With what a humble and a modest
truth
Thou dost commend thy unpresuming
virtues.
Ye want not testimonies to your mild-
ness—
There, on yon lofty crosses, which
surround us,
Each with a Jewish corpse sublimely
rotting
On its most honourable eminence;
There's none in all that long and ghast-
ly avenue
Whose wind-bleach'd bones depose not
of thy mercy.
We know our brethren, and we thank
thee too;
A courteous welcome hast thou given
them, Roman,
Who have abandon'd us in the hour of
peril.
They fled to 'scape their ruthless coun-
trymen;
And, in good truth, their City of Ref-
uge seems
To have found them fair and gentle
entertainment.

SIMON.

Peace, John of Galilee! and I will an-
swer
This purple-mantled Captain of the
Gentiles;
But in far other tone than he is wont
To hear about his silken couch of
feasting
'Amid his pamper'd parasites.—I speak
to thee,
Titus, as warrior should accost a war-
rior.
The world, thou boastest, is Rome's
slave; the sun
Rises and sets upon no realm but
yours;
Ye plant your giant foot in either
ocean,
And vaunt that all which ye o'erstride
is Rome's.
But think ye, that because the com-
mon earth
Surfeits your pride with homage, that
our land,

Our separate, peculiar, sacred land,
 Portion'd and seal'd unto us by the
 God
 Who made the round world and the
 crystal heavens;
 A wondrous land, where Nature's
 common course
 Is strange and out of use, so oft the
 Lord
 Invades it with miraculous interven-
 tion;
 Think ye this land shall be an Heathen
 heritage,
 An high place for your Moloch?
 Haughty Gentile!
 Even now ye walk on ruin and on
 prodigy.
 The air ye breathe is heavy and o'er-
 charged
 With your dark gathering doom; and
 if our earth
 Do yet in its disdain endure the foot-
 ing
 Of your arm'd regions, 'tis because it
 labours
 With silent throes of expectation, wait-
 ing
 The signal of your scattering. Lo!
 the mountains
 Bend o'er you with their huge and
 lowering shadows,
 Ready to rush and overwhelm: the
 winds
 Do listen panting for the tardy pres-
 ence
 Of Him that shall avenge. And there
 is scorn,
 Yea, there is laughter in our fathers'
 tombs,
 To think that Heathen conqueror doth
 aspire
 To lord it over God's Jerusalem!
 Yea, in Hell's deep and desolate abode,
 Where dwell the perish'd kings, the
 chief of earth;
 They whose idolatrous warfare erst
 assail'd
 The Holy City, and the chosen people;
 They wait for thee, the associate of
 their hopes
 And fatal fall, to join their ruin'd con-
 clave.
 He whom the Red Sea 'whelm'd with
 all his host,

Pharaoh, the Egyptian; and the kings
 of Canaan;
 The Philistine, the Dagon worshipper;
 Moab, and Edom, and fierce Amalek;
 And he of Babylon, whose multitudes,
 Even on the hills where gleam your
 myriad spears,
 In one brief night the invisible Angel
 swept
 With the dark, noiseless shadow of his
 wing,
 And morn beheld the fierce and riot-
 ous camp
 One cold, and mute, and tombless ceme-
 tery,
 Sennacherib: all, all are risen, are
 moved;
 Yea, they take up the taunting song of
 welcome
 To him who, like themselves, hath
 madly warr'd
 'Gainst Zion's walls, and miserably
 fallen
 Before the avenging God of Israel!

THE JEWS.

Oh, holy Simon! Oh, prophetic Simon
 Lead thou, lead thou against the Gen-
 tile host,
 And we will ask no angel breath to
 blast them.
 The valour of her children soon shall
 scatter
 The spoiler from the rescued walls of
 Salem,
 Even till the wolves of Palestine are
 glutted.
 With Roman carnage.

AMARIAH.

Blow, ye sacred priests,
 Your trumpets, as when Jericho of old
 Cast down its prostrate walls at
 Joshua's feet!

PLACIDUS.

Let the Jew speak, the captive of
 Jotapata;
 Haply they'll reverence one, and him
 the bravest
 Of their own kindred.

TERENTIUS.

See! he speaks to them;
And they do listen, though their men-
acing brows
Lower with a darker and more furious
hate.

JOSEPH.

Yet, yet a little while—ye see me rise,
Oh, men of Israel, brethren, country-
men!
Even from the earth ye see me rise,
where lone,
And sorrowful, and fasting, I have
sate
These three long days; sad sackcloth
on the limbs
Which once were wont to wear a sol-
dier's raiment,
And ashes on the head, which ye of
old
Did honour, when its helméd glories
shone
Before you in the paths of battle. Hear
me,
Ye that, as I, adore the Law, the
Prophets;
And at the ineffable thrice-holiest name
Bow down your awe-struck foreheads
to the ground.
I am not here to tell you, men of Israel,
That it is madness to contend with
Rome;
That it were wisdom to submit and
follow
The common fortunes of the universe;
For ye would answer, that 'tis glori-
ous madness
To stand alone amid the enslaved
world
Freedom's last desperate champions: ye
would answer,
That the slave's wisdom to the free-
born man
Is basest folly. Oh, my countrymen!
Before no earthly king do I command
you
To fall subservient, not all-conquering
Caesar,
But in a mightier name I summon you,
The King of Kings! He, he is mani-
fest
In the dark visitation that is on you.

'Tis He, whose loosed and raging
ministers,
Wild War, gaunt Famine, leprous Pes-
tilence,
But execute his delegated wrath.
Yea, by the fulness of your crimes, 'tis
He.

Alas! shall I weep o'er thee, or go
down
And grovel in the dust, and hide my-
self
From mine own shame? Oh, thou de-
filed Jerusalem!
That drinkest thine own blood as from
a fountain;
That hast piled up the fabric of thy
guilt
To such portentous height, that earth
is darken'd
With its huge shadow—that dost boast
the monuments
Of murder'd prophets, and dost make
the robes
Of God's High-priest a title and a
claim
To bloodiest slaughter—thou that every
day
Dost trample down the thunder-given
Law,
Even with the pride and joy of him
that treads
The purple vintage—And oh thou, our
Temple!
That wert of old the Beauty of Holi-
ness,
The chosen, unapproachable abode
Of Him which dwelt between the
cherubim,
Thou art a charnel-house, and sepul-
chre
Of slaughter'd men, a common butchery
Of civil strife;—and hence proclaim I,
brethren,
It is the Lord who doth avenge his
own:
The Lord, who gives you over to the
wicked,
That ye may perish by their wicked-
ness.
Oh! ye that do disdain to be Rome's
slaves,
And yet are sold unto a baser bondage,
One that, like iron, eats into your
souls.

Robbers, and Zealots, and wild Edomites!
 Yea, these are they that sit in Moses' seat,
 Wield Joshua's sword, and fill the throne of David;
 Yea, these are they—

AMARIAH.

I'll hear no more—the foe
 Claims from our lips the privilege of reply.
 Here is our answer to the renegade,
 A javelin to his pale and coward heart!

JOSEPH.

I am struck, but not to death! that yet
 is wanting
 To Israel's guilt.

JEWS.

Oh, noble Amariah!
 Well hast thou spoken! well hast thou replied!
 Lead — lead — we'll follow noble Amariah!

TITUS.

Now, Mercy, to the winds! I cast thee off—
 My soul's forbidden luxury, I abjure thee!
 Thou much-abused attribute of gods
 And godlike men. 'Twas nature's final struggle;
 And now, whate'er thou art, thou unseen prompter!
 That in the secret chambers of my soul
 Darkly abidest, and hast still rebuked
 The soft compunctious weakness of mine heart,
 I here surrender thee myself. Now wield me
 Thine instrument of havoc and of horror,
 Thine to the extremest limits of revenge;
 Till not a single stone of yon proud city
 Remain; and even the vestiges of ruin
 Be utterly blotted from the face of earth!

STREETS OF JERUSALEM NEAR
 THE INNER WALL.

MIRIAM, SALONE.

MIRIAM.

Sweet sister, whither in such haste?

SALONE.

And know'st thou not
 My customary seat, where I look down
 And see the glorious battle deepen
 round me?
 Oh! it is spirit-stirring to behold
 The crimson garments waving in the dust,
 The eagles glancing in the clouded sunshine.

MIRIAM.

Salone! in this dark and solemn hour,
 Were it not wiser that the weak and helpless,
 Bearing their portion in the common danger,
 Should join their feeble efforts to defend—
 Should be upon their knees in fervent prayer
 Unto the Lord of Battles?

SALONE.

Yes; I know
 That Zion's daughters are set forth to lead
 Their suppliant procession to the gates
 Of the Holy Temple. But Salone goes
 Where she may see the God whom they adore
 In the stern deeds of valiant men, that war
 To save that Temple from the dust.

Behold!

I mount my throne, and here I sit the queen
 Of the majestic tumult that beneath me
 Is maddening into conflict. Lo! I bind
 My dark locks, that they spread not
 o'er my sight.

Now flash the bright sun from your
gleaming arms,
Shake it in broad sheets from your
banner folds,
Mine eyes will still endure the blaze,
and pierce
The thickest!

MIRIAM.

And thou hast no tears to blind thee?

SALONE.

Behold! behold! from Olivet they pour,
Thousands on thousands, in their martial
order.

Kedron's dark valley, like Gennesareth,
When over it the cold moon shines
through storms,

Topping its dark waves with uncertain
light,

Is tossing with wild plumes and gleaming
spears.

Solemnly the stern lictors move, and
brandish

Their rod-bound axes; and the eagles
seem,

With wings dispreed, to watch their
time for swooping!

The towers are moving on; and lo!
the engines,

As though instinct with life, come
heavily labouring

Upon their ponderous wheels; they nod
destruction

Against our walls. Lo! lo, our gates
fly open:

There Eleazar—there the mighty John—
Ben Cathla there, and Edom's crested
sons.

Oh! what a blaze of glory gathers
round them!

How proudly move they in invincible
strength!

MIRIAM.

And thou canst speak thus with a
steadfast voice,

When in one hour may death have laid
in the dust

Those breathing, moving, valiant mul-
titudes?

SALONE.

And thou! oh thou, that movest to the
battle

Even like the mountain stag to the
running river,

Pause, pause, that I may gaze my fill!—

MIRIAM.

Our father!

Salone! is't our father that thou seest?

SALONE.

Lo! lo! the war hath broken off to ad-
mire him!

The glory of his presence awes the
conflict!

The son of Caesar on his arméd steed
Rises, impatient of the pluméd helms

That from his sight conceal young
Amariah.

MIRIAM.

Alas! what means she? Hear me yet
a word!

I will return or e'er the wounded men
Require our soft and healing hands to
soothe them.

Thou'lt not forget, Salone—if thou
seest

Our father in the fearful hour of peril,
Lift up thy hands and pray.

SALONE.

It is like gazing on the morning sun,
When he comes scattering from his
burning orb

The vaporish clouds!

MIRIAM.

She hears, she heeds me not.
And here's a sight and sound to me
more welcome

Than the wild fray of men who slay
and die—

Our maidens on their way to the Holy
Temple.

I'll mingle with them, and I'll pray
with them;

But through a name, by them unknown
or scorn'd,

My prayers shall mount to heaven.
Behold them here!

Behold them, how unlike to what they were!

Oh! virgin daughters of Jerusalem!
Ye were a garden once of Hermon's lilies,
That bashfully upon their tremulous stems

Bow to the wooing breath of the sweet spring.

Graceful ye were! there needed not the tone

Of tabret, harp, or lute, to modulate
Your soft harmonious footsteps; your light tread

Fell like a natural music. Ah! how deeply

Hath the cold blight of misery prey'd upon you.

How heavily ye drag your weary footsteps,

Each like a mother mourning her one child.

Ah me! I feel it almost as a sin,
To be so much less sad, less miserable.

CHORUS.

King of Kings! and Lord of Lords!
Thus we move, our sad steps timing
To our cymbals' feeblest chiming,
Where thy House its rest accords.
Chased and wounded birds are we,
Through the dark air fled to thee;
To the shadow of thy wings,
Lord of Lords! and King of Kings!

Behold, oh Lord! the Heathen tread
The branches of thy fruitful vine,
That its luxurious tendrils spread
O'er all the hills of Palestine.
And now the wild boar comes to waste
Even us, the greenest boughs and last,
That, drinking of thy choicest dew,
On Zion's hill in beauty grew.

No! by the marvels of thine hand,
Thou still wilt save thy chosen land!
By all thine ancient mercies shown,
By all our fathers' foes o'erthrown;
By the Egyptian's car-borne host,
Scatter'd on the Red Sea coast;
By that wide and bloodless slaughter
Underneath the drowning water.

Like us in utter helplessness,
In their last and worst distress—
On the sand and sea-weed lying,
Israel pour'd her doleful sighing;
While before the deep sea flow'd,
And behind fierce Egypt rode—
To their fathers' God they pray'd,
To the Lord of Hosts for aid.

On the margin of the flood
With lifted rod the Prophet stood;
And the summon'd east wind blew,
And aside it sternly threw
The gather'd waves, that took their stand,

Like crystal rocks, one either hand,
Or walls of sea-green marble piled
Round some irregular city wild.

Then the light of morning lay
On the wonder-paved way,
Where the treasures of the deep
In their caves of coral sleep.
The profound abysses, where
Was never sound from upper air,
Rang with Israel's chanted words,
King of Kings! and Lord of Lords!

Then with bow and banner glancing,
On exulting Egypt came,
With her chosen horsemen prancing,
And her cars on wheels of flame,
In a rich and boastful ring
All around her furious king.

But the Lord from out his cloud,
The Lord look'd down upon the proud;
And the host drave heavily
Down the deep bosom of the sea.

With a quick and sudden swell
Prone the liquid ramparts fell;
Over horse, and over car,
Over every man of war,
Over Pharaoh's crown of gold,
The loud thundering billows roll'd.
As the level waters spread
Down they sank, they sank like lead,
Down sank without a cry or groan.
And the morning sun, that shone
On myriads of bright-armed men,
Its meridian radiance then
Cast on a wide sea, heaving as of yore,
Against a silent, solitary shore.

Then did Israel's maidens sing,
 Then did Israel's timbrels ring,
 To Him, the King of Kings! that in the
 sea,
 The Lord of Lords! had triumph'd glo-
 riously.

And our timbrels' flashing chords,
 King of Kings! and Lord of Lords!
 Shall they not attuned be
 Once again to victory?
 Lo! a glorious triumph now!
 Lo! against thy people come
 A mightier Pharaoh! wilt not thou
 Craze the chariot wheels of Rome?
 Will not like the Red Sea wave,
 Thy stern anger overthrow?
 And from worse than bondage save,
 From sadder than Egyptian woe,
 Those whose silver cymbals glance,
 Those who lead the suppliant dance,
 Thy race, the only race that sings
 Lord of Lords! and King of Kings!

STREETS OF JERUSALEM—
 EVENING.

MIRIAM.

Ah me! ungentle Eve, how long thou
 lingerest!
 Oh! when it was a grief to me to lose
 Yon azure mountains, and the lovely
 vales
 That from our city walls seem wan-
 dering on
 Under the cedar-tufted precipices;
 With what an envious and a hurrying
 swiftness
 Didst thou descend, and pour thy
 mantling dews
 And dew-like silence o'er the face of
 things;
 Shrouding each spot I loved the most
 with suddenest
 And deepest darkness; making mute the
 groves
 Where the birds nestled under the stil!
 leaves!
 But now how slowly, heavily thou fall-
 est!
 Now when thou mightest hush the an-
 gry din
 Of battle, and conceal the murtherous
 foes

From mutual slaughter, and pour oil
 and wine
 Into the aching hurts of wounded men!
 But is it therefore only that I chide
 thee
 With querulous impatience? will the
 night
 Once more, the secret, counsel-keeping
 night,
 Veil the dark path which leads to Si-
 loe's fountain?
 Which leads—why should I blush to
 add—to Javan?
 Oh thou, my teacher! I forgot thee
 not
 This morning in the Temple—I forgot
 not
 The name thou taught'st me to adore,
 nor thee—
 But what have I to do with thoughts
 like these,
 While all around the stunning battlè
 roars
 Like a gorged lion o'er his mangled
 prey?
 Alas! alas! but the human appetite
 For shedding blood,—that is insatiate!
 —Time was that if I heard a sound of
 arms,
 My heart would shudder, and my limbs
 would fail.
 When, to have seen a dying man had
 been
 A dark event, that with its fearful
 memory
 Had haunted many a sad and sleepless
 night.
 But now—now—

SALONE, MIRIAM.

MIRIAM.

Sister! my Salone! Sister!
 Why art thou flying with that frantic
 mien,
 Thy veil cast back and streaming with
 thine hair?
 Oh, harbinger of misery! I read
 A sad disastrous story in thy face;
 'Tis o'er, and God hath given the city
 of David
 Unto the stranger.

SALONE.

Oh! not yet; our wall,
Our last, our strongest wall, is still un-
shaken,
Though the fierce engines with their
brazen heads
Strike at it sternly and incessantly.

MIRIAM.

Then God preserve the lost! and oh,
our father!

SALONE.

All is not lost! for Amariah stands
Amid the rushing sheets of molten fire,
Even like an Angel in the flaming cen-
tre
Of the sun's noontide orb—
Hark, hark!—who comes?

SIMON.

Back—back—I say, by—

MIRIAM.

'Tis my father's voice!
It sounds in wrath, perhaps in blas-
phemy;
Yet 'tis my living father's voice—He's
here.

SIMON, MIRIAM, SALONE.

SIMON.

Now may your native towers rush o'er
your heads
With horrible downfall, may the treach-
erous stones
Start underneath your footing, cast you
down,
For the iron wheels of vengeance to
rush o'er you—
Flight! flight! still flight!—Oh, infidel
renegades!

The above, JOHN, AMARIAH, HIGH-
PRIEST, &c.

SIMON.

Now, by the living God of Israel,
John!

Your silken slaves, your golden-san-
dal'd men,—

Your men! I should have said, your
girls of Galilee!—

They will not soil their dainty hands
with blood.

Their myrrh-dew'd locks are all too
smoothly curl'd

To let the riotous and dishevelling airs
Of battle violate their crisp'd neatness.

Oh! their nice mincing steps are all un-
fit

To tread the red and slippery paths of
war;

Yet they can trip it lightly when they
turn

To fly—

JOHN.

Thou lying and injurious Pharisee!
For every man of thine that in the
trenches

Hardly hath consented to lay down his
life,

Twice ten of mine have leap'd from
off the walls,

Grappling a Gentile by the shivering
helm,

And proudly died upon his dying foe.
But tell thou me, thou only faithful
Simon!

Where are the men of Edom, whom we
saw

Stretching their amicable hands in par-
ley,

And quietly mingling with the un harm-
ing foe?

SIMON.

Where are they? where the traitors
meet, where all

The foes of Simon and Jerusalem,
In th' everlasting fire! I slew them,

John,—

Thou saw'st my red hand glorious with
their blood.

JOHN.

False traitors! in their very treachery
false!

They would betray without their lord—
In truth,

Treason, like empire, brooks not
rivalry.

SIMON.

Now, by the bones of Abraham our
father,
I do accuse thee here, false John of
Galilee!
Or, if the title please thee, John the
Tyrant!
Here, in our arm'd, embattled San-
hedrim,
Thou art our fall's prime cause, and
fatal origin!
From thee, as from a foul and poison-
ous fount,
Pour the black waters of calamity
O'er Judah's land! God hates thee,
man of Belial!
And the destroying bolts that fall on
thee
From the insulted heavens, blast all
around thee
With spacious and unsparing desola-
tion.
Hear me, ye men of Israel! do ye won-
der
That all your baffled valour hath re-
coil'd
From the fierce Gentile onset? that
your walls
Are prostrate, and your last hath
scarce repell'd
But now the flush'd invader? 'Tis from
this—
That the Holy City will not be de-
fended
By womanish men, and loose adulterers.
Hear me, I say, this son of Gischala,
This lustful tyrant, hath he not defiled
Your daughters, in the open face of
day
Done deeds of shame, which midnight
hath no darkness
So deep as to conceal? It is his pride
T' offend high heaven with crimes be-
fore unknown—
Hath he not mock'd the austere and
solemn fasts,
And sabbaths of our Law, by revellings
And most heaven-tainting wantonness?
Yea, more,
Hath he not made God's festivals a
false
And fraudulent pretext for his deeds of
guilt?

Yea, on the day of the Unleaven'd
Bread,
Even in the garb and with the speech
of worship,
Went he not up into the very Temple?
And there before the Veil, even in the
presence
Of th' Holy of Holies, did he not
break forth
With arm'd and infuriate violence?
Then did the pavement, which was
never red
But with the guiltless blood of sacrifice,
Reek with the indelible and thrice-foul-
est stain
Of human carnage. Yea, with impious
steel
He slew the brethren that were kneel-
ing with him
At the same altar, uttering the same
prayers.
(Speak, Eleazar, was't not so?—thou
dar'st not
Affirm, nor canst deny thine own be-
trayal.)
And since that curséd hour of guilty
triumph
There hath he held the palace of his
lusts,
Turning God's Temple to a grove of
Belial:
Even till men wonder that the pillars
start not
From their fix'd sockets; that the of-
fended roof
Fall not at once, and crush in his own
shame
The blasphemous invader. Yea, not yet,
I have not fathom'd yet his depth of
sin.
His common banquet is the Bread of
Offering,
The vessels of the altar are the eups
From which he drains his riotous
drunkenness.
The incense, that was wont to rise to
heaven
Pure as an infant's breath, now foully
stagnates
Within the pestilent haunts of his las-
civiousness.
Can these things be, and yet our
favour'd arms
Be clad with victory? Can the Lord
of Israel

For us, the scanty remnant of his wor-
shippers,
Neglect to vindicate his tainted shrine,
His sanctuary profaned, his outraged
Laws?

JOHN.

Methinks, if Simon had but fought to-
day
As valiantly as Simon speaks, the foe
Had never seen to-morrow's onset—

SIMON.

Brethren,

Yet I demand your audience—

JEWS.

Hear him! hear

The righteous Simon!

SIMON.

Men of Israel!

Why stand ye thus in wonder? where
the root

Is hollow, can the tree be sound?
Man's deeds

Are as man's doctrines; and who hopes
for ought

But wantonness and foul iniquity
From that blaspheming and heretical
sect,

The serpent spawn of Sadoc, that cor-
rupt

The Law of Moses and disdain the
the Prophets?

That grossly do defraud the eternal
soul

Of its immortal heritage, and doom it
To rot for ever with its kindred clay
In the grave's deep unbroken prison-
house?

Yea, they dispeople with their infidel
creed

Heaven of its holy Angels; laugh to
scorn

That secret band of ministering Spirits;
That therefore, in their indignation,
stand

Aloof, and gaze upon our gathering ruin
With a contemptuous and pitiless scorn.
They that were wont to range around
our towers

Their sunlight-wing'd battalia, and to
war

Upon our part with adamantine arms.

JOHN.

Oh! impotent and miserable arguer!
Will he that values not the stake as
boldly

Confront the peril as the man that feels
His all upon the hazard? Men of Gal-
ilee,

The cup of life hath sparkled to our
lips,

And we have drain'd its tide of love
and joy,

Till our veins almost burst with o'er-
wrought rapture.

And well we know that generous cup,
once dash'd,

Shall never mantle more to the cold
lips

Of the earth-bound dead. And there-
fore do we fight

For life as for a mistress, that being
lost,

Is lost for ever. To be what we are
Is all we hope or pray for; think ye,
then,

That we shall tamely yield the contest
up,

And calmly acquiesce in our extinction?
We know that there stands yawning at
our feet

The gulf, where dark Annihilation
dwells

With Solitude, her sister; and we fix
Our steadfast footing on the perilous
verge,

And grapple to the last with the fierce
foe

That seeks to plunge us down; and
where's the strength

That can subdue despair?—For the
other charge,

We look not, Simon, to the sky, nor
pray

For sightless and impalpable messen-
gers

To spare us the proud peril of the war.
Ourselves are our own Angels! we im-
plore not

Or supernatural or spiritual aid;
We have our own good arms, that God
hath given us,

And valiant hearts to wield those
mighty arms.

SIMON.

Oh heavens! oh heavens, ye hear it,
and endure it!
Outwearied by the all-frequent blas-
phemy
To an indignant patience: and the just
Still, still must suffer the enforced al-
liance
Of men whose fellowship is death and
ruin.

JOHN.

Why, thou acknowledged Prince of
Murderers!
Captain Assassin! Lord and Chief of
Massacre!
That pourest blood like water, yet dost
deem
That thou canst wash the foul and scar-
let stain
From thy polluted soul, as easily
As from thy dainty ever-dabbling
hands,
That wouldst appease with rite and or-
dinance,
And festival, and slavish ceremony,
And prayers that weary even the stones
thou kneel'st on,
The God whose image hourly thou ef-
facest
With mangling and remorseless steel!
'Tis well
That graves are silent, and that dead
men's bones
Assert not the proud privilege thou
wouldst give them;
For if they did, Heaven's vaults would
ring so loudly
With imprecations 'gainst the right-
eous Simon,
That they would pluck by force a
plague upon us,
To which the Roman, and the wasting
famine,
Were soft and healing mercies.

SIMON.

Liar and slave!

There is no rich libation to the All-
Just
So welcome as the blood of renegades
And traitors—

MIRIAM (*apart*).

Oh! I dare not listen longer!
The big drops stand upon his brow;
his voice
Is faint and fails, and there's no food
at home.
The night is dark—I'll go once more,
or perish.

[*Departs unperceived.*]

SIMON.

What, John of Galilee! because my
voice
Is hoarse with speaking of thy crimes,
dost scoff,
And wag thy head at me, and answer
laughter?
Now, if thy veins run not pure gall,
I'll broach
Their tide, and prove if all my creed
be false;
If traitor's reeking blood smell not to
heaven
Like a sweet sacrifice.

JOHN.

Why, ay! the victim
Is bound to th' horns of th' altar!
Strike, I say,
He waits thee—Strike!

HIGH-PRIEST.

Hold, Chiefs of Israel!
Just Simon! valiant John! once more
I dare
To cast myself between you, the High-
Priest,
Who by his holy office calls on you
To throw aside your trivial private
wrongs,
And vindicate offense more rank and
monstrous.
Avenge your God! and then avenge
yourselves!
The Temple is polluted—Israel's Lord
Mock'd in his presence. Prayers even
thence have risen,
Prayers from the jealous holy Sanctu-
ary,
Even to the Crucified Man our fathers
slew.

JEWS.

The Crucified! the Man of Nazareth!

HIGH-PRIEST.

This morn, as wont, our maidens had
gone up

To chant their suppliant hymn; and
they had raised

The song that Israel on the Red Sea
shore

Took up triumphant; and they clos'd
the strain,

That, like th' Egyptian and his car-
borne host,

The billows of Heaven's wrath might
overwhelm

The Gentile foe, and so preserve Jeru-
salem;

When at the close and fall a single
voice

Linger'd upon the note, with "Be it
done,

Through Jesus Christ, thine only Son."
My spirit shrank within me; horror-

struck,
I listen'd; all was silence! Then again

I look'd upon the veiled damsels, all
With one accord took up the swelling

strain
To him that triumph'd gloriously. I

turn'd
To the Ark and Mercy Seat, and then

again
I heard that single, soft, melodious

voice,
"Lord of Mercies be it done,

Through Jesus Christ, thine only Son."
Here, then assembled Lords of Israel,

Whoever be the victim, I demand her;
Your wisdom must detect, your justice

wreak
Fit punishment upon the accursed sac-
rilege.

SALONE (*apart*).

Miriam! Miriam! Ha!—She's fled.—
Guilt! Guilt

Prophetic of the damning accusation
It doth deserve! Apostate! 'twere a

sin
Against Jerusalem and Heaven to spare
thee!

HIGH-PRIEST.

I do commend you, brethren, for your
silence!

I see the abhorrence labouring in your
hearts,

Too deep and too infuriate for words.

SIMON.

Now, if it were my child, my Sarah's
child,

The child that she died blessing, I'd
not sleep

Till the stones crush her. Yea, thus,
thus I'd grasp,

And hurl destruction on her guilty
head.

Here, John, I pledge mine hand to thee,
till vengeance

Seize on the false and insolent blas-
phemer.

(SALONE, *half unveiled, rushing for-
ward, stops irresolutely.*)

Their eyes oppress me—my heart chokes
my voice—

And my lips cling together—Oh! my
mother,

Upon thy death-bed didst thou not be-
seech us

To love each other!

HIGH-PRIEST.

Veiled maid, what art thou?

SALONE.

Off! off! the blood of Abraham swells
within me—

As I cast down my veil, I cast away
All fear, all tenderness, all fond re-
morse.

It is too good a death for one so guilty
To perish for Jerusalem—

[*She stands unveiled.*]

SIMON.

Salone!

HIGH-PRIEST.

The admired daughter of the noble
Simon!

VOICE AT A DISTANCE.

Israel! Israel!

HIGH-PRIEST.

Who is this that speaks
With such a shrilling accent of com-
mand?

VOICE.

Israel! Israel!

JEWS.

Back! give place! the Prophet!

ABIRAM (*the false prophet*).

Israel! Israel!

HIGH-PRIEST.

Peace!

ABIRAM.

Ay! peace, I say!
The wounds are bound; the blood is
stanch'd! and hate
Is turn'd to love! and rancorous jeal-
ousy
To kindred concord! and the clashing
swords
To bridal sounds! the fury of the feud
To revel and the jocund nuptial feast.

HIGH-PRIEST.

What means Abiram?

ABIRAM.

It is from on High.
Brave Amariah, son of John! Salone,
Daughter of Simon! thus I join their
hands;
And thus I bless the wedded and the
beautiful!
And thus I bind the Captains of Jeru-
salem
In the strong bonds of unity and
peace.—

And where is now the wine for the
bridegroom's rosy cup?
And the tabret and the harp for the
chamber of the bride?
Lo! bright as burnish'd gold the lamps
are sparkling up,
And the odours of the incense are
breathing far and wide;
And the maidens' feet are glancing in
the virgins' wedding train;
And the sad streets of Salem are alive
with joy again!

THE JEWS.

Long live Salone! Long live Amariah!

SALONE.

Am I awake?—how came I here un-
veil'd
Among the bold and glaring eyes of
men?

THE JEWS.

Long live Salone! Long live Amariah!

SIMON.

He speaks from Heaven—accept'st
thou, John of Galilee,
Heaven's terms of peace?

JOHN.

From earth or heaven, I care not—
What says my boy?

AMARIAH.

Oh! rather let me ask,
What says the maid? Oh! raven-hair'd
Salone,
Why dost thou crowd thy jealous veil
around thee?
Look on me freely; beauteous in thy
freedom;
As when this morn I saw thee, on our
walls,
Thy hair cast back, and bare thy mar-
ble brow
To the bright wooing of the enamour'd
sun:
They were my banner, Beauty, those
dark locks;

And in the battle 'twas my pride, my strength,
To think that eyes like thine were gazing on me.

SALONE.

Oh no, thou saw'st me not!—Oh, Amariah!
What Prophets speak must be fulfill'd.
'Twere vain
T' oppose at once the will of Heaven—
and thee.

JOHN.

Now, if there be enough of generous food,
A cup of wine in all the wasted city,
We'll have a jocund revel.

SIMON.

Prophet Abiram,
I have a question for thy secret ear.
Thou man, whose eyes are purged from earthly film,
Seest thou no further down the tide of time
Beyond this bridal nothing?—Answer me!
For it should seem this designated union
Of two so noble, this conspiring blood
Of Israel's chiefs, portends some glorious fruit
To ripen in the deep futurity.

ABIRAM.

Simon, what meanest thou?

SIMON.

The Hope of Israel!
Shall it not dawn from darkness? Oh! begot
In Judah's hour of peril, and conceived
In her extreme of agony, what birth
So meet and fitting for the great Discomfiter?

ABIRAM.

A light falls on me.

SIMON.

Prophet! what shall dye
The robe of purple with so bright a grain
As Roman blood? Before our gates are met
The lords of empire, and our walls may laugh
Their siege to scorn, even till the BRANCH be grown
That's not yet planted—Yea, the wrested scepter
Of earth, the sole dominion—Back, Abiram,
To thy prophetic cave—kneel, pray, fast, weep;
And thou shalt bless us with far nobler tidings,
And we will kiss thy feet, thou Harbinger
Of Judah's glory—

Now lead on the Bridal.
Blow trumpets! shout, exulting Israel!
Shout Amariah! shout again Salone!
Shout louder yet, the Bridegroom and the Bride!
Rejoice, oh Zion, now on all thy hills!
City of David, through thy streets rejoice!

FOUNTAIN OF SILOE—NIGHT—
AN APPROACHING STORM.

MIRIAM.

He is not here! and yet he might have known
That the cold gloom of the tempestuous skies
Could never change a faithful heart like mine.
He might have known me, not a maid to love
Under the melting moonlight, and soft stars,
And to fall off in darkness and in storm.
Ah! seal'd for ever be my slanderous lips!
Alas! it is the bitterest pang of misery
That it will force from us unworthy doubts
Of the most tried and true. Oh, Javan, Javan!
It was but now that with presumptuous heart

I did repine against the all-gracious
 heavens,
 That wrapt me round in charitable dark-
 ness,
 Because my erring feet had well-nigh
 miss'd
 Their known familiar path.

JAVAN, MIRIAM.

JAVAN.

What's there? I see
 A white and spirit-like gleaming—It
 must be!
 I see her not, yet feel that it is Miriam,
 By the indistinct and dimly visible grace
 That haunts her motions; by her tread,
 that falls
 Trembling and soft like moonlight on
 the earth.
 What dost thou here? now—now?
 where every moment
 The soldiers prowl, and meeting sen-
 tinels
 Challenge each other? I have watch'd
 'for thee
 As prisoners for the hour of their de-
 liverance;
 Yet did I pray, love! that thou might'st
 not come,
 Even that thou might'st be faithless
 to thy vows,
 Rather than meet this peril—Miriam,
 Why art thou here?

MIRIAM.

Does Javan ask me why?
 Because I saw my father pine with hun-
 ger—
 Because—I never hope to come again.

JAVAN.

Too true! this night, this fatal night, if
 Heaven
 Strike not their conquering host, the foe
 achieves
 His tardy victory. Round the shatter'd
 walls
 There is the smother'd hum of prepara-
 tion.
 With stealthy footsteps, and with muf-
 fled arms,

Along the trenches, round the lowering
 engines,
 I saw them gathering: men stood whis-
 pering men,
 As though revealing some portentous
 secret;
 At every sound cried, Hist! and look'd
 reproachfully
 Upon each other. Now and then a light
 From some far part of the encircling
 camp
 Breaks suddenly out, and then is
 quench'd as suddenly.
 The forced unnatural quiet, that per-
 vades
 Those myriads of arm'd and sleepless
 warriors,
 Presages earthly tempest; as yon clouds,
 That in their mute and ponderous black-
 ness hang
 Over our heads, a tumult in the skies—
 The earth and heaven alike are terribly
 calm.

MIRIAM.

Alas! alas! give me the food! let's say
 Farewell as fondly as a dying man
 Should say it to a dying woman!

JAVAN.

Miriam!

It shall not be. *He, He* hath given
 command,
 That when the signs are manifest, we
 should flee
 Unto the mountains.*

MIRIAM.

Javan, tempt me not.

My soul is weak. Hast thou not said of
 old,
 How dangerous 'tis to wrest the words
 of truth
 To the excusing our own fond desires?
 There's an eternal mandate, unrepeal'd,
 Nor e'er to be rescinded, "Love thy Fa-
 ther!"
 God speaks with many voices; one in
 the heart,
 True though instinctive; one in the
 Holy Law,
 The first that's coupled with a gracious
 promise.

**Matt.* xxiv. 16.

JAVAN.

Yet are his words, "Leave all, and follow me,
"Thou shalt not love thy father more than me"—*
Dar'st disobey them?

MIRIAM.

Javan, while I tread
The path of duty I am following him,
And loving whom I ought to love, love him.

JAVAN.

If thou couldst save or succour—if this night
Were not the last—

MIRIAM.

Oh, dearest, think awhile!

It matters little at what hour o' the day
The righteous falls asleep, death cannot come

To him untimely who is fit to die:
The less of this cold world, the more of heaven,

The briefer life, the earlier immortality.
But every moment to the man of guilt
And bloodshed, one like—ah me! like my father,

Each instant rescued from the grasp of death,

May be a blessed chosen opportunity
For the everlasting mercy—Think what 'tis

For time's minutest period to delay
An infidel's death, a murderer's—

JAVAN.

Go! go, dearest!

If I were dying, I would have thee go—
Oh! thou inspher'd, unearthly loveliness!

Danger may gather round thee, like the clouds

Round one of heaven's pure stars,
thou'lt hold within

Thy course unsullied.

*Matt. x. 7.

MIRIAM.

This is worse than all!

Oh! mock not thus with wild extravagant praise

A very weak and most unworthy girl.
Javan, one last, one parting word with thee—

There have been times, when I have said light words,

As maidens use, that made thy kind heart bleed;

There have been moments, when I have seen thee sad,

And I have cruelly sported with thy sadness:

I have been proud, oh! very proud, to hear

Thy fond lips dwell on beauty, when thine eyes

Were on this thin and wasted form of mine.

Forgive me, oh! forgive me, for I deem'd

The hour would surely come, when the fond bride

Might well repay the maiden's waywardness.

Oh! look not thus o'erjoy'd, for if I thought

We e'er could meet again this side the grave,

Trust me, I had been charier of my tenderness.

Yet one word more—I do mistrust thee, Javan,

Though coldly thou dost labour to conceal it;

Thou hast some frantic scheme to risk for mine

Thy precious life—Beseech thee, heap not thou

More sorrows on the o'erburthen'd.

JAVAN.

Think'st thou, then,

I have no trust but in this arm of flesh
To save thee?

MIRIAM.

Oh, kind Javan! pray not thou
That I may live, that is too wild a prayer;

That I may die unspotted, be thy suit
To Him who loves the spotless.

JAVAN.

Ha—the thought!
It pierces like a sword into my heart!

MIRIAM.

And think'st thou mine unwounded?—
Fare thee well!
Our presence does but rack each other's
souls.
Farewell! and if thou lovest when I am
dead,
May she be to thee, all I hoped to be.

JAVAN.

Go—go—

MIRIAM.

Thou bidst me part, and yet de-
tain'st me
With clinging grasp—ah no, 'tis I clasp
thee.
I knew not that my fond unconscious
hand
Had been so bold—Oh, Javan! ere the
morn
'Twill have no power t' offend thee—
'twill be cold.

JAVAN.

Offend me! Miriam, when thou'rt above
Among the Saints, and I in the sinful
world,
How terrible 'twill be if I should forfeit
The hope of meeting thee in blessed-
ness.

MIRIAM.

Forfeit! with faith like thine?

JAVAN.

Thou well rebukest me.
To thy Redeemer I commit thee now,
To leave thee here, or take thee to him-
self.
Farewell, farewell! the life of this sad
heart,—

Dearer than life — I look for thee,
and lo!

Nought but blind darkness—

Save where yon mad city,
As though at peace and in luxurious
joy,
Is hanging out her bright and festive
lamps.

There have been tears from holier
eyes than mine
Pour'd o'er thee, Zion! yea, the Son of
Man
This thy devoted hour foresaw and
wept.
And I—can I refrain from weeping?
Yes,
My country, in thy darker destiny
Will I awhile forget mine own distress.

I feel it now, the sad, the coming hour;
The signs are full, and never shall
the sun
Shine on the cedar roofs of Salem
more;
Her tale of splendor now is told and
done:
Her wine-cup of festivity is spilt,
And all is o'er, her grandeur and her
guilt.

Oh! fair and favour'd city, where of old
The balmy airs were rich with mel-
ody,
That led her pomp beneath the cloud-
less sky
In vestments flaming with the orient
gold;
Her gold is dim, and mute her music's
voice,
The Heathen o'er her perish'd pomp
rejoice.

How stately then was every palm-deck'd
street,
Down which the maidens danced with
tinkling feet;
How proud the elders in the lofty
gate!
How crowded all her nation's solemn
feasts
With white-rob'd Levites and high-
mitred Priests;
How gorgeous all her Temple's sacred
state!

Her streets are razed, her maidens sold
for slaves,
Her gates thrown down, her elders in
their graves;
Her feasts are holden 'mid the Gentile's
scorn,
By stealth her Priesthood's holy gar-
ments worn;
And where her Temple crown'd the
glittering rock,
The wandering shepherd folds his
evening flock.

When shall the work, the work of death
begin?
When come th' avengers of proud Ju-
dah's sin?—
Aceldama! accurs'd and guilty ground,
Gird well the city in thy dismal bound,
Her price is paid, and she is sold like
thou;
Let every ancient monument and tomb
Enlarge the border of its vaulted gloom,
Their spacious chambers all are want-
ed now.

But nevermore shall yon lost city
need
Those secret places for her future dead;
Of all her children, when this night is
pass'd,
Devoted Salem's darkest, and her last,
Of all her children none is left to her,
Save those whose house is in the sep-
ulchre.

Yet, guilty city, who shall mourn for
thee?
Shall Christian voices wail thy de-
vastation?
Look down! look down, avengèd Cal-
vary,
Upon thy late yet dreadful expiation.
Oh! long foretold, though slow accom-
plish'd fate,
"Her house is left unto her desolate;"
Proud Caesar's ploughshare o'er her
ruins driven,
Fulfills at length the tardy doom of
heaven;
The wrathful vial's drops at length are
pour'd
On the rebellious race that crucified
their Lord!

STREETS OF JERUSALEM—NIGHT

Many Jews Meeting.

FIRST JEW.

Saw ye it, father? saw ye what the
city
Stands gazing at? As I pass'd through
the streets,
There were pale women wandering up
and down;
And on the house-tops there were hag-
gard faces
Turn'd to the heavens, where'er the
ghostly light
Fell on them. Even the prowling
plunderers,
That break our houses for suspected
food,
Their quick and stealthful footsteps
check, and gasp
In wonder. They, that in deep wear-
iness,
Or wounded in the battle of the morn,
Had cast themselves to slumber on the
stones,
Lift up their drowsy heads, and lan-
guidly
Do shudder at the sight.

SECOND JEW.

What sight? what say'st thou?

FIRST JEW.

The star, the star, the fiery-tresséd star,
That all this fatal year hath hung in
the heavens
Above us, gleaming like a bloody sword,
Twice hath it moved. Men cried aloud,
"A tempest!"
And there was blackness, as of thunder
clouds:
But yet that angry sign glared fiercely
through them,
And the third time, with slow and sol-
emn motion,
'Twas shaken and brandish'd.

SECOND JEW.

Timorous boy! thou speak'st
As though these things were strange.
Why now we sleep

With prodigies ablaze in all the heavens,
 And the earth teeming with portentous signs,
 As sound as when the moon and constant stars
 Beam'd quietly upon the slumbering earth
 Their customary fires. Dost thou remember,
 At Pentecost, when all the land of Judah
 Stood round the Altar, at the dead of night,
 A Light broke out, and all the Temple shone
 With the meteorous glory? 'twas not like
 The light of sun or moon, but it was clear
 And bright as either, only that it with-er'd
 Men's faces to a hue like death.

THIRD JEW.

'Twas strange!
 And, if I err not, on that very day,
 The Priest led forth the spotless sacrifice,
 And as he led it, it fell down, and cast
 Its young upon the sacred pavement.

FOURTH JEW.

Brethren,
 Have ye forgot the eve, when war broke out
 Even in the heavens? all the wide northern sky
 Was rocking with arm'd men and fiery chariots.
 With an abrupt and sudden noiselessness,
 Wildly, confusedly, they cross'd and mingled,
 As when the Red Sea waves dash'd to and fro
 The crazed cars of Pharaoh—

THIRD JEW.

Who comes here
 In his white robes so hastily?

FIRST JEW.

'Tis the Levite,
 The Holy Aaron.

LEVITE.

Brethren! Oh, my Brethren!

THE JEWS.

Speak, Rabbi, all our souls thirst for thy words.

LEVITE.

But now within the Temple, as I minister'd,
 There was a silence round us; the wild sounds
 Of the o'erwearied war had fallen asleep.
 A silence, even as though all earth were fix'd
 Like us in adoration, when the gate,
 The Eastern gate, with all its ponderous bars
 And bolts of iron, started wide asunder,
 And all the strength of man doth vainly toil
 To close the stubborn and rebellious leaves.

FIRST JEW.

What now?

ANOTHER JEW.

What now! why all things sad and monstrous.
 The Prophets stand aghast, and vainly seek,
 Amid the thronging and tumultuous signs
 Which crowd this wild disastrous night,
 Of the Eternal. Wonder breaks o'er wonder,
 As the clouds roll o'er each other in the skies;
 And Terror, wantoning with man's perplexity,
 No sooner hath infix'd the awed attention

On some strange prodigy, than it
straight distracts it
To a stranger and more fearful.

THIRD JEW.

Hark! what's there?
Fresh horror!—

(*At a distance.*)

To the sound of timbrels sweet,
Moving slow our solemn feet,
We have borne thee on the road,
To the virgin's blest abode;
With thy yellow torches gleaming,
And thy scarlet mantle streaming,
And the canopy above
Swaying as we slowly move.

Thou hast left the joyous feast,
And the mirth and wine have ceas'd;
And now we set thee down before
The jealously-unclosing door;
That the favour'd youth admits
Where the veiled virgin sits
In the bliss of maiden fear,
Waiting our soft tread to hear;
And the music's brisker din,
At the bridegroom's entering in,
Entering in a welcome guest
To the chamber of his rest.

SECOND JEW.

It is the bridal song of Amariah
And fair Salome. In the house of Si-
mon
The rites are held; nor bears the
Bridegroom home
His plighted Spouse, but there, doth
deck his chamber;
These perilous times dispensing with
the rigor
Of ancient usage—

VOICE WITHIN.

Woe! woe! woe!

FIRST JEW.

Alas!
The son of Hananiah! is't not he?

THIRD JEW.

Whom said'st?

SECOND JEW.

Art thou a stranger in Jerusalem,
That thou rememberest not that fearful
man?

FOURTH JEW.

Speak! speak! we know not all.

SECOND JEW.

Why thus it was:
A rude and homely dresser of the vine,
He had come up to the Feast of Tab-
ernacles,
When suddenly a spirit fell upon him,
Evil or good we know not. Ever since,
(And now seven years are past since
it befell,
Our city then being prosperous and at
peace),
He hath gone wandering through the
darkling streets
At midnight under the cold quiet stars;
He hath gone wandering through the
crowded market
At noonday under the bright blazing
sun,
With that one ominous cry of "Woe,
woe, woe!"
Some scoff'd and mock'd him, some
would give him food;
He neither curs'd the one, nor thank'd
the other.
The Sanhedrim bade scourge him, and
myself
Beheld him lash'd, till the bare bones
stood out
Through the maim'd flesh, still, still he
only cried,
Woe to the City, till his patience
wearied
The angry persecutors. When they
freed him,
'Twas still the same, the incessant Woe,
woe, woe.
But when our siege began, awhile he
ceased,
As though his prophecy were fulfill'd;
till now
We had not heard his dire and boding
voice.

WITHIN.

Woe! woe! woe!

JOSHUA, *the Son of Hananiah.*

Woe! woe!

A voice from the East! a voice from
the West!

From the four winds a voice against
Jerusalem!

A voice against the Temple of the
Lord!

A voice against the Bridegrooms and
the Brides!

A voice against all people of the land!
Woe! woe! woe!

SECOND JEW.

They are the very words, the very voice
Which we have heard so long. And
yet, methinks,

There is a mournful triumph in the
tone

Ne'er heard before. His eyes, that were
of old

Fix'd on the earth, now wander all
abroad,

As though the tardy consummation
Afflicted him with wonder—Hark!
again.

CHORUS OF MAIDENS.

Now the jocund song is thine,
Bride of David's kingly line!
How thy dove-like bosom trembleth,
And thy shrouded eye resembleth
Violets, when the dews of eve
A moist and tremulous glitter leave
On the bashful sealéd lid!
Close within the bride-veil hid,
Motionless thou sit'st and mute;
Save that at the soft salute
Of each entering maiden friend
Thou dost rise and softly bend.

Hark! a brisker, merrier glee!
The door unfolds,—'tis he, 'tis he.
Thus we lift our lamps to meet him,
Thus we touch our lutes to greet him.
Thou shalt give a fonder meeting,
Thou shalt give a tenderer greeting.

JOSHUA.

Woe! woe!

A voice from the East! a voice from
the West!

From the four winds a voice against
Jerusalem!

A voice against the Temple of the
Lord!

A voice against the Bridegrooms and
the Brides!

A voice against all people of the land!
Woe! woe—

[*Bursts away, followed by Second Jew.*]

FIRST JEW.

Didst speak?

THIRD JEW.

No.

FOURTH JEW.

Look'd he on *us* as he spake?

FIRST JEW (*to the Second returning.*)

Thou follow'dst him! what now?

SECOND JEW.

'Twas a True Prophet!

THE JEWS.

Wherefore? Where went he?

SECOND JEW.

To the outer wall;
And there he suddenly cried out and
sternly,

"A voice against the son of Hananiah!
"Woe, woe!" and at the instant,
whether struck

By a chance stone from the enemy's en-
gines, down

He sank and died!—

THIRD JEW.

There's some one comes this way—
Art sure he died indeed?

LEVITE.

It is the High-Priest.

The ephod gleams through the pale
lowering night;
The breastplate gems, and the pure
mitre-gold,
Shine lamplike, and the bells that fringe
his robe
Chime faintly.

HIGH PRIEST.

Israel, hear! I do beseech you.
Brethren, give ear!—

SECOND JEW.

Who's he that will not hear
The words of God's High-Priest?

HIGH PRIEST.

It was but now
I sate within the Temple, in the court
That's consecrate to mine office—Your
eyes wander—

JEWS.

Go on!—

HIGH PRIEST.

Why hearken, then—Upon a sudden
The pavement seem'd to swell beneath
my feet,
And the Veil shiver'd, and the pillars
rock'd.
And there, within the very Holy of
Holies,
There, from behind the wingéd Cheru-
bim,
Where the Ark stood, noise, hurried
and tumultuous,
Was heard, as when a king with all his
host
Doth quit his palace. And anon, a voice,
Or voices, half in grief, half anger, yet
Nor human grief nor anger, even it
seem'd.
As though the hoarse and rolling thun-
der spake
With the articulate voice of man, it
said,
"LET US DEPART!"

JEWS.

Most terrible! What follow'd?
Speak on! speak on!

HIGH PRIEST.

I know not why, I felt
As though an outcast from the aban-
don'd Temple.
And fled.

JEWS.

Oh God! and Father of our Fathers,
Dost thou desert us?

CHORUS OF YOUTHS AND MAIDENS.

Under a happy planet art thou led,
Oh, chosen Virgin! to thy bridal bed.
So put thou off thy soft and bashful
sadness,
And wipe away the timid maiden
tear,—
Lo! redolent with the Prophet's oil of
gladness,
And mark'd by heaven, the Bride-
groom Youth is here.

FIRST JEW.

Hark—hark! an arméd tread!

SECOND JEW.

The bold Ben Cathla!

BEN CATHLA.

Ay, ye are met, all met, as in a mart,
T' exchange against each other your
dark tales
Of this night's fearful prodigies. I
know it,
By the inquisitive and half-suspicious
looks
With which ye eye each other, ye do
wish
To disbelieve all ye have heard, and
yet
Ye dare not. If ye have seen the moon
unsphered,
And the stars fall; if the pale sheeted
ghosts
Have met you wandering, and have
pointed at you

With ominous designation; yet I scoff
Your poor and trivial terrors—Know
ye Michol?

Michol!

JEWS.

BEN CATHLA.

The noble lady, she whose fathers
Dwelt beyond Jordan—

SECOND JEW.

Yes, we know her;
The tender and the delicate of women,
That would not set her foot upon the
ground
For delicacy and very tenderness.

BEN CATHLA.

The same!—We had gone forth in
quest of food:
And we had enter'd many a house,
where men
Were preying upon meagre herbs and
skins;
And some were sating upon loathsome
things
Unutterable, the ravening hunger.
Some,
Whom we had plunder'd oft, laugh'd in
their agony
To see us baffled. At her door she met
us,
And "we have feasted together here-
tofore,"
She said, "most welcome warriors!"
and she led us,
And bade us sit like dear and honour'd
guests,
While she made ready. Some among
us wonder'd,
And some spake jeeringly, and thank'd
the lady
That she had thus with provident care
reserved
The choicest banquet for our scarcest
days.
But ever as she busily minister'd,
Quick, sudden sobs of laughter broke
from her.
At length the vessel's covering she
rais'd up,
And there it lay—

HIGH PRIEST.

What lay?—Thou'rt sick and pale.

BEN CATHLA.

By earth and heaven, the remnant of
a child!
A human child!—Ay, start! so started
we—
Whereat she shriek'd aloud, and clapp'd
her hands,
"Oh! dainty and fastidious appetites!
"The mother feasts upon her babe, and
strangers
"Loathe the repast"—and then—"My
beautiful child!
"The treasure of my womb! my bos-
om's joy!"
And then in her cool madness did she
spurn us
Out of her doors. Oh still—oh still I
hear her,
And I shall hear her till my day of
death.

HIGH PRIEST.

Oh, God of Mercies! this was once thy
city!

CHORUS.

Joy to thee, beautiful and bashful
Bride!
Joy! for the thrills of pride and joy
become thee;
Thy curse of barrenness is taken from
thee.
And thou shalt see the rosy infant
sleeping
Upon the snowy fountain of thy
breast;
And thou shalt feel how mothers
hearts are blest
By hours of bliss for moment's pain
and weeping.
Joy to thee!

The above, SIMON, JOHN.

SIMON.

Away! what do ye in our midnight
streets?

Go sleep! go sleep! or we shall have
to lash you,
When the horn summons to the morn-
ing's war,
From out your drowsy beds—Away! I
say.

HIGH-PRIEST.

Simon, thou know'st not the dark signs
abroad.

JOHN.

Ay! is't not fearful and most ominous
That the sun shines not at deep mid-
night. Mark me,
Ye men with gasping lips and shiver-
ing limbs,
Thou mitred priest, and ye misnaméd
warriors,
If ye infect with your pale aguish fears
Our valiant city, we'll nor leave you
limbs
To shake, nor voices to complain—T'
your homes.

SIMON, JOHN.

JOHN.

In truth, good Simon, I am half your
proselyte;
Your angels, that do bear such excel-
lent wine,
Might shake a faith more firm than
ours.

SIMON.

Brave John,
My soul is jocund. Expectation soars
Before mine eyes, like to a new-
fledg'd eagle,
And stoopeth from her heavens with
palms ne'er worn
By brows of Israel. Glory mounts with
her,
Her deep seraphic trumpet swelling
loud
O'er Zion's gladdening towers.

JOHN.

Why, then, to sleep.
This fight by day, and revel all the
night,
Needs some repose—I'll to my bed—
Farewell!

SIMON.

Brave John, farewell! and I'll to rest,
and dream
Upon the coming honours of to-mor-
row.

MIRIAM.

To-morrow! will that morrow dawn
upon thee?
I've warn'd them, I have lifted up my
voice
As loud as 'twere an angel's, and well
nigh
Had I betray'd my secret: they but
scoff'd,
And ask'd how long I had been a
prophetess?
But that injurious John did foully
taunt me,
As though I envied my lost sister's
bridal.
And when I clung to my dear father's
neck,
With the close fondness of a last em-
brace,
He shook me from him.

But, ah me! how strange!

This moment, and the hurrying streets
were full
As at a festival, now all's so silent
That I might hear the footsteps of a
child.
The sound of dissolute mirth hath
ceased, the lamps
Are spent, the voice of music broken
off.
No watchman's tread comes from the
silent wall,
There are nor lights nor voices in the
towers.
The hungry have given up their idle
search
For food, the gazers on the heavens are
gone,
Even fear's at rest—all still as in a
sepulchre!
And thou liest sleeping, oh Jerusalem!
A deeper slumber could not fall upon
thee,
If thou wert desolate of all thy chil-
dren,
And thy razed streets a dwelling-place
for owls.

I do mistake! this is the Wilderness,
The Desert, where winds pass and
make no sound,
And not the populous city, the be-
sieged
And overhung with tempest. Why, my
voice,
My motion, breaks upon the oppressive
stillness
Like a forbidden and disturbing sound.
The very air's asleep, my feeblest
breathing
Is audible—I'll think my prayers—and
then—
—Ha! 'tis the thunder of the Living
God!
It peals! it crashes! it comes down in
fire!

Again it is the engine of the foe,
Our walls are dust before it—Wake—
oh wake—

Oh Israel!—Oh Jerusalem, awake!
Why shouldst thou wake? thy foe is in
the heavens.

Yea, thy judicial slumber weighs thee
down,
And gives thee, oh! lost city, to the
Gentile
Defenceless, unresisting.

It rolls down,
As though the Everlasting raged not
now
Against our guilty Zion, but did mingle
The universal world in our destruction;
And all mankind were destined for a
sacrifice
On Israel's funeral pile. Oh Crucified!
Here, here, where thou didst suffer, I
beseech thee
Even by thy Cross!

Hark! now in impious rivalry
Man thunders. In the center of our
streets
The Gentile trumpet, the triumphant
shouts
Of onset; and I—I, a trembling girl,
Alone, awake, abroad.

Oh, now ye wake,
Now ye pour forth, and hideous Mas-
sacre,
Loathing his bloodless conquest, joys to
see you

Thus naked and unarm'd—But where's
my father?
Upon his couch in dreams of future
glory.
Oh! where's my sister? in her bridal
bed.

MANY JEWS.

FIRST JEW.

To the Temple! To the Temple! Israel!
Israel!
Your walls are on the earth, your
houses burn
Like fires amid the autumnal olive
grounds.
The Gentile's in the courts of the Lord's
house.
To the Temple! save or perish with
the Temple!

SECOND JEW.

To the Temple! haste, oh all ye cir-
cumcised!
Stay not for wife, or child, for gold or
treasure!
Pause not for light! the heavens are
all on fire,
The Universal City burns!

THIRD JEW.

Arms! Arms!
Our women fall like doves into the
nets
Of the fowler, and they dash upon the
stones
Our innocent babes. Arms! Arms! be-
fore we die
Let's reap a bloody harvest of revenge.
To the Temple!

FOURTH JEW.

Simon! lo, the valiant Simon.

The above, SIMON.

SIMON.

He comes! he comes! the black night
blackens with him,
And the winds groan beneath his char-
iot wheels—

He comes from heaven, the Avenger of
Jerusalem!

Ay, strike, proud Roman! fall, thou
useless wall!

And vail your heads, ye towers, that
have discharg'd

Your brief, your fruitless duty of re-
sistance.

I've heard thee long, fierce Gentile! th'
earthquake shocks

Of thy huge engines smote upon my
soul,

And my soul scorn'd them. Oh! and
hear'st not thou

One mightier than thyself, that shakes
the heavens?

Oh pardon, that I thought that He,
whose coming

Is promised and reveal'd, would calmly
wait

The tardy throes of human birth. Mes-
siah,

I know thee now, I know yon lightning
fire

Thy robe of glory, and thy steps in
heaven

Incessant thundering.

I had brought mine arms,
Mine earthly arms, my breastplate and
my sword,

To cover and defend me—Oh! but thou
Art jealous, nor endur'st that human
arm

Intrude on thy deliverance. I forswear
them,

I cast them from me. Helmless, with
nor shield

Nor sword, I stand, and in my naked-
ness

Wait thee, victorious Roman—

JEW.

To the Temple!

SIMON.

Ay, well thou say'st, "to the Temple"—
there 'twill be

Most visible. In his own house the
Lord

Will shine most glorious. Shall we
not behold

The Fathers bursting from their yield-
ing graves,

Patriarchs and Priests, and Kings and
Prophets, met

A host of spectral watchmen, on the
towers

Of Zion to behold the full accomplish-
ing

Of every Type and deep Prophetic
word?

Ay, to the Temple! thither will I
too,

There bask in all the fulness of the
day

That breaks at length o'er the long
night of Judah.

*Chorus of Jews flying towards the
Temple.*

Fly! fly! fly!

Clouds, not of incense, from the Tem-
ple rise,

And there are altar-fires, but not of
sacrifice.

And there are victims, yet nor bulls
nor goats;

And Priests are there, but not of
Aaron's kin;

And he that doth the murtherous rite
begin,

To stranger Gods his hecatomb de-
votes;

His hecatomb of Israel's chosen race
All foully slaughter'd in their Holy
Place.

Break into joy, ye barren, that ne'er
bore!

Rejoice, ye breasts, where ne'er sweet
infant hung!

From you, from you no smiling babes
are wrung,

Ye die, but not amid your children's
gore.

But howl and weep, oh ye that are with
child,

Ye on whose bosoms unwean'd babes
are laid;

The sword that's with the mother's
blood defiled

Still with the infant gluts the in-
satiated blade.

Fly! fly! fly!

Fly not, I say, for Death is every
where,

To keen-eyed Lust all places are the same:
 There's not a secret chamber in whose lair
 Our wives can shroud them from th' abhorrèd shame.
 Where the sword fails, the fire will find us there,
 All, all is death—the Gentile or the flame.

On to the Temple! Brethren, Israel on!
 Though every slippery street with carnage swims,
 Ho! spite of famish'd hearts and wounded limbs,
 Still, still, while yet there stands one holy stone,
 Fight for your God, his sacred house to save,
 Or have its blazing ruins for your grave!

THE FRONT OF THE TEMPLE.

SIMON.

They fight around the altar, and the dead
 Heap the chok'd pavement. Israel tramples Israel,
 And Gentile Gentile, rushing where the Temple,
 Like to a pit of frantic gladiators,
 Is howling with the strife of men, that fight not
 For conquest, but the desperate joy of slaying.
 Priests, Levites, women, pass and hurry on,
 At least to die within the sanctuary.
 I only wait without—I take my stand
 Here in the vestibule—and though the thunders
 High and aloof o'er the wide arch of heaven
 Hold their calm march, nor deviate to their vengeance
 On earth, in holy patience, Lord, I wait,
 Defying thy long lingering to subdue
 The faith of Simon.
 'Twas but now I pass'd
 The corpse of Amariah, that display'd

In the wild firelight all its wounds, and lay
 Embalm'd in honour. John of Galilee
 Is prisoner; I beheld him fiercely gnashing
 His ponderous chains. Of me they take no heed,
 For I disdain to tempt them to my death,
 And am not arm'd to slay.
 The light within
 Grows redder, broader. 'Tis a fire that burns
 To save or to destroy. On Sinai's top,
 Oh Lord! thou didst appear in flames, the mountain
 Burnt round about thee. Art thou here at length,
 And must I close mine eyes, lest they be blinded
 By the full conflagration of thy presence?

TITUS, PLACIDUS, TERENTIUS, SOLDIERS;
 SIMON.

TITUS.

Save, save the Temple! Placidus, Terentius,
 Haste, bid the legions cease to slay; and quench
 Yon ruining fire.
 Who's this, that stands unmoved
 Mid slaughter, flame, and wreck, nor deigns to bow
 Before the Conqueror of Jerusalem?
 What art thou?

SIMON.

Titus, dost thou think that Rome
 Shall quench the fire that burns within yon Temple?
 Ay, when your countless and victorious cohorts,
 Ay, when your Caesar's throne, your Capitol
 Have fallen before it.

TITUS.

Madman, speak! what art thou?

SIMON.

The uncircumcised have known me
heretofore,
And thou mayst know hereafter.

PLACIDUS.

 It is he—
The bloody Captain of the Rebels,
Simon,
The Chief Assassin. Seize him, round
his limbs
Bind straight your heaviest chains. An
unhop'd pageant
For Caesar's high ovation. We'll not
slay him
Till we have made a show to the wives
of Rome
Of the great Hebrew Chieftain.

SIMON.

 Knit them close,
See that ye rivet well their galling links.

(Holding up the chains.)

And ye've no finer flax to gyve me with?

TERENTIUS.

Burst these, and we will forge thee
stronger then.

SIMON.

Fool, 'tis not yet the hour.

TITUS.

Hark! hark! the shrieks
Of those that perish in the flames. Too
late
I came to spare, it wraps the fabric
round.
Fate, Fate, I feel thou'rt mightier than
Caesar,
He cannot save what thou hast
doom'd! Back, Romans,
Withdraw your angry cohorts, and give
place
To the inevitable ruin. Destiny,
It is thine own, and Caesar yields it
to thee.
Lead off the prisoner.

SIMON.

Can it be? the fire
Destroys, the thunders cease. I'll not
believe,
And yet how dare I doubt?
 A moment, Romans.
Is't then thy will, Almighty Lord of
Israel,
That this thy Temple be a heap of
ashes?
Is't then thy will, that I, thy chosen
Captain,
Put on the raiment of captivity?
By Abraham, our father! by the
Twelve,
The Patriarch Sons of Jacob! by the
Law,
In thunder spoken! by the untouch'd
Ark!
By David, and the Anointed Race of
Kings!
By great Elias, and the gifted Prophets!
I here demand a sign!

'Tis there—I see it.
The fire that rends the Veil!

 We are then of thee
Abandon'd—not abandon'd of our-
selves.

Heap woes upon us, scatter us abroad,
Earth's scorn and hissing; to the race
of men

A loathsome proverb; spurn'd by every
foot,

And curs'd by every tongue; our heri-
tage

And birthright bondage; and our very
brows

Bearing, like Cain's, the outcast mark
of hate:

Israel will still be Israel, still will boast
Her fallen Temple, her departed glory;
And, wrapt in conscious righteousness,
defy

Earth's utmost hate, and answer scorn
with scorn.

THE FOUNTAIN OF SILOE.

MIRIAM, THE SOLDIER.

MIRIAM.

Here, here—not here—oh! anywhere
but here—

Not toward the fountain, not by this
lone path.
If thou wilt bear me hence, I'll kiss thy
feet,
I'll call down blessings, a lost virgin's
blessings
Upon thy head. Thou hast hurried
me along,
Through darkling street, and over
smoking ruin,
And yet there seem'd a soft solicitude,
And an officious kindness in thy vio-
lence—
But I've not heard thy voice.

Oh, strangely cruel!

And wilt thou make me sit even on this
stone,
Where I have sate so oft, when the
calm moonlight
Lay in its slumber on the slumbering
fountain?
Ah! where art thou, thou that wert
ever with me,
Oh Javan! Javan!

THE SOLDIER.

When was Javan call'd
By Miriam, that Javan answer'd not?
Forgive me all thy tears, thy agonies.
I dar'd not speak to thee, lest the
strong joy
Should overpower thee, and thy feeble
limbs
Refuse to bear thee in thy flight.

MIRIAM.

What's here?

Am I in heaven, and thou forehasted
thither
To welcome me? Ah, no! thy war-
like garb,
And the wild light, that reddens all the
air,
Those shrieks—and yet this could not
be on earth,
The sad, the desolate, the sinful earth.
And thou couldst venture amid fire and
death,
Amid thy country's ruins to protect me,
Dear Javan?

JAVAN.

'Tis not now the first time, Miriam,

That I have held my life a worthless
sacrifice
For thine. Oh! all these later days of
siege
I've slept in peril, and I've woken in
peril.
For every meeting I've defied the cross,
On which the Roman, in his merciless
scorn,
Bound all the sons of Salem. Sweet,
I boast not;
But to thank rightly our Deliverer,
We must know all the extent of his
deliverance.

MIRIAM.

And I can only weep!

JAVAN.

Ay, thou shouldst weep,
Lost Zion's daughter.

MIRIAM.

Ah! I thought not then
Of my dead sister and my captive
father—
Said they not "captive" as we pass'd?—
I thought not
Of Zion's ruin and the Temple's waste.
Javan, I fear that mine are tears of
joy;
'Tis sinful at such times—but thou art
here,
And I am on thy bosom, and I cannot
Be, as I ought, entirely miserable.

JAVAN.

My own belovèd! I dare call thee mine,
For Heaven hath given thee to me—
chosen out,
As we two are, for solitary blessing,
While the universal curse is pour'd
around us
On every head, 'twere cold and barren
gratitude
To stifle in our hearts the holy glad-
ness.
But, oh Jerusalem! thy rescued chil-
dren
May not, retir'd within their secret joy,
Shut out the mournful sight of thy
calamities.

Oh, beauty of earth's cities! thrond
quen

Of thy milk-flowing valleys! crown'd
with glory!

The envy of the nations! now no more
A city—One by one thy palaces

Sink into ashes, and the uniform smoke
O'er half thy circuit hath brought back
the night

Which the insulting flames had made
give place

To their untimely terrible day. The
flames

That in the Temple, their last proudest
conquest,

Now gather all their might, and furi-
ously,

Like revellers, hold there exulting tri-
umph.

Round every pillar, over all the roof,
On the wide gorgeous front, the holy
depth

Of the far sanctuary, every portico,
And every court, at once, concentrated,
As though to glorify and not destroy,
They burn, they blaze—

Look, Miriam, how it stands!
Look!

MIRIAM.

There are men around us!

JAVAN.

They are friends,

Bound here to meet me, and behold the
last

Of our devoted city. Look, oh Chris-
tians!

Still the Lord's house survives man's
fallen dwellings,

And wears its ruin with a majesty
Peculiar and divine. Still, still it
stands,

All one wide fire, and yet no stone hath
fallen.

Hark—hark!

The feeble cry of an expiring nation.

Hark—hark!

The awe-struck shout of the unboasting
conqueror.

Hark—hark!

It breaks—it severs—it is on the earth.
The smother'd fires are quench'd in
their own ruins:

Like a huge dome, the vast and cloudy
smoke

Hath cover'd all.

And it is now no more,
Nor ever shall be to the end of time,
The Temple of Jerusalem!—Fall down,
My brethren, on the dust, and worship
here

The mysteries of God's wrath.

Even so shall perish,
In its own ashes, a more glorious Tem-
ple,

Yea, God's own architecture, this vast
world,

This fated universe—the same de-
stroyer,

The same destruction—Earth, Earth,
Earth, behold!

And in that judgment look upon thine
own!

HYMN.

Even thus amid thy pride and luxury,
Oh Earth! shall that last coming burst
on thee,

That secret coming of the Son of
Man.

When all the cherub-throning clouds
shall shine,

Irradiate with his bright advancing
sign:

When that Great Husbandman shall
wave his fan,

Sweeping, like chaff, thy wealth and
pomp away:

Still to the noontide of that nightless
day,

Shalt thou thy wonted dissolute
course maintain.

Along the busy mart and crowded
street,

The buyer and the seller still shall meet,
And marriage feasts begin their

jocund strain:

Still to the pouring out the Cup of
Woe;

Till Earth, a drunkard, reeling to and
fro,

And mountains molten by his burning
feet,

And Heaven his presence own, all red
with furnace heat.

The hundred-gated Cities then,
The Towers and Temples, nam'd

of men

Eternal, and the Thrones of Kings;
 The gilded summer Palaces,
 The courtly bowers of love and
 ease.

Where still the Bird of pleasure
 sings;
 Ask ye the destiny of them?
 Go gaze on fallen Jerusalem!
 Yea, mightier names are in the fatal
 roll,

'Gainst earth and heaven God's stand-
 ard is unfurl'd,
 The skies are shrivell'd like a burning
 scroll,

And the vast common doom ensep-
 ulchres the world.

Oh! who shall then survive?

Oh! who shall stand and live?

When all that hath been, is no more:
 When for the round earth hung in
 air,

With all its constellations fair

In the sky's azure canopy;

When for the breathing Earth, and
 Sparkling Sea,

Is but a fiery deluge without shore,
 Heaving along the abyss profound and
 dark,

A fiery deluge, and without an Ark.

Lord of all power, when thou art
 there alone

On thy eternal fiery-wheelèd
 throne,

That in its high meridian noon

Needs not the perish'd sun nor moon:
 When thou art there in thy presiding
 state,

Wide-scepter'd Monarch o'er the
 realm of doom:

When from the sea depths, from
 earth's darkest womb,
 The dead of all the ages round thee
 wait:

And when the tribes of wickedness are
 strewn

Like forest leaves in the autumn of
 thine ire:

Faithful and True! thou still wilt save
 thine own!

The Saints shall dwell within th'
 unharmed fire,

Each white robe spotless, blooming
 every palm.

Even safe as we, by this still foun-
 tain's side,

So shall the Church, thy bright and
 mystic Bride,

Sit on the stormy gulf a halcyon bird
 of calm.

Yes, 'mid yon angry and destroying
 signs,

O'er us the rainbow of thy mercy
 shines,

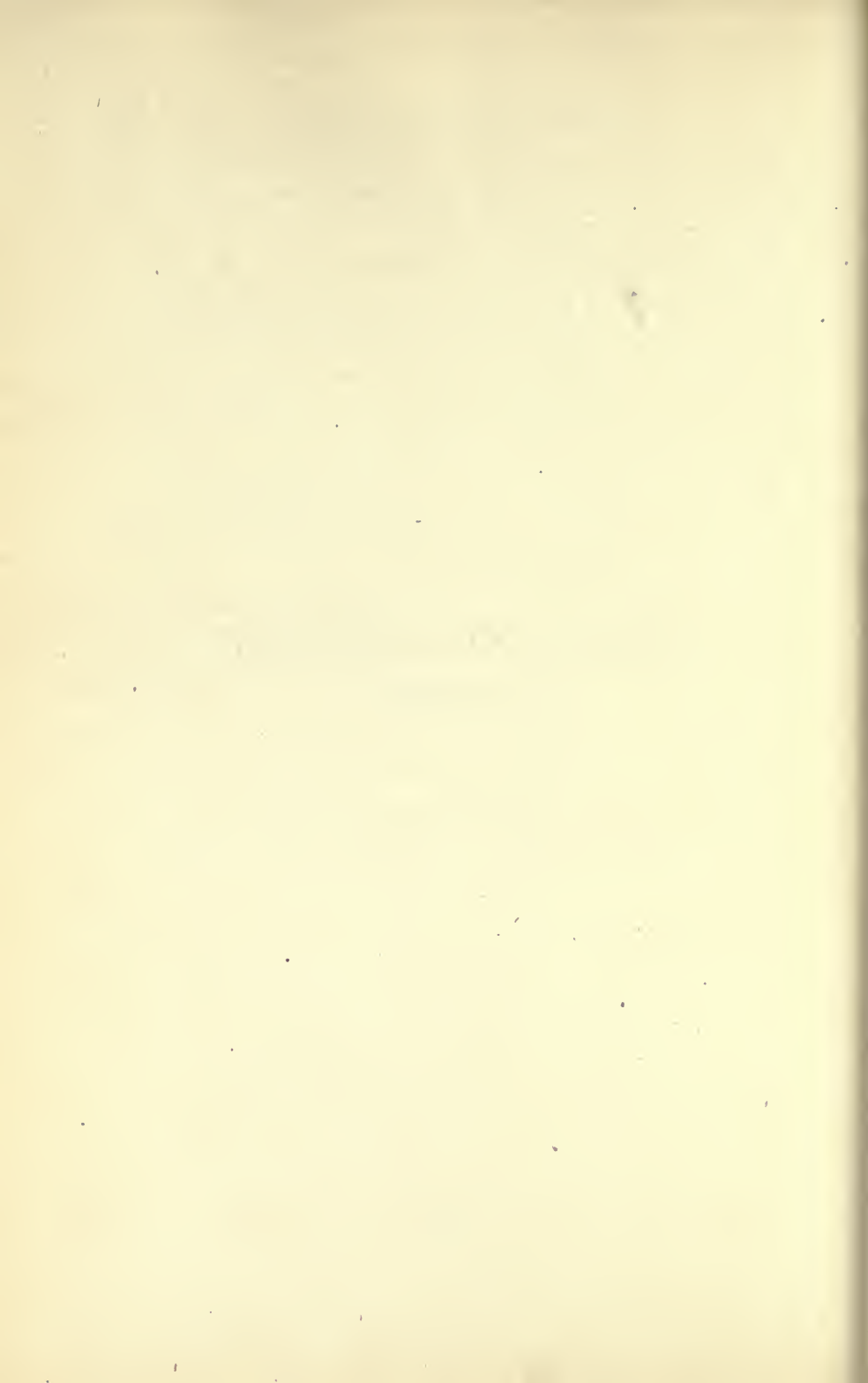
We hail, we bless the covenant of its
 beam,

Almighty to avenge, Almighty to re-
 deem!

HENRY HART MILMAN (1791-1868).

HEROD AND MARIAMNE

A TRAGEDY



HEROD AND MARIAMNE

A TRAGEDY.

ACT I.

SCENE I.

A hall in HEROD'S palace.

Enter JOSEPH and SOHEMUS.

JOSEPH.

It hath come, good Sohemus. 'T hath come.

SOHEMUS.

What, brother?

JOSEPH.

The king is summoned by Antonius Unto Laodicea concerning—

SOHEMUS.

Well?

JOSEPH.

Lower, I pray you—why, concerning, ^{sir,} The death of Aristobulus.

SOHEMUS.

Heaven save us!

What saith the queen?

JOSEPH.

Which queen, my Sohemus?

There are so many queens in Herod's palace,

We needs must name them when we speak of them.

By Moses' beard! the wild bees have more wisdom:

They have one queen, where Herod houses four.

There is his mother Cypros, and his ^{sister} My wife Salome: they do hate most violently His consort Mariamne, and her mother, The old king's daughter, Alexandra.

SOHEMUS.

Nay,

All this I know by demonstration, sir. The information that I crave concerns Queen Mariamne. Doth she think her brother To have been murdered?

JOSEPH.

There, sir, lies the matter. She doth not think so, while her mother doth. They have been wrangling o'er it all the morning, And wrangle yet. My wife and Cypros sulk Within their own apartments; and the king Is closeted with Antony's messenger.

SOHEMUS.

Where is Hyrcanus?

JOSEPH.

Sleeping, sir, I think The kind old king hath but that refuge ^{now} When the queens quarrel.

SOHEMUS.

A most fitting refuge! For when queens quarrel kings are kings ^{in vain.} Soft, friend! is that not Mariamne's voice?

JOSEPH.

It is,—and Alexandra's. Let us go,
Ere we be dragged into their mad dispute.
[*Exeunt.*]

Enter MARIAMNE and ALEXANDRA.

ALEXANDRA.

Art thou my daughter?

MARIAMNE.

If thou dost tell truth.

ALEXANDRA.

Insolence! Wilt thou mock me? God
of Moses!
Almost I think that I unknowing lie
And that thou art a changeling! Sure
no blood
Of mine makes blue those traitorous
veins o' thine!
To call him brother, and yet love the
king
Who murdered him!

MARIAMNE.

Madam, I will not think it.

ALEXANDRA.

Not think it? Will not think it!

MARIAMNE.

No, madam.
Nor hear it said. Therefore be silent.

ALEXANDRA.

Silent!

This unto me, thy mother? Silent?
Oh,

Would I were tongued like nature!
thou shouldst hear

A hundred thousand voices utter,
"Murder!"

Why, I do tell thee I have knowledge
of it

From ten reliable sources. It was
planned—

Ay, planned from first to last. And he,
thy brother,

So young, so fair, that even thou didst
show
Old and uncomely by his side!

MARIAMNE.

Good mother,
None loved my brother more than I
did love,
And love him: therefore go I quietly,
Thinking how did he live he would prefer
That we should mourn him, not with
cries and curses,
But in the stillness of our hearts with
prayer.

ALEXANDRA.

Prayers for his murderer? Oh, 'tis
well! 'tis well!
Thou art so eaten with unnatural love
For this thy kingly sinner, that thy
heart
Hath no unoccupied cranny where might
lodge
Love natural for him whom he hath
murdered.

MARIAMNE.

I will not hear that word again.

ALEXANDRA.

Not hear it?
Canst command deafness, that thou wilt
not hear it?
I say that Herod hath thy brother
murdered,—
Murdered! Ay, murdered! murdered!
Dost thou hear?
Or, being queen, canst thou command
thy ears
That they drink not unwelcome sounds?

MARIAMNE.

No, madam;
But I can twenty hands command to
take thee
Where thy voice cannot reach my ears.

ALEXANDRA.

Ay, do it!
Do it, I say! 'Twere well that Herod's
wife

Took Herod's way; 'twere well Hyrcanus' daughter
Should be o'er-daughtered in Hyrcanus' palace;

'Twere well the blood of Aristobulus
Should not cry out, lest Herod seeking sleep

Should be disturbed. O God of Israel,
God of the widowed and the childless,
hear!

To Thee I turn, to Thee shall mount
my grief;

Thine ears shall drink this murder, and
Thine arm

Destroy the murderer.

MARIAMNE.

Madam, have done.

ALEXANDRA.

Have done! Have done, didst say?
When hell is finished,
Packed full, and the gates locked against
new-comers,
I will have done.—O Aristobulus,
This was thy sister, and is wife to him
Who had thee murdered.

MARIAMNE.

Mother, be advised.

My duty as thy daughter hath a limit.

ALEXANDRA.

Thy duty unto Herod hath no limit.
What! wilt thou take his hand, lie by
his side,

Be mother of his children, and the blood
Of the high-priest thy brother red be-
tween ye?

I tell thee, woman, thou wilt know my
pangs

When thou hast brought forth sons for
him to slay!

MARIAMNE.

Mother, here comes the king! 'Twere
best indeed
He did not hear thee.

ALEXANDRA.

Ay, now it were best;

But there will come a time, I tell you,
girl,

He'll curse the day that he was born
with ears!

MARIAMNE.

In truth, you'd best be silent.

ALEXANDRA.

I will go;

Fear not but that I'll go. God blast these
eyes

If ever they are willing witnesses

Unto thy dalliance with Herod!

[Exit.]

MARIAMNE.

Nay,

God knows I loved my brother, and do
mourn him

With a sore heart; but when my mother
thus

Doth lay his death upon the king my
husband,

She doth divide my pity with her hate,
And makes my grief half Herod's. Ay,
by heaven!

Though he be rash, hot-natured, mad
in wrath,

And prone to take occasion by the
throat,

He is as little capable of murder

As this my heart of killing the great
love

That I do bear him Ah, he comes, and
anger

Hot at his heels!

Enter HEROD.

HEROD.

[Not seeing MARIAMNE.]

Herod com-
manded by a Roman turn-coat!
Antony summon Herod! Antony,—
The by-word of all nations, the last
toy

Of an Egyptian wanton! Who that
reads

In future ages will believe it? Oh
That Antony had summoned me in per-
son!

The Egyptian harlot had been loverless
In less time than she takes to make a
kiss.—

Ah, Mariamne!

MARIAMNE.

Shall I stay, my lord?

HEROD.

Hath Herod ever bid thee from him?

MARIAMNE.

No.

But I can well imagine that this summer

Hath left thee with a love of loneliness.

HEROD.

Come close. Give me thine eyes. Dost think with Antony Concerning this affair?

MARIAMNE.

With Antony?

HEROD.

Ay,—that thy brother's blood is on my hands.

Thou dost not think it?

MARIAMNE.

As I live, my lord,

If I do think it, let me live no longer.

HEROD.

Then I care not who thinks it. Mariamne,

I am not Herod when I am with thee.

MARIAMNE.

What then, my lord?

HEROD.

Why, Mariamne's lover.

I am no longer king, no longer soldier, No longer conqueror, unless in truth I rule thy heart.

MARIAMNE.

Thou knowest that my heart Is but thy throne.

HEROD.

Let me be king of thee, And God is welcome to the sway of heaven.

MARIAMNE.

Do not blasphemie.

HEROD.

Away! thy veins run milk And make thy heart a baby. Not blasphemie!

Love cannot utter blasphemy, for Love Is his own god and king of his own heaven.

Well, dost thou love me?

MARIAMNE.

Thou dost know I do.

HEROD.

Thou dost not! Thou dost make a pet of Duty, And fatten him on what should be my food.

Love me? Not thou! Thou lovest the cold peace

That's child of frozen virtue. I have fire

To melt the Sphinx, but not to warm the blood

Of one chaste woman.

MARIAMNE.

Chaste I am, my lord, Yet for that chasteness do but better love thee.

HEROD.

I tell thee no! Thou dost but use the word

To play with, as a child its father's sword.

Thou hast ne'er seen it scarlet with joy's death,

Or smoking with the heart's blood of a thought.

What! thou lie 'wake o' nights? Thou scorch thy brain

With bootless wishing? Thou eat pictured lips?

Thou feed regret with memory, and
then rage
Because he is not satisfied? Thou love?
Nay, girl, the sun will set the sea afire
Ere thy cool heart be set aflame with
love.
Moreover, look you, sooner shall the
waves
Of that same ocean cool the thirsty sun
Than thy pale humour make me moder-
ate.

MARIAMNE.

I would not have thee love me less.

HEROD.

Thou wouldst not?
Why dost thou shrink, then? Look how
thou dost pale
And redden when I touch thee. Come,
thine eyes,
Thine arms, thy lips,—still shrinking?
Israel's God!
Shall Herod coax his lawful wife for
favour's?
I say thou dost not love me, yea, more-
over,
That thou dost lie when thou wouldst
have me think
Thou dost not blame me for thy broth-
er's death.
I know thou thinkest that I had him
slain.

MARIAMNE.

I do not think it, Herod. Dost thou
think
I would be here if I believed it?

HEROD.

Where, ^{Where,}
Where wouldst thou be, then? Not
here, say'st thou?
Where then? Speak, woman! where?

MARIAMNE.

Why, dead, maybe;
But not with thee.

HEROD.

Thou liest! Didst thou die,
I'd have thy body brought into my
chamber
And make my bed thy sepulchre.

MARIAMNE.

Ay, Herod,
My body, but not me. Nay, my dear
lord,
Why waste such moments as are left in
strife
And harsh dissension? Soon thou wilt
be gone,
And Mariamne but a recollection.
Why dost thou doubt me? Why should
I not love thee,
Who art the chief of men and lovers?
Nay,
If, as thou sayest, I shrink, it is be-
cause
My love doth fear the violence of thy
love,
Not I thyself,—not Mariamne, Herod.

HEROD.

Love is not blind, as the Greeks fable it,
For he doth look from these fair eyes
o' thine,
Else am I Pleasure's bondman.

MARIAMNE.

Nay, not so.
Thou'rt husband to the truest wife in
Jewry.

HEROD.

And the least loving.

MARIAMNE.

Wilt thou wrong me still?
I know not how to dress out love in
words.
I can but tell thee o'er and o'er again
The naked fact, I love thee.

HEROD.

Would to heaven
I knew what loving means to thee!

MARIAMNE.

I'll tell thee:
It means to put myself beyond myself,
To think of him I love in that self's
stead,
To be sleep's enemy because of him,

Because of him to be the friend of pain,
 To have no thought, no wish, no dream,
 no memory,
 That is not servant to him; to forget
 All earlier loves in his,—all hates, all
 wrongs;
 Being meek to him, though proud unto
 all others;
 Gentle to him, though to all others
 harsh;
 To him submissive, though unto high
 heaven
 Something rebellious. Last, to keep my
 patience
 And bear his doubts, who have his
 children borne.

HEROD.

Enough, enough. Thou most magnif-
 icent
 Of queens and women, I will never
 doubt thee
 After to-day.

MARIAMNE.

Alas, my lord, to-morrow—
 To-morrow'll be to-day.

HEROD.

I will not doubt thee
 So long as I do live.

MARIAMNE.

Oh that thou wouldst not!
 Doubt is the shaft wherewith Love
 wounds himself:
 Doubt me no more, and be no more un-
 happy.

HEROD.

Alas! unhappiness doth wait below
 To ride with me, seeing I must leave
 thee, love,
 And that for such a summons! Jewry's
 throne!
 Antony summon me? It is as though
 The dog did whistle for his master.

MARIAMNE.

It is most insolent. But need'st thou
 Ay,
 go?
 Is it imperative?

HEROD.

More than thou knowest.
 Let us not talk of it. Tell me thou'lt
 miss me.
 How wilt thou spend the hours when I
 am gone?

MARIAMNE.

In wishing for the hour when thou'lt
 return.

HEROD.

God's heart! how I do love thee!—Ha!
 a step!
 Curséd be any that doth interrupt us,
 Though it be mine own mother!

MARIAMNE.

[Starting away from him.] 'Tis thy
 mother.
 Love me not in her presence, lest she
 hate me
 The more for thy much loving.

Enter CYPROS.

CYPROS.

Good my son,
 Thy horses wait for thee.

HEROD.

Do thou likewise.
 Seest thou not that I am occupied?

CYPROS.

A wife should urge her husband to his
 duty,—
 Not keep him from it.

HEROD.

Out! Such musty maxims
 Affront the air. Leave me. I'll send
 for thee
 When I desire thee.

CYPROS.

Madam, wilt thou hear this
 And say no word?

HEROD.

Think'st thou that I'll hear that
And say no word? Depart o' the
instant!

MARIAMNE.

Nay,
I'll wait below. Thy mother hath some
message,—
Some special word for thee. I will be
there,
Fear not, to give thee my last love and
blessing.
Now let me leave thee, as I love thee.

HEROD.

Go, then.

MARIAMNE.

Why dost thou say't so harshly?

HEROD.

If thou lovedst me
Thou wouldst not be so ready to be
gone.

MARIAMNE.

Doubt'st me again? Remember what
thou said'st
A moment past, and to thy word be
true.

HEROD.

Well, go, I will believe thee.
[Exit MARIAMNE.]

How now, mother?
What reason shall make good of this
offence
To plead thy pardon?

CYPROS.

Love, my son.

HEROD.

What love
Can pardon plead for interrupting
mine?

Thy love, sayest thou? The love of all
the mothers

Back counted unto Eve, and smelted
down
In one huge mass, would not so much
as make
My love a weapon.

CYPROS.

Then I'll say my pride,
Which guards thy dignity as 'twere
mine own.

HEROD.

My dignity?

CYPROS.

Thy honour and thy dignity.

HEROD.

My dignity? My honour? Quick, give
word!
What wouldst thou touch?

CYPROS.

But that which touches thee.

HEROD.

My honour! By the throne of God, thy
honour
Shall not survive this moment of thy
speaking,
If thou hast played with me.

CYPROS.

Nay, good my son,
Think you a woman so infirm as I
Would take a lion-whelp for plaything?
Nay,
Did I upon my knees approach the
throne
Of great Jehovah, I were not more
serious.

HEROD.

What then? Give word. Who is it?
Hath some one
Proved treacherous in the household?

CYPROS.

Ay,—the one
Who should above all else be faithful.

HEROD.

Joseph —my treasurer?—thy son-in-law?
 What hath he done? Speak, madam:
 I've no time
 To tarry information.

CYPROS.

Nay, not Joseph.

HEROD.

Not Joseph? Then 'tis Sohemus. By heaven!
 Trust hath denied herself if he be false!

CYPROS.

Neither is Sohemus the guilty one.

HEROD.

Who is it, then? Delay no longer, woman.
 I'll have it, though it blast me! Who is it?

CYPROS.

Mayhap I had best tell thee the offence
 Ere naming the offender?

HEROD.

No, I say,
 I'll hear the name. Who is it?

CYPROS.

Mariamne.

HEROD.

Thou liest! Dost thou hear? Thou liest! Stop!
 Keep from me. Come not near me.
 Thou'rt my mother,
 But tempt me not with nearness,—tempt me not.
 Dost know what 'tis to anger Herod?
 Answer!
 What! Mariamne? Mariamne false?
 How false? False to my bed? Were this proved false,
 I'd have thee burned to warm her bed-chamber!

False? Mariamne? How? With whom?
 How false?

Down on thy knees and swear it!

CYPROS.

I do swear it.
 But she is false only in thought, not deed.

HEROD.

In thought? In thought? How canst thou know her thought?
 This is a lie, and thou shalt die for it.
 —Without, there!

CYPROS.

Herod, hear me. Call no witness
 Unto thy shame.

HEROD.

My shame? Away! Away!

CYPROS.

Salome'll prove it.

HEROD.

Though great God Himself
 Came down as witness, I would not believe it!

CYPROS.

My son, if thou wouldst only let me speak—

HEROD.

Speak, then. But I do warn thee that thy life
 Hangs in the balance. One thin thread of gold
 From Mariamne's temple would outweigh it.

CYPROS.

I have had certain knowledge that thy wife
 Hath sent her picture—

HEROD.

Ah?

CYPROS.

To Antony.

HEROD.

Woman, dost thou crave death, that thus
thou tempt'st it?

To Antony? To Antony? Her picture?
Hath sent her picture to Mark Antony,
The Egyptian harlot's lover? She, my
wife,

The queen of Jewry? Mariamne? She,
The wife of Herod? Oh, if thou hast
lied,

I'll have thy heart cut out and thrown
straightway

Beneath the feet of Mariamne!

CYPROS.

Nay,

Thou sham'st thyself, my son, more than
thou dost thy mother,
To give thy wrath the rein. I have had
word.

I know the thing I speak. Salome, too,
Doth know it.

HEROD.

That she hath her picture sent
Unto Mark Antony?

CYPROS.

Ev'n so.

HEROD.

That she—

God! she shall come herself and answer
this.

CYPROS.

Not so; but wait until thou art arrived
In Laodicea, and then, in off-hand man-
ner,

Bring up the subject to Mark Antony,
Or Gallius, or some one of his picked
friends,

But carelessly, as though thou found'st
it matter

For mirth.

HEROD.

Ha, now I see why Antony
Hath summoned me.

CYPROS.

For what, my son?

HEROD.

For what?

To take my life, that he may take my
wife,

I see it all. It is a plot between them.
I see it! Ha! ha! ha!

CYPROS.

Is this a time for laughter, Herod?

Beseech you, quietly. At what dost
laugh?

HEROD.

I laugh to think how I will foil them,
madam!
Where's Joseph? Where is Sohemus?

CYPROS.

Sure thou wilt not word this to
Sohemus,—
To Joseph?

HEROD.

I will word it to Beelzebub
If it doth pleasure me! Out of my way!
Oh, I will play into their hands! I'll
aid them!

I'll make them merry! Ha! ha! ha!
Oh, I'll make them merry!

[Exit, laughing.]

Enter SALOME.

SALOME.

Why laughed my brother?

CYPROS.

At what should he laugh?
A Herod laughs where a mere man
would weep.

SALOME.

Hast told him of the picture?

CYPROS.

Ay.

SALOME.

What said he?

CYPROS.

He laughed, and asked me where thy
husband was.

SALOME.

Asked thee where Joseph was?

CYPROS.

Ay.

SALOME.

God above!
This will ruin all. Joseph would take
her part
Against great heaven.

CYPROS.

But he cannot deny't.

SALOME.

He'll find some means to soothe him.

CYPROS.

Well, so be it.

I've done all in my power to ruin her.

SALOME.

Insolent vixen! I would give one-half
Of my young life, could I but spend the
other

In watching her abasement.

CYPROS.

Soft! Come on.

Herod returns this way. [Exeunt.]

Enter HEROD and JOSEPH.

JOSEPH.

What! Sent her picture to Mark
Antony

Thy mother told thee this? Wilt thou
believe it?

HEROD.

Whether or not I do believe it, uncle,
I've a command for thee.

JOSEPH.

In all, my liege,
I'll prove obedient.

HEROD.

Thou knowest, sir,
This summons is a dangerous one.

JOSEPH.

My lord,
God's kingdom watches over Israel's
kings.

HEROD.

But Israel's God hath naught to do,
good uncle,
With Roman Antony. Look! this com-
mand
Is one most sacred.

JOSEPH.

I will keep it, sire,
As mine own soul.

HEROD.

Then, Joseph, if that Antony
Doth take my life, do you take Mari-
amne's;
For even in death I would not be with-
out her.

JOSEPH.

Dear my lord—

HEROD.

Say no word. Thou hast thy orders.

JOSEPH.

But kill her, sire?—thy queen, whom
thou so lovest?

HEROD.

'Tis for that reason I would have her
slain.

JOSEPH.

But sure, my lord, this is a savage love.

HEROD.

As savage as the heart it quickens. Look,
sir!
Thou wilt be faithful?

JOSEPH.

As unto my God.

HEROD.

[*Taking off a ring.*]

Thus, then, I seal thee to me. Wear
this ring,
And never look on it but what thou
thinkest
Of that which thou art sworn to.

JOSEPH.

I'll remember.

HEROD.

Commend me to my mother and thy
wife,
Also to Alexandra and Hyrcanus.
My queen doth wait for me without.
Farewell.
Remember thou art sealed to this.

JOSEPH.

My lord,
Death will forget ere I do.

HEROD.

Then farewell.

[*Exit.*]

JOSEPH.

How he doth love her! Yet a love more
cruel
Than hottest hate. I know not, on my
soul,
If Herod's hate or Herod's love be
crueller.
Ay, to be Herod's wife were punishment
Enough for a she-angel grown rebellious,
Where Lucifer was hurled into a hell.

Sealed to his orders? Sealed unto a
murder!

Yet he hath ever used me kindly,—ay,
With trust and courtesy. It is this love,
Which makes a madman even of a king,
That hath so spurred him. Now would
unto heaven

Salome did not so abhor the queen!
For, though imperious, she is a woman
To win the liking even of a woman.
She send her picture to Mark Antony!
Why, sooner would she scar her won-
drous beauty

Than so unveil it to the eyes of lust.
She send the fool of Cleopatra love-
tokens!

Nay, let the sea turn traitor to the moon
And fill some reedy pond for love! Well,
well,

Her innocence doth wait to welcome him
In Laodicea. [*Exit.*]

Enter ALEXANDRA and HYRCANUS.

ALEXANDRA.

What, father! thou art with this Her-
od too?

Thou think'st him guiltless? Thou canst
speak of him

With kindness, and thy only grandson
dead

At his command? Oh, are there mothers
in heaven

Who have so suffered upon earth? If
so,—

If any such there be, to them I kneel,
To them cry out, to them denounce
this Herod!

HYRCANUS.

My daughter, thou hast heavy grief to
bear.

ALEXANDRA.

Help me to bear it, then! Take thou
thy share,

And help me to my vengeance! Thou
art king,

Thou art the king of Jewry,—not this
Herod,

This low-born conqueror, this thief o'
crowns,

This son of scorned Antipater! Oh, I
marvel

That thou canst eat, and drink, and
sleep, and wake,

And call thyself Hyrcanus, and yet bear it!

Whence came his greatness? Whence his power? Yea,

And whence his crown? The first two were thy gifts,

The third he stole to show his gratitude! What, sire! wilt thou endure't, wilt sit so calm

While Fortune strips thee to make rich this traitor?

Rise, be a king once more; nay, be a man!

Appeal unto the people; they do love thee.

Resume thy throne, resume thy dignity, Denounce this Herod! Seize this Herod! Slay this Herod!

HYRCANUS.

More gently, good my daughter. I am old.

ALEXANDRA.

Ay, old in patience! Make me but thine heir,

And I'll defy him.

HYRCANUS.

Nay, I crave but peace As pillow for my age. My time to rule Is past, and Time is ruler over me.

Believe me, thou dost somewhat wrong the man.

He is ambitious, but hath not kept all Of this my kingdom.

ALEXANDRA.

What! not all? Not all?

Oh, noble generosity! Not all?

Thy kingdom is thy spouse, and is there beggar

So lost that he would share with any man

His lawful wife? Hyrcanus, O my father,

By thy white hairs I charge thee honour them

And give them back their crown!

HYRCANUS.

'Dear daughter, patience. Had I the wish, the means were not with me.

ALEXANDRA.

Take thou thy part, and God will give thee means.

Oh, would I were Hyrcanus, and a man! Thou soon shouldst see this Herod made a slave!

HYRCANUS.

Hast thou forgot he is thy daughter's husband?

ALEXANDRA.

Forgotten it! Though memory were worn

So full of gaps 'twould not hold yesterday,

That should be recollected! What! forgotten

A Herod's blood doth mingle in the veins That should be clogged with it as with some poison?

That my grandchildren are half Herod? —she,

My child, their willing mother? No, O God!

When I forget this thing, forget Thou me!

Enter CYPROS *and* SALOME.

CYPROS.

Madam, thou dost talk loudly for a palace.

ALEXANDRA.

Madam, thou dost talk pertly for a commoner.

CYPROS.

How! Commoner! The mother of King Herod?

ALEXANDRA.

Common for that, if not a commoner.

CYPROS.

Insolent shrew! dost not thou fear to
word me?

ALEXANDRA.

Insolent citizen! dost not thou fear
To word me?

SALOME.

Madam, best you have a care.

HYRCANUS.

Ay, good my daughter, pray you guard
your tongue.

Who rouses Hate must look for hell
to follow.

Come with me.

ALEXANDRA.

Nay, not I. Let these go forth,
If they would not be worded.

CYPROS.

We go forth
At thy command? Let God obey the
devil.

Go thou forth, shrew.

ALEXANDRA.

Let God obey the devil,
For I will not.

SALOME.

Dost thou insinuate?

CYPROS.

Ay, dost thou dare?

HYRCANUS.

Good Cypros, good Salome,
Good Alexandra—

ALEXANDRA.

Ay, call evil good!
It is thy trade, since thou'st called
Herod generous.

CYPROS.

The king shall hear of this on his return.
Ay, instantly!

ALEXANDRA.

He hath not yet departed.
Here is the lawful king of Israel [*points
to HYRCANUS*],
And here his daughter.

CYPROS.

Herod shall know of this.

ALEXANDRA.

Ay, tell the shoe that the foot chafes
with it.

Do, gentle commoner; do, citizen;
Cypros, do.

HYRCANUS.

Oh, daughter, daughter, you do dig a
pit
And rush into it.—Please you, madam,
patience.

CYPROS.

Dost tell me patience? Thou hast heard
her? Come,
Salome: if the king be not yet gone,
He shall have word of this.

SALOME.

Ay, as I live!

[*Exeunt SALOME and CYPROS.*]

HYRCANUS.

Oh, woe is me, my daughter, that my life
May not glide onward stilly to its silence,
But thus by words be lashed into a storm
To toss this frail old bark that bears my
soul.

Canst thou not feign a peace, though
set for war?

Surely thou need'st not use such taunt-
ing terms

As those with which thou hast just
heaped the mother

And sister of the king.

ALEXANDRA.

The king again?
 And thou dost call him king? More
 sovereignly
 There is in this my tender woman's body
 Then e'er was topped by thy lost diadem.
 Let us begone. The very air's infected
 That they have breathed.

[Exeunt.]

SCENE II.

*Before the palace gates.*MARIAMNE, with her two sons, ALEX-
ANDER and ARISTOBULUS.

MARIAMNE.

How long he tarries! Run, my boys,
 run quickly,
 And see if ye can glimpse him.

[Exeunt boys.]

This delay
 Hath signs that make me fearful. What
 if Cypros
 Hath poured some falsehood in his
 jealous ears
 To poison love? He's here. I'll meet
 him. Well,

Enter HEROD.

At last thou'rt come, my lord.

ALEXANDER.

[Running to his mother.] Oh, mother,
 mother!
 He flung me from him, that I tripped
 and fell!

MARIAMNE.

Herod, was this well done?—Hush,
 hush, my boy:
 King's sons weep not for scratches.—
 Good my lord,
 Wilt thou not answer?

HEROD.

'Tis a comely boy.
 Think you that Antony could father
 better?

MARIAMNE.

Mark Antony? How should I know,
 my lord?

HEROD.

How shouldst thou know? That's well,
 that's very well.
 How shouldst thou know? Ay, ay,
 there is the riddle
 The Sphinx hath failed to answer. 'Tis
 for that
 He turns from Egypt for its solving.

MARIAMNE.

Sire,
 Thou art in merry mood for sad oc-
 casion.
 Goest thou in truth to Antony?

HEROD.

Ay, madam.
 Wilt thou come with me?

MARIAMNE.

No, not if I could.

HEROD.

Ha? Wherefore not?

MARIAMNE.

Because I'm weary, Herod,
 Of thy fierce humours.

HEROD.

Weary of my humours?
 Weary of me? Thou wilt confess it,
 then,
 Unto my face?

MARIAMNE.

I said not I was weary
 Of thee, but of thy humours. As to that,
 When they do touch me only, I can bear
 them;
 But when they touch my children, I am
 roused
 Above submission. See how thou'st
 bruised him, sir!
 And he doth look to thee as unto God,

And loves thee above God,—ay, wor-
ships thee,—
And thus thou usest him!

HEROD.

Come to me, boy.
Thy mother, doth she speak the truth?

ALEXANDER.

Ay, sire,
My mother always speaks the truth.

HEROD.

So! does she?
Thou lov'st me, then?

ALEXANDER.

Yes, sire.

HEROD.

With all thy heart?

ALEXANDER.

With all that's not my mother's.

HEROD.

Dost not know
Herod will not take part of anything?
Well, tremble not. So! Let me see
thine eyes:

What color are they?

ALEXANDER.

Mother saith, like thine.

HEROD.

Ay, doth she? Look! how wouldst thou
like a brother
With Roman eyes?

ALEXANDER.

What are they like, my lord?

HEROD.

Like Antony's.

ALEXANDER.

Is that the Antony
My mother talks of?

HEROD.

Dost thou say so, boy?
Doth she talk of him? Soft, soft, soft!
no tears!
This Antony thy mother talks of,—soft!
No tears, I tell thee,—come, what doth
she say
Of Antony?

ALEXANDER.

That he's a bad, bad Roman,
Who hath sent here to take thee from
us.

HEROD.

Hold!
Look at me. Thou hast honest eyes.

MARIAMNE.

[*Coming forward.*] Ay, Herod,
And he is honest. Wilt thou doubt thy
son,
As well as her who mothered him?—
Sweet boy,
Come close to me.—Why should he not
be honest?
He is Hyrcanus' grandson, and the son
Of Mariamne.

HEROD.

Not of Herod?

MARIAMNE.

Now
Shame on thee, doubting king! I will
bear all
But that which slurs my honour. Darest
thou stand,
Look in my eyes, and hint nie wanton?
No,
Thou dost not dare to do it.—Come,
my sons,
These are no words to fill your innocent
ears:
Bid God-speed to the king your father.

ALEXANDER.

Sire,
God speed thee on thy journey.

ARISTOBULUS.

God be with thee.

MARIAMNE.

Farewell, my lord. God be with thee
indeed,
To mend thy doubting heart.

[Exit with her sons.]

HEROD.

Stay, Mariamne!

No, I'll not call her back to melt resolve
With love's quick fire. I will be firm in
this.

And yet was guilt ne'er foreheaded like
that.

The child, too, said that she named
Antony

But to abuse him. Yet that is no proof,
He may have been instructed so to speak.
I will proceed unto the truth in person.
How if it were some trick? My mother
hates her,—

Salome too. But then they dared not
trick me;

Moreover, they do know that proof
awaits me

Whether of their dishonesty or truth.
Be that as 't may, if she hath sent her
picture

Unto Mark Antony, by Israel's God,
I'll send her to his wanton as a slave!

ACT II.

SCENE I.

Laodicea. A room in ANTONY'S house.

Enter ANTONY and HEROD.

ANTONY.

Nay, say no more about it. I'm content
Unto the full with what thou'st told me.
Tut!

I might have known 'twas woman's bab-
ble.

HEROD.

Ay,

These women that are kin to those we
love!

Methinks that Satan was a married man,
And his wife's mother egged him to
rebel,
Seeing that heaven would not hold them
both.

ANTONY.

Well said! Well said! Thou hast the
trick o' humour.

Thou canst trim old facts with invention,
sir,

Until they seem not worn. Thou'lt be
well missed

In Laodicea. But look you; it is said
Arabia doth not give willing tribute.
How's that?

HEROD.

Thou'st tapped a cedar, Antony,
And look for it to give forth balsam.

ANTONY.

So?

Arabia's king is niggardly?

HEROD.

Good sooth,
As covetous of his gold as Earth her-
self,
And tighter holds it.

ANTONY.

So? I have heard as much
From Cleopatra. What's the tribute?
Know you?

HEROD.

It was two hundred talents, but of late
It has been less,—considerably less.

ANTONY.

Less? That's not well,—not well. I
like not that.

I have no time to war against Arabia.
Two hundred talents? That rich coun-
try's veins

Could spare ten hundred drops o' gold,
nor beat

One pulse-stroke weaker. If there must
be war—

HEROD.
Well?
ANTONY.
If there must be war, I'll look to thee
To manage it.
HEROD.
[*Aside.*]

So be it. He shrinks from murder
Of one alone, but to secure his death
Would order thousands unto theirs.

ANTONY.
[*Muttering.*]
'Tis pity.
'Tis pity. I'd not have it so. [*Rous-*
ing.] What say you?

HEROD.
Nothing.

ANTONY.
If there be war, I look to thee,
Remember.

HEROD.
I'll remember.
ANTONY.

Hold a little,
There are some papers,—those I told
thee of.
Wait for me here.

[*Exit ANTONY.*]

HEROD.
Thou Roman hypocrite!
Wait for thee? Ay, I'll wait, I'll wait.
Fear not
But that I'll wait. Thou cunning plot-
maker!
Make war against Arabia? Thou'dst
make war
Against red hell, if Satan's wife were
comely.
And yet this man doth take my hand
and clasp me
His closest friend, speak of the things
that irk him,
Quote Cæsar freely, whistle Cæsar's
Rome

Into my Jewish ears, make light or
serious
As the mood takes him; and doth brood
withal
O'er schemes to have me butchered.
Israel's God!
If such is friendship, be not Thou my
friend!
Here comes the Roman lover o' Jews'
wives.

Enter ANTONY.

ANTONY.
Here are the papers: please you look at
them:
They can be sealed again. Note this,
and this,
And this particularly. Is't not strange?
Here, too, is something strikes me in-
consistent,
And here again. Dost thou return to-
day?
I do not willing spare thee.

HEROD.
And I go
Less willingly for thy unwillingness.
When shall I look to welcome thee,
my lord,
In Jewry?

ANTONY.
Why, ere very long, I trust,
If all works as I'd have it.

HEROD.
[*Aside.*]
Ay, ay, ay
If all works as thou'dst have it. Verily
I do believe thee.

ANTONY.
What say'st?
HEROD.

That these errors
Are strange indeed. Who drew up these
reports?

ANTONY.
Athenion.

HEROD.

With his own hand?

ANTONY.

I think so.

HEROD.

Best thou madest certain. Then thou'lt
come to Jewry,
If all doth work as thou wouldst have
it, sir?

ANTONY.

Indeed, most joyously.

HEROD.

Be sure o' that.

ANTONY.

What, Herod?

HEROD.

That thou'lt come most joyously.

ANTONY.

Why, I am sure of it.

HEROD.

Sure?

ANTONY.

What's the matter?
Thou makest a mountain of this mole-
hill.

HEROD.

Ay,
But 'twere a task as difficult, Antony,
To make a mole-hill of a mountain.

ANTONY.

Well,
Thou'rt in strange mood to-day. And
thou wilt go?

HEROD.

Ay, Antony.

ANTONY.

I do suspect thee, friend—

HEROD.

Of what?

ANTONY.

Of being somewhat in my plight.
There is one only difference.

HEROD.

And that?

ANTONY.

Thou callest thy Cleopatra Mariamne.

HEROD.

Antony!

ANTONY.

What! So moved at the mere name?

HEROD.

Not at the name, but at the way of
naming:
Name not the wife of Herod and thy
wanton
In the same breath.

ANTONY.

How, sir!

HEROD.

Yes, I repeat it,
And do but ask what I myself fulfil.
Thou hast ne'er heard me name Octavia
In such connection.

ANTONY.

By the gods! thy pride
Would make Jove's throne its footstool!
Have a care!
Dost brave me?

HEROD.

Thou mayst call it as thou wilt,
The fact remains, I will not have my
queen

Come near thy wanton, even in a sentence.

ANTONY.

Gods, sir!

HEROD.

I know I'm in thy power. Yet, Roman, I've done but what in my place thou hadst done.

ANTONY.

Well—well—well—well. She's fair enough, in truth, To make a lover even of a Herod.

HEROD.

How dost thou know she's fair? By hearsay?

ANTONY.

By hearsay and by demonstration both. I have her picture.

HEROD.

[*Calmly and with tightened lips.*]

Ah! thou hast her picture?

ANTONY.

And well done, too. One Procrius, a Greek, Hath limned it. I have oft bethought me, sir, That thou shouldst have it.

HEROD.

[*More calmly and more rigid.*] Hast thou so, indeed?

ANTONY.

Ay, from the hour I knew it had been sent By Alexandra, I did purpose to—

HEROD.

By Alexandra! God! by Alexandra? Didst thou say Alexandra?

ANTONY.

Ay. What then?

HEROD.

Did Alexandra send it to thee? Speak! Hyrcanus' daughter, Alexandra?

ANTONY.

Ay.
What, man! art going mad?—Without, there! ho!
Wine! Water! Anything to drink! Wine, there!

HEROD.

[*Aside.*] (And I have doubted her, have thought her false, Bid her a cold farewell.) I cry you grace.
Give me to drink some water. No, not wine!
Water, I tell you! 'Tis the air, I think,
The closeness of the day. Notice me not.
The picture, thou dost say, was sent to thee By Alexandra?

ANTONY.

Ay, by Alexandra.

HEROD.

Dost thou know, Antony, I lied just now?

ANTONY.

Lied?

HEROD.

Lied! I gave thee, friend, to understand That my wife's mother stood not in my love.

ANTONY.

And so thou didst.

HEROD.

Well, hear me, Antony: Before the one great God of Israel, I dote upon her!

ANTONY.

Well, of all thy moods This is the strangest.

HEROD.

Yet the welcomest;
Look you,—the picture,—can I see it
now?

ANTONY.

I will go bring it to thee.

HEROD.

I'm thy debtor. [*Exit ANTONY.*]
Oh, Mariamne, Mariamne, Mariamne!
Thou shalt set foot upon my neck for
this,
Loll on my throne, and take my diadem
To girdle thee.
And I did bid her cold farewell, and
thus
Am one kiss short for all eternity!
And the boy, too,—I hurt him. A brave
boy,
So proud he would not weep, although
I gripped him
To hurt one tougher by a good ten
years.
A valiant boy. And she so fierce for
him;
Ay, ay, she hurt me well for hurting him.
Oh, I'll invent some higher name than
prince
To give her sons!
Good Joseph!—he believed in her. Now,
truth,
I am half envious of Joseph's goodness.
But he shall not outdo me after this:
Herod the king shall as a warning take
Herod the husband. Yet without a
cause
I was not jealous. No, by Jewry's
throne,
I was not jealous without cause! My
mother—
Ay, but she did not lie in everything.
No, Alexandra, Alexandra, she—
Hyrceanus' daughter! Ha! there's mis-
chief here,
Though of a different temper. She to
send
The picture of my wife to Antony?
To Antony? Ah, let me think on this!
This hath, in truth, a twang of treachery,
False, scheming Jezebel! Yet I'll for-
give her,
That 'twas herself, not Mariamne,—
yea,

Not Mariamne! But she must to
prison,—
To prison, for a time at least.

Enter ANTONY.

ANTONY.

Here is the picture: it is something
rough
In certain parts: a taking roughness,
though.

HEROD.

Ay, ay, 'tis like, 'tis very like: her eyes
Unto an eyelash, yet not to an eyelash:
There's margin here for the imagination
To make perfection out of, almost. Why
I like it for its lack o' sleekness, man.
'Tis only God who can afford to finish!
'Tis like her, but as sunlight's like the
sun.

The color's here, but not the radiance.
I thank thee, Antony. This thought o'
thine
Shall father many deeds. As to Arabia,
I will do all that thou couldst there de-
sire;
Fear not the issue. Now give me the
papers;
Thou has not sealed them, though,
Here is a lamp;
Despatch, I pray thee, for I must be-
gone;
Or shall I seal them?

ANTONY.

Oh, I'll do it for thee.
Gaze on thy pictured queen in peace
meantime.
As to the tribute from Arabia,
'Tis in thy hands. All such auxiliaries
As thou didst purpose for my army's
strengthening,
Take in this cause if needs be so. These
papers
Are now as tight as is my trust in thee,
And, like that trust, stamped with my
seal. Commend me
Unto thy queen, thy mother, and thy
household;
Farewell, if thou wilt go.

HEROD.

I must, my friend.
In everything depend on me.

ANTONY.

I will.

HEROD.

Then, once more thanking thee as to
this matter,
The likeness of my queen, farewell.

ANTONY.

Farewell. *[Exit HEROD.]*

'Twas well imagined. Ay, 'twill serve
a turn.

Fate hath by this woven his very heart-
strings

Into the pattern of my destiny.
He will remember I returned that pic-
ture,

Where, otherwise, myself would be for-
got.

Ah, well, so goes it. Yet, as I'm a
Roman,

'Twere almost worth my while to turn
a Jew

Could I by so becoming fall in love
With mine own lawful spouse. Yet,

after all,
The Jew's God is a bachelor, therefore
wise

In that respect above our Roman Jove:
There's nothing quicker rouses envious
spleen

Than to behold a man who's deep in
love

With his own wife! *[Exit]*

SCENE II.

A room in HEROD'S palace.

Enter JOSEPH and SALOME.

JOSEPH.

Ay, madam, I repeat it—I repeat it;
I know thou art my wife, and I re-
peat it.

God wot, I know that thou'rt my lawful
wife,

And yet I do repeat it. Heaven wit-
ness

That I remember Cypros is thy mother,
Thyself my wife Salome, yet again

I do repeat it: ye are both unjust,
Unwise, unwomanly, in this your hatred

Of Noble Mariamne.

SALOME.

Sir, be warned:
Thou hadst best guard thy tongue,

JOSEPH.

Do thou, then, wife,
Set me example.

SALOME.

This to me?—to me?

JOSEPH.

This unto any one who hates the queen.
I say 'twas base in thee to run to Herod

With this tale of the picture. Ay, more-
over,

That I will ne'er believe she knew 'twas
sent,

Till Raphael be commissioned so to say!

SALOME.

Sir, I do tell thee—

JOSEPH.

Madam, I tell thee
I will not rest till this be set at rights.

She send her picture to Mark Antony!
She would as soon have Satan for a
lover.

Ay, that I'll swear to. She to send her
picture!

Salome, in God's name—all praise be
His!

Wherefore, in God's name, as I said,
do ye,

Your mother and yourself, so hate the
queen?

SALOME.

Wherefore? Didst say wherefore?
Thou dost observe her,

Her insolence, her arrogance, her scorn,
Her sideward smiles, her upward eye-
brows, ay,
Her hints and innuendoes, and then ask
Wherefore? Away! Thou art so blind
with doting
Upon this virtuous queen, thou canst not
see
When she insults thy wife.

JOSEPH.

I can well see
When that my wife insults me. Come,
be careful:
No more o' that.

SALOME.

No more of what?

JOSEPH.

Of that
I shame to mention,—how much more
to hear!
Woman, see that thou dost not drop
again
Into such wicked hinting. Nay, no
word:
I will not hear it. God protect the
queen
From thy tongue's venom! In the mean
time, I,
Being His servant, will do what I can
To keep her happy. Nay, I tell thee,
peace.
I will not hear so much as one foul
word
Against Queen Mariamne!

SALOME.

Will not?

JOSEPH.

Ay,

Will not.

SALOME.

Thou wilt not hear me speak? Thou?
—thou?
Thou wilt not hear me speak?—Salome?
—me?
Thy wife, and Herod's sister?

JOSEPH.

Should not to me insult his queen.
Herod's self

SALOME.

Out, slave!

JOSEPH.

Slave, maybe, but unchained. Therefore
be still.
Here comes the queen herself.

SALOME.

[*Muttering.*]

A crownéd baggage.

Enter MARIAMNE and her two sons.

MARIAMNE.

Let us sit here, sweet boys.—Madam,
good-morrow.
Fair greeting to thee, friend.—Come,
Alexander,
Bring me thy bow, I'll string it.

SALOME.

Pray you, madam,
Whence came that bow?

MARIAMNE.

It was my husband's, madam,
When that he was a lad.

SALOME.

He will ill take it
That thou hast fingered o'er his trap-
pings thus.

MARIAMNE.

Ah! dost thou think so?—Not so hard,
my boy;
Set thy knee to it steadily. Now, now,
There goes the string! Now see if thou
canst bend it.

ALEXANDER.

Almost. 'Tis stiff. Whew! but it stung
my wrist!

There. Is that better?

JOSEPH.

Good, good, good, my lad!
Thy father will be boy again to watch
thee.
Well done! Well done!

ALEXANDER.

What sayest thou, mother?

MARIAMNE.

Why,
Well done, indeed, my warrior.

SALOME.

Have care;
I know thy father's humour, boy. Be-
ware
Lest thy fine weapon turn into a rod
For thy chastisement.

ALEXANDER.

Madam, dost thou think
A son of Herod would be beaten?

SALOME.

Ay,
If Herod snuffed occasion. Ay, young
sir,
I do, most surely.

MARIAMNE.

Then thou art mistaken.
He is not only Herod's son, but mine.
Think you I'd see him beaten?

SALOME.

What wouldst do?
Close thine eyes, girl?

MARIAMNE.

No, but have closed in death
The eyes of any who did try it.

SALOME.

Ay,
Were it the king himself. I can believe
thee.

MARIAMNE.

Thou talkest idly, madam, and beyond
Thy mark o' freedom.—Come here, pret-
ty one.

[To ARISTOBULUS.]

Wouldst thou shoot, too?

ARISTOBULUS.

Ay, mother, that I would.
But that's too big for me.

MARIAMNE.

I'll have one cut, then,
Fit for thy dainty grasp. How's that,
my heart?

ARISTOBULUS.

Oh, well, well, well! I will shoot too.
Oh, ay!
Brother! oh, brother, look, I'm going to
shoot,
Better than thee! I'm going to kill a
tiger
And sleep upon his hide. And then
another;
That shall be mother's. Then another
yet
For Uncle Joseph. Uncle, wouldst thou
like it?
Thou wilt not mind the hole my arrow
makes,
Wilt thou? Look, uncle, big as this.
Look, mother,
As big as this!

MARIAMNE.

Sweet chatterer, come here.
Thou'rt treading on thy aunt Salome's
robe.

SALOME.

What's that? Let him tread on. His
mother, truth,
Sets foot upon my neck: then why not
he
Upon my garments? Go on, boy, go on.

ALEXANDER.

Why, what's the matter, aunt? What
has he done?

SALOME.

What is the matter? Out, thou babbling brat!
I'll answer thee. [*Cuffs him.*]

MARIAMNE.

[*Seizing her wrist and swinging her to her knees by a sudden movement.*]

Ask thou his pardon, there.
Do as I bid thee. It were best for thee.
Look in my eyes, and thou wilt know
'twere best
For thee and thine that thou obeyed'st
me! Quick,
His pardon.

SALOME.

[*As if cowed.*] Well, I ask it, then.

MARIAMNE.

More, more.
Say, "Alexander, son of Mariamne,
I crave thy pardon with all humbleness."
Say it!

SALOME.

I say it.

MARIAMNE.

Woman, speak those words!
Speak!

SALOME.

Alexander, son of Mariamne.
I crave thy pardon.

MARIAMNE.

With all humbleness.

SALOME.

Well, with all humbleness.

MARIAMNE.

Now crave thou mine.

JOSEPH.

Nay, madam.

MARIAMNE.

Crave thou mine!

SALOME.

[*Sneeringly.*] Ay, Joseph, plead!

MARIAMNE.

Crave thou my pardon, woman!

SALOME.

Well, I crave it. [*Rising to her feet.*]
But better for thee hadst thou cursed
high heaven
Than dared Salome's vengeance!

[*Exit.*]

JOSEPH.

Good madam, if it had been possible,
I would thou hadst left this undone.

MARIAMNE.

Good uncle,
In that she is thy wife, with all my heart
I wish so too. But it was written so.
Think on't no more. Thou hast my
trust and love
In everything save in thy spouse, good
uncle.
I cannot feign. Therein is my chief
fault—
Or virtue, as you will.—Look, little one,
Go with thine uncle: he will see thy
bow
Doth suit thee.

ARISTOBULUS.

Wilt thou truly, uncle dear?

JOSEPH.

Ay, that I will. Come on.—Sweet niece,
I thank thee.

[*Exit ARISTOBULUS and JOSEPH.*]

ALEXANDER.

Mother, I loved thee when thou flungest
her down!

How strong thou art! Oh, thou art
 very queen
 Without thy diadem, as night is night
 Without the stars. Sweet mother!

MARIAMNE.

Ah, my boy,
 Thou dost not know—

ALEXANDER.

What, mother?

MARIAMNE.
 [*Absently.*]

What it is

To be a Herod's wife.

ALEXANDER.

How dost thou mean?

MARIAMNE.
 [*As if to herself.*]

Doubted at every turn,—insulted, braved
 By those who most should cherish me,—
 my children
 Subject to slights which I could better
 bear,
 My mother scorned, her father set at
 naught,
 And I not even queen over his moods.

ALEXANDER.

What art thou saying, mother? Please
 remember
 That which thou saidst thou'dst tell me.

MARIAMNE.

What, dear?

ALEXANDER.

Why,
 How thou first saw'st my father! How
 he threw
 The javelin! how rode the Arab horse!
 Oh, thou dost know. Wilt thou not
 tell me now?

MARIAMNE.

How I first saw thy father?

ALEXANDER.

Ay. Please do it.

MARIAMNE.

It is so long ago.

ALEXANDER.

Oh, mother, please!
 Don't say thou hast forgotten it, sweet
 mother!
 Think!

MARIAMNE.

God in heaven! it is the one last thing
 That I would do. Nay, never heed me,
 child;
 I do remember what thou'dst have. So,
 then,
 Sit there. How like, how like thine eyes
 are, sweet,
 Unto thy father's! Well, I'll on. Let's
 see:
 How was it, now? His very trick o' lip.
 Well, well, I'll tell thee. 'Twas a sum-
 mer day,
 And I a maid of Spring. Canst thou
 think, boy,
 Of me as being some sweet little maid
 Such as thou'lt some day woo and mar-
 ry?

ALEXANDER.

Nay,
 I will not wed her unless she be in truth
 Thy very copy as thou art this instant.

MARIAMNE.

Oh, darling! thy old mother?

ALEXANDER.

Old! Thou old?
 But tell the story, for thou shalt not
 tease me.

MARIAMNE.

'Twas Nisan, then, a day o' cloud and
 shine,
 Yet all the clouds condensed would
 scarce have dyed
 One o' thy swarthy locks. There was a
 festival,

And there were promised many feats of strength

And skill in various ways, especially Casting the javelin. Thou knowest, sweet,

Samaria was my home, the lovely "vale Of many waters,"—so they call it. Oh To see the great pomegranate-trees in bloom

Once more—but once! It was in very truth

As though the heart's blood of the year had stained them.

I'm coming to thy father! I was then Affianced to him only, ne'er had seen Even his pictured face, and greatly feared To think of how he might appear. At last,

When almost we were tired o' watching youths

Draw bows or brandish spears, he came. His horse,

A coal-black Arab, trapped in beaten gold,

As though dark Night had borrowed of bright Day,

Chafed at the reins and reared. At that the king,

Herod, thy father, dashed his mighty fist Against the brute's strained crest, then, loosing rein.

Poised lithely, with his javelin aloft, Keen on the changing air. Onward they swooped,

Straight on, with singing hair and hoofs a-thunder.

Like to a wind made visible.

ALEXANDER.

On, mother! Tell me the rest! Please, mother! mother! mother! Don't stop to think of it! Tell me the rest!

MARIAMNE.

He cast the javelin. The severed air Shrieked with its wound, and, lo! the last shot arrow

That marked the target quivered, cleft in twain

By that sure-hurléd blade.

ALEXANDER.

He cleft the arrow?— The shaft itself? Oh, mother, dost thou think

I could so cast a javelin some day? Not now, but when I'm bigger? Dost thou think it?

MARIAMNE.

I know not if thou couldst excel withal To such extent as did thy father, dear: He is world-honored for such feats.

But, truth, I think thou couldst in part approach his skill.

Thou hast his very swing o' carriage.

ALEXANDER.

Well, What next? What did he then?

MARIAMNE.

Leaped from his horse And caught me in his arms.

Enter HEROD.

HEROD.

As he doth now! What! trembling? Oh, my queen! my wife! my life! Tremble no more! Give me thy lips! Look up! Nay, sweet, look down. [*Kneeling.*] Here is my rightful place; Here let me kneel forever!

MARIAMNE.

Nay, my lord. Thy place is something higher, for 'tis here.

[*Touching her heart.*]

HEROD.

Then lift me to it, for I dare not rise Of my sole self unto such happiness.

MARIAMNE.

[*Lifting him.*] Come, then.

HEROD.

Oh, God! to love like this is pain.
Give me thy shoulder for a moment,
sweet.
All of me that's not Herod is in mine
eyes.

MARIAMNE.

And all that's Herod or not Herod, love,
Is in my heart.

HEROD.

[*Taking her face into his hands.*]

In nothing changed: the same
Deep, maddening eyes; lips curled for
love; rich locks
That tempt the fingers. Ay, the same,
the same,
Even to that flutter in thy throat when
touched,
As though thy heart were some wild,
wingéd thing
That struggled to be free. Wild heart,
I'll kiss thee
For being wild. [*Kisses her throat.*]

MARIAMNE.

Ah, Herod! ah, thy corselet!—
It cuts my arm.

HEROD.

Let my lips plead its pardon.

[*Kissing her shoulder.*]

God's heart, girl, thou art twenty times
more sweet
Than all thy dear Samaria's sun-kissed
fruits.
Thy lips! Once more thy lips!—thy
lips!—thy lips!

MARIAMNE.

Nay, Herod! Herod! thou forgett'st the
boy.
This is not seemly.

HEROD.

Ho! Not seemly, say'st thou?
Herod and seemly harnessed, were as
well
As were a tiger lashed unto a dove.

MARIAMNE.

Yet doves, the Greeks do tell us, draw
Love's chariot.

HEROD.

The chariot of Love's queen. The king
of love
Guides heel-wing'd tigers with a sword
of flame.
Talk not to me of doves: it is as though
One little, milk-white cloud did near the
blaze
Of some red sunset. Heaven is in my
heart
Because of thee,—but heaven on fire.
Look, boy;
Come to my knee. Thou art a well-knit
lad:
Wouldst learn to cast the javelin?

ALEXANDER.

Oh, father!

HEROD.

That's well,—that's well. Ay, call me
father, boy:
I like it better than more stately terms
From thy young lips.—He hath thy
brows, my queen.

MARIAMNE.

Nay, thine—unto a hair.

HEROD.

Why, heart, look here:
For th' dark original of this proud arch
I first did love thee. Mine? Thou
knowest well
Those were ne'er copied from my shaggy
front.—
Look thou, to-morrow ere the sun be
high
I'll teach thee how to cast a javelin.

ALEXANDER.

Sire!

HEROD.

Nay, father, or no javelin.

ALEXANDER.

Dear father!

HEROD.

Thou rogue! that knack o' sweetness,
without question,
Was from thy mother gotten. Well,
come kiss me.
Now off.

ALEXANDER.

Ay, father. Mother dear, farewell!

[Exit.]

HEROD.

Now to my lips!

MARIAMNE.

My lord.

HEROD.

Nay, do not speak.

MARIAMNE.

I cannot breathe.

HEROD.

Ah, peace!

MARIAMNE.

Nay, let me breathe.

HEROD.

Presently, by and by. Why, struggle
not.
I would not hurt thee.

MARIAMNE.

But thou dost,—thou dost.
Thou art so strong thou dost not know.

HEROD.

Well, there.
Come lean against me. Look! what
thinkest thou
That I have here? [*Touching his breast.*]

MARIAMNE.

I cannot think.

HEROD.

To please me. Come. But try,

MARIAMNE.

A lock of hair?

HEROD.

Since first I loved thee; but there's
something else. Ay, that,

MARIAMNE.

Indeed I cannot think what 'tis.

HEROD.

[*Taking out picture.*]

Why, here,—
What dost thou think o' this?

MARIAMNE.

Why, 'tis myself!
When didst thou have it done? And
where? By whom?
Am I as fair as that?

HEROD.

Is moonlight fair
As starlight?

MARIAMNE.

Nay, my eyes are not so large.

HEROD.

Larger.

MARIAMNE.

Oh, Herod, no! And see what lips!

HEROD.

I'd rather feel them. Nay, shrink not,
shrink not:
Thou dost not know how't chafes me
when thou shrinkest.

MARIAMNE.

I will not, then. Who painted it?

HEROD.

A Greek
Named Procrius. Here, take it in thy
hands.
'Tis well done, is it not? [*Aside.*] She
is as true
To me as I was false to her. I'd swear
By every goddess in the Roman heaven
That she ne'er eyed that picture in her
life.
Ay, 'twas all Alexandra. God of Israel!
Would to Thy mercy that, like Adam's
wife,
All others could be mothered by a rib!

MARIAMNE.

[*Coming towards him.*]

It is most wondrous.
In truth, my love, it gladdens me at
heart
That thou'st so good a copy of myself,
To help remembrance when thou'rt ab-
sent.

HEROD.

Nay,
Memory needs no aid from Mariamne.
But how thinkest thou I got this picture?

MARIAMNE.

Truth,
It is beyond me.

HEROD.

Whose dost think it was
Ere it was mine?

MARIAMNE.

I cannot dream.

HEROD.

Why, then—
Mark Antony's.

MARIAMNE.

Mark Antony's! Thou jestest.

HEROD.

I do not jest. Thy mother sent this
picture
Unto Mark Antony.

MARIAMNE.

No! no! Why should she?

HEROD.

I know not; but for no good,—that I
know.

MARIAMNE.

What wilt thou do?

HEROD.

Thou knowest as well as I
That for offence so grave imprisonment
Were a light punishment.

MARIAMNE.

Ah, for my sake
Forgive her. Thou dost know how rash
she is.—
How hot o' temper. 'Twas a crime,
indeed,
To bare my face unto the Roman's
eyes;
But I, who bare my very soul to thee,
Do crave her pardon. Look, my lord, I
kneel.

HEROD.

No, by my soul! thou never shalt bend
knee
To any save thv God. She was forgiven
At thy first asking.

MARIAMNE.

Now thou'rt king indeed,—
Now Herod at his best.

HEROD.

Come, prove it, then,
Upon my lips.—Who comes?

Enter JOSEPH and ARISTOBULUS.

ARISTOBULUS.

[*Brandishing a little bow and arrow.*]

Oh, mother, look! look! look! [*Seeing the king.*] Oh, uncle!

HEROD.

Soft!

Come here, boy. Why, thou art most
bravely weaponed.
Canst bend that monstrous bow?—Good
uncle, greeting.

JOSEPH.

I knew not thou wert back, my lord,
indeed.
When didst thou come?

HEROD.

Why, some few moments gone.
Uncle, I would have word with thee.—
My love,
Farewell until this interview be o'er,
Wait for me in our chamber.

MARIAMNE.

Ay, my lord.

Come, little archer.

[*Exit with ARISTOBULUS.*]

HEROD.

Good uncle, thou wert right in all thou
saidst:
The mother of my queen, and not her-
self,
Did send her picture to Mark Antony.

JOSEPH.

Praise be to God for this! And, good
my lord,
Let it be long ere thou again dost doubt
her.

HEROD.

Is never long enough?

JOSEPH.

Ay, if thou'rt serious.
But close thine ears against the slanders,
sire,
My wife and thine own mother are most
sure
Again to bring thee.

HEROD.

Death's not deafer, sir,
Than I will be.

JOSEPH.

Nor let looks stir thee.

HEROD.

As I am king. None,

JOSEPH.

As thou art man!

HEROD.

Ay, then,
As I am man. Not one, not one. Rest,
uncle;
I will be staunch. But look you, sir:
what object
Dost think Hyrcanus' daughter had in
this?

JOSEPH.

Nay, I know not. Some woman's mud-
dle, surely.
Thou'lt not stir up dissension when 'tis
napping,
For such small cause?

HEROD.

Small cause, say you? Small cause!
Just heaven! it hath never seemed so
great
As by this "small" o' thine. Small
cause, that she,
My queen, hath been unveiled unto the
eyes
That are a wanton's daily mirrors! Oh,
Small cause had God to punish Lucifer,
If that my cause against this shrew be
small!

JOSEPH.

What wilt thou, then?

HEROD.

I would have 'prisoned her,
But that my queen did plead against it,
sir.—

Unto less heart-near matters: Antony
Has given Cœlosyria to his jade.

JOSEPH.

That's better for Judea than for Antony.
Sawest Cleopatra while in Laodicea?

HEROD.

Ay. How she hates me!

JOSEPH.

Thou wert safer, nephew,
In Cleopatra's hate than in her love.

HEROD.

Ay, but she works against me.

[Enter CYPROS.]

Greeting, mother.
How dost thou?

CYPROS.

Well in body, but in mind
Something less easy. Sir, I crave your
leave.

[Aside.]

Bid him go forth. I have some news for
thee.

HEROD.

Is it so musty now it will not keep?

CYPROS.

It doth concern Hyrcanus' daughter,
Herod,
If thou'st no care to hear it, I will go.

HEROD.

Nay, stay. Of Alexandra? I will hear
it.—
Uncle, thy leave.

JOSEPH.

Nephew, thy promise.

HEROD.

I will remember. Ay,

JOSEPH.

Heaven aid thee, then!
[Exit.]

HEROD.

Mother, thou art not in my love just
now.

How camest thou to state so falsely,
madam,

This matter of the picture?

CYPROS.

Good my son,
How dost thou mean?

HEROD.

Thou knewest all the while
Hyrcanus' daughter sent it,—not my
wife.

CYPROS.

Nay, Herod, as I live. But how dost
know
'Twas only Alexandra?

HEROD.

That's not matter.
Suffice it that I know. What's this thou
saidst
Thou hadst to tell me?

CYPROS.

While that thou wast gone,
Reports did reach us thou wert slain by
Antony;

Whereon this woman strove to coax thy
uncle
That he would set forth straightway
from Judea
And seek protection with the Roman
legion.

 HEROD.
She did?

 CYPROS.

 Ay, by my soul!

 HEROD.

 Thou hast once lied:
How shall I know if once thou speakest
truth?

 CYPROS.

Here comes Salome: ask her.

 HEROD.

 Hath Salome
The writ of truth about her?

 [Enter SALOME.]

 Look you, sister,
What of this flying to the Roman en-
signs?

 SALOME.
True.

 HEROD.

 Wilt thou swear it?

 SALOME.

 Ay.

 HEROD.

 God knows ye women
Would swear hell heaven, to win the
devil over.
How shall I know?

 CYPROS.

 Ask Joseph.

SALOME.

 Nay, not Joseph.

 HEROD.

Why not?

 SALOME.

 Because he would swear wet were dry,
To win one smile from thy chaste
queen.

 HEROD.

 What meanest thou?

 SALOME.

But what I said.

 HEROD.

 Why saidst thou "my chaste queen"?

 SALOME.

Is she not chaste?

 HEROD.

 Softly! No insolence!
Why should I not ask Joseph?

 SALOME.

 Ask him, then:
'Tis naught to me.

 HEROD.

 But 'tis not naught to me!
Woman, give word. Why dost thou
simper? Speak!
What dost thou smirk at?

 SALOME.

 Why, at mine own thoughts.

 HEROD.

Are they so merry?—Mother, dost thou
know

Why thus she Josephs me?

CYPROS.

'Tis not unnatural
A wife should feel some jealousy when—

HEROD.

When what? This 'what's' the thing.
Sister, have care,—
Have care: I am more Mariamne's husband
Than I'm thy brother.

SALOME.

Think'st thou that is news?

HEROD.

Then answer.

SALOME.

I have answered.

HEROD.

What dost thou hint at?

Trifle not.

SALOME.

Hinting's not my way.
Thank God, I have the courage to be
honest.

HEROD.

Then demonstrate it. What didst mean
just now,
By saying that Joseph would swear wet
were dry,
To win a smile from Mariamne?

SALOME.

That he would do it. There's no mystery
there.

HEROD.

Pernicious vixen! I'd not husband thee
Though on our wedding-day I were to
pose

God of the hundredth heaven! What
dost thou mean,
Thou smirking obstinacy? Speak, I
say!
If that thou dost not word it o' the' instant,
I'll give thy vaunted courage work to
do.

SALOME.

If thou wouldst hear thy shame told as
a tale,
Pardon me if I would not so hear mine.

HEROD.

My shame and thine? My shame?
Have care! have care!

Herod is Herod, though ten times a
brother.

My shame? My shame? My shame?
Ay, let thy blood

Forswear thy poisonous lips, as that of
thee

In my hot veins forswears thy poisonous
self.

Mother, begone! we'll have this out
alone.

No word! Depart! [*Exit CYPROS.*]
Now, woman.

SALOME.

'Tis not my fault. Why dost glare?

HEROD.

Fault? Fault? Who spoke of fault?
Just now 'twas shame. Well, shame's
a fault, that's true.

And faults are shameful when found
out. Come, hasten,
Madam, this matter.

SALOME.

[*Pulling out a bracelet.*]

Hast thou e'er seen this?

HEROD.

Ah, 'tis the bracelet I gave Mariamne
At our betrothal. Jade, how didst thou
get it?
She wears it ever on her left arm.

SALOME.
Did wear,—not wears it.

HEROD.
Girl, where didst thou find it?

SALOME.
In Joseph's closet.

HEROD.
May that lie thrice damn thee!
What! thou wouldst have me think—oh,
devilish harpy!—
Have I e'er called thee sister? Look,
Salome,
If thou hast jested, I'll forgive thee.

SALOME.
If I had jested, I would not forgive
Myself.

HEROD.
Oh, devil!—devil!

SALOME.
Why, just powers!
Let me begone ere that I am quite
murdered
For doing what's my duty.

HEROD.
Move no step
Until I wring that poisonous mind o'
thine
Of its last drop. Thou say'st thou
found'st this bracelet
Within thy husband's closet?

SALOME.

Ay.

HEROD.
Then thou
Didst steal and put it there!

SALOME.

Brother!

HEROD.
I say,
If thou didst find the bracelet of my
wife
In Joseph's closet, thou didst steal it
thence
And put it there for reasons of thine
own!

SALOME.
Herod!

HEROD.
Ay, that's the name of Jewry's king.
Doth any dare to brave him who doth
bear it?
Look you, if this be false,—nay, it is
false,—
Why, mark you, then, if when I show
this bracelet
Unto my queen, with word of thy foul
slander,—
If, when I tell her this, she pleads not
for thee,
To have thee pardoned, dear as is this
toy
For all the memories that it doth enring,
I'll have it beaten to an arrow head,
And send it through thy false and
shrivelled heart
With mine own hand!

[Exit.]

SALOME.

Accurséd be ye both!

ACT III.

SCENE I.

A room in HEROD'S Palace.

Enter MARIAMNE and ALEXANDRA.

MARIAMNE.

Mother, I do but ask thee be advised.

ALEXANDRA.

Thou dost but ask me be advised? In-
deed!

So thou dost only ask me be advised?

Well, am I not a docile, patient mother?
A gentle, good, obedient, humble queen?
Thou ask'st me be advised! Now, let a
babe

Advise its mother how to suckle it,—
The stars grow independent, and turn
back

Upon their courses to instruct high God
How they should move,—earth rail at
heaven's method,—

The entire and changeless system change
about,

Until at last the nations rule their kings,
Not kings their nations! Thou advise
me!

MARIAMNE.

Madam,

Thou must acknowledge that it was not
seemly

To send my picture to the Roman gen-
eral.

What purpose hadst thou?

ALEXANDRA.

What is that to thee,
Since 'twas unseemly? Thou wouldst
not seek, surely,

To learn unseemly matters?

MARIAMNE.

Good my mother,
Wilt thou not see that all my care, in
this

Hath been to place thee beyond scorn or
danger?

Thou ran'st a risk almost as terrible
As when thou soughtest to convey thy-
self

And Aristobulus to Cleopatra
Concealed in perforated coffins.

ALEXANDRA.

Risk!

What risk? Of what?

MARIAMNE.

Of being imprisoned.

ALEXANDRA.

I?—

I be imprisoned?—I?—Hyrcaus' daugh-
ter?—

The sometime queen of this usurping
king?

MARIAMNE.

Mother, have care.

ALEXANDRA.

He to imprison me?
He—Herod—to imprison Alexandra?
Out! I will not believe it.

MARIAMNE.

Best thou didst.

ALEXANDRA.

What! thou wouldst suffer it?

MARIAMNE.

To be a queen
Doth mean to suffer many things, good
mother;
And who should know this better than
thyself?

ALEXANDRA.

Ay, who indeed, O God!

MARIAMNE.

Then for my sake
Be warned in time. For there may
come an hour
When even Mariamne'll plead in vain.

ALEXANDRA.

What wouldst thou?

MARIAMNE.

Be but careful. Make no plans
To follow secret ways. Thou knowest
well
Thou'rt watched at every turn.

ALEXANDRA.

Ay, well I know it.
But what's more exquisite than by thy
skill

To make the watcher watch in vain,—
outwit him,—
Baffle him utterly?

MARIAMNE.

How thou hast ever failed unto this moment.

ALEXANDRA.

We must thrice fail to be successful once.
I have once more to fail.

MARIAMNE.

Believe me, mother, .
That "once" might never live to breed success.
Here comes the king. I'll ask thee now to go:
'Twere best he did not now see us together.

ALEXANDRA.

I'll think of what thou'st said, but will not promise.
No promises. [Exit.]

MARIAMNE.

She is my body's mother,
And yet she seems as daughter to my soul.
Oh, would to God that she would be advised!
There's something ominous to me of late
In very silence, and my urgent heart
Cries, "Herod! Herod! Herod!" till the night
Is vibrant with his name. Would unto God
I knew to what extent he loveth me,
Or could but sift his passion through his love
And note how much the one outweighs the other!
Joseph doth hold unto the theory
That he doth cherish me above ambition;
And yet I doubt:—men so oft love the pleasure
Above the pleasure giver. Love lives on trifles,
And we can lose him wholly with an eye,
A broken tooth, an arm, our tresses' gold.

How if some day this face which now he worships
Were by some grievous accident scarred o'er,
Made hideous? How if mine eyes were blurred
By some fierce, sudden blight?—my figure mangled?
How if—oh, God!—I were a leper? Then—
Would he then love me? Nay, a leprous soul
Were easier borne of men than that one lock
Should lose its beauty! Yet, withal, how Joseph
Doth dwell upon his constancy! Good Joseph!
His wife's the only evil thing about him.
Good, faithful Joseph!

Enter HEROD.

HEROD.

Madam, I am come.
Is Joseph here?

MARIAMNE.

No. Dost thou wish for him?
I'll have him called.

HEROD.

Nay, but I heard his name;
I'm sure I heard his name.

MARIAMNE.

Why, so thou didst:
I spoke of him.

HEROD.

Spoke of him? What of him?
Do thy thoughts oft run Joseph-wards?

MARIAMNE.

Indeed they do, my lord.

HEROD.

Ha!

MARIAMNE.

I am certain, sir,
He is the faithfullest of those about thee.

HEROD.

The faithfullest?

MARIAMNE.

Ay. Why dost thou so stare?

HEROD.

Know'st thou this bracelet?

MARIAMNE.

Oh! where didst thou find it?
Thank God 'tis found! How strange
that thou shouldst find it!

HEROD.

Strange?

MARIAMNE.

Ay. What then?

HEROD.

Wherefore is it so strange
That I should find thy bracelet?

MARIAMNE.

'Twas my thought,—
My woman's way o' conjuring coinci-
dence
Out of a leaf-fall. I did say 'twas
strange
Because it is the bracelet thou didst
give me
At our betrothal. Aristobulus
Did slip it from mine arm this very
morn
While playing, and I have not seen it
since,
Though every servant hath been er-
randed
Throughout the palace to make search
for it.

HEROD.

Where is the boy?

MARIAMNE.

With Joseph.

HEROD.

Is there none
Save Joseph to amuse him?

MARIAMNE.

Nay, thine uncle
Doth love our boys.

HEROD.

And our boys' mother,—yes.

MARIAMNE.

I think he doth. He is the only one
Of all thy household who is civil to me.

HEROD.

Insinuations?

MARIAMNE.

Dost insinuate
That I insinuate?

HEROD.

Why not? thou art—
A woman.

MARIAMNE.

And a queen.

HEROD.

By heaven, thou lookest it!
See that thou act it, too. Have the boy
called.

MARIAMNE.

Who?—Aristobulus?

HEROD.

Ay.

MARIAMNE.

Wherefore, sir?

HEROD.

Have the boy called, I say.

MARIAMNE.

I pray you, Herod,
If that he hath offended,—if (more like)
Thy sister and thy mother have borne
tales
Concerning him—

HEROD.

Away!

MARIAMNE.

If thou'st been urged
To harshly deal with him, do not, I
pray thee.

HEROD.

Peace!

MARIAMNE.

He's so young, so frail, so timorous,
So fearful of thee.

HEROD.

It were well his mother
Took lesson by that last. Call him, I
say.

MARIAMNE.

And I, that I will not, unless thyself
Dost tell me why thou wishest him.

HEROD.

Thou wilt not?

—Without, there!

[Enter Servant.]

Tell the young prince Aristobulus
To wait on me immediately. Hasten!

MARIAMNE.

If 'tis thy purpose to ungently use him,
Myself shall stand between ye!

Enter ARISTOBULUS.

Come, my heart;
None shall entreat thee.

ARISTOBULUS.

Is he angry with me?

MARIAMNE.

I know not; but he shall not hurt thee.

HEROD.

Boy,
When didst thou have this bracelet?

MARIAMNE.

Ah!

ARISTOBULUS.

This morning.—
Oh, mother, who did find it? I'm so
glad!
Did the king find it, mother?

MARIAMNE.

I know not.

HEROD.

Where didst thou have it last?

ARISTOBULUS.

I don't remember.

HEROD.

Thou dost not?

ARISTOBULUS.

No. I think—

HEROD.

Well, out with it!
What dost thou think?

ARISTOBULUS.

I think my uncle Joseph
Took us into his chamber, and I think—
I think—I think—

HEROD.

Gods! what dost stammer at?
I will not eat thee.

MARIAMNE.

Thou dost eye him so.

HEROD.

What, then! shall I not look at mine
own son?

What is it that thou thinkest, boy?

ARISTOBULUS.

'Twas there

I dropped it.

HEROD.

Come to me.

ARISTOBULUS.

Oh, mother!

HEROD.

Come.

MARIAMNE.

Nay, go, my boy.—If thou dost hurt
him, Herod,
From that same moment I'm no more
thy wife!

HEROD.

So be it, then—Come to me, boy. Now
up,—

Up for a kiss. Here, take this chain
with thee:

'Twill make as bright a plaything as
the bracelet.

Now, dost thou love me?

ARISTOBULUS.

I—I—think so. Oh!

I mean, I do. Don't hurt me. Put me
down.

HEROD.

Go, then.

ARISTOBULUS.

May I go, mother?

MARIAMNE.

Ay.

Exit ARISTOBULUS.

HEROD.

Come, let me new-betroth thee. My queen,

MARIAMNE.

Tell me the meaning of this most
strange scene
Through which we have just gone.

HEROD.

For what wouldst know?

MARIAMNE.

For that I am thy wife and Jewry's
queen.
Thinkest thou, my lord, that thou canst
doubt me—ay,
In any way—and that I'll meekly bear
it?
I tell thee thou hadst better doubt thy-
self
Ten thousand times than Mariamne
once!

HEROD.

I do not doubt thee.

MARIAMNE.

Thou hast doubted me;
And once to doubt is ever to be doubt-
ful.
Thinkest thou I did not mark the hid-
den meaning
With which thou didst enweigh the boy's
least word,—
How thou didst question and cross-
question him,
Frighten, soothe, frown, and smile all
in an instant?
Why didst thou summon him—my child,
my last-born—
To answer what his mother had replied
to?

Ay, wherefore didst thou that? And
as thou entered'st,
Why didst thou eye me when I spoke of
Joseph?
There's more in all of this than Joseph
only.
Can it be Joseph's wife?

HEROD.

How if it were?

MARIAMNE.

Then farewell happiness, farewell peace,
hope,
Life, joy, content,—ay, Herod, fare thee
well!

HEROD.

How dost thou mean?

MARIAMNE.

If Herod once hath listened
Unto Salome, Death may wed with Life
Ere Mariamne be again a queen!

HEROD.

Why, what dost mean?

MARIAMNE.

That thy trust was my throne,
Thy love my sceptre, and thy faith my
crown.
Shall I be queen and yet despoiled of
these?—
A beggar of small favors in the kingdom
Where I was wont to reign? Not I!—
O God!
I'd rather be Thy humblest slave, than
queen
Unto a king whom a Salome rules!

HEROD.

Nay, Mariamne.

MARIAMNE.

Am I Mariamne,
And yet my child made witness 'gainst
me? Mariamne,

And yet Salome heard before me?
Mariamne,
And yet by Herod doubted?

HEROD.

By my kingdom,
I do not doubt thee.

MARIAMNE.

Then why brought'st my child
To prove me? 'Yea, if that the flesh
were false
From whence he sprung, why should he
be more true?
How didst thou know 'twere not a les-
son taught,
That guiltiness might look like in-
nocence?

Who is there in the breadth of Israel
To prove that Mariamne is not false?

HEROD.

Herself! He who could meet thine eyes
and doubt thee
Would prove himself the very core of
falseness!

MARIAMNE.

He who Salome trusts doubts Mariamne.
Thou canst not both believe in Jove and
Jah:

Honor to one doth mean to one dis-
honor,—
For one a throne, for one a sepulchre.

HEROD.

Madam, I swear to thee.

MARIAMNE.

Swear unto God:
His throne is sure.

HEROD.

No surer than thine own.

MARIAMNE.

Then heaven's kingdom rocks.

HEROD.

Nay, be assured.

MARIAMNE.

Of what? Of my abasement? Would
to God

I were as sure of ultimate content!

HEROD.

Nay, Mariamne, hear me. Let me speak.
I never was suspicious without cause.

MARIAMNE.

And such a cause!

HEROD.

Why, there was reason in't.

MARIAMNE.

One grain of reason leavens a huge
mass

Of inconsistency. Of what, my lord,
Am I suspected?

HEROD.

I was told to-day

This bracelet had been found in Joseph's
closet.

MARIAMNE.

What if it had? What then? In
Joseph's closet?

What if it had been found in Joseph's
closet?

HEROD.

Why, sure thou seest where conclusion
points?

MARIAMNE.

He points into a blackness where mine
eyes

Are sensible of naught but blackness.

HEROD.

Why,
Thou knowest how mine uncle worships
thee,
Is ever ready to defend or serve thee,
Doth in the least thing find thee love-
worthy.

MARIAMNE.

And so he doth. What then? What
hath my bracelet
To do with this?

HEROD.

Why, 'tis self-evident.

Thou hast ne'er parted from it till to-
day,—

Not once since I first clasped it on thee.

Well,

Then, when I hear—dost mark me?—
when I hear

It has been found in Joseph's closet,—
ay,

When I hear where 'twas found, was it
but natural

That I should think—should find it
strange—should wonder—

Oh, thou must understand what I would
say.

It is all past: let us not think on it,—
Let us not think.

MARIAMNE.

I will be queen to Death

When I have ceased to think upon it.
What!

Thou didst suspect me with thine uncle?
Me?

Thy queen, thy wife, the mother of thy
sons?

Thou hast suspected me, and with thine
uncle?

—Now, God in heaven, commemorate
this day

By pardoning Satan, for Thou mayest
withal

Unjustly have condemned him!

HEROD.

Hear me, madam.

MARIAMNE.

Hear thee, to have mine ears more
 blasted? Nay,
 Let deafness rescue me from further
 words
 That thou mayst utter!

HEROD.

Madam.

MARIAMNE.

Out! Away!

I will not hear thee! False with Joseph?
 False?—
 False with his treasurer? Nay, God,
 with any?
 Why, I must laugh at this! The world
 must laugh!
 Oh, God! Oh, God! I am indeed un-
 queened!
 My heart and sceptre both at once are
 broken!

HEROD.

Weep not.

MARIAMNE.

I do not weep! Tears, such as women
 Do shed for lesser causes. I would
 scorn
 To offer this my sorrow. The red
 drops
 Shed from my riven heart, no man may
 witness,
 Though he were ten times tyrant, ten
 times king,
 Ten times a Herod!

HEROD.

Mariamne.

MARIAMNE.

Ay,
 Murder my name, now thou hast slain
 my honour!
 Cry, "Mariamne," till the west doth
 ring
 An echo to the east, north unto south,
 The earth to heaven, until the very stars
 Cease in their song, to shriek, "Adul-
 teress!"

HEROD.

Why, thou art mad!

MARIAMNE.

Oh, would to God I were!—
 That this my reason had not joy sur-
 vived,
 To view my misery as a thing apart!
 —O God! Shame is chief torturer in
 hell:
 Kill me outright, and be more merciful
 Than hadst Thou spared more lives than
 I have griefs!

HEROD.

Wilt thou not listen?

MARIAMNE.

Shall I tutor God?
 Since He is deaf to me, I unto thee
 Will be deaf also!

HEROD.

Mariamne, stay.

MARIAMNE.

She was the queen of Jewry, and was
 slain
 By one of Herod's words. I am the
 queen
 Of my sole self; therefore I will begone.

[Exit.]

HEROD.

How she defies me! Yet I swear I love
 her
 The more for her defiance. She were
 one
 To sit beside Jah on His throne and
 nod
 At quits with Juno. She hath scourged
 me bravely,
 Yet from each wound my heart's blood
 leaped with love,
 To kiss the hand that smote. And she
 was proud,
 Held herself loftily, and veiled her eyes
 Beneath her haughty lids, as who should
 say,

"Thine halves can view sufficiently this Herod."

Israel's God! her mind is virgin yet: I've never wedded save her body. She To word me thus,—she,—Mariamne,—she,—

The conquered daughter of a conquered king?

And yet I love her for 't. Yea, were I God,

And able to fill space with Mariamne, Compact the stars into her diadem, Darken heaven to give her light, and of eternity

Make one embrace, I were an-hungered still!

[Enter Servant.]

SERVANT.

A messenger, my lord, from Antony.

HEROD.

From Antony? Command him hither.

[Exit Servant.]

So!

Shall public warfare chafe the ill-shod heel Of private strife? Can I not rest a moment?—

[Enter Messenger.]

Papers from Antony? What can they treat of?

[Opens them.]

What's this? What's this, I say? Knew'st thou of this?

Lysanius of Syria put to death!

Leagued with the Parthians! His rule given o'er—

Given to the Queen of Egypt,—Cleopatra!

Know you the contents of these papers, sir?

MESSENGER.

In part, my lord.

HEROD.

All this since I have left! And is Lysanius dead?

MESSENGER.

Even so, my liege.

HEROD.

Lysanius dead, and Cleopatra queen Of his domain? God! let me on—on—on!

What! More donations? The Nabalacan kingdom,—

The sea-coast—what! Palestine's sea-coast—all—

From Eleutherus even unto Egypt, With only Tyre and Sidon, sir, excepted?

This greedy wanton would storm heaven itself

Were Babel's tower standing! What! More yet?

Jericho, too?—Without, there, ho!

[Enter Attendant.]

Thou, sir,

Bid Sohemus and Saramallas hither— Stay, let them wait within my audience-chamber.

[Exit Attendant.]

While I fold these, sir, know'st thou if the queen

Went into Syria with Antony?

MESSENGER.

She did, my lord.

HEROD.

Ah! Say you? There's the germ Whence sprung this crooked tree o' knowledge. Come. Let's to my audience-chamber.

[Exeunt.]

SCENE II.

Enter ALEXANDRA and HYRCANUS.

ALEXANDRA.

But why not write to Malchus? Is not Malchus

Thy friend? Hath he not proved himself thy friend?

Now, as Arabia's governor and lord,
Is he not plac'd to take the part of friend

In verity towards us? Thou must know it!—

Ask that he send some horsemen to escort us

In safety from Jerusalem's boundaries.

What's in a letter? Thou couldst find some ten,

Ay, twelve, to bear 't in secret. There's Dositheus!

I'm sure Dositheus loves thee.

HYRCANUS.

So he doth;

Ay, so he doth,—he doth,—I'm sure he doth.

But as for writing unto Malchus,—why,

It is too much to ask of friendship.

ALEXANDRA.

What?

What is too much? That he do send us horsemen

To aid us in our flight? Call'st thou that much?

Why, 'twere an office he would claim with gladness.

As for the multitude, thou knowest well They are with thee,—not Herod.

HYRCANUS.

Daughter, daughter,

Why wilt thou not let peace sleep peacefully?

Quiet doth seem to me a boon, good daughter,

That king's might place before their diadems.

I am too old to plan new orders.

ALEXANDRA.

So?

Then let me do 't. The future race of kings

That yet may spring to power from Mariamne

Will never find that fault, believe me, father,

Among the virtues of their sovereignty. Come, here is pen; come, here is parchment. Write,—

Write,—write.

HYRCANUS.

To Malchus? That he send us horsemen?

ALEXANDRA.

Ay, escort to the lake Asphaltites.

Write, sire, as thou wast king and wilt be! Write.

HYRCANUS.

Soft, daughter, soft! How would it be if Herod

Should by some means discover I had written?

Would it not anger him? Hast pondered that?

ALEXANDRA.

Oh, wilt thou pause to think of Herod's anger,

When thine should make thee pitiless? Plunge thy pen

Into my veins, that my resolv'd blood May of itself form the important words

And save thy dubious hand the trouble!

HYRCANUS.

Nay,

Nay, nay; be not so violent, good daughter.

Canst thou not give me time to ponder this?

If Herod finds thou hadst a part in it, How then? How then?

ALEXANDRA.

Let then take care of then.

This now is in our charge. Oh, father, write.

Think on thy murdered grandson,—think on him.

The boy thou loved'st, so fair, so pure, so holy,

So all that Herod is not! Think on him, And on his fate, on what our fates may

be,

And write to Malchus. See, here is the parchment

Close to thy hand, and wax made ready.
See—

I'll write it for thee,—That he'll send straightway

A troop of horsemen to escort us hence.
That's all. Look! thou hast but to sign thy name

And seal it with thy seal: unto Dositheus

I will myself commit it privately.

As for Dositheus, thou knowest, father,
He could not prove unfaithful. He knows well

What 'tis to lose kinspeople by this means,—

This Herod-plague. Ay, ay, Dositheus
Will be as true to thee as thine own arm.

Fear not. Wilt thou not sign?

HYRCANUS.

How if I sign—

My death-warrant?

ALEXANDRA.

Think not such woman thoughts:
They do unsex thee. Naught can come of it

But good to thee and thine.

HYRCANUS.

Sometimes death's good
When life is evil.

ALEXANDRA.

Oh, delay no longer!

Sign, as thou lovest me,—as I love thee,—

As God doth love us both! Sign,—
sign, Hyrcanus.

HYRCANUS.

Thou'rt sure thou hast not asked but that?

ALEXANDRA.

But what?

HYRCANUS.

That he send horsemen to escort us?

ALEXANDRA.

As I'm thy daughter, that is all. ^{Ay,} Now sign.

Good father, sweet, sweet father, sign the letter.

Wilt thou not sign to please me, father?
Look!

I have not had a pleasure since the day
On which we lost our Aristobulus.
It will so please me.

HYRCANUS.

Well—

ALEXANDRA.

Oh, do it! do it!
Some one may come. There is no time.

HYRCANUS.

Thou'rt sure

Thou'st only asked for escort?

ALEXANDRA.

Sure,—sure,—sure.
Now sign it, father,—dearest father.

HYRCANUS.

Well,
If thou art sure thou'st asked no more than that—

ALEXANDRA.

I swear it by my dead boy's murdered body!

HYRCANUS.

Soft! not so shrilly,—not so shrilly,
daughter.

There [*signs letter*], will that pleasure thee?

ALEXANDRA.

Ay, God alone
Doth know how much! Oh, dear my father, trust me,

When we are safe beyond these listening walls,

I'll tell thee how I thank thee! Some one comes,

Enter MARIAMNE, slowly.

Sweet father, say no word to her as yet:
She must not know of this till by and
by.

Why, gods! how pale she is!—Daughter,
good-morrow.
What ails thee?

MARIAMNE.

Nothing. Mine own spirit. Ah!
How farest thou, dear Hyrcanus?

HYRCANUS.

Why, my sweet one,
As old men fare who have no occupation
Save thinking on what occupied them
once.

MARIAMNE.

'Tis a sad way to live.

HYRCANUS.

Think you?

MARIAMNE.

Ay, sire;
But to live any way is sad.

ALEXANDRA.

How now?
What sour experience gave that max-
im birth?
What hath gone wrong?

MARIAMNE.

My destiny.

ALEXANDRA.

Why, girl,
I never saw thee in such plight before.

MARIAMNE.

Nor I myself.

HYRCANUS.

Dost thou feel ill, my star?—
But then how rustily old wits do work!

Stars are exempt from maladies and ail-
ments,

As thou shouldst be, my blossom.

MARIAMNE.

Thou'rt so good,
So gentle ever, I do love thee. Here,
Give me thy hand. Doth not my fore-
head burn?

HYRCANUS.

Ay, ay, it doth.—What's well for fever,
daughter?
The child hath fever.

MARIAMNE.

There's no cure for this.

ALEXANDRA.

Now, by my faith, thou hast a fever,
girl!

This comes o' too much roof-walking
by night.

Thou knowest I warned thee not to stay
so late.

But then I have a drink of balsam-
flowers

That savors more of magic and strange
arts

Than doth beseem a Jewish beverage.
I'll give thee some to drink.

MARIAMNE.

'Twill do no good.

ALEXANDRA.

How dost thou say? I tell thee that it
will.

Come, be not obstinate.

HYRCANUS.

Ay, go, my lamb.
Go, take thy mother's brew. Go, pretty
one:

She makes rare brews. There's one she
hath of late,—

'Twill stop an aching back,—'tis wonder-
ful.

MARIAMNE.

Hast one will stop an aching heart—for aye?

Enter JOSEPH.

JOSEPH.

[*To* HYRCANUS.]

My lord, the king would speak with thee.

HYRCANUS.

Well, Joseph—

Be docile, pretty one: thy mother's brews

Are brewed with strange discretion.
Best you hearkened.

Wilt hearken, daughter?—Yes, I come,
good Joseph.—

Fair health attend thee, fair one. Take
the brew. [Exit.]

JOSEPH.

Sweet niece, how pale thou art!—How
is't, in truth?

Is she ill, madam?

ALEXANDRA.

Why, I know not, sir.

Mayhap she'll not acknowledge it. She
looks so.

MARIAMNE.

Nay, I am well enough, good uncle.—

Mother,
Reach me my needlework.

ALEXANDRA.

What! wilt thou work?

Best that thou took'st the air awhile.

JOSEPH.

Ay, madam.

Wilt thou not walk?

MARIAMNE.

Good uncle, let me rest.

ALEXANDRA.

How? peevish?

MARIAMNE.

Possibly. Despair, good mother,
Dons strange disguises.— Seemed I
peevish, uncle?
I'm sorry for it.

JOSEPH.

Tut! tut! tut! 'tis nothing.
I mean, thou wert not peevish.

MARIAMNE.

Nay, I was.

ALEXANDRA.

Ay, ay, thou wert indeed. What hath
gone wrong?
Haply thy Herod hath his favors stinted,
Doth not so hotly love thee?

JOSEPH.

Madam, madam,
The king's love doth not wane with lesser fires,
But, like the sun, burns steadily, always,
Though sometimes by a cloud 'tis darkened.

ALEXANDRA.

Pshaw!
It twinkles like a star; is no more fixed
Than torch-reflections in a restless sea;
Waneth and waxeth ever with the moon;
Needeth, like any lamp, to be refilled
With flattery's oil; flares with the wind
o' passion,
Like any earth-born flame.

JOSEPH.

Wilt thou, sweet niece,
Hear this of thy fond lord, and yet be
silent?

MARIAMNE.

Whom 'is he fond of?

JOSEPH.

Madam, canst thou ask it?

MARIAMNE.

Sir, canst thou answer it?

JOSEPH.

Ay, that can I.
With all my heart I'll speak in his
heart's cause.
If ever man loved woman, Jewry's king
Doth love the queen of Jewry.

ALEXANDRA.

Pah! go to!
Go to, I say! He'd love her ten times
better
Were she the queen of somewhere else.

JOSEPH.

Nay, lady,
Man were a god could he love more
than Herod.

ALEXANDRA.

Ay, ay, ay,—more than Herod loves him-
self.
I can believe thee.

JOSEPH.

[Turning to MARIAMNE.]

Madam, sure thou knowest
How dear thy husband holds thee.

MARIAMNE.

No, good uncle.

JOSEPH.

No! Ah, thou meanest thou wouldst
make me think
'Tis past thy comprehension.

ALEXANDRA.

Pshaw, I say!
He loves her by the moment, by the
mood,—
To fill the gap 'twixt war and war.

JOSEPH.

Why surely
Thou dost not think so, madam? As I
live,
There are ten thousand proofs he loves
his queen,—
Ay, more, that Herod doth love Mari-
amne
Till Antony and Cleopatra's loves
Seem like as sparks blown off from his
great fire.

ALEXANDRA.

Sparks that may scorch his robe of self-
esteem
Some windy day. What are ten thou-
sand proofs?
Give me but one, and all the doubtful
rest
Shall sleep beneath my blessing.
Where's a proof?
Come, proof, sir.

JOSEPH.

Proof? And is there need of proof?
Not that I have it not, but marvel,
madam,
That thou wouldst have it.—Lady, pray
thee listen.
Dost thou too wish a proof?

MARIAMNE.

If such there be,
I will not close mine ears against it.

JOSEPH.

How!
If such there be! If such there be!
Just heaven!
If there be proof that Herod loves thee?
Why,
I have one single one that would out-
size
Ten thousand thousand!

ALEXANDRA.

Oh, there's room for it.
Come, yield it,—yield, good Joseph.

JOSEPH.

Thou, my queen,
Wilt have me speak?

MARIAMNE.

Ay, if thou carest to.

JOSEPH.

Why, then,—but speak not of it to the king:

I know not if he'd like its mentioning,
Though 'twere to prove his love,—ere
he set forth

To Loadicea, he did instruct me, madam,—

Commission me—

ALEXANDRA.

Well, on: this wondrous proof,—
I thirst to hear it.—Say you, daughter?

MARIAMNE.

Ay,

Tell on, good uncle.

JOSEPH.

He commissioned me,
So dearly did he love thee, that should
death

Be meted him by Antony—in fact,
Should he be put to death—

MARIAMNE.

To death? What then?

JOSEPH.

So doth he worship thee, so doteth on
thee,

That he commissioned me, in such event,
In case, as I have said, that Antony—
Who's there? Is't no one? Nay, I saw
a figure.

Some one moved near the door, and,
o' my word,

This must be kept with us.

MARIAMNE.

Well, on! on! on!

What did he tell thee?

JOSEPH.

That if Antony
Did order him to death,—did slay him,
madam,—
If Antony—

MARIAMNE.

If Antony did what?
Good uncle, thou'st a Cleopatra tongue,
That thus thou dinnest ever Antony
In Mariamne's ears. They'd hear of
Herod.

JOSEPH.

Well, then, in short, he did commission
me,

If such were his sad fate to send thee
after.

MARIAMNE.

How, sir? Not slay me?

JOSEPH.

Ay, that was his order.
So dearly did he love thee (that in
death—
Even in death—he would not be with-
out thee.

MARIAMNE.

Oh, mother, mother, take me to thy
breast!

I'm but thy child again,—no wife! no
wife!

No wife!

JOSEPH.

Why, lady!—

ALEXANDRA.

Dost thou mean to say
That crownéd devil bade thee murder
her?—
My daughter?

JOSEPH.

Nay, not murder.

ALEXANDRA.

He hath murdered.
Why not again? Blood-lust doth grow
with tasting,
And murders breed as summer locusts
do.

He hath her brother murdered, why not
her?—

Why not the sister? Shall there be a limit
 Unto a Herod's thirst: when he cries
 out
 For blood to slake it, doth that being
 live
 Who'd dare deny him? Yea! For I
 am she,—

I, Alexandra, rightful queen of Jewry!
 What! call you this a proof?—a proof
 of love?

That she be murdered? Oh, how he
 doth love her!

So that's thy proof? Oh, how he wor-
 ships her!

It is thy proof, you say? Witness, O
 God,

How he must dote upon her! Mari-
 amne,

Up! up! Wilt thou bear this? Ah! she
 hath swooned.

Some water, pray you. Toss me that
 cushion quickly.

Here, place it here. Water, I pray you,
 sir. [Exit JOSEPH.]

O God of Gods, whose brow is bound
 with justice,

Whose loins with vengeance,—Thou
 whose changeless shadow

Breaks on the edge of Space, whose
 sheltering wings

Enroof the windy temple of the stars,
 To whom the stars themselves are but
 as gold-dust

From noiseless wheels of thy Triumphal
 Car,—

Thou who of Thine Omnipotence madest
 man

Visible in Thine image, and invisible
 Of Thine own essence,—let not his spilt
 blood

Cry out to Thee in vain. Judge Thou,
 O Jah,

The murderer of Aristobulus,
 Of him who as my son was dear indeed.

But as thy high-priest precious beyond
 words!

Judge Thou in all the would-be murderer
 Of this mine other child, the lawful
 daughter

Of Alexander Thine anointed king!

Judge him by his desires, not by his
 deeds,

And Thou wilt have to make another hell
 To scorch another Satan!

SCENE III.

Another room in the palace.

Enter SALOME, laughing.

SALOME.

Oh, fool, fool, fool! Oh, excellent,
 sweet fool!

Sweet husband fool! Sweet, simple,
 foolish Joseph!

How thou hast played into mine hands
 with this!

To tell her that—ha! ha!—to tell her
 that,

Of all things in the world, to prove his
 love!

When thou art dead, mine own dear
 fool of fools,

I will turn Roman and erect a temple
 Unto thy godlike memory! Oh, this—

This is beyond my utmost expectation,—
 Mine enemy to toss into my lap

The ball of fate,—my loyal husband—
 oh!

I never loved him until now! ha! ha!
 What wisdom's in the fooling of some
 fools!

Here comes my brother.—This will
 please you, brother,—

Sweet brother, this will please you when
 you hear it.

Wilt have the bracelet made to an ar-
 row-head

To reach my heart, good brother? Nay,
 not yet,—

Not yet, by that of Herod that's mine
 own!

Farewell, sweet brother, till thou hear'st
 this news.

Oh, Joseph, thou has made me bride
 again.

I am again in love with thee for this!—
 Oh, darling fool! Ha! ha! ha! ha!

[Exit, laughing]

*Enter HEROD, folding some papers,
 followed by Attendant.*

Run after Saramallas with these papers,
 And bid the queen attend me.

[Exit Attendant.]

How accursed
 These quarrels that divide us! I am
 thirsty
 Already for her lips. Her angry eyes
 Yet paint the air with horror.—Death!
 that look—
 That look she gave me! Yet I did de-
 serve it;
 Ay, ay, 'twas well deserved. How her
 lips curled,
 Like threads that writhe in fire, and her
 thin nostrils
 Sucked like a veil blown o'er an open
 mouth.
 I swear, were she but angry with another,
 I should more love her angry than com-
 posed!
 Ah, she is here. My blood leaps hard to
 meet her.
 Now, as I live, she shall be friends with
 me,
 Or I will make an enemy of God!

Enter MARIAMNE.

My queen!

MARIAMNE.

Not thine

In anything.

HEROD.

What, madam?

MARIAMNE.

Neither queen,
 Nor wife, nor friend, nor slave, of thine.

HEROD.

What, madam?

MARIAMNE.

My name is Mariamne. I am sister
 To Aristobulus,—that Aristobulus
 Who died conveniently.

HEROD.

Why, what is this?

MARIAMNE.

The truth in person.

HEROD.

Mariamne, thou—
 Even thou mayst go too far.

MARIAMNE.

How? To my grave?

HEROD.

Hast thou gone mad?

MARIAMNE.

If to face fate be madness.

HEROD.

Is this some trick,—some fantasy?

MARIAMNE.

Why, no.
 It is my freedom's birthday.

HEROD.

How? Thy freedom?

MARIAMNE.

Have I not said? I am mine own and
 God's:
 None other owns so much as the sixth
 share
 In my least drop of blood.

HEROD.

Dost thou defy me?

MARIAMNE.

No, Herod; I despise thee.

HEROD.

What?

MARIAMNE.

And scorn thee.

Despise

HEROD.

Thou art mad,—I'm sure of it;
 Ay, thou art mad,—mad,—mad!

MARIAMNE.

If it be madness
To scorn thee, I am mad.

HEROD.

To scorn me? Thou?
To scorn me? Thou, whom I have
loved!—
God! loved!

MARIAMNE.

Loved? Loved? Blaspheme not Love's
most holy name,
Lest he do blast thee. What, thou
love? What! thou?—
Herod, and say thou'st loved? Oh,
love most mighty,
Most infinite, most tender, to contem-
plate
The murder of the thing it loved!

HEROD.

The murder?
Wert thou not mad—

MARIAMNE.

The murder,—ay, the murder.
What! thou canst stand and bare thine
eyes to mine,
And speak of love? Oh, wise to make
my butcher
Him whom thou didst suspect me with,
—ay, Herod,
The man whom thou didst think my
paramour!

HEROD.

What dost thou mean?

MARIAMNE.

That thou didst love me well
Most well and nobly, when thou or-
dered'st Joseph,
If thou wert slain by Marc Antonius,
To slay me also, whom thou dost so
love!

HEROD.

Who told thee this? Who told thee this,
I say?

MARIAMNE.

Joseph himself.

HEROD.

Adulteress!

MARIAMNE.

Sir—

HEROD.

Ay,
Adulteress! Now know I thou art false.
What! dost thou think a man would
give such words
Unto a woman lest there were between
them
A tie more strong than death?—would
thus brave death,
Nay, woo death as a bride? Cursed be
ye both!
Thou, woman, thou, whom I have called
my wife,
May there be drought throughout thy
treacherous veins
As in a land accursed! Ay, mayst thou
shrivel
To a lank, eye-blasting horror day by
day,
Until a million million lagging years
Have sucked thy blood, as babes once
sucked thy breast
When thou wast Herod's wife!

MARIAMNE.

Thy coward curse
I do shake off as 'twere a stained gar-
ment.
God is with me. Thou, Herod, stand'st
alone.
Thou hast scared even pity from thy
side
With those foul words. There is my
crown,—there all
Of Mariamne that remains to thee!

[Flings her crown at his feet, and Exit.]

HEROD.

Oh, God! I choke! Wine, there! Nay,
blood,—blood,—blood!

[Exit.]

ACT IV.

SCENE I.

*A room in HEROD'S palace.**Enter HEROD, laughing.*

HEROD.

Am I called Herod, and shall Fate
laugh at me?

No, I will laugh at Fate!—

Ha! ha! ha! ha! Oh, I have been well
fooled,—

Herod the Fool, not Herod King of
Jewry.

Who was the man in Egypt had a
treasurer

Called Joseph? But that Joseph was not
false.

Potiphar's Joseph unto Herod's Joseph
Was as the smile of God unto His frown.

God's frown? Ay, God can frown; but
so can Herod.

And Herod's wife to Potiphar's? Ay,
there—

There is the matter: my wife unto Poti-
phar's

Is as one drop of mud unto another!

Oh, curse her! curse her! What! false
unto me?—

My queen, and with my treasurer? Both
false?

Not even the cutting comfort of his
truth

To hug? Adulteress! adulteress!

Now let such angels as cry "Holy!"
thrice

Before the throne of God, so shriek
that word

"Adulteress" that she may hear it ring
From heaven to hell, when she doth
stand in pride

Before the throne of Satan! May she
live

To die ten times a pulse-beat! May
starved fiends,

With faces like her children's, gnaw her
heart

And spit it in her eyes to dry her tears!
May she be Baal's drudge, and bear
him devils

To rend her paramour! God! God!
God! God!

That I were but Thyself, to revise hell
And multiply capacity for pain
By all the words in space!

Enter SOHEMUS.

SOHEMUS.

I am here, my liege.

HEROD.

Go bid my mother and Salome hither.
Ay, let her come.

[Exit SOHEMUS.]

'Tis well that she should come.
She shall this dainty pleasure share with
me.

For every pang of anguish I endure,
She shall be torn with two,—ay, with
a hundred.

Oh, devil, devil, to have told me of it!
And yet I'd know. But 'twas a devil's
errand.

[Enter SALOME and CYPROS.]

So, madam, thou hast come,—and thou?
Ye're welcome.

The day is fair.

SALOME.

What mean'st thou?

HEROD.

What meant'st thou?

SALOME.

When?

HEROD.

When thou brought'st me that bracelet?

SALOME.

Why,

My meaning was as easily observed
As was the bracelet.

HEROD.

[Seizing her by the throat.]

Darest thou, jade? So! so!

CYPROS.

Herod, hold off thy hands! Thou'tt
choke her!

HEROD.

By God's help or the devil's, so I will.

CYPROS.

Thou'rt mad!—Help, ho! The king is mad!

HEROD.

'Tis madness
To say a king is mad. Well, there she
is:
Mayst thou rejoice in her!

CYPROS.

Thou hast half killed her.

HEROD.

Would it were wholly! Serpents die
not thus.

CYPROS.

Thou art a fiend!

HEROD.

Else were I not her brother.
Look thou,—thou, madam, who art lying
there,—
Die not ere thy reward be given thee.
I took thee for a liar, but in all
Thou hast been true,—I do acknowledge
it,—
In all,—in all. I've somewhat roughly
used thee,
But thou shalt have amends,—ay, ay,
amends.
What thinkest thou 'twill be? Thou
canst not dream,
Canst thou, poor dove? thou art so sad-
ly ruffled
Since thou didst choose to preen thy
dainty feathers
Betwixt a tiger's paws,—poor dove, poor
dove!
But there shall be reward.

CYPROS.

Speak what thou meanest.
Canst thou not see she is half dead—
poor girl!—
With thy rough usage?

HEROD.

She shall have a toy
To soothe her waking,—ay, a pretty ball
To toss withal, of red and white and
black.
Like you the colors?

SALOME.

Dost thou mean in truth
Thou hast aught for me?

HEROD.

Ay.

SALOME.

What is it?

HEROD.

Why,
Thy husband's head!—Without, there,
ho! [Enter Attendant.]

Send Sohemus
Straightway unto me.—What! dost pale?
What! thou,
A Joseph's wife, and pale? Thou! thou!
Oh, thou
Shalt feel what 'tis to suffer.—

[Enter SOHEMUS.]

Sohemus,
Take forth this woman's husband, the
Idumean
Joseph, sometime my trusted treasurer,
And let him not return.

SALOME.

How! Banish him?

No.

HEROD.

SALOME.

What then?

HEROD.

Slay him.

SALOME.

Never! thou wouldst not.

HEROD.

Soft! shall I break a promise? 'Twas
my word.

Thou shalt be paid in full,—in full,—in
full.

By God! I am half minded that thy lap
Should serve as block for his beheading!

—Sir,

Away unto thy office!—Ay, there,
crouch,—

Crouch, thou foul, damnéd thing. What!
still so white,

For all thy well-daubed red? Ere it be
night

Thou shalt have blood for paint!

CYPROS.

My son!—my son!

HEROD.

No son of thine, to call that monster
sister.

—Let me not thrice remind thee,
Sohemus:

To work without delay. To work!

SOHEMUS.

But, sire—

HEROD.

Tempt me not thrice, I say. Begone!

[SOHEMUS attempts to go, but SALOME
clings to him and prevents him from
leaving.]

SALOME.

By God,

He shall not till I know what thou dost
purpose.

HEROD.

Why, then remain, good Sohemus; re-
main.

'Twill give me joy such as kings seldom
know

To tell her what I purpose. It is this.
With the first western streak of evening

red,

It is my purpose—wilt thou write it
down?

Here are my tablets, if thou hast none.
No?

So be it. As I said, with the first stain
Of blood from Night's wound on the
brow of Day

The blood of thy sweet spouse shall
stain likewise

The sword of him I shall appoint here-
with

To strike his fair head from his comely
neck.

'Tis now some minutes short of sunset-
ting.

Let Sohemus place a chair beside this
window

Ere he goes forth. Methinks it is but
just

That after all thy crafty painstaking
Thou shouldst enjoy results unto the full.

The execution will take place there,—
seest thou?—

Beneath that date-tree.—Sohemus, a
chair.

SALOME.

Thou wouldst not do it!

HEROD.

No, I'll have it done.

From childhood I've abhorred the sight
of blood,

Save when it's battle-shed: it turns me
faint.

Wilt thou not have the chair?

SALOME.

Thou couldst not kill him.

HEROD.

What didst thou think that I would do,
sweet sister,

When thou hadst proved him false?
Have him to sup?

A higher honor waits him, trust me,
madam:

He shall be Herod's chief ambassador
To Satan, and his power unlimited.

There are some things in hell that I'd
have changed,—

Ay, some in heaven. Thou'rt pale. Nay,
have the chair.

SALOME.

If thou wouldst kill him, let her die
with him.

HEROD.

Make her ambassadress who was a
queen?
It were not seemly.

SALOME.

'Tis the law of Jewry
That both should die.

HEROD.

Herod is Herod's law.

SALOME.

Brother, I lied! In all I lied! In
everything
I was a liar!

HEROD.

Ay, and thou dost lie,
In all thou liest, and in everything
Thou art a liar, still!—

SALOME.

Good brother, hear me—

HEROD.

A Herod hear a liar?

SALOME.

'Twas her fault,—
Not his, but hers.

HEROD.

Devil! I'd shed his blood
To wipe those words out, if for noth-
ing else!
What! thou art not yet satisfied? God's
wrath!
I'll make thee drain a goblet of his
blood
Unto my health! Away! The west is
red;
The headsman's sword is thirsty.

SALOME.

Herod—

HEROD.

Nay,
Remind me not that I am Herod, woman,
If thou wouldst gain thy plea.

SALOME.

Brother—

HEROD.

That's worse.

SALOME.

As Jewry's king I kneel to thee.

HEROD.

As wife
To an adulterous hound I spurn thee.

SALOME.

[To CYROS.]

Madam,
Help me to plead.

CYROS.

Wilt thou not hear me, sir?

HEROD.

No! for thou art her mother.—Sohemus,
Forth on my errand.

SALOME.

[Clinging to SOHEMUS.]

Nay, he shall not.

CYROS.

Sir,
Think what thou doest.

SOHEMUS.

Ay, in God's name, sire—

HEROD.

In mine own name I do command thee
forth.—

Unhand him, madam. Thou weak,
snivelling wretch,
Unloose him, or I will compel thee,—
thus.—

[*Dragging SALOME away from SOHEMUS.*]

Sohemus, forth upon my errand. Lo!
The west is yet more red! Ha! ha! ha!
ha!

SCENE II.

Enter MARIAMNE.

MARIAMNE.

Oh, God! that I were dead!—that I were
dead!—

That I were dead!—or that I had not
lived

To be the sepulchre of mine own heart!
What! Mariamne called adulteress
By Herod? Herod call me that? Just
heaven!

All things are possible after this thing!
Oh, that foul name! Would he had
sent his sword

To find the utmost secret of my heart,
Or ever my quick ears had sucked that
poison!

Where shall I turn for comfort?—Is to
live

Always to wish for death? Now, were
it so,

And my veins nourishing an unborn
child,

I'd spill their plenty unto lapping dogs
Ere breath should be its portion! Let
me think,—

Ay, let me think. He shed my brother's
blood.

And my blood feeds the hearts of his two
sons.

What horror were beyond this horrible?
Ay, there is one. He hath been loved
by me!

I've held his murderous hands, played
with the curls

That warmed his murder-pregnant brain,
—ay, kissed—

Oft kissed the lips that spoke the mur-
dering words,

Lain down my head above the awful
secret

His heart so well did keep! Oh, God!
oh, God!

Must I know this and live? Sweet
heaven, but rid me

Of this disgracéd body, and my soul
Upon the wind of knowledge may be
blown

Eternally an alien and accursed,
Yet I will think Thee merciful.

*Enter ALEXANDER with pomegranate-
flowers.*

ALEXANDER.

Look, mother,
Sweet, mother. look! Here are pome-
granate-flowers,
To make thee think thou'rt in Samaria.
Are those more beautiful? Look, moth-
er!

MARIAMNE.

Nay,
Nay, do not touch me! do not speak to
me!

Oh, look not so, my heart,—my life,—
my son,—

Mine, and not his! Come, touch me!
touch me! touch me!

Speak to me! kiss me! clasp me! let
me hear

Ten thousand words of love!

ALEXANDER.

Why dost thou hold me?
Thou'lt crush the flowers. And pray
thee tell me, mother,

Why wast not pleased at first? Have I
been naughty?

I thought thou'dst like the flowers so
much.

MARIAMNE.

I do,—
I do. The pretty flowers,—ay, they are
lovely,

And colored like to blood,—like unto
blood.

ALEXANDER.

Why dost thou say it so? The ugly
word!

I hate that word,—that "blood." Wilt
thou not wear them?

MARIAMNE.

Ay, ay,—upon my heart,—there is the place.
Look not at me out of his eyes. Dost hear?
Thou hast his eyes, I say! Do not look at me!

ALEXANDER.

Mother!

MARIAMNE.

No, not that word! Dost hear me, boy?
Why, they're his very eyelids! Get thee gone!
Away with thee! Oh, God! Come back! come back!
I did not mean it. Look at me, nor weep!
I did not mean it. Look, I'll drink thy tears
With kisses. Would that they were poisonous!
Is this the dagger that I gave thee?
Come,—
Give it to me again, and here—

[Uncovering her neck.]

ALEXANDER.

Nay, mother,
What dost thou mean? Take care! It is so sharp;
I sharpened it to-day.

MARIAMNE.

To-day is well;
To-day should every sword throughout Judea
Be newly whetted, and their edges proved
Upon one heart!

ALEXANDER.

At what dost look so hard?

MARIAMNE.

Upon that glare of steel. Stand not like that,—
'Tis so he stands a hundred times a day.

Move,—walk,—change that position,—
anything,
So thou dost not look like him. Yes,—
thy flowers,—
Thy flowers. When hast thou seen thy father? Nay,
I mean thou must not name him unto me
So long as thou dost live. Dost understand?

ALEXANDER.

I must not name my father to thee?

MARIAMNE.

Ay,
Thou must not.

ALEXANDER.

Why? Dost thou not like his name?
I will not say his name.

MARIAMNE.

Thou'lt not speak of him
In any wise. Dost hear?

ALEXANDER.

Ay, mother, but—

MARIAMNE.

Where didst thou get these flowers?
They are so fresh.
Didst thou think of it all of thine own self?

There is one pity: they have not a perfume.

Perfume's the soul of flowers. I think such flowers

As have no perfume will not bloom in heaven,

But perish, with the beasts. Thou hast not seen him,—

Thy father,—then, to-day? Nay, speak not! Look,

Here is the way the fruit begins to grow.

Did he speak to thee? Nay, no word,—no word.

There, go! go! go! Bring me some flowers, my heart,

That have sweet perfumes. Run! run! run!

[Exit ALEXANDER.]

SCENE III.

Enter HEROD and DOSITHEUS.

HEROD.

A letter from Hyrcanus unto Malchus? Malchus? What should Hyrcanus with this Malchus?

DOSITHEUS.

My liege, I'd have thee read. My tongue rebels:
'Twill not be proxy for disloyal words.

HEROD.

Disloyal?

DOSITHEUS.

When thou'st read the letter, sire, I think thou wilt agree with me.

HEROD.

Disloyal?

He gave it to thee?

DOSITHEUS.

He and Alexandra.

HEROD.

Ah! Alexandra! Well, I'll read it. So! An escort to Arabia! That's well,—Excellent. Ay, I'm very glad to know He's in such gallant health. An escort, sir,

Unto Arabia! He's somewhat aged—Think you?—to look on travelling as a pleasure.

I'm glad his health's so good.

DOSITHEUS.

Was I right, sire, To bring the letter to thee?

HEROD.

Right,—most right.
'Tis at all times a cheering thing, Dositheus,

To know thy wife's grandfather is in health.

It cheers me, sir,—it cheers me, verily. I thought he coughed of late.

DOSITHEUS.

And so he doth.

HEROD.

No matter: he'd ride double with his cough Into Arabia. It cannot, sir, Be very heavy. Come, re-seal this letter.

DOSITHEUS.

Seal it?

HEROD.

Ay, seal it. And when it is sealed, Bear it, as thou wast told to do, to Malchus.

DOSITHEUS.

My liege?

HEROD.

Sir, I have said.

DOSITHEUS.

That I this letter Bear to Arabia's governor?

HEROD.

Ay.

DOSITHEUS.

Sire, Thou canst not understand its full import.

HEROD.

Possibly.

DOSITHEUS.

But, my lord, take it to Malchus? How if he answers it?

HEROD.

Dositheus, It is not how if he will answer it,

But, if he answers, how it will be answered.

DOSITHEUS.

I think I comprehend thy meaning, sire.

HEROD.

Think not, but act. Take thou the fleetest horse
From out my stables, and to Malchus,—
ho!
To Malchus ere 'tis night! Dositheus,
Be prompt, and thou shalt win a higher place
Than even now thou hast in mine esteem.
Away to Malchus.

DOSITHEUS.

I will ride, my lord,
As lover to his maid. Trust me in all.
[Exit.]

HEROD.

[Looking after him.]

In all but all. This works to thine advantage:
Therefore I trust thee. Were Hyrcanus king,
Thou shouldst not be the letter-carrier
Of Herod, good Dositheus,—no, no,
I promise thee! God! how my head
burns! Oh!
It is as though my skull were but a crucible
For flames to dance in. Ha! ha! ha!
That's famous!
A crownéd crucible! I've not the knack
Of fitting big ideas to little words:
I'm Herod,—more a poem than a poet.
Poets are mad, they say,—leastwise in
Persia;
Well, I'm in Jewry, and I'm not a poet,
Ergo, not mad; yet I've sometimes be-
thought me.
If the worst madness were not sanity,
To be most mad 's to think thyself most
sane.
But if thou'rt sane and think'st thou
mayest be mad?
How then? Were it not better many
times

To be unknowing mad?—honestly rav-
ing?

'Tis not a pleasant task at hush of
night

To daub upon the canvas of the future
Such scenes as thou mayst choose to
conjure up

Where thou shalt have declared a war
'gainst Reason.

'Tis better to dream sleeping than awake.
Traitors go mad sometimes, so I have
heard,

For thinking on their sins; beggars, they
say,

Are sometimes starved to madness; fel-
ons, too,

Rave in the galleys. I do ofttimes won-
der

If madness ever seized a king? Ay, ay,
Nebuchadnezzar grazed; but Balaam's
ass

Forsook his asshood and adopted speech:
It is a serious question which was mad-
der,—

The man who took the ass's method, or
The ass who took the method of the man.

I'll have my chief interpreter take notes
Upon that theme,—if Balaam's ass was

mad.

On his decision hangs a serious question:
Nebuchadnezzar's sanity.—What's that?

[A scream without.]

What's that, I say?

Enter ALEXANDER, running, pale as death.

ALEXANDER.

Oh, father, father, father!

HEROD.

What is it? Speak, I say! Where is
thy tongue?

Speak o' the instant! Is thy mother—
Ha!

What o' thy mother?

ALEXANDER.

Mother doth not know.

Oh, come with me,—quick,—quick!

HEROD.

What is it, sir?

God! I will know.

ALEXANDER.

Oh, sir,—I know it's false,—

But they have bound my uncle Joseph.

Oh!

The cords have cut him so! They say,
moreo'er,'Tis thy command, and that he must be
killed,—His head chopped off. Oh, father, come!
—don't wait!I know thou'lt come. He kissed me;
and he wept;He said thou hadst his blessing; and the
bloodWas all upon his wrists, and on his robe.
And they are cutting off his beard and
hair.

Oh, come! come! come!

HEROD.

Well, boy, why should I come?

ALEXANDER.

Oh, father, please be different; mock me
not,—Mock me not now: afterwards thou
mayst tease me

Until my heart is like to burst, but now—

Oh, quickly, father, quickly give me leave
To have chopped off the heads of those
who seized him.

Oh, 'twas so pitiful!

He'd just begun to show me how a
storm—A sand-storm in the desert—smothered
men

And camels. Come! come! come!

The cord has cut so deep into his wrists!

Come, father!

HEROD.

How if I told thee I had ordered this?

ALEXANDER.

Oh, do not mock! 'Twill be too late!
Oh, come!

HEROD.

Thy uncle Joseph dies at my command.

'ALEXANDER.

Oh, no! no! no!

HEROD.

I say he doth.

ALEXANDER.

And I,

That thou art mad to say it.

HEROD.

Mad!

ALEXANDER.

Ay, mad!

Oh, father, come! I kneel.

HEROD.

It is too late.

ALEXANDER.

No! no! not if thou'lt hurry.

HEROD.

I do tell thee

It is too late.

[Turns to window.]

Ha! there he is.—Good uncle,
Good-even to thee. Bear King Lucifer
Word of my everlasting fealty. So!
Up in my arms, boy. Look!

ALEXANDER. [Shrieks.]

Oh, uncle! uncle!

Speak to him, father! Oh! the sword!
the sword!Make him put up his sword.—We're
coming, uncle!Uncle, we're coming.—Oh, why doth he
kneel?Why doth he bend his neck? Oh, God!
oh, God!

The blood! the blood! the blood!

[Turns suddenly with a wild gesture.]

Thou'rt not my father!—
Thou art a devil. Devils wear not
crowns.
There, devil!

[*Snatches off his father's crown and
flings it out of the window, then
swoons.*]

HEROD.

[*Dashing him down.*]

Not thy father? I believe thee.

ACT V.

SCENE I.

A room in HEROD'S palace.

Enter SALOME and Cup-Bearer.

SALOME.

The king returns to-day.

CUP-BEARER.

Ay, madam.

SALOME.

Art sure thou knowest thy part? Well,

CUP-BEARER.

Hear me, and see.

SALOME.

Be quick, then. Soft! I'll draw this
curtain first.
Now, quickly.

CUP-BEARER.

First, then, madam, I'm to wait
Till thou send'st for me; then, on some
occasion
When the king hath had words more
violent
Than usual with the queen, I enter in,
Hastily, yet with a composéd mien,
That I may seem assured in every way

As to the service I'm about to render.
Next I do tell the king Queen Mariamne
Hath coaxed me to assist her in the
mixture

Of a love-potion, all of whose ingredients
I do not know; that this was kept a
secret

From all but us who brewed it; that I
thought

My safest course, both for myself and
him,

Was to confess it all. Is not that right?

SALOME.

Ay, ay. But shouldst thou falter—

CUP-BEARER.

I'll not falter,
Trust me, good madam, I have not for-
gotten

The day she had me scourged for mak-
ing free

To pinch the ears of Aristobulus
For sprinkling me with water. I'll not
shrink.

Her servants' whips have sealed me to
thy service.

SALOME.

Well, go thy ways till I have need of
thee.

Go with a usual face: purse not thy
brows,

Nor look as though thy heart hung on
thy ribs

A bag o' secrets. Go: some one is com-
ing.

Think of the gold that shall be thine.
That's well.

Now go.—Ha! it is she herself. Go
quickly!

[*Exit Cup-Bearer.*]

Enter MARIAMNE.

Good-morrow, murderess.

MARIAMNE.

Wouldst thou, poor wretch,
Raise anger from the dead? Thy woes,
Salome,
Make me forbearing.

SALOME.

So they make not me,
Proud-nostrilled harlot!

MARIAMNE.

Darest thou?

SALOME.

Dare I? God,
Help me to laugh! Ha! ha! ha! ha!
Dare I?

MARIAMNE.

Nay, I forgot,—thou'rt mad. Poor,
fond, weak wretch,
In seeking my destruction thou hast com-
passed
Thy husband's death.

SALOME.

Wilt thou remind me of it?
Take that! [*Stabs at her.*]

MARIAMNE.

[*Quietly, holding her by both wrists.*]

Yes, I will take it, verily,
But not as thou didst mean that I should
take it.
I am as far thy better in my body
As in my soul. There! get thee gone!—
away!—
Ere I am tempted unto what I would
not.
I'll keep thy dagger as a dear memento
Of this most gentle scene; and should
my heart
Grow soft in thinking of thy grief, my
soul
Shall profit by the lesson of this steel.
Go, woman.

SALOME.

Ay, I go,—to come again.
[*Exit.*]

MARIAMNE.

Murderess? Yea, I feel a murderess.
Ah, Joseph, had I known,—had I but
known,—

Torture could not have wrung those
words from me,
For I'd have wedded dumbness on the
rack.

O God, O God, is this Thy king?—this
Herod?—

This Mariamne's husband?—this rage-
buffeted

And passion-driven slayer of the in-
nocent?—

This king whose humors rule him?—this
fond fool

Who wears distemper's motley, and
whose crown

Is but a badge of sin? Rather hath not
Some devil dispossessed his soul, to
reign

Over his body's kingdom?

Oh, this is not the man whose bride I
was,

The king whose queen, the conqueror
whose wife!

Ah me! we women, how have we vexed
Love,

That he doth scourge us speak we but
his name?

I will be gentle with her, for the sake
Of him who was her husband; but this
dagger

Shall keep me ever cautious.

Enter HEROD.

HEROD.

What say you?

MARIAMNE.

I spoke, sir, with a ghost.

HEROD.

Ha?

MARIAMNE.

With a ghost

Which was thy handicraft.

HEROD.

Woman!

MARIAMNE.

A ghost

That wore a scarlet collar,—one whose
head

Was plastered on with blood.

HEROD.

Away, thou fiend!

MARIAMNE.

Nay, send me not away: I should much
 please thee.
 There is the making of a pretty ghost
 In me, my lord, and scarlet is my color.

HEROD.

Devil!

MARIAMNE.

Nay, wife to one.

HEROD.

[Drawing a dagger.]

Begone, I say!

MARIAMNE.

Ay, strike! Thou hast a genius, sir, be-
 lieve me,
 For ghost-making. Strike! there is noth-
 ing—ay,
 Nothing in all the world would so en-
 chant me
 As being made a ghost to haunt thee!
 Nay,
 Glare not as I already were a ghost.
 I see thou art not in a loving mood:
 Therefore I will begone. Great king of
 ghosts,
 Good-morrow. [Exit]

HEROD.

I said that I'd have blood,—I said so,—
 ay,
 But there is not enough in all the land
 To slake my humor's thirst. Oh that I
 were
 Another Pharaoh, and another Moses
 Would turn the Nile to blood a second
 time,
 That I might swim through its encrim-
 soned waves!
 Oh that I were a thing of quenchless
 thirst,
 A vampire monstrous, flattened at the
 throat
 Of one vast body which should be the
 flesh
 Incorporate of every thing alive!

Enter DOSITHEUS.

Is't thou? Dositheus,

DOSITHEUS.

My liege, the letter.

HEROD.

How? From Malchus?

DOSITHEUS.

From Malchus, sire.

HEROD.

That's well; that's well. Ah ha!
 Look here, Dositheus: what think you,
 man,
 Of that,—and that,—and that?
 He will not only send an escort, sir.
 To his beloved Hyrcanus,—dost thou
 mark?—
 But will make welcome all whom he may
 bring,
 Even all the Jews that may be of his
 party,
 And he shall lack for nothing. God of
 Israel!
 There's one thing that he shall not lack
 for,—death!

DOSITHEUS.

My liege—

HEROD.

So the good Malchus doth agree?

DOSITHEUS.

My liege—

HEROD.

I'll show this letter to the Sanhedrim,
 And he shall straightway suffer to the
 utmost
 The law that deals with traitors!

DOSITHEUS.

But, my liege—

HEROD.

Away! Send me Hyrcanus and his
daughter.
Bid them at once attend me.

[Exit DOSITHEUS.]

Would to heaven
His withered veins held more of that red
fluid
Which can alone quench my insatiate
thirst!
Such drops as death may wring from his
dry body
Will but make wet the door-way of a
throat
That gapes for rivers.

Enter HYRCANUS and ALEXANDRA.

Thou art come, my lord.
I'm glad to see that thou'rt not more in-
firm.
I pray thee, sit. —Sit, madam.

ALEXANDRA.

No, I'll stand.
I can breathe better standing. What is
it?

HEROD.

Why, sure thou wouldst not hear before
thy father,—
Thou who art courteous to thy waiting-
woman
And cry thy needle pardon if thou break-
est it?—
Thou'lt sit, sir?

HYRCANUS.

Yes, I thank thy courtesy,
I'm better friends with bed each day I
live.

HEROD.

Yet thou'rt industrious for an old man,
sir.

HYRCANUS.

Industrious?

HEROD.

Ay; thou doest many things
Which young men could not better.

HYRCANUS.

I, my son?

ALEXANDRA.

What dost thou mean?

HEROD.

Softly, good mother-in-law:
I speak unto thy father.—Good Hyr-
canus.
Thou hast a talent that I dreamed not of.

HYRCANUS.

Thou flatterest me, sir. I won a crown
From the Athenian senate once; but,
truth,
'Twas long ago.

HEROD.

The thing of which I speak
Might, sir, have won thee back the
crown of Jewry,
Had it succeeded.

ALEXANDRA.

What?

HEROD.

I speak, my friend,
Of this thy unsuspected talent—

ALEXANDRA.

Well?

HEROD.

Of letter-writing.

[Shows him the letter.]

I assure thee, sir,
I could not trace—upon my honor, sir—
Characters clearer or more shapely.

HYRCANUS.

Daughter,
It is some jest, is't not? Pray you, in-
form me:
I never had the trick o' jest-catching.

ALEXANDRA.

Father, come with me. Ay, it is a jest,—
It is a jest. Come, father; come, Hyrcanus.

HEROD.

Stay, both of ye! Stir not a step!—A
jest?
A jest to make hell merry!
What! wouldst feign ignorance, thou
damnéd traitress?—
Thou, sir, dost thou in truth dare to pre-
tend
Thou dost not recognize this letter?—
this,—
The one thou sent'st unto Arabia's
governor,—
To Malchus? Ha! I touch thee! Good
my lord,
This Malchus is an honest friend o' thine.
Look! he will send thee escort. Look!
thy party,
Even such Jews as thou mayest take with
thee,
Will be provided for. Look here,—and
here!
Thou shalt not want for aught. Oh,
would to heaven
That I had such a friend!—that this same
Malchus
Were Herod's friend!

[ALEXANDRA *sinks half fainting into a
chair.*]

What, madam, wilt thou sit,
Now that thy father stands? It is not
seemly.
Up on thy feet: thou canst breathe bet-
ter so. [*Laughing.*]
Methinks thou shouldst thank God with
all thy breath
That thou dost breathe at all!.

ALEXANDRA.

It was my fault:
Lay all the blame on me,—on me.

HEROD.

Attend.
This is thy father's signature, is't not?

ALEXANDRA.

I teased him to it. Oh, if any suffers,
It should be I!

HYRCANUS.

Nay, nay, thou must not suffer:
It was my fault to let thee bring me to
it.
I am old, Herod, but not yet so old
As to have outlived courage. Weep not,
daughter;
I'll bear the fullest consequence:—weep
not:
Would I could weep!

HEROD.

Thou shalt, and tears of blood.—
Without, there, ho!

Enter Attendants.

Lead forth this man straightway
Unto the palace prison, and send
Sohemus
Unto me in my closet.

ALEXANDRA.

Thinkest thou, Herod,
While Alexandra still is Alexandra,
Her father shall be fingered by a slave?—
Thou knave, thou durst not touch him.—
Father, come;
Come with me,—so.—Thou, sirtah, lead
the way.—
Good father, lean on me.

HYRCANUS.

I'm very old;
Death hath been close to me for many
years.
I am not frightened. Hath he naught
to say?—
Naught of his reasons?

ALEXANDRA.

He hath none to speak of.
Come; come, come, come.

HYRCANUS.

Well, I am old, and death is like a friend
 Who comes disguised as an enemy.
 Think'st thou he'll let me speak to
 Mariamne
 And to her pretty boys?

ALEXANDRA.

Ay, ay. Come on.

HYRCANUS.

Her boys are like her, but one hath his
 eyes.
 Well, well, I've lived to be so old that
 death—
 Even death will not seem new to me.
 Lead on.—
 Farewell, Antipater. [Exeunt.]

HEROD.

That's over. Would it were to do again!
 Her face—ha! ha!—her face was sure the servant
 Of a most furious soul. I can believe
 it,—
 That 'twas her plot; yet he must die for
 it.
 And who can say Antipater is cruel
 When he doth give another that one
 thing
 Which he desires,—a swift and sudden
 death?
 What's cruelty? A tree whose roots split
 hell,
 Whose crest disturbs the stars. Me-
 thinks my star
 Hath long since been a cinder, and its
 fire
 Is all here in my brain. Do men go
 mad
 For dreading madness?

[Enter MARIAMNE.]

Ha! What wouldst thou?

MARIAMNE.

Madman!

Is this thing true?

HEROD.

Why dost thou call me madman?
 I am not mad.

MARIAMNE.

Is this thing true, I say?
 Hast thou given orders that he be im-
 prisoned?—
 Hyrcanus?

HEROD.

Wherefore didst thou call me madman?
 Thou never call'dst me so till now.

MARIAMNE.

Till now
 Thou ne'er wast mad. Give answer to
 my question.
 Hast sent Hyrcanus unto prison?

HEROD.

Ay.

MARIAMNE.

Thou hast?—O God, where is Thy
 justice?

HEROD.

Look you,
 Why said you I was mad? I am not so.
 Was I e'er calmer?

MARIAMNE.

Thou hast sent Hyrcanus
 To prison, under charge of treachery?—
 Hyrcanus,—he who was a king in all
 To make thee seem his sceptre's shadow!

HEROD.

Now—
 Why, now, now, now—look now how
 calm I am!
 Seem I a madman?

MARIAMNE.

—He who is still king
 By every right which cries thee wrong!
 —a man
 To make thy memory a woman,—one
 Beside whom thou dost show as black-
 ribbed clouds
 Against an evening sun! Thou send
 Hyrcanus

To prison? Thou? Thou,—Herod?
 Now let Satan
 Send God to hell that he may rule in
 heaven!
 What! he in prison at thy order?—he
 Who even with sin dealt ever holily,—
 He whose white hair the very winds did
 reverence,—
 He unto whom thy every dignity
 Thou owest,—thy wealth, thy crown, thy
 throne, thy sceptre,
 That very power which now doth wrong
 him! Oh,
 Let me believe thee mad, ere that thy
 reason
 Cried "Amen" to this deed!

HEROD.

He is a traitor.

MARIAMNE.

And what art thou? thou who usurped
 his throne,
 Who filched his crown, who stole away
 his sceptre,
 Who hath his grandchild called adul-
 teress?
 Ay, what art thou, thou, sir, whose
 name is Herod,
 Whose heart is hell condensed?

HEROD.

Thou sayest, a madman.

MARIAMNE.

No! no! thou art not mad! Look not
 like that.
 When thou didst order him to prison,
 then,—
 Then wast thou mad. Not now; not
 now.

HEROD.

I am not?

MARIAMNE.

No, no, I tell thee. What dost stare at?
 Come,
 Thou didst not mean it: I am sure o'
 that.
 Look! I'll forget my wrongs,—all, all,
 all, all,—
 So thou dost not wrong him.

HEROD.

Why, it were madness
 To set him free. I would not give the
 people
 So good a cause to say that I am mad.

MARIAMNE.

They could not have a better cause than
 this
 That now they have in his imprisonment.
 What! will the foulest beggar in the
 streets
 Think that in sanity thou wouldst im-
 prison
 A gentle, fond, feeble, retired old man
 For treachery? Nay, but believe me,
 Herod
 Thou'st ta'en the surest way to prove thy
 madness.

HEROD.

Say it no more.

MARIAMNE.

Say what? That thou art mad?
 Then give me no more cause to say it.
 See!
 I've forgot all but what should be re-
 membered,—
 That I am Mariamne and thy wife,
 Thy queen, the mother of thy sons. Take
 me,
 And set Hyrcanus free!

HEROD.

What! wilt thou kiss me?

MARIAMNE.

Yes.

HEROD.

What! be as my wife again?

MARIAMNE.

Yes,—yes!

All that I was, and more, I will be,
 Herod,
 So thou dost set him free.

HEROD.

Wilt love me too?

MARIAMNE.

I will be all to thee that thou couldst wish.

HEROD.

Save loving?

MARIAMNE.

If thou dost find fault with me,
Send me to prison in Hyrcanus' stead.

HEROD.

Then thou'lt not swear to love me?

MARIAMNE.

Oh, my lord,
What deed could better merit love than
this one
I'd have thee do? As thou'lt some day
be old,
Think on his age, and do him rever-
ence.

HEROD.

Nay,

I am not old, and think of thee each
moment.

Is that the way to calmness?

MARIAMNE.

What's his crime?

Or who hath slandered him? His in-
nocence

I'll prove sire, with my life.

HEROD.

[*Handing her Malchus's letter.*]

Not with thy love?

Read that. The governor's reply is here,
On this side,—here.

MARIAMNE.

[*Reading.*]

Would go to Asphaltites
And to Arabia. Would have an escort,
He and my mother. Signed Hyrcanus.—

Well,

What's there of treachery? I see no
harm here.

HEROD.

No harm? Thou seest no harm in it?
No harm!

No harm! No harm! But soft! soft!
soft! Read on.

Read Malchus' answer.

MARIAMNE.

Escort granted them;
All done in's power to aid them; shelter
promised
Unto his party.—Well?

HEROD.

No,—ill, by God!

Give me the papers: thou wilt tear
them, girl.

We'll see if that the Sanhedrim thinks
with thee.

No harm! [*Laughing.*] 'Tis harm to
think there is no harm.

MARIAMNE.

Thou canst not purpose to submit those
letters
Unto the Sanhedrim?

HEROD.

It is my purpose,—
This very moment.

MARIAMNE.

Herod, hear me!—Look!
Look on me! Look, my lord!—I kneel;
I kneel.

Am I less fair than when thou loved'st
me?

HEROD.

Wilt swear to love me now?

MARIAMNE.

All that a wife
Should be I will be.

HEROD.

All save loving. Ay,
Thou dost not love me, and he shall not
live

To take the love that should be mine!

MARIAMNE.

Nay, hear me!

HEROD.

No more! no more!

[Enter Cup-Bearer.]

Ha, slave! what dost thou there?

CUP-BEARER.

My lord, I come on most important matters.

HEROD.

Important matters? Whom do they concern?
Hyrchanus?

CUP-BEARER.

No; the queen.

HEROD.

The queen? What queen?—
Queen Mariamne? Well?

CUP-BEARER.

Yesterday noon,
Your majesty, the queen did come to me
And ask that I would help her brew a
potion—
A love-drink—for your majesty. Being
won
By much fine gold, I did consent, but
afterwards
Bethought me that, not knowing all the
contents
Of that which she had given me, 'twere
best
Both for my lord and my lord's faithful
servant
That I should tell my lord concerning it.

HEROD.

A love-drink! Ha! for me?—Madam,
what's this?

MARIAMNE.

As bold a lie as ever was well lied.—

Sirrah, hast thou forgot my eunuchs'
whips,
That thus thou bravest me?

CUP-BEARER.

Your majesty,
I've not forgotten them.

HEROD.

A love-drink! So!
For me? Hast thou this drink?

CUP-BEARER.

Not now, my lord.
Princess Salome hath it in her charge.

MARIAMNE.
[Aside.]

Salome!

HEROD.

Bid her here at once.

MARIAMNE.

What, Herod!
Thou'lt hear thy slave and sister before
me?
Canst thou not see he lies? Dost thou
not know
He is in her employ and hired to lie?—
Thou craven hound! stir not until I bid
thee.
Look in mine eyes and say those words
again!—
Thou seest: he cannot do it. Mark him,
sir:—
He cannot look at me.

HEROD.

Canst thou not so?

CUP-BEARER.

My lord, mistake me not; it is not fear
Which keeps me from returning the
queen's look,
But that my duty unto thee, my liege,
Forbids that I should gaze upon thy con-
sort.

HEROD.

Well said! Well said!—Madam, thou art rebuked.

MARIAMNE.

Rebuked! and by that worm? Thy queen rebuked!

And by thy cup-bearer?—Now long farewell,

Hyrchanus! Peace be thine,—as must be death.

I have done all for thee that woman could

And yet be woman.

HEROD.

Nay, what dost thou mean? Where art thou going?

MARIAMNE.

Where I'll find honour, sir,—Unto Hyrcanus.

HEROD.

I forbid it!

MARIAMNE.

I Am not to be forbidden. Stand aside. If thou art Herod, I am Mariamne, And queen unto the end, though crownless.

[Exit.]

HEROD.

Then she is mad,—not I. I am not mad.

Who said so? No one. But they must not think so,—

Not think so, either. I will see a madman

And make comparison.—Ho, there! you, sir,

Do men run mad in Jewry?

CUP-BEARER.

Ay, my lord.

HEROD.

Hast thou seen any?

CUP-BEARER.

What? Madmen, my lord?

HEROD.

Ay, madmen.

CUP-BEARER.

Scores, my lord.

HEROD.

How looked they, slave?—Seemed they to be in any sort acquainted With their affliction?

CUP-BEARER.

Some did, sire.

HEROD.

Some did? They were not mad, then—no! they were not mad.

A man may not be mad and know it, slave, Think'st thou?

CUP-BEARER.

Why, yes, my lord, sometimes.

HEROD.

Away! Away! thou traitorous hound! thou knave! thou villian! Out of my sight! Dost hint that I am mad?

[Exit Cup-Bearer.]

When Herod's mad, let God be writ a fool,

And wisdom's sucklings swarm the throne of heaven.

What! shall a man go mad and talk of it?

No! no! no! no! Cunning is twin to madness.

Madmen will swear unto their sanity With th' self-same ravings that proclaim them mad.

Why, I am calmer than I was a month—
A week—a day—nay, even a moment
past.

I let her go unhanded,—let her word me,
Took even her insults calmly, where a
madman

Had torn her into shreds,—ay, into rib-
bons!

A potion? A love-potion? Let me see:
That's not so bad. Methinks there's
something here

Not altogether venomous. I'll ponder.
What if she loves me after all?—would
win me

By crafty means? I've heard that such
things happen.

If that were so,—if this love-drink were
harmless,—

If—ah! if Mariamne loveth me! Why,
Though hell should burst in flames be-
neath my feet,

I'd take her back again, and with my kis-
ses

Make its worst blaze seem cool! Oh,
I'm on fire,—

On fire! But let me recollect. The 'po-
tion,—

He said he thought 'twas best to tell me.
Why?

Why was it best? Sure there could be
no harm,

Unless—unless—ah! there's the thing,—
unless

He did suspect that it was poisoned.
Ay,

There is a possibility. No matter!

I will not think on it. She poison me?—
She, Mariamne, poison Herod? Well,

I'm glad I am not mad, since were I so
I might have fall'n into this snare. And
yet

It is enough to make a Solomon

Cry Wisdom wanton, and as lawful wife
Clip easy Foolishness. Now would to

God

That I were mad, to know not of this
horror!

Sweet Madness, come, come, come!
Scoop out my brains

To feed thy henchmen and in this racked
skull

Take up thy wild abode! Let every
cranny

In my once-loving heart be packed with
ravellings

From Fate's accurséd loom, snatch off
my crown

To make the harlot Circumstance a
zone,

And use my sceptre as a rod wherewith
To scourge all wise men to thy ser-
vice!

SCENE II.

A dungeon.—HYRCANUS and ALEXANDRA.

HYRCANUS.

Good daughter, I am weary: loose these
chains

A little.

ALEXANDRA.

Oh, God help me, sir, I cannot!
Father, thou knowest with what joy of
heart

I'd be there in thy place. Thou know-
est that,

Dost thou not, father? Look! lean so,
against me.

Is it not easier? Here's water, sir,
If thou art thirsty.

HYRCANUS.

No, I'm only tired.
Thou think'st he'll let me see my little
grandsons

Ere I am led to execution? Speak!
Dost not, good daughter?

ALEXANDRA.

Nay talk not like that.
He would not dare to kill thee.

HYRCANUS.

Ay, ay, ay,
He would. But Mariamne 'll plead for
me?

Thou saidest so, didst not?

ALEXANDRA.

Ay, father.

HYRCANUS.

Well,
'Tis all with her. Why dost thou weep,
my daughter?

ALEXANDRA.

Alas! how canst thou ask me why I weep?

Dost thou not suffer for me? Was't not I

Who lured thee to thy ruin? Did not I

Draw up that paper and then torture thee

Until thou'dst signed it? And am I not free,

While thou art fettered? I,—thy daughter,—I,

Who should have been the comfort of thy age,

The councillor of all to thy advantage, Thy stay in time of trouble! Look, Hyrcanus:

I brought thee to thy death. Oh! curse me! curse me!

I kneel to hear thy curses as another To receive blessings. Let me no more writhe

Beneath thy gentleness. Come, curse me! curse me!

HYRCANUS.

Good daughter, do not weep. If it be death,

Why, death and I are friends, and glad to meet.

And say not 'tis thy fault if that I die; For in that letter there was naught, believe me,

To merit this the law's extremest course.

ALEXANDRA.

No: was there? Was there? Answer quickly, father.

Thou knowest I only wished to place thee, sir,

Beyond his reach.

HYRCANUS.

I know it. Do not weep.

I know it, daughter. Hark! I hear a footfall.

Hush! listen; listen.

[Enter MARIAMNE.]

ALEXANDRA.

Mariamne! Oh, Thou'rt welcome, thou art welcome! Yet thine eyes Are not as I would have them.

HYRCANUS.

Pretty one, How will it fare with me?

MARIAMNE.

As it should fare With him who wrongs thee. Sire, he is a monster, And his heart petrified long ere this hour Into the corner-stone of a new hell.

ALEXANDRA.

And thou canst speak so calmly, Mariamne?

Knowest his doom, and yet can tell him of 't

With not so much as even one false note In all thy soft voice-music?

MARIAMNE.

Am I calm? I think I'm mine own ghost; for I feel nothing

As I was wont to feel. I know the headsman,

And sent his wife a brew only this Nisan,

When she lay sick to death. There'll be no mis-stroke.

Thou art not feared, sir?

HYRCANUS.

No, my pretty one, I am not feared of anything but life, Now that I have made friends with Death. But, heart, I'd say farewell unto our pretty boys.

MARIAMNE.

I'll call them.

[Exit.]

ALEXANDRA.

Devil! devil! Oh, this Herod!
Lucifer were a paragon to him,
And Satan lovable.—O God! O God!
Instruct me how to demonize myself,
That I may meet him on equality
And curse him as a sister! Father,
father,
Art thou asleep?

HYRCANUS.

Almost. I am fast drowsing
Unto the final moment, when my pillow
Shall be the block, and all my dream-
ing death.
Peace! peace! weep not.

*Enter MARIAMNE, ALEXANDER, and
ARISTOBULUS.*

Ah, pretty ones, come here.
Thou lookest pale, my soldier. What's
the matter?

MARIAMNE.

He hath not yet recovered, dear Hyr-
canus,
From witnessing his uncle's death.

HYRCANUS.

Well, he must not see mine. So! so!

ALEXANDER.

No! no! no! no! Oh, no! no! no!

HYRCANUS.

There, there, my prince, thou shalt not.
Why, how thou tremblest! Look, I am
to die,
And yet I tremble not.

ALEXANDER.

I'd rather die
Ten thousand thousand times than see
thee killed.
But then he cannot kill thee,—he cannot.

He is a devil, but he could not kill thee.
Say that he could not, mother,—mother,
say it!

Oh, I did love him so! I loved him so!
And now, whenever I do think of him,
There is a shining redness comes be-
tween us—
Faugh!—and a smell of blood,—a thick,
wet red,—
A damp, fresh, sickening, faint, far-
reaching smell!
Oh, uncle! uncle!

HYRCANUS.

So! poor boy! poor boy!
And I must die?

MARIAMNE.

Would I could die for thee!—
Who's there?

Enter Attendant and Herald.

HERALD.

Hyrcanus, thou art summonéd
To come straightway before the Sanhe-
drim.

HYRCANUS.

Then kiss me, pretty ones. Come close
to me.

Nay, daughter do not weep. Come,
Mariamne.

Kneel for my blessing,—all of ye; kneel
there,

Where I can touch ye. Nay, come closer
yet.

The God of Israel forever keep ye,
As I would keep ye, were I Israel's
God,—

Forever love, bless, guard, and cherish
ye.

Don't weep; don't weep! I can no more,
my heart.

Unloose this bracelet,—I have missed the
clasp,—

Wear it, and think sometimes of him who
wore it.

This for thee, boy,—and this for thee,—
and this

For thee, my daughter; all that's left,
for Death.

Don't tremble, Alexander! this poor body
Hath not sufficient blood to fill a goblet
To Herod's health. Farewell,—farewell,
—farewell!

[ALEXANDRA swoons.]

What, daughter! wilt thou go before me?

Why,

It is not like thee so to lack in de-
ference.—

Look to her, sweet, and if in truth she's
dead,

See that she be entombed with me.

Farewell,—

Farewell,—farewell! Why, I am young
again,

To think how soon I will be quit of age.

Lead on. Hyrcanus is once more a
king,

And goes to meet King Death as equal!

[*Exeunt* HYRCANUS and *Attendant*.]

MARIAMNE.

Father!—

Nay, let me not disturb him. Come,
my boys,

Let's to thy father,—let's unto thy
father

With this sweet news. Let's to him
with our thanks.

Let's take him kisses,—ha! ha! ha!—
such kisses!

Let's fall upon our knees to honour him.

Was ever such a father? Come, let's
hurry!

Let's kiss, kiss, kiss, kiss, kiss him!
Run! run! run!

[*Exit, running, leading her two boys
by either hand.*]

SCENE III.

A room in the palace.

Enter HEROD and SALOME.

HEROD.

Thou canst not swear that it was poi-
soned?

SALOME.

But can there be a doubt? No;

HEROD.

Ha!

SALOME.

I repeat it,
Can there be any doubt? She knows
too well
That thou art but her fancy's slave, her
toy,
To brew thee merely love potions.

HEROD.

Her slave?

I'll make thee slave to her! So? I a
slave!

Thou hast a daring bent o' mind? Look
thou!

Unless thou prove this love-brew poi-
sonous,

Thou shalt in prison rot. As I am
Herod,

I do believe thou'st lied from first to
last

Concerning this affair and all that's
touched it.

Thou art a most accomplished liar.
Prove it,

Or I will make her ten times queen
again,

And brand the hideous story of thy
falseness

With red-hot irons on thy naked flesh,

Then have thee whipped through every
street and by-way

Of all the towns in Jewry, that all men
May read of it! Away, and bring me
proof,

Or look for death in agony unequalled!

[*Exit* SALOME.]

What if I've been deceived in everything
From then till now?

Enter MARIAMNE and boys.

What! Mariamne?

MARIAMNE.

Ay.

Who looks like Mariamne, save herself?
And these, sir, are her sons. She comes
to thank thee—
She and her sons—for thy last kindness
to them.

HEROD.

Wilt thou not sit? Here is a chair.

MARIAMNE.

Nay, Herod,

I'd have mine eyes at level with thine
own;
And loving thanks are better proffered
standing.

HEROD.

Why so?

MARIAMNE.

'Tis hard to give thanks graciously.

HEROD.

Not when 'tis Mariamne thanking Herod.

MARIAMNE.

More than ever.

HEROD.

Say'st thou?

MARIAMNE.

Ay, my lord,—

More than ever.

HEROD.

Why, right well thou knowest
I'm always thankful to be thanked by
thee.

Come, kiss me. For what wouldst thou
thank me?

MARIAMNE.

For

Hyrcanus' death! Nay, kiss me! I am
sister

To Aristobulus. Nay, wilt not kiss me?
Thy treasurer Joseph loved me. Nay,
now kiss me.
I am the grandchild of Hyrcanus!

HEROD.

What! what! wilt thou dare?

MARIAMNE.

Then thou'lt not kiss me? Haply
I am not looking fair enough to-day?
I'll have a robe dyed in Hyrcanus' blood,
And 'broidered richly with the hair of
Joseph
And Aristobulus, to wear withal
When I would please thee. Come, a
kiss,— a kiss.

HEROD.

Devil!

MARIAMNE.

Or, if that will not pleasure thee,
I'll make a feast for thee, and in thine
honor
These thy two sons I'll have served up,
with blood
For wine.

HEROD.

Devil, I say!

MARIAMNE.

Or, if that dish
Were something coarse for such a
mighty king,
Their hearts alone I'd offer thee.

HEROD.

God's heart!
Dost think I'll let thee live to mock me?

MARIAMNE.

No:
Killing's thy forte. I pray thee send me,
sir,
To Aristobulus, and Joseph, and Hyr-
canus.
Haply thou hast some tender message,
sir,

That I could bear them? 'Tis the only errand
On which for thee I would go willingly.
Come, send me,—send me.

HEROD.

Can a man bear this
And not go mad?

MARIAMNE.

Mad? Oh, no, thou'rt not mad.
I'm mad, the time is mad, earth, sea,
heaven, hell,
The past, the future—but not Herod!
No!
He'll stand a monument to sanity
When for some excellent reason he hath
slain
Everything save his reason!

HEROD.

God in heaven!

MARIAMNE.

Nay, God is not in heaven! If he were
there,
Herod would not be here! He travels,
sir;
There's a rebellion on some distant star,
And He hath gone to quell it.

Ay, in heaven

Thou know'st but these three souls,
Hyrchanus, Joseph,
And Aristobulus. Cry out to them!
Cry out to them! cry out to them!

HEROD.

Thou darest!

Woman!

MARIAMNE.

Ay,—to my woe. The wife of Herod
Should have by justice been a dragoness,
Giving birth to monsters that had
murdered him!
Not unto men for him to murder.

HEROD.

Curse thee!

MARIAMNE.

Curse me, didst say?—curse me? Now,
as I live,

May everything that hath on every
world

Since the creation, died, be resurrected
To curse thee with a separate curse!

Oh, demon,

Thou'st found the core of sin and eaten
it.

What! thou wouldst curse me? Am I
not accursed

Sufficiently in having been thy wife?
Didst thou not curse me with a curse
complete

When thou didst make me mother of thy
sons?

Be thou accurséd, Herod, ay, accurséd,
Beyond thy utmost knowledge of a curse.
Forget that I once loved thee. Recollect.
My hatred only. Thirst, thou shalt have
blood,

And blood alone, to quench thy torment.
Hunger,

Thou shalt not eat, but be thyself de-
voured.

Cry out to heaven, and thy prayers re-
bounding

Shall hurl thee into hell; while death to
thee

Shall be one dream of life most horrible!

HEROD.

Oh, God!

MARIAMNE.

Ay, tremble; for He hears not thee,
While Mariamne's curse is registered!

[Exit.]

HEROD.

What! Mariamne! Mariamne! Mari-
amne!

Return! Thou canst not hate me! No!
no! no!

That's to be mad,—to say that Mariamne
Hates Herod. And I am not mad. I
dreamed.

Then I am dead! She said that I would
dream

Of life in death. Who said so? Mari-
amne?

No,—one who looked like her. Yet
there is none—

Not one who looks like her, saving her-
self.

She said that, too. Her eyes! her eyes!
her eyes!

They were two fires; they burned into
my heart's core.

Nay, but my heart's a fire. My heart?
What heart?

I gave my heart to Mariamne,—yea,
And she fed anger on it. Well, I'm
glad,

I'm glad, in spite of all, that I'm not
mad;

Else might I think all this had really
happened;

And now I know I'm dreaming.

Enter SALOME.

Good Salome,

Wake me, I pray you. [*Aside.*] But
that's foolish: ay,

She's part and parcel of my dream.—
Good sister,

How come you in my dream?

SALOME.

What! art thou mad?

HEROD.

No,—dreaming.

SALOME.

Why, that's madness on occasion.

Up! Rouse ye! rouse ye! Here's the
potion.—Look!

HEROD.

Is 't poisonous?

SALOME.

Ay.

HEROD.

Then give it me.

SALOME.

For what?

HEROD.

To drink.

SALOME.

Go to! Why, thou art mad in verity.

HEROD.

Would that I were!

SALOME.

I say thou art.

HEROD.

Then once

Thou bringest me welcome tidings.

SALOME.

Brother.

HEROD.

Well?

SALOME.

What is the matter?

HEROD.

Why, I'm mad, I hope.

Thou saidst that I was mad, but then,
good sooth,

Thou art a famous liar lied about.

But look thou, there's a something in
me, jade,

That whispers madmen may go mad-
der.

SALOME.

Sir,

Rouse ye. Look here: this is the love-
potion

That Mariamne brewed to kill thee.

HEROD.

Ah!

SALOME.

If it be not a poison, I implore
That thou wilt torture me for pastime.

HEROD.

How!—

To kill me?

SALOME.

Ay: who else? Wake up! wake up!

HEROD.

Why, now, that's right. That is as I
would have it.
I would not longer sleep.

SALOME.

Then rouse ye! Here,
Take 't in thy hand. There in thy palm
thou holdest
What might have been thy death.

HEROD.

Poison, thou sayest?

SALOME.

Ay, ay.

HEROD.

And brewed by Mariamne?

SALOME.

Ay.

HEROD.

By Mariamne for king Herod?

SALOME.

Ay.

All this thou knowest. Why wilt ques-
tion me?

It is for thee to prove, if I speak truth.

HEROD.

And I will prove thee, monster! Ay,
by heaven!

The dream is past, and Herod is awake,
To sleep no more!—Without, there!

Enter Attendant.

Send me straightway
A slave from out the workers in the
vineyard.

Thou shalt be proved. Fear not: thou
shalt be proved,—

In all,—in all. But then I am not mad,
If this is not a dream.—So! thou art
come?

Enter Attendant and Slave.

Salome, here's thy proof,—a pretty proof.
—What is thy age?

BOY.

A score of years, my lord.

HEROD.

Dost thou hate life?

BOY.

No, sire. Why should I hate it?
I'm very happy.

HEROD.

Were't not better, boy,
That thou shouldst part with it ere thou
dost hate it?
Give me thy answer.

BOY.

I know not, my lord.

HEROD.

I know, and will decide for thee. Drink
this.

BOY.

[Drinks.]

Unto thy health, sire.

HEROD.

Ha!

BOY.

Oh, God! what's this?—
—Water, I pray you.

[Dies.]

HEROD.

Thou art proved, Salome:—
Salome, thou are proved! I will believe
thee

Though thou shouldst say thou never
wast a liar!

Almost a merry death this would have
been.

It scarce had loosed my crown or stirred
my sceptre.

Look how he's stretched,—as easily, I
wager,

As were he sleeping in the vineyard sun-
light.

I am not sorry that he's dead. No! no!
He might have lived to be a Herod.

Ay,
He might have lived to have a wife.

SALOME.

Come, rouse thee!
Wilt thou hang thus above a dead slave's
body?
Away!

HEROD.

For what?

SALOME.

For vengeance! Dost thou ask me,
And that thou mightst have been, there
at thy foot?
Away! to bring the would-be murderess
To justice.

HEROD.

No! let justice go to her!
I will not see her more, though we
should live
A million years within our voices' sound!

SALOME.

Live! dost thou speak of life as possible
Unto that demon?—one who never loved
thee?—
Who made thy love a means unto her
ends?—
A traitress?—an adulteress?—Ay, thou'st
said it!
Almost a murderess, quite one in heart?
She who seduced thy sister's husband?—
she—

HEROD.

Enough! enough! thou hast named
crimes sufficient
To make thyself seem holy in compari-
son!

SALOME.

Sir!

HEROD.

Oh, be satisfied; be satisfied;
She shall not live.

SALOME.

Now thou art Herod!

HEROD.

No,
Now I'm a madman! [Exit, laughing.]

SALOME.

And now I have conquered!
She is already 'prisoned, and I'll follow,
To see that she doth soon meet death!

[Exit.]

SCENE IV.

*A dungeon. MARIAMNE chained.
Two guards, talking.*

1ST GUARD.

She hath not said a word since I have
watched her,
Nor moved. I have not seen her weep,
—not once.

2D GUARD.

Believe you all that's said of her?

1ST GUARD.

Not I.

2D GUARD.

In thine ear, friend: I do suspect foul
play.

1ST GUARD.

Most like. Here comes the sister of
the king.

Enter SALOME.

SALOME.

Slaves, where's the prisoner?

1ST GUARD.

There, madam.

SALOME.

Ah!

Good-morrow, madam. I do trust your queenship

Is in all things provided for? Not so? What! sulky? Fie! fie! fie! knit not thy brows.

I fear thou hast a temper, gentle queen. A queen should not indulge in mortal passions.

And, by the way, if any ill befall thee, I know 'twill comfort thee to think thy sons,—

Thy pretty sons,—Prince Aristobulus,—The one who trod upon my robe,—rememberest?—

And Alexander,—he who less resembles My husband Joseph,—that into my charge

They will be given. Ha! have I touched thee, harlot?

What! No word yet? Well, thy blood speaks for thee:

It ne'er leaped readier to Herod's kisses Than it doth to the words of Herod's sister.

Be honest, now: why didst thou lure my husband

From loyalty to me and to the king? 'Twas madness. Ay, thou mightst have known I'd trace it.

Come, now; speak. Tell me. Didst thou truly love him,

Or was't mere wantonness? Nay, do not die,

Of rage, before thy time,—thy time's so near,

Ha! ha! so near,—so near. Well, of thy sons

I'll promise thee one thing.

MARIAMNE.

What?

SALOME.

Ah, thou speakest!

Thou art not dumb, as I began to fear? I'll promise thee one thing,—but one, though.

MARIAMNE.

Well,

What is it?

SALOME.

'Patience! patience!

MARIAMNE.

What is it?

SALOME.

I will not cuff them more than twice a day

Ha! ha! ha! ha! Have care,—have care, good girl!

Thou'lt die, if thou so giv'st thy fury vent.

MARIAMNE.

Joseph! Joseph! Joseph! rise from thy grave

And blast this devil with thy festering horror!

Leap to her arms all headless as thou art,

And venge my wrongs: I, Mariamne, summon thee,

Who was and am the Queen of Jewry!

SALOME.

Fiend!

MARIAMNE.

[*Breaking loose and seizing SALOME.*] O God! Make me the tool to venge his murder!

Off, cords! Be brittle as all joy! Off! off!—

Ha! wilt speak more of cuffing?

SALOME.

Help, there! ho! The queen is mad! Help! help! The queen is mad!

MARIAMNE.

One other cry, and thou shalt stand straightway

Face unto face with thy wronged husband's ghost.

Ay, presently I mean to send thee to him,

No matter what thou doest. Dost thou hear me?

First cry me pardon, though,—pardon,
dost hear?—

And then to bloody Joseph!

SALOME.

Hold thy hands!

Thou'rt choking me.

MARIAMNE.

Presently,—but not yet.

My pardon.

SALOME.

Thou art mad! Well, pardon,—pardon.
Now let me go.

MARIAMNE.
[*Stabbing her.*]

Ay, unto Joseph! So!
Know'st thou this dagger? I return it
to thee!

SALOME.
[*Swoons.*]

Oh! I am killed!

Enter Guards.

1ST GUARD.

Oh, heaven! what's this?

2D GUARD.

We will be put to death.
Mark how she bleeds.

1ST GUARD.

Softly! she is but wounded.

2D GUARD.

Did the queen do it?

1ST GUARD.

Ay, she must have.

2D GUARD.

Look!
She's stiller, sir, than ever.

1ST GUARD.

Well,—I know not,—
Mayhap the princess killed herself.

2D GUARD.

Soft, soft!
She moves. She is not dead. Come on,
sir; come.

[*Exeunt, bearing SALOME out.*]

MARIAMNE.

[*Staring at the blood left from SALOME'S
wound upon the floor.*]

Why, her blood's red, like any other
woman's!
I had thought it would be black,—black
as her soul;—
As Herod's.

Enter SARAMALLAS and SOHEMUS.

SARAMALLAS.

Look, friend, how she stares!

SOHEMUS.

In truth,
There's something here— What! blood?
Look, Saramallas!

SARAMALLAS.

'Tis blood, assuredly. Look to the
queen:
She may have stabbed herself.

SOHEMUS.

Would God she had!

SARAMALLAS.

Ay, Sohemus, Amen with all my heart.
Was his command to kill her final?

SOHEMUS.

Final.

SARAMALLAS.

And must she die? Is there no way?
—not one?

SOHEMUS.

Thou knowest well that I would die to save her.

SARAMALLAS.

And thou'rt to take a napkin to the king
Dipped in her blood?

SOHEMUS.

Oh, speak not of it, man!
I love my mistress, and would kill ten Herods
Rather than look to see one single hair
Of her bright head disturbed.

SARAMALLAS.

Well, 't must be done.—
Your majesty, the Sanhedrim—

MARIAMNE.

I know,
I know, good Saramallas.—Sohemus,
Good-morrow. It is well. I care not now.
She's dead: my sons are safe. Thou, Sohemus,
Protect them all that's in thy power from Cyros.
Yet I do not much fear her, now the power
That urged her is subdued. Good Sohemus,
Cyros without Salome is a hell
Without a devil. See they say their prayers,
And do not break the Sabbath with their games,
And letter-cutting on the lintels. Nay,
Thou wast a boy, and know how boys will do it,—
Even the gentlest.—Well, I'm ready.
Come.

SOHEMUS.

Oh, mistress well beloved and always loving,
Thou knowest that I'd rather suffer death
Ten thousand times than see thee even unhappy.

MARIAMNE.

Yea, friend, even so. But once to suffer death

Is nevermore to suffer anything.

Therefore rejoice with me, whose not-long life

Hath been so full of pain, I would not purchase

Another day of life were't purchasable
For the mere asking. I will bear thy love

To Joseph. Nay, no tears, good Sohemus.

Mine eyes are dry as are these breasts of mine,

That once did nourish princes. Cease,
I pray thee.

I'll walk alone, a queen unto the last.
[Exit.]

SCENE V.

Enter HEROD.

What, she prepare a poison for me! Oh, Foul, foul! She, Mariamne?—she, my queen?

Nay, she was Joseph's wanton, not my queen.

Was not that vile? But thus to seek my life,—

That's viler. No, not that: to slay my honour,—

That was more vile. And yet she might have known it,—

That I would pardon her. But she must die,—

She must die now. Die? Mariamne? Nay,

He who doth spill a drop of her rare blood

Shall kill his best-belovéd for my pleasure

Upon a holiday! What! die? Her lips,
That I so oft have kissed, to rot i' th' tomb

Like any beggar's? What! an end of all?

All our soft hours, our million-pleasured years,—

Even our quarrelling? And yet, and yet,
She plotted for my death. Soft, is that sure?

Soft, soft,—Salome! But I saw him die

Die, with these very eyes. Oh, God! I
 care not:
 One kiss would make a thousand deaths
 seem easy,
 And there's no poison like to fruitless
 yearning!
 I care not what she purposed, I'll forgive
 her,—
 I will forgive her, and be writ forever
 Herod the happy fool of Mariamne!
 Ay, ay, a happy fool is wise in all things
 Above the sourest knowledge-wrinkled
 seer
 That scoffs at him! Yes, yes, I will
 forgive her,
 And teach her not to hate me.

[Enter SOHEMUS.]

Ay, sir, thou—
 Thou art the very man I seek. Good
 Sohemus,
 Attend. I did speak rashly to thee,
 friend,
 Some moments past.

SOHEMUS.

Rashly, my lord?

HEROD.

Ay, Sohemus.
 There is a burning here doth sometimes
 urge me
 To violence whose half I do not mean.
 I gave thee orders which I would re-
 tract,—
 I would retract.

SOHEMUS.

For God's sake, Herod, speak!

HEROD.

Why, what's the matter? Here, sir!
 wouldst thou swoon?
 What is the matter? I would have the
 queen
 Set free again. Dost hear?

SOHEMUS.

The queen is free.
 Ay, Herod, she hath soared beyond thy
 reach

Forever. Here's the kerchief thou com-
 manded'st
 That I should dip in her warm blood.

HEROD.

Thou liest!
 What! dost thou dare to show me that
 vile rag
 And say 'tis stained with Mariamne's
 blood?

SOHEMUS.

Ay Herod, I have but obeyed thy order,

HEROD.

Dog, thou dost lie! Who put thee to this
 trick?
 Where is Salome? She hath hired thee
 to it.
 Speak, sir! Where is she?

SOHEMUS.

Wounded unto death.
 The poor queen, frenzied by her coward
 taunts,
 Did burst her bonds and stab her nigh to
 death.

HEROD.

The poor queen? What poor queen?
 What dost thou hint?
 Dost dare speak thus of Mariamne? Go!
 Bid her unto me. Bid her here, I say.
 Away!

SOHEMUS.

Nay, Herod, be convinced. Thy queen
 No longer lives: that blood is hers in-
 deed,
 And I the most unhappy man on earth!

HEROD.

Dost thou dare say thou art, when
 Herod's here?
 Thou most unhappy? Thou? O dog,
 dog, dog!
 Would thou hadst twenty lives, that I
 might take them
 Each in a different way! She's dead,
 thou say'st?

And that's her blood? Back to her with
this message:
"My chief fault was obedience; and
Herod,
Being a madman, killed me for obeying."

[Runs SOHEMUS through with his
sword.]

SOHEMUS.

I'm glad to go to her. Thou hast
done well.

[Dies.]

HEROD.

That Mariamne's blood? Oh, God! let
redness
Possess the earth, the heavens forswear
their blue,
The sea its green! ay let the very stars
Put on her color, and burn bloodily
To do her honor! I will build a pyra-
mid

Unto her memory, and its littlest stone
Shall twice outsize Cheops' entirety;
While for a mortar I will mix the dust
Of emperors dead with blood of living
kings!

To work! to work! for earth's founda-
tion-stone
Must be the first in the tremendous pile!

[Exit madly.]

Enter two or three attendants, running.

1ST ATTENDANT.

Was't not the king?

2D ATTENDANT.

I'm sure I heard him.

3D ATTENDANT.

Ay,
And so am I; but he's not here. Look
there!
Is't not Lord Sohemus?

1ST ATTENDANT.

Ay,—dead, I think.

2D ATTENDANT.

Alas! alas! He had the kindest heart
In all of Jewry.

1ST ATTENDANT.

So he had; and heaven
Now hath his soul. Let's bear him
hence. Come on.

[Exeunt, bearing the body of SOHEMUS.]

SCENE VI.

Another part of the palace.

Enter HEROD and ALEXANDER.

HEROD.

Boy, where's thy mother? Where's thy
mother, boy?
Speak, boy: I will not hurt thee. Look,
I'm gentle,—
I am not angry. Look, I'll throw my
sword
After my crown. Thou seest I recollect
it,—
Thy insolent waggery,—ha! ha!—and
yet am gentle.
Thou seest? Come, then, my pretty
prince. Look here:
This ring for thee. Now tell me, where's
thy mother?

ALEXANDER.

In heaven, where thou'lt never be, vile
king.
Call me no more sweet names; for I do
hate thee!—
Hate thee!—hate thee!—

HEROD.

What's that, thou devil? Ha!
She taught thee that.

ALEXANDER.

She never taught me anything
But what was good; nor could I teach
myself

A better way of honoring her memory
Than by abhorring thee!

HEROD.

Devil!

ALEXANDER.

I tell thee,
Thou'lt be thrice damned, if after killing
her
Thou seek'st to kill her honour! Slay
me! do!
I'm not afraid. Thou'st thrown away
thy sword;
Then take thy hands. I ask no more,
by heaven,
Than to be sent to her!—Oh, mother!
mother!

HEROD.

Where is she, then? Where is she?
Tell me that,
And thou shalt go to her. Don't weep;
don't weep.
Look, I am sorry if I called thee devil.
Look,—for thou'lt see what no man saw
ere this,—
Herod a pardon-beggar. Look,—I'm
sorry.

ALEXANDER.

Go beg of God; for I have naught to
give thee
Save only hate.

[Exit.]

HEROD.

Now know I thou'rt his son!
No! no! no! no! I did not mean it!
Oh,
Return, return, my son, my Alexander,
My son and hers! Or if that thou dost
hate me,
Be a dear hypocrite, and feign to love
me!
What's that, though? Soft! if one may
feign to love,
May not one feign to hate? Might she
not so?
She doth not hate me: no, she hath but
feigned it,—

This hatred,—that I may her love more
value
When she confesses it.—Without, there!
ho!

Enter Attendants.

Sirs,—bid the queen at once attend me.
Quick!
Why do ye stand there as though death
had gripped ye?
Summon the queen at once!

ATTENDANT.

What queen, my lord?

HEROD.

What queen, dog? Wilt thou give me
back my words?
What queen? Know that there is one
only queen
In Herod's catalogue. Call Mariamne,
The Queen of Jewry; bid her come to
me
Here o' the instant. Oh, away with ye!

[Exit Attendants.]

Now shall all nights to this night be as
leaves
From Wisdom's tree, unto its golden
fruit,—
As sparks to stars,—as stars unto God's
crown!
Let some new God be born to conquer
heaven,
Dethrone Jehovah, and create new
worlds
For that prince who shall some day live
as proof
Of this night's wonder. Mariamne,
come!
I'll shake the stars from out their
blackened sockets
To light our bridal bed; the choir of
heaven
Shall chant us to our sleep; and for thy
coverlet
Thou shalt the mantle of God's glory.
Shout,
Ye tempest-riding spirits; earth, give
voice;
Resound, ye forests, like to harps; let
ocean

Her cymbal-clashing waves send unto
 heaven
 And sweep down echo from the halls of
 Zeus!
 Yea, let hell on the forehead of this
 night
 Be bound as torch to light our ecstasy!

Re-enter Attendants.

So, sirs! Where is the queen?

ATTENDANT.

Thou must know, sire—

HEROD.

Must know? Is that an answer for thy
 king?
 Call me Queen Mariamne from the
 doors.
 Call her, I say.

ATTENDANT.

Oh, sire, the queen is dead.
 She was beheaded full an hour ago.

HEROD.

Damned be thy lying tongue! Away!
 away!
 Or I will go myself to summon her!

[Exit Attendants.]

Beheaded? Mariamne? There was
 blood,—

Ay, there was blood,—but there's no
 sign in that.

A lamb's blood might stand proxy for
 a queen's,

And no one know the difference. Dead?
 Dead?

Were God to say it, I'd cry God a liar!
 Stay! something comes to me,—some-
 thing comes back.

I did commission Sohemus—The napkin
 Oh, God! it was her blood, and she is
 dead!

O Mariamne, Mariamne, Mariamne!

What am I who have slain thee? Lucifer

Is holy unto Herod, for in truth

He was sin's victim, I the king of vice!

Beheaded? God, was there no other way

But death must roll that proud head on
 the ground

As children roll a ball? What! do I
 live

And Mariamne dead? What! am I
 Herod,

And Mariamne slain at my command?—

That Herod whom men call the Great?
 Just God!

Herod the Great? Ay! Herod the great
 in sin!

[Falls forward on his face]

AMÉLIE RIVES.

[Princess Pierre Troubetzkoy.]

(1863—)



NATHAN THE WISE



NATHAN THE WISE*

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

SULTAN SALADIN.
SITTAH, *his Sister.*
NATHAN, *a rich Jew of Jerusalem.*
RECHA, *his Adopted Daughter.*
DAJA, *a Christian woman, living in the Jew's house as Recha's companion.*
A YOUNG TEMPLAR.
A DERVISE.
THE PATRIARCH OF JERUSALEM.
A LAY-BROTHER.
AN EMIR.
MAMELUKES *in Saladin's service.*

The scene is in Jerusalem.

ACT FIRST.

SCENE I.

A Hall in Nathan's House.

NATHAN *returning from a journey.*
DAJA *meeting him.*

DAJA.

'Tis he: 'tis Nathan! God be ever
praised
That you're returned to us again at
last!

NATHAN.

Ay, Daja; God be praised! But why
"at last?"
Was it my purpose to have come be-
fore?
Could I have come before? for Baby-
lon
Is from Jerusalem, as I was forced

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To travel, turning oft to right and left,
A good two hundred leagues. Collect-
ing debts,
Besides, is not a work to be dispatched
In haste, or easily turned off.

DAJA.

Oh, Nathan,
What misery, what misery meanwhile
Might have befallen you here! Your
house—

NATHAN.

Took fire,
That have I heard already. God but
grant
I've heard the whole!

DAJA.

And might have easily
Been leveled with the ground.

NATHAN.

Then had we built
Another and a better.

DAJA.

True; but Recha,
Within a hair's breadth was she burned
to death.

NATHAN.

Burned!—who?—my Recha? That I
had not heard.
Why, then, a house I should no more
have needed.
Within a hair's breadth burned to death!
She was—

Was burned to death! Speak out—
 speak out, I say!
 Slay me and torture me no longer!
 Yes,
 She has been burned to death!

DAJA.

And if she were,
 Should I be telling it?

NATHAN.

Why fright me then?
 O Recha! O my Recha!

DAJA.

Yours—your Recha?

NATHAN.

God grant I ne'er may have to unlearn
 the use
 Of calling her my child!

DAJA.

And call you all
 That you possess, with equal right your
 own?

NATHAN.

Naught with a greater. All I else pos-
 sess
 Has been bestowed by Nature and by
 Fortune.
 This is the only gift I owe to Virtue.

DAJA.

O Nathan, what a price you make me
 pay
 For all your kindness! if aught exer-
 cised
 From such a motive can be called a
 kindness.

NATHAN.

From such a motive? What?

DAJA.

My conscience—

NATHAN.

Let me but tell you first—

Daja,

DAJA.

I say my conscience—

NATHAN.

What stuffs in Babylon I bought for
 you!
 So precious and so tasteful. Recha's
 own
 Are scarcely fairer.

DAJA.

All in vain. My conscience,
 I tell you, will no more be lulled to
 sleep.

NATHAN.

And how you will delight in all the
 jewels,
 The rings, the clasps, the ear-rings, and
 the chains,
 That in Damascus I selected for you,
 I'm eager to behold.

DAJA.

How like yourself!
 You must be always giving, always giv-
 ing.

NATHAN.

Take gladly, as I give you, and—be
 silent!

DAJA.

Be silent! Doubts there any one that
 Nathan
 Is honor, generosity itself?
 And yet—

NATHAN.

I'm but 'a Jew. Is that your meaning?

DAJA.

You know my meaning better.

NATHAN.

Then be silent.

DAJA.

I will be silent. What of guilt grow
hence
In sight of God, which I cannot pre-
vent,
I cannot change—cannot,—fall on your
head.

NATHAN.

Fall on my head! But tell me where
she is.
Where tarries she? Ah, should you
have deceived me!
Knows she I'm here?

DAJA.

I might retort the question.
Her every nerve still trembles with af-
fright.
Her fancy colors with a glow of fire
Whate'er it paints. In sleep her spirit
wakes;
Awake, it sleeps: inferior now to
brutes,
Superior now to angels.

NATHAN.

Ah, poor child!

What are we men!

DAJA.

This morning long she lay,
With eyelids closed, as she were dead.
Then quick
Sprang up, cried, "Hark, my father's
camels come!
Hark, his own gentle voice!" Then
drooped again
Her eyelids, and, the arm's support
withdrawn,
Her head once more fell back upon the
pillows.
I hasted through the gate, and, lo!
'twas you—
'Twas you, indeed, approaching! And
what wonder?
For her whole soul has since been but
with you—
And him.

NATHAN.

And him! What him?

DAJA.

Who from the fire
Preserved her.

NATHAN.

Who was that? Where is he now?
Who was it that preserved my Recha
for me?

DAJA.

A Templar, who, some days before a
prisoner,
Was hither brought, and pardoned by
the Sultan.

NATHAN.

A Templar granted life by Saladin?
Could no less miracle than this have
saved
My Recha? God!

DAJA.

And but for him who risked
Again his unexpected boon, she had
Been lost.

NATHAN.

Where is this noble man? Where is he,
Daja?
Conduct me to his feet. Whatever
treasure
Was left you, you bestowed on him at
once;
Gave all: with promises of more—much
more?

DAJA.

How could we?

NATHAN.

Did you not?

DAJA.

He came, but whence
None knew; he went, and whither none
could tell.

A stranger to the house, his ear alone
 To guide him, onward through the
 smoke and flame,
 With outstretched mantle, fearlessly he
 pressed
 Toward the voice that cried to us for
 help.
 Already had we given him up for lost,
 When suddenly, from out the smoke
 and flame,
 He stood before us, bearing her aloft
 In his strong arms. By our exultant
 thanks
 Unmoved, he laid his burden on the
 ground,
 Pressed through the multitude his way,
 and vanished.

NATHAN.

But not, I hope, forever.

DAJA.

Many days
 We saw him yonder, walking to and
 fro
 Beneath the palms that shade the sep-
 ulchre
 Of our ascended Lord. I went to him
 With rapture; thanked him, praised,
 commanded, begged
 He would but once behold the grateful
 girl,
 Who could not rest till at her savior's
 feet
 She'd wept her thanks.

NATHAN.

Well?

DAJA.

Useless; he was deaf
 To our entreaties and he poured, be-
 sides,
 Such scorn upon me—

NATHAN.

You were frightened off.

DAJA.

Nay; anything but that. Day after day

I went to him again; day after day
 Let him again insult me. There is
 nothing
 I've not endured from him; nothing
 that gladly
 I'd not have still endured. But long he's
 ceased.
 To walk beneath the palms that shade
 the grave
 Of our ascended Lord, and no one
 knows
 His dwelling-place—You are amazed;
 you ponder?

NATHAN.

I ponder the effect this must produce
 Upon a mind like Recha's. To be
 scorned
 By one whom she is bound to prize
 so highly:
 To be at once repelled and yet attracted.
 'Twixt head and heart long contest
 must ensue,
 If sorrow or misanthropy shall conquer.
 Oft neither triumphs, and imagination
 Becoming party in the strife, creates
 A dreamer, in whom now the head
 usurps
 The place of heart, and now the heart
 plays head.
 Sad interchange! If I mistake not
 Recha,
 The latter is her fate. She yields to
 fancies.

DAJA.

But then so pure, so lovely!

NATHAN.

Fancies still.

DAJA.

Above the rest, one—fancy, if you
 will—
 She cherishes. Her Templar, as she
 deems,
 Is not a mortal being, not of earth.
 One of the angels, to whose guardian
 care,
 Her little heart from childhood fondly
 thought

Itself intrusted, stepped out from the cloud
 Beneath whose veil he hitherto had hovered
 About her even in the fire, and stood
 Revealed as Templar.—Do not smile!
 Who knows?
 At least, if smile you must, do not destroy
 A fancy shared alike by Christian, Jew,
 And Mussulman,—so beautiful a fancy.

NATHAN.

And beautiful to me.—Go, trusty Daja,
 See how she is—if I may speak with her.
 Then I will seek this freakish guardian angel;
 And if it be his pleasure still to dwell
 Among us on the earth, and wear the guise
 Of so unmannerly a knight, doubt not
 I shall discover and conduct him hither.

DAJA.

You promise much.

NATHAN.

Should then this sweet conceit
 Be changed to sweeter truth—for, trust me, Daja,
 To human heart more dear is man than angel—
 You'll surely not with me—with me—
 be vexed.
 If so this angel-dreamer shall be cured.

DAJA.

How good you are, and yet how bad
 withal!
 I go. But hark! but see! She comes
 herself.

SCENE II.

RECHA *and the preceding.*

RECHA.

Is it in very truth yourself, my father?
 I thought you had but sent your voice
 before.

Where tarry you? What deserts or
 what mountains,
 What rivers, separate us now? One
 roof
 Is o'er us both, and yet you hasten not
 To clasp your Recha, who was burned
 meanwhile!
 Poor Recha! Almost, only almost
 burned.
 Nay, shudder not! Oh, 'tis an ugly
 death
 To die by fire!

NATHAN.

My child! my darling child!

RECHA.

You had to cross the Euphrates, Tigris,
 Jordan,—
 Who knows how many more? Oft for
 your life
 I trembled till the fire enveloped me;
 But since the fire enveloped me, to die
 By water seems refreshment, solace,
 balm.
 But you have not been drowned, nor
 I been burned.
 We will rejoice, and give God thanks.
 He bore
 Your boat and you upon the unseen
 wings
 Of angels over all the faithless streams;
 He bade my angel visibly unfold
 His snowy wings, and bear me through
 the fire.

NATHAN.

(His snowy wings! Ah, yes; the Templar's mantle,
 Outstretched and white.)

RECHA.

Ay; visibly to bear me
 From out the flames, fanned backward
 by his wings.
 Thus have I seen an angel face to
 face—
 My guardian-angel.

NATHAN.

Recha would be worth
 An angel's visiting, and would in him

See naught more fair than he in her
beheld.

RECHA (*smiling*).

My father,
Whom flatter you—the angel or your-
self?

NATHAN.

Had but a human being, such a man
As Nature daily grants, this service
rendered,
He must for you have been an angel;
ay,
He must and would.

RECHA.

Not such an angel. No;
This was in truth, in very truth an
angel.
Have you yourself not taught me to
believe
That angels are; that God for them that
love Him
Can yet work miracles? I love Him.

NATHAN.

Yes;
And He loves you; and hourly miracles
For you, and such as you, is working
now;
From all eternity has worked them for
you.

RECHA.

I love to hear it.

NATHAN.

Natural it sounds
And commonplace to have a Templar
save you;
But is it therefore less a miracle?
The greatest miracle of all is this:
That true and genuine miracles become
Of no significance. Without that won-
der
Scarce would a thoughtful man bestow
the name
On things that only children should ad-
mire.
Who, gaping, follow what is new and
strange.

DAJA (*to Nathan*).

Would you to bursting strain her o'er-
wrought brain
With all your subtleties?

NATHAN.

Trust her to me!
Were it not miracle enough for Recha
To be delivered by a human being,
Himself by no small miracle first saved?
Not small indeed! Who ever heard
before
Of Templar being spared by Saladin—
Of Templar asking to be spared, or
hoping—
Or offering more for freedom than the
girth
That holds his sword, or, at most, his
dagger?

RECHA.

That proves for me, my father. For
that reason
He was no actual Templar—only
seemed it.
Since never to Jerusalem there came
A captive Templar save to certain
death;
Since none e'er walked Jerusalem so
free,
How could one voluntarily, at night,
Have come to save me?

NATHAN.

Most ingenious, Recha!—
Speak, Daja; 'twas from you I learned
he came
A prisoner hither; you must know yet
more.

DAJA.

So runs the story. It is said, besides,
That Saladin preserved the Templar's
life
Because of the resemblance that he bore
A favorite brother. But as, twenty
years
Have passed away since this dear
brother's death—
His name I know not—know not where
he died—
It sounds so—so incredible the whole
May be but fiction.

NATHAN.

Wherefore, Daja, sounds it
Incredible, but that you would believe—
As is the case—things more incredible?
Why should not Saladin, whose family
Are all so dear to him, in younger days
Have loved one brother with peculiar
love?
Look not two countenances oft alike?
Are old impressions, therefore, vanished
ones?
Works the same cause no longer one
effect?
Since when? Where lies in this the in-
credible?
Ah, my wise Daja, further miracles
There can be none for you. Your mir-
acles
Alone demand—deserve, I mean—belief.

DAJA.

You laugh at me.

NATHAN.

Laughed you not, too, at me?—
Thus was your rescue still a miracle,
Dear Recha, possible alone to Him
Who oft is pleased to guide, by feeble
threads,
The set decrees and purpose absolute
Of kings—his toys, if not his scorn.

RECHA.

My father,
If I am wrong, not willingly I err.

NATHAN.

Willingly rather learn. See now a fore-
head
Arched thus, or so; the outline of a
nose
Drawn this way more than that; brows
curving so,
Or so, according as the bone is sharp
Or round; a line, crease, angle, spot,
a nothing
Upon the face of one wild European—
And you are rescued from the fire in
Asia!
Is that no miracle, ye wonder-seekers?

What need to trouble an angel with it
then?

DAJA.

What harm—if I may speak—in the be-
lief
An angel rather than a man has saved
us?
Feel we not so much nearer brought to
Him
Of the deliverance the mysterious
cause?

NATHAN.

Pride, Daja, naught but pride! The iron
pot
Would have itself be lifted from the
fire
By silver tongs, that so it may be
deemed
A silver pot. Pah! What the harm,
you ask?
What harm? What good, I might re-
tort. 'Tis nonsense,
Or blasphemy, this "feeling nearer
God."
But harm it does—ay, actual harm; for
listen:
To your deliverer, be he man or angel,
Would you not both, and you especially,
Desire to render great and various serv-
ice?
But how perform such service to an
angel?
Thank him you can, and sigh to him
and pray;
Can melt away in ecstasies before him;
Can keep a fast upon his sacred day;
Can give your charities;—all that is
naught.
Your neighbor and yourself are more
the gainers,
It seems to me, than he. He grows not
fat
By all your fasting; all your charities
Make him not rich; no greater is his
glory
For all your ecstasies; his power no
greater
For all your faith. But, think him hu-
man now—

DAJA.

Ay, more, indeed, could we have done
for him

Had he been human. What our readi-
ness,
God knows. But he was so above all
wants,
Was in and for himself so all-sufficient,
As only angels are and angels can be.

RECHA.

And when at last he vanished—

NATHAN.

Vanished! How?
No longer showed himself beneath the
palms?
Or have you really further searched
for him?

DAJA.

That we have not.

NATHAN.

Not, Daja? See what harm!
You cruel enthusiasts! What if this
angel
Had been—been sick?

RECHA.

Sick!

DAJA.

Sick! He cannot be!

RECHA.

A shudder chills me. Daja, feel—my
brow,
So warm but now, is turned to ice:

NATHAN.

A Frank
He is, a stranger to our climate; young
To all the hard requirements of his
Order—
To hunger, watching, unaccustomed.

RECHA,

Sick!

DAJA.

He only means that it were possible.

NATHAN.

See, there he lies, without a friend, or
gold
To purchase friends—

RECHA.

Alas! my father!

NATHAN.

Lies
Without attendance, counsel, sympa-
thy—
A prey to sorrows, and perhaps to
death.

RECHA.

Where? Where?

NATHAN.

He who for one he never knew
Nor saw—enough it was a human be-
ing—
Had leaped into the flames—

DAJA.

Oh, spare her, Nathan!

NATHAN.

Who would not know more nearly,
would not see
What he had saved, that he might not
be thanked—

DAJA.

Oh, Nathan, spare her—spare her!

NATHAN.

Had no wish
To see again, unless a second time
He might deliver; for enough for him
It was a human being—

DAJA.

Hush! Ah, see!

NATHAN.

He, dying, has no other solace, none,
Besides the memory of his deed.

DAJA.

Hush! hush!
You're killing her.

NATHAN.

And so did you kill him;
Or so you might have killed him.
Recha! Recha!
'Tis medicine, not poison, that I give
you!
He lives! Come, be yourself! He is
not sick—
Not even sick!

RECHA.

Quite sure? Not dead? Not sick?

NATHAN.

Not surely dead; for God rewards even
here
The good that here is done. But have
you learned
That pious ecstasies are easier far
Than virtuous deeds; how gladly idle-
ness,
Concealing its true motive from itself,
Would stand excused from virtuous
deed, and plead
Its pious ecstasies instead?

RECHA.

My father,
Leave, leave your Recha nevermore
alone!—
He has but left Jerusalem perhaps?

NATHAN.

Assuredly.—Yonder a Mussulman,
With curious eye, observes my loaded
camels.
Look! Know you him?

DAJA.

It is your dervise.

NATHAN.

Who?

DAJA.

Your dervise; your antagonist at chess.

NATHAN.

Al-Hafi! That Al-Hafi!

DAJA.

Treasurer now
Of Saladin.

NATHAN.

Dream you again? Al-Hafi!—
'Tis he—'tis he, indeed! He comes to-
ward us.
Quick, back into the house!—What will
he tell me?

SCENE III.

NATHAN *and the* DERVISE.

NATHAN.

Now let your eyes be opened to their
widest!
Is it yourself or not? In this attire—
A dervise?

DERVISE.

Well, why not? Can dervises
Be turned to no account whatever then?

NATHAN.

To plenty. But I had supposed a der-
vise,
A genuine dervise, would be turned to
none.

DERVISE.

By the Prophet! May be I'm no genu-
ine one.
Yet, if one must—

NATHAN.

Must—dervise? Dervise must?
Nay, no man must; why must a dervise
then?
What must he, pray?

DERVISE.

What is desired of him
In faith and honor, and he knows is
right—
That must a dervise.

NATHAN.

There you speak the truth.
Let me embrace you, man, and call you
friend!

DERVISE.

Before you learn to what I've been pro-
moted?

NATHAN.

In spite of your promotion.

DERVISE.

I'm become
A fellow in the State, perhaps, whose
friendship
Were inconvenient.

NATHAN.

I will take the risk,
If but your heart continue dervise still.
The fellow in the State is but your
gown.

DERVISE.

But that craves honor too. What think
you? Guess!
What am I at your court?

NATHAN.

Dervise—no more;
Unless you may besides be—cook.

DERVISE.

Go to!
I shall unlearn my trade with you. A
cook!
Not butler too?—Confess that Saladin
Could better read me. I'm his treas-
urer!

NATHAN.

You—his?

DERVISE.

But of the smaller treasure, mind—
That for his house. His father holds
the greater.

NATHAN.

His house is great.

DERVISE.

Ay, greater than you think;
For every beggar forms a part of it.

NATHAN.

Yet Saladin is so opposed to beggars—

DERVISE.

He would exterminate them root and
branch,
Though he himself thereby be made a
beggar—

NATHAN.

I thought so.

DERVISE.

Is one now in fact. Each day
His treasury contains, at sunset, less
Than nothing. Let the tide be e'er so
high
At morning, long ere noon 'tis all run
out.

NATHAN.

Because canals, alike impossible
To fill or stay, are feeding from it.

DERVISE.

Right!

NATHAN.

I know it all.

DERVISE.

When princes are the vultures
Amidst the carrion, that is bad enough;
But when they are the carrion 'midst
the vultures,
'Tis ten times worse.

NATHAN.

Oh, never, never that!

DERVISE.

Ah, you may talk!—But come, what
will you give
If I resign my office to you? Eh?

NATHAN.

What yields your office?

DERVISE.

Me indeed not much;
But for yourself 'twould yield abundantly.
For when the tide is low, as low it will
be,
Lift up your own floodgates, let in
your money,
And take in interest whatsoever you
will.

NATHAN.

Perhaps charge interest on the interest
Of interest?

DERVISE.

Yes.

NATHAN.

Till my capital
Becomes all interest.

DERVISE.

That tempts you not?
Then write at once the quittance of
our friendship;
For I had counted much on you.

NATHAN.

How so?

DERVISE.

That you would help me hold my post
with honor;
Your purse be open always to my need.
You shake your head?

NATHAN.

Let's understand each other.
There's a distinction here. To you—
why not?
Al-Hafi, dervise, shall to all I have
Be ever warmly welcome. But Al-
Hafi,
The treasurer of the Sultan—he—to
him—

DERVISE.

Did I not guess it?—How your good-
ness ever
Keeps pace with prudence, prudence
with your wisdom;
But patience, and this difference in
Al-Hafi,
Shall trouble you no more.—Behold
this robe
Of honor that the Sultan decked me
with.
Ere it be faded and in rags, fit clothing
For dervise' wear, within Jerusalem
It shall be hanging, while beside the
Ganges,
Barefoot and light, I walk the burning
sands
Among my teachers.

NATHAN.

Like yourself!

DERVISE.

And play
At chess with them.

NATHAN.

Your highest good.

DERVISE.

Consider
 What tempted me;—that I might beg
 no longer?
 Might play the part of rich man
 amongst beggars?
 Might have the power of making in a
 twinkling
 A poor rich man out of the richest
 beggar?

NATHAN.

Not surely that.

DERVISE.

Far more absurd than that.
 The first time in my life I had been
 flattered,
 By Saladin's kind-hearted fancy flat-
 tered.

NATHAN.

What fancy?

DERVISE.

That a beggar only knew
 The feelings of a beggar that a beggar
 Alone had learned kind dealings with a
 beggar.
 "Your predecessor," he said, "was cold
 and harsh.
 He gave unkindly, if he gave at all;
 Must always first ungraciously inquire
 About the asker—not content to know
 He was in want; he must discover, too,
 The reason of the want, and make his
 gifts,
 His stingy gifts, proportionate to that.
 Not so Al-Hafi. So unkindly kind
 He will not suffer Saladin to seem.
 Al-Hafi is not like those foul, clogged
 pipes,
 That give back troubled and impure
 the water
 That was so clear and still when they
 received it.
 Al-Hafi thinks, Al-Hafi feels with me."
 Thus sweetly sang the fowler's voice,
 and lured
 The silly bird within the net. O fool!
 The fool too of a fool.

NATHAN.

But gently, gently,
 My dervise!

DERVISE.

What! Is it not a foolery
 To oppress one's brother-men by hun-
 dreds, thousands—
 To waste their strength, to plunder,
 torture, kill them—
 Yet wish to appear the savior of a
 few?
 Is it not foolery to try to ape
 The mercy of the Highest—who, im-
 partial,
 On evil and on good, on field and
 waste,
 Spreadeth Himself abroad in sun and
 rain—
 Yet not to have the overflowing hand
 Of the Almighty? Is't not foolery?

NATHAN.

Enough! Have done!

DERVISE.

Not till I have confessed
 My equal foolery. Say, was it none
 In me that I was always tracing out
 The kindly side of fooleries like these,
 As my apology for sharing in them?
 Call you that none?

NATHAN.

Al-Hafi, make all haste
 To get into your wilderness again.
 I fear lest, living among men, you'll
 cease
 To be a man yourself.

DERVISE.

I fear it too.
 Farewell!

NATHAN.

So hasty? Hold, Al-Hafi, hold!
 Fear you the desert will escape? Stay
 —stay!

Will he not hear me? Ho, Al-Hafi—
here!
No, he is gone; and I had asked so
gladly
About our Templar: he must know the
knight.

SCENE IV.

DAJA *entering hastily*. NATHAN.

DAJA.

O Nathan, Nathan!

NATHAN.

Well, what is it, Daja?

DAJA.

He has appeared again—appeared
again!

NATHAN.

Who, Daja?

DAJA.

He!

NATHAN.

He? When appeared *he* not?

Aha! 'tis only *your* he that is *he*.

That is not well; not though he were
an angel.

DAJA.

Beneath the palms he's walking to and
fro,
And breaking ever and anon the dates.

NATHAN.

And eating? As a Templar?

DAJA.

Tease me not!

Beneath the palm-trees' thickly woven
shade
Her greedy eye discovered him, and
follows

Unwaveringly; and she entreats, con-
jures you,
Without delay, to go to him. Oh,
haste!
She's at her window, and will sign to
you
Which way to seek him. Haste!

NATHAN.

Just from my camels?
Would that be courteous? Haste to
him yourself,
And tell him my return. It was his
honor
Alone forbade his entering my house
While I was absent. He'll be glad to
come
When 'tis the father that invites him.
Go,
Say I invite him, cordially invite—

DAJA.

In vain; he will not come to you. In
short,
He comes not to a Jew.

NATHAN.

Yet go; at least
Detain him, or, best, keep your eye
upon him.
Go first; I follow instantly. Go—go!

SCENE V.

A square planted with palm-trees, under which the TEMPLAR is walking to and fro. A LAY-BROTHER follows him at a little distance, as if he would speak with him.

TEMPLAR.

'Tis not from idleness he follows me.
See how he glances towards my hands.
—Good brother—
Or may I call you father?

LAY-BROTHER.

Brother only.
A poor lay-brother only, at your serv-
ice.

TEMPLAR.

Good brother, had I aught myself—By
heaven,
By heaven, I've nothing—

LAY-BROTHER.

Still, take hearty thanks.
May God return to you a thousand-
fold
What you would give me. For the
will it is
That makes the giver—not the gift.
Besides,
I was not sent to beg the knight for
alms.

TEMPLAR.

Then you were sent?

LAY-BROTHER.

Yes; from the monastery.

TEMPLAR.

Where I had hoped but now to find a
morsel
Of pilgrim's fare?

LAY-BROTHER.

The tables then were filled.
But let the knight return with me.

TEMPLAR.

Why so?
'Tis many a day since I have tasted
meat.
Besides, what need? The dates are
ripe.

LAY-BROTHER.

The knight
Should be upon his guard against the
fruit;
Too much is dangerous. It clogs the
spleen,
Breeds melancholy.

TEMPLAR.

And what now if I like
This melancholy? But to give that
warning
You were not sent.

LAY-BROTHER.

Oh, no; I was but sent
To sound the knight somewhat—to feel
his pulse.

TEMPLAR.

You tell me that yourself?

LAY-BROTHER.

And wherefore not?

TEMPLAR.

(A crafty brother.) Does the mon-
astery
Have many such as you?

LAY-BROTHER.

I do not know.
I must obey, sir knight.

TEMPLAR.

So you obey,
And ask no questions?

LAY-BROTHER.

Were aught else obeying,
Sir knight?

TEMPLAR.

(See how simplicity is sure
To come off best!) Could you not
further tell
The name of him who seeks such
knowledge of me?
My oath, 'tis not yourself.

LAY-BROTHER.

Were it becoming
In me, or profitable?

TEMPLAR.

Whom could it profit,
Or whom become to be so curious?

LAY-BROTHER.

The Patriarch, I conclude, since he it
was
Who sent me here.

TEMPLAR.

The Patriarch? Knows he not
The white cloak's bloody cross?

LAY-BROTHER.

Even I know that.

TEMPLAR.

Well then! I am a Templar, and a
captive.

And if I add that I was taken at
Tebnin,

The fortress that we vainly tried to
scale

Before the truce expired, and thus lay
open

A passage into Sidon,—if I add,
That twenty more were taken captive
with me,

But I alone received the Sultan's par-
don,—

Then has the Patriarch all he needs
to know—

More than he needs.

LAY-BROTHER.

Scarce more, though, than he knew.
He fain would know the reason why
the knight

Was pardoned by the Sultan—he alone.

TEMPLAR.

I know not that myself. My neck was
bared,

And on my mantle kneeling I awaited
The final stroke, when more intent his
eyes

The Sultan fixes on me, toward me
springs,

And motions. I am raised; my chains
fall off;

I try to thank him; tears are in his
eyes;

Silent is he—am I; he goes, I stay.

What now the meaning of it all may be,
The Patriarch must unriddle for him-
self.

LAY-BROTHER.

His inference is that God must have
reserved you

For great, great enterprises.

TEMPLAR.

Great, indeed!

For rescuing a Jewess from the fire;
Conducting curious pilgrims up Mount

Sinai,

And more as great.

LAY-BROTHER.

The rest will come. Meanwhile
'Tis not a bad beginning. Greater
things

Already for the knight the Patriarch
May have in store.

TEMPLAR.

Ah, brother, think you so?
Has any hint been dropped of such?

LAY-BROTHER.

Ay, ay.

But first I am to sound the knight to
learn

If he's the man.

TEMPLAR.

All right; sound on! (Let's see
How he will sound me!) Well?

LAY-BROTHER.

The shortest way
Were honestly to set before the knight
The Patriarch's wish.

TEMPLAR.

Good!

LAY-BROTHER.

He desires to send
A little letter by the knight.

TEMPLAR.

By me?
I am no carrier. So then, that's the
work
He holds more glorious than the rescu-
ing
A Jewess from the fire?

LAY-BROTHER.

It must be; for—
The Patriarch says—upon this little
letter
The interests of all Christendom de-
pend.
God will reward the safe delivery
of it—
The Patriarch says—with a peculiar
crown
In heaven; and of this crown—the
Patriarch says—
Is none more worthy than the knight.

TEMPLAR.

Than I?

LAY-BROTHER.

Because to earn this crown—the Patri-
arch says—
Is none more fitted than the knight.

TEMPLAR.

Than I?

LAY-BROTHER.

You have your freedom here; can
everything
Examine at your will; you understand
How cities should be stormed, and how
defended;
Can duly estimate—the Patriarch says—
The strength and weakness of that in-
ner wall
Just built by Saladin; and can minutely
Describe it to the soldiers of the Cross.

TEMPLAR.

Could you not further tell me the con-
tents,
Good brother, of the letter?

LAY-BROTHER.

The contents—
I know not quite myself. But to King
Philip
The letter is addressed. The Patri-
arch—
I oft have wondered that a holy man
Whose walk is else in heaven, should
deign to keep
So well-informed of the affairs of
earth.
It must be very burdensome to him.

TEMPLAR.

Go on; the Patriarch—

LAY-BROTHER.

Knows beyond a doubt
Exactly how and where, with how great
force,
From what direction, Saladin will open
The next campaign, should war break
out afresh.

TEMPLAR.

He does?

LAY-BROTHER.

He does, and would inform King
Philip;
That he may judge if danger be so
great,
'Twere better to renew at any cost
The truce with Saladin, so lately broken
By your brave Order.

TEMPLAR.

What a Patriarch!
No common messenger he seeks in me,
Good honest man; he wants—a spy.
Go, tell him,
As far as you could sound me, worthy
brother,
He had mistaken his man; that I am
bound

To hold myself still captive; and that
 Templars
 Have one profession, that of arms—
 know naught
 Of playing the spy.

LAY-BROTHER.

I thought so! None the worse
 My judgment of the knight. The best
 remains.
 The Patriarch has ferreted out the fort-
 ress,
 What name it bears, and where on Leb-
 anon
 It lies, wherein are stored the enormous
 sums
 From which the Sultan's prudent father
 pays
 The army, and defrays all costs of war.
 Thither, from time to time, the Sultan
 goes,
 By lonely roads, and almost unattended,
 You understand?

TEMPLAR.

Not I!

LAY-BROTHER.

How easy now
 To overpower the Sultan, or—dispatch
 him.
 You shudder? Nay; two pious Maro-
 nites
 Have volunteered already for the deed,
 If but some valiant man be found to
 lead them.

TEMPLAR.

And did the Patriarch look to me again
 To be this valiant leader?

LAY-BROTHER.

He believes
 That out of Ptolemais can King Philip
 Give most effectual aid.

TEMPLAR.

To me—to me?
 Have you not heard, have you not just
 been told,

What obligations bind me to the Sul-
 tan?

LAY-BROTHER.

I heard.

TEMPLAR.

And yet—

LAY-BROTHER.

Oh, yes—the Patriarch says—
 That may be very well; but God, your
 Order—

TEMPLAR.

Change naught; command no villainy!

LAY-BROTHER.

Oh, no;
 But then—the Patriarch says—a vil-
 lainy
 In man's esteem may not be one in
 God's.

TEMPLAR.

My life I owe the Sultan. Shall my
 hand
 Rob him of his?

LAY-BROTHER.

As long—the Patriarch says—
 As Saladin remains the enemy
 Of Christendom, he can acquire no
 right
 To be your friend.

TEMPLAR.

My friend? A man to whom
 I only would not play the thankless
 villain.

LAY-BROTHER.

True; but—the Patriarch says—the debt
 of thanks
 Is canceled, canceled before God and
 man,
 For service rendered on account of
 others.
 And as—the Patriarch says—it is re-
 ported
 The Sultan spared you only for a some-
 thing.

In face or bearing, that recalled a brother—

TEMPLAR.

That too the Patriarch knew; and even yet—

Oh were I sure of that! Ah, Saladin! Could Nature fashion but a single feature

In likeness of your brother, yet my soul Receive no answering trait; or could such trait,

To do a Patriarch's pleasure, be suppressed?

Nature, so liest thou not; not so does God

Belie Himself upon His works! Go, brother;

Provoke me not to anger. Go!

LAY-BROTHER.

I go;

And readier than I came. Forgive me, knight.

We brothers have no choice but to obey.

SCENE VI.

The TEMPLAR and DAJA. DAJA has been watching from a distance, and now approaches.

DAJA.

The brother's visit left him not, methinks,

In happiest humor. Still, I needs must venture.

TEMPLAR.

Ah, excellent! The proverb holds—that monk

And woman, woman and monk, are Satan's claws.

To-day he throws me to and fro between them.

DAJA.

Do I again behold you, noble knight? Thank God a thousand times! But where so long

Have you been hiding? Not been sick, I hope?

TEMPLAR.

No.

DAJA.

Well, then?

TEMPLAR.

Yes.

DAJA.

We have been anxious for you.

TEMPLAR.

Indeed!

DAJA.

Have you been on a journey?

TEMPLAR.

Yes.

DAJA.

And just returned today?

TEMPLAR.

No; yesterday.

DAJA.

To-day has Recha's father too returned. Now may not Recha hope?

TEMPLAR.

For what?

DAJA.

For that She has so often begged. Her father too

Will soon himself most pressingly invite you.

He comes from Babylon, with twenty camels

Piled high with precious spices, stones, and stuffs,

The rich returns of India, Persia,
Syria—
Of China even.

TEMPLAR.

I do not buy.

DAJA.

His people
Revere him as a prince; yet why 'the
wise'
They call him, not 'the rich,' I often
wonder.

TEMPLAR.

To them, perchance, are rich and wise
the same.

DAJA.

Good should they call him first. How
good he is
You cannot think. When Recha's debt
to you
Was told him, there was nothing in that
moment
He'd not have done for you or given.

TEMPLAR.

Indeed!

DAJA.

Try him, and see!

TEMPLAR.

How soon a moment passes?

DAJA.

Were he less good, should I have been
content
So long to dwell with him? You think,
perhaps,
I do not feel my dignity as Christian?
Nor in my cradle was it e'er foretold
That for this very cause to Palestine
I should accompany my wedded lord,
There to bring up a Jewish girl. My
husband,

A noble squire in Emperor Frederick's
army—

TEMPLAR.

By birth a Swiss, to whom had been
accorded
The glory of drowning in the selfsame
stream
With his Imperial Majesty. O woman,
How often have you told me that be-
fore?
Is there no end to your pursuing me?

DAJA.

Pursuing?

TEMPLAR.

Yes, pursuing. I'll not see
Nor hear you more; I will not be re-
minded
Forever by you of a deed I did
Without a thought; a riddle to myself
Whene'er I think of it. Not willingly
Would I repent it; but should such a
chance
Again occur, you'll have yourself to
blame
If I'm a trifle slower, stop to question,
And let what's burning, burn.

DAJA.

May God forbid!

TEMPLAR.

From this day forth, grant me at least
the favor
Of knowing me no more. I beg it of
you.
Keep too the father from me. Jew is
Jew.
I am a clumsy Swabian. Long ago
The maiden's image faded from my
soul,
If it were ever there.

DAJA.

Not yours from hers.

TEMPLAR.

And what of that?

DAJA.

Who knows? Men are not always
The thing they seem.

TEMPLAR.

Yet seldom better. [*Is going.*]

DAJA.

Why haste you? Stay;

TEMPLAR.

Woman, do not make these palms,
'Neath which I've loved to walk, grow
hateful to me.

DAJA.

Go then, you Northern bear! Go—go!
And yet
I must not lose the monster out of
sight.

[*She follows him at a distance.*]

ACT SECOND.

SCENE I.

*Room in the Sultan's palace. SALADIN
and SITTAH at chess.*

SITTAH.

Where are you, Saladin? Why, how
you play!

SALADIN.

Not well? I thought I did.

SITTAH.

For me: yet hardly.
Take back that move.

SALADIN.

Why so?

SITTAH.

The knight's exposed.

SALADIN.

True: so, then!

SITTAH.

Then I shall step in between.

SALADIN.

You're right again. Then check!

SITTAH.

What use in that?
I interpose, and you are where you
were.

SALADIN.

From this dilemma is there no escape,
Except by paying? Well, then take my
knight.

SITTAH.

I want him not; I let him stand.

SALADIN.

No favor.
The place was more important than the
piece.

SITTAH.

May be.

SALADIN.

But reckon not without your host.
See! had you looked for that?

SITTAH.

I'd not, indeed;
How could I think you weary of your
queen?

SALADIN.

My queen?

SITTAH.

Beyond my thousand denarii,
No fraction shall I win to-day, I see.

SALADIN.

How so?

SITTAH.

You ask? Because with all your
might
You will be beaten. That's no gain to
me.
Small pleasure can one take in games
like that.
Besides, win I not always most from
you
When I have lost? When have you
failed to send
The double of the stake, to comfort me
For my defeat?

SALADIN.

Ah! so, my little sister,
When you have lost, you lost on pur-
pose—eh?

SITTAH.

Your generosity at least, dear brother,
May be to blame that I'm no better
player.

SALADIN.

But we forget our game. Come, make
an end!

SITTAH.

How stands it? So then, check, and
double check!

SALADIN.

That double check I truly had not seen.
It robs me of my queen.

SITTAH.

Could you have helped it?
Let's see!

SALADIN.

No, no; take off the queen. I
ne'er
Was lucky with the piece.

SITTAH.

Only the piece?

SALADIN.

Away with her! No harm is done; for
thus
All's safe again.

SITTAH.

Well has my brother taught
The courtesy that should be showed to
queens. [*Leaves her.*]

SALADIN.

Take her or take her not! I have no
other.

SITTAH.

Why should I take her? Check! check!

SALADIN.

Keep on!

SITTAH.

Check!

And check! and check!

SALADIN.

And mate!

SITTAH.

Not quite; your knight
Can interpose, or what you will; all one.

SALADIN.

Right! You have won, and Hafi pays.
Go, call him!—

You guessed aright, dear Sittah; for my
mind

Was not intent upon the game—it wan-
dered.

Besides, who gives us these smooth
pieces always,

That have no meaning, no suggestion in
them?

Have I not played with the Imam him-
self?—

Defeat but seeks excuse. 'Twas not alone
The shapeless pieces, Sittah, made me lose.
Your skill, your sharper, quicker eye—

SITTAH.

There, too,
You would but blunt the sting of your defeat.
Enough, you were preoccupied; even more
Than I.

SALADIN.

Than you? What had you on your mind?

SITTAH.

Not your anxiety.—O Saladin,
When shall we play so heartily again?

SALADIN.

We'll play but so much the more eagerly.
Because there's to be war again, you mean?
So be it! Forward! I did not begin.
I gladly would have had the truce renewed:
Gladly, most gladly, would have given my Sittah
A noble husband, too, as Richard's brother
Had surely been. Is he not Richard's brother?

SITTAH.

Ah, if you can but sing your Richard's praises!

SALADIN.

If Richard's sister, then, could have become
Our brother Melech's wife—Ah, what a house!
Of all the best, first houses in the world,
The best, the first. You see I am not slow
To praise myself. I do not deem myself
Unworthy of my friends. What men had then
Been born into the world!

SITTAH.

Did I not laugh
From the beginning at your beauteous dreams?
You do not know, you will not know the Christians.
Christianity, not manhood, is their pride.
E'en that which from their founder down has spiced
Their superstition with humanity,
'Tis not for its humanity they love it.
No; but because Christ taught, Christ practiced it.
Happy for them he was so good a man!
Happy for them that they can trust his virtue!
His virtue? Not his virtue, but his name,
They say, shall spread abroad, and shall devour
And put to shame the names of all good men.
The name, the name is all their pride.

SALADIN.

Why else,
You think, should they require of you and Melech
To take the Christian name, ere you could love
A Christian consort?

SITTAH.

Yes; as if in Christians,
As Christians only, could exist that love
With which, in the beginning, God endowed
Both man and woman.

SALADIN.

Poor conceits too many
The Christians hold, not to believe that also.
And yet you err. The Templars, not the Christians,
Are here to blame; are not to blame as Christians,
But Templars. They it is who bring our plans
To naught. They will not lose their hold on Acca,

Which Richard's sister, as her dower,
would bring
To Melech. Lest the knightly interest
Should suffer loss, they play the silly
monk.

A sudden blow they think may have
success,

And scarce can wait until the truce be
o'er.—

Keep on, my masters, on! I'm well
content.

Were but all else as I would have it!

SITTAH.

What?

What else disturbed you—so could ruffle
you?

SALADIN.

What always has disturbed me. I have
been

Upon Mount Lebanon; I've seen our
father.

His cares still burden him.

SITTAH.

Alas!

SALADIN.

Escape

There's none; on every side he's
cramped; feels lack,

Now here, now there.

SITTAH.

What is it lacks? What cramps him?

SALADIN.

What else but that I hardly deign to
name;

Which, when I have, seems worthless;
but when not,

Is indispensable?—Where tarries Hafî?
Was he not called?—This fatal, cursed
gold!

Good, Hafî, that you're come.

SCENE II.

The dervise AL-HAFI. SALADIN. SITTAH.

AL-HAFI.

The gold from Egypt
Has then arrived. There need be plenty
of it.

SALADIN.

Have you had tidings?

AL-HAFI.

I? Not I! I came
Expecting to receive them.

SALADIN.

Pay to Sittah
A thousand denarii.

[Walks to and fro, lost in thought.]

AL-HAFI.

Pay—not receive!
That's good! A something rather less
than naught.

To Sittah? Once again to Sittah?
Lost?

And lost again at chess! There stands
the game.

SITTAH.

You cannot grudge me my good for-
tune?

AL-HAFI *[studying the game]*.

Grudge?

If— But you know.

SITTAH *[motioning to him]*.

Hush, Hafî, hush!

AL-HAFI *[still looking on the board]*.

'Twere better
You grudged yourself.

SITTAH.

Hush, Hafî!

AL-HAFI [*to Sittah*].
 Yours the white?
 You offer check?

SITTAH.
 'Tis well he does not hear.

AL-HAFI.
 The move is his?

SITTAH [*going nearer to him*].
 Pray, say I may receive
 My money.

AL-HAFI [*still intent on the game*].
 Yes; you shall receive the money,
 As you receive it always.

SITTAH.
 Are you mad?

AL-HAFI.
 The game's not over, Saladin—not lost.

SALADIN [*scarce attending*].
 No matter! Pay!

AL-HAFI.
 Pay—pay!—There stands your queen.

SALADIN.
 She counts for naught; belongs not in
 the game.

SITTAH.
 Make haste and say that I may fetch
 the money.

AL-HAFI [*still eager with the game*].
 Of course; as usual—But suppose the
 queen
 Be no more in the game you're not yet
 mated.

SALADIN [*approaches and overturns the
 board*].
 I am; I will be.

AL-HAFI.
 So! As played, so won!
 And as 'twas won, so 'twill be paid.

SALADIN [*to Sittah*].
 What says he?

SITTAH [*occasionally signing to
 Al-Hafi*].
 You know him; how he likes to make
 objections;
 To be entreated; sometimes will be jeal-
 ous.

SALADIN.
 But not of you? Not of my sister?—
 Hafi,
 What hear I of you? Jealous?

AL-HAFI.
 May be so.
 I would I had her mind; were good as
 she.

SITTAH.
 Still, he has always paid me honestly;
 To-day, too, will he pay. Trust him.—
 Go, Hafi!
 I'll send and fetch the money.

AL-HAFI.
 No; I play
 This farce with you no more. He must
 be told.

SALADIN.
 Who? What?

SITTAH.
 Al-Hafi, keep you thus your word?
 Is this your promise?

AL-HAFI.
 How could I suppose

You'd carry it so far?

SALADIN.

Shall I learn naught?

SITTAH.

I pray you, Hafi, be discreet.

SALADIN.

'Tis strange!

Does Sittah pray so earnestly, so warmly
A stranger's and a dervise's forbearance,
Rather than mine, her brother's? I
command,
Al-Hafi! Dervise, speak!

SITTAH.

Let not a trifle

Disturb you, brother, more than it
deserves.

You know that many times I've won
from you

This same amount at chess; and since
the money

To me was useless now, and Hafi's
chest

Had none too much of it, I left it there.

But have no fear, for neither you, my
brother,

Nor Hafi, nor the treasury, shall keep it.

AL-HAFI.

Ah, if that were all!

SITTAH.

There's more of the same.

E'en that is in the treasury, untouched,
That once you handed me yourself:
some months

Has it been lying there.

AL-HAFI.

E'en that's not all.

SALADIN.

Not all? Speak out, then!

AL-HAFI.

Since we've been expecting
The gold from Egypt, she—

SITTAH [*to Saladin*].

Why listen to him?

AL-HAFI.

Not only drew no money, but—

SALADIN.

Advanced
Her own?—not so!

AL-HAFI.

Supported the whole court.
Herself alone defrayed your whole ex-
pense.

SALADIN [*embracing her*].

My own true sister!

SITTAH.

Who but you, my brother,
Had made me rich enough to do so
much?

AL-HAFI.

And now is making her as poor, as beg-
gared
As he himself.

SALADIN.

I poor? Her brother poor?
When had I more—when less? A cloak,
a sword,
A horse—and God! What need I more?
In these,
When can I want? Yet could I chide
you, Hafi.

SITTAH.

Nay, chide not, brother. Could I but
relieve
Our father's needs as well!

SALADIN.

Ah, there you dash
My happiness again. I, for myself,

Want nothing—cannot want. But he—
 he wants;
 And in him, want we all. What shall
 I do?
 It may be long before the gold arrives
 From Egypt. Why so great delay, God
 knows.
 All's quiet there. I will economize,
 Will save, submit to aught that but concerns
 Myself, and brings no suffering on
 others.
 But what avails it all? A horse, a
 cloak,
 A sword—these must I have; and with
 my God
 There is no cheapening. Little enough
 it is
 Contents him now—my heart. I counted
 much
 Upon your treasury's overplus, Al-Hafi.

AL-HAFI.

My overplus? Confess yourself, em-
 palling,
 Or strangling at the least, had been my
 doom,
 If any overplus you'd caught me in.
 A fraud, indeed, had been a safer ven-
 ture.

SALADIN.

What's to be done?—Was there, then,
 none but Sittah
 To borrow of?

SITTAH.

Would I that privilege,
 My brother, have relinquished? Still I
 claim it.
 Still not quite to the bottom am I
 drained.

SALADIN.

Not quite! That's worst of all.—Take
 instant measures;
 Get gold of whom you can, and as you
 can;
 Go, borrow—promise! Only borrow
 not
 Of those made rich by me; such borrow-
 ing

Were asking back my gifts. Seek the
 most greedy:
 They readiest lend to me; for they have
 learned
 How in my hands their gold accumu-
 lates.

AL-HAFI.

I know none such.

SITTAH.

I just bethink me, Hafi,
 I heard your friend was back again.

AL-HAFI [*embarrassed*].

My friend?

Who may he be?

SITTAH.

That much-praised Jew of yours.

AL-HAFI.

A much-praised Jew—of mine?

SITTAH.

Endowed by God,—
 I well remember yet the words you used
 In speaking of him,—one endowed by
 God
 In fullest measure with the least and
 greatest
 Of all this world's possessions.

AL-HAFI.

Said I so?
 What could such words have meant?

SITTAH.

The least is riches;
 The greatest, wisdom.

AL-HAFI.

Of a Jew? What Jew
 Could words like those have fitted?

SITTAH.

Not your Nathan?

AL-HAFI.

Ah, Nathan—yes; I had not thought of him.

Is he indeed come back again at last? Things must have prospered with him then. 'Tis true,

The people called him once the Wise—and Rich.

SITTAH.

Now more than ever call they him the Rich.

The city rings with stories of the jewels, The treasures he has brought.

AL-HAFI.

So then the Rich He is again, and soon will be the Wise.

SITTAH.

What say you to approaching him, Al-Hafi?

AL-HAFI.

For what? You do not mean to borrow? Ah,

There you mistake him. Nathan lend! Therein

Consists his wisdom, that he lends to none.

SITTAH.

Another picture of him once you drew.

AL-HAFI.

He'd lend you merchandise at need; but money,

His money, never! Otherwise a Jew, Whose like is rarely found among his people.

He has intelligence, knows how to live, Is strong at chess. But he excels the rest

In evil as in good. Count not on him. 'Tis true, he gives the poor. A match

he is For Saladin, in giving. Not as much,

Perhaps, but just as gladly—just as free From all distinction. Mussulman, Parsee,

The Christian, or the Jew, all one to him.

SITTAH.

And such a man—

SALADIN.

How can I ne'er have heard Of such a man till now!

SITTAH.

Would he not lend To Saladin—to Saladin, who spends For others only, not himself?

AL-HAFI.

There shows The Jew again—the ordinary Jew. My word for it, so envious he is, So jealous of your giving! No "God bless you!"

In all the world, but he'd have said to him.

He therefore lends to none, lest he should lose

The means of giving. Charity his law Commands, but it commands not courtesy;

And thus through charity is he become The most discourteous neighbor in the world.

'Tis true, we've not been on good terms of late;

But think me not for that unjust to him. In all else is he good, but not to lend: Trust me he'd not.—I'll knock at other doors.

I just bethink me of a Moor who's rich And miserly.—I go! I go!

SITTAH.

What haste, Al-Hafi?

SALADIN.

Let him go: nay, let him go!

SCENE III.

SITTAH. SALADIN.

SITTAH.

He hurries off as he were glad to escape.
What means it? Has he been himself
deceived,
Or would he mislead us?

SALADIN.

Why ask of me?

I hardly know of whom you spoke. This
Nathan,
This Jew of yours, I never heard his
name
Until to-day.

SITTAH.

How is it possible

You never heard of one of whom 'tis
said
He has explored the graves of Solomon
And David, and by certain magic words
Can loose their seals? And further,
that from them
He brings to light of day, from time to
time,
That boundless wealth which speaks no
lesser source.

SALADIN.

If 'tis from graves this man derives his
wealth,
'Tis surely not from Solomon's or Da-
vid's,
But from the graves of fools!

SITTAH.

Or knaves! Besides,
More yielding are the sources of his
wealth
Than such a mammon-pit; exhaustless
are they.

SALADIN.

He trades, you say.

SITTAH.

His beasts of burden toil
On every highway and through every
desert;

In every harbor lie his ships. Al-Hafi
So told me once, and rapturously added
How generously, nobly would his
friend
Employ the wealth he had not thought
too mean
To labor for with hand and brain: he
added,
How free from prejudice his spirit was,
How open was his heart to every virtue,
With all things beautiful in sympathy.

SALADIN.

Yet now Al-Hafi spoke so doubtfully,
So coldly of him!

SITTAH.

Coldly?—no; embarrassed.

As deemed he it were dangerous to
praise,
Yet would not censure undeservedly.
Or is it that the best among his people
Can never quite escape the Jew; that
here
Is Hafi disappointed in his friend?
But be he what he may—more than a
Jew
Or less—is he but rich, enough for us.

SALADIN.

You surely would not take his gold
from him
By violence, dear sister!

SITTAH.

Violence?

What call you violence? by fire and
sword?
No, no; against the weak what force is
needed
Save their own weakness?—Come with
me awhile
Into my harem; you must hear a singer
I bought me yesterday. Meanwhile a
plan
I have for Nathan shall be ripening.
Come!

SCENE IV.

*Near the palms before NATHAN'S house.
RECHA and NATHAN come from the
house. DAJA joins them.*

RECHA.

Why have you been so long in coming,
father?
You scarce will find him now.

NATHAN.

Well, well; if here
No more, no longer 'neath these palms,
yet elsewhere.
Be tranquil. See, comes there not Daja
to us?

RECHA.

She's lost him, I am sure.

NATHAN.

Perhaps not, Recha.

RECHA.

She'd come more quickly else.

NATHAN.

She may not see us.

RECHA.

She sees us now.

NATHAN.

And hurries forward. Look!
Be calm—be quiet!

RECHA.

Would you want a child
Who could be calm,—who could be un-
concerned
For one whose bravery was her life—
the life
She values only as it came from you?

NATHAN.

I would not have you other than you
are;

Not though I read a something in your
soul
You will not name.

RECHA.

What, father?

NATHAN.

Do you ask—
Ask me so timidly? Whate'er be stirred
Within you, 'tis but innocence and na-
ture.
Fear not. I have no fear. But promise
me—
If e'er your heart declare itself more
plainly,
No wish of it shall be concealed from
me.

RECHA.

You make me tremble but to think my
heart
Could ever wish concealment from my
father.

NATHAN.

Enough; 'tis once for all agreed be-
tween us.—
See, here is Daja!—Well?

DAJA.

He's walking yet
Beneath the palms, just hid by yonder
wall.
Look, there he is!

RECHA.

Ah, see! He hesitates.
Will he go on or back, to right or left?

DAJA.

No, no; he's sure to take again the path
Around the cloister, and must pass this
way.

RECHA.

Right, right! Say, have you spoken
with him to-day?
How is he?

DAJA.

Just as always.

NATHAN.

Have a care
He does not see you. Better further
back;—
Or safest in the house.

RECHA.

But one look more!
Alas, the hedge that steals him from
me!

DAJA.

Come!
Your father's right. He might turn back
at once,
Should he behold you. Come!

RECHA.

Ah me, that hedge!

NATHAN.

And should he suddenly emerge from it,
He could not fail to see you. Go, then
—go!

DAJA.

Come, come with me; I'll take you to a
window,
Whence we may watch them unob-
served. Come!

RECHA.

Yes?

[Both go into the house.]

SCENE V.

NATHAN. *Soon afterward the* TEMPLAR.

NATHAN.

I almost dread to meet this strange Un-
known;
I almost shrink before his rugged virtue.
Strange that one man can make his fel-
low-man
Thus ill at ease!—Ah, there he comes.
By heaven!
A manly youth. That brave, defiant
look,
I like it well—that solid tread. The
shell

Alone is bitter; surely not the kernel.
Where have I seen one like him?—No-
ble Frank,
Forgive me—

TEMPLAR.

What?

NATHAN.

Permit me—

TEMPLAR.

What, Jew, what?

NATHAN.

That I presume to address you.

TEMPLAR.

Can I help it?

Be brief!

NATHAN.

Forgive, and hurry not so proudly,
With such contempt, past one whom you
have bound
Unto yourself forever.

TEMPLAR.

How is that?

Ah, I can guess. You are—

NATHAN.

My name's Nathan.
I'm father of the maiden whom you
saved
So generously from the fire. I come—

TEMPLAR.

If 'tis to thank me, you may spare your-
self.
Too many thanks have I endured al-
ready
For such a trifle. Nothing do you owe
me.
How did I know the maiden was your
daughter?
It is the Templar's duty to assist

The first, the best whose need he sees.
 Besides,
 My life was at that moment hateful to
 me.
 I gladly seized the opportunity
 To risk it for another—for another,
 Though but a Jewess.

NATHAN.

It is nobly spoken—
 Offensively and nobly. Yet I read
 Your motive. Modest greatness shields
 itself
 Behind offensive words from admira-
 tion.
 But if it scorn the tribute of our praise,
 Is there none other less contemptible?
 Knight, were you not a prisoner here,
 a stranger,
 I should not be thus bold. Command
 me—speak!
 What service can be done you?

TEMPLAR.

None by you.

NATHAN.

Yet I am rich.

TEMPLAR.

To me the richest Jew
 Was ne'er the best.

NATHAN.

Might you not still employ
 That better which he has—employ his
 wealth?

TEMPLAR.

Good; there I will not wholly say you
 nay—
 E'en for my mantle's sake. When this
 be worn
 To tatters, so that neither shred nor
 stitch
 Will hold together longer, I will come
 And borrow cloth or money for a new
 one.—
 Look not so troubled. You are safe
 a while.
 'Tis not yet come to that. See, it is still

In tolerable condition. Only here
 It has an ugly spot; this end was
 scorched.
 But lately did it happen, as I bore
 Your daughter through the fire.

NATHAN [*taking hold of the corner and
 looking at it.*]

Strange that a burn,
 An ugly spot like that, should bear this
 man
 A better testimony than his lips!—
 Might I but kiss it—kiss the spot! Ah,
 pardon,
 'Twas unawares.

TEMPLAR.

What?

NATHAN.

That a tear fell on it.

TEMPLAR.

No matter, it has had such drops before.
 (I soon shall grow confused before this
 Jew.)

NATHAN.

Might I request the further favor of
 you,
 That you would send your mantle to my
 daughter?

TEMPLAR.

What would she with it?

NATHAN.

That her lips may press
 The spot, since to embrace your knees,
 in vain
 Is her desire.

TEMPLAR.

But, Jew—your name is Nathan?
 But, Nathan—you have spoken well, and
 sharply.
 I know not what to answer. Surely—I—

NATHAN.

Disguise yourself, dissemble as you will.
Here too I've found you out. You were
too good,

Too honorable to be more polite.

A girl, all sentiment—her waiting
woman,

All eagerness to serve—her father ab-
sent—

You cared for her good name; fled from
her gaze—

Fled that you might not conquer. Fur-
ther cause

For thanks.

TEMPLAR.

I must confess you know the motives
That ought to be a Templar's.

NATHAN,

But a Templar's?

Ought only—and because his Order
bids?

I know a good man's motives, and I
know

Good men are everywhere.

TEMPLAR.

With no distinction?

NATHAN.

Distinguished by their color, form and
dress.

TEMPLAR.

Not more or less in one place than an-
other?

NATHAN.

All such distinctions are of small ac-
count.

The great man everywhere needs ample
space:

Too many, closely planted, dash them-
selves

Against each other. Average ones,
like us,

Stand everywhere in crowds. But let
not one

Cast slurs upon the others. Knots and
gnarls

Must live on friendly terms. One little
peak

Must not take airs, as 'twere the only
one

Not sprung from earth.

TEMPLAR.

Well said! But know you, Nathan,
What people practiced first this casting
slurs—

What people were the first to call them-
selves

The chosen people? How if I—not
hate,

Indeed—but cannot help despising them
For all their pride,—a pride which has
descended

To Mussulman and Christian,—that
their God

Must be the one true God? You start
to hear

Such words from me, a Christian and a
Templar.

When, where, has this fanaticism of
having

The better God, and forcing him as best
On all the world, e'er showed itself in
colors

More black than here and now? Who
here and now

Feels not his eyes unsealed? But be
he blind

Who will!—Forget what I have said,
and leave me. [Going.]

NATHAN.

You know not, how much closer you
have drawn me.

We must, we must be friends! Despise
my people

With all your heart. We neither chose
our people.

Are we our people? What does "peo-
ple" mean?

Is Jew or Christian rather Jew or
Christian

Than man? May I have found in you
another

Who is content to be esteemed a man!

TEMPLAR.

You have, by heaven, you have! Your
hand! I blush
That for a moment I should have mis-
judged you.

NATHAN.

And I am proud; for 'tis the vulgar
only
That rarely is misjudged.

TEMPLAR.

And but the rare
That's not forgotten. Nathan, yes, we
must,
We must indeed be friends.

NATHAN.

Are so already.
How Recha will rejoice! And ah, how
bright
The future opens to me! Only know
her!

TEMPLAR.

I'm burning with impatience. Who is
this
Comes running from your house—is it
not Daja?

NATHAN.

'Tis she—but why so troubled?

TEMPLAR.

Oh, may naught
Have happened to our Recha!

SCENE VI.

The preceding. DAJA enters hastily.

DAJA.

Nathan, Nathan!

NATHAN.

Well?

DAJA.

Pardon me that I disturb you, knight.

NATHAN.

What is it?

TEMPLAR.

What?

DAJA.

The Sultan sent.
The Sultan wants to see you. Oh, good
heaven!
The Sultan!

NATHAN.

Me?—the Sultan? He desires
To see what novelties I've brought; but
tell him
That little—nothing has been yet un-
packed.

DAJA.

Naught will he see; he wants to speak
with you,
With you in person, soon, as soon as
may be.

NATHAN.

I come. Go, go!

DAJA.

Be not displeased, dread knight.
We're so concerned to know the Sul-
tan's pleasure!

NATHAN.

That will be known in time. Go, leave
us now!

SCENE VII.

NATHAN and the TEMPLAR.

TEMPLAR.

Then know you him not personally
yet?

NATHAN.

The Sultan? No, I've neither shunned
nor sought him.
The common fame spoke far too well
of him
For me not rather to believe than see.
But now—though that be false, his
saving of your life—

TEMPLAR.

Yes; that at least is true. I hold my
life
But as his gift.

NATHAN.

He granted me with that
A double, threefold life. That changes
all
Between us; throws a sudden net about
me
Which binds me to his service ever-
more.
Scarce can I wait to learn his first
commands.
I am prepared for all; and will con-
fess
I am so for your sake.

TEMPLAR.

Oft as I've met him
I've found no way to thank him yet
myself.
The impression that I made upon him
came
As suddenly as suddenly it passed.
It may be he remembers me no more:
Yet once at least he must remember
me,
To speak my final sentence. Not enough
That I exist at his command; have life
But by his will: he must decide whose
will
Shall guide my life.

NATHAN.

True: I will haste the more.
Some word may furnish opportunity
To speak of you. Permit me—pardon.
—I haste.
When will you come to us?

TEMPLAR.

Whene'er I may.

NATHAN.

Whene'er you will.

TEMPLAR.

To-day, then.

NATHAN.

And your name,

I pray you?

TEMPLAR.

Was—is Curd von Stauffen. Curd!

NATHAN.

Von Stauffen—Stauffen?

TEMPLAR.

Does the name surprise you?

NATHAN.

Von Stauffen? Many of that name
have here—

TEMPLAR.

Oh yes; full many here have lived and
died.
My uncle—father—But why fix your
eyes
With such a growing eagerness upon
me?

NATHAN.

Oh, nothing, nothing! Can I e'er be
weary
Of gazing on you?

TEMPLAR.

Then I leave you first.
The seeker's eye not seldom has dis-
covered
More than the seeker wished. I dread
it, Nathan.

Let time, not curiosity, cement
Our friendship. *[He goes.]*

NATHAN.

Oft the seeker's eye discovers
More than he wished.—He seemed to
read my soul
That might befall me here.—'Tis not
alone
Wolf's gait, Wolf's figure, but his
voice as well.
Exactly so would Wolf throw back his
head;
So carried Wolf his sword; so Wolf
would shade
His brow to hide the flashing of his
eyes.
How such deep-printed images will
slumber
Within us, till a word, a sound awakes
them!
Von Stauffen—that was it. Filneck
and Stauffen.
Of this I must know more, and pres-
ently.
But first to Saladin.—Who's listening
there?
Is it not Daja? Come, come nearer,
Daja.

SCENE VIII.

DAJA. NATHAN.

NATHAN.

What is it? Ah, the weight on both
your hearts
Is not what Saladin would have with
me.

DAJA.

You cannot blame her for it. At the
moment
Your converse with him grew more in-
timate,
The Sultan's message drove us from
the window.

NATHAN.

Tell her she may expect him every mo-
ment.

DAJA.

In truth?

NATHAN.

May I depend upon you, Daja?
Be on your guard, I pray you. You will
ne'er
Have reason to repent it. E'en your
conscience
Will find account in it. Disturb me
not
In what I plan. In all you ask and tell,
Use caution and reserve.

DAJA.

How can you think
Of such a thing again! I go: go you!
For see, there surely comes from Sa-
ladin
A second messenger—your dervise,
Hafi. *[Goes.]*

SCENE IX.

NATHAN. AL-HAFL.

AL-HAFL.

Ha, ha! I'm just in search of you
again.

NATHAN.

Is it so urgent? What's his will
with me?

AL-HAFL.

Whose?

NATHAN.

Saladin's.—I come; I come.

AL-HAFL.

To whom?

To Saladin?

NATHAN.

Did Saladin not send you?

AL-HAFL.

No. Has he sent before?

NATHAN.

He has indeed.

AL-HAFI.

It is decided then.

NATHAN.

What? What's decided?

AL-HAFI.

That—I am not to blame; God knows
I'm not.
What tales have I not told of you,
what lies,
To avert it?

NATHAN.

What to avert? What is decided?

AL-HAFI.

That you're his treasurer. I pity you.
At least I'll not stay by to see. I go;
I go this hour. You know already
whither,
And know the way. Have you com-
mands for me
Upon the road? Speak! I am at your
service.
But order nothing more than can be
carried
Upon a naked back. Speak quick! I'm
off!

NATHAN.

Bethink yourself, Al-Hafi; pray, con-
sider
That I know nothing vet. What means
your talk?

AL-HAFI.

Best take the bags with you at once.

NATHAN.

The bags?

AL-HAFI.

The gold you're to advance to Saladin.

NATHAN.

So that is all?

AL-HAFI.

Shall I look on and see
How he will drain your marrow day
by day,
Down to the very toes; look on and
see
How his extravagance will borrow,
borrow,
And borrow from those barns ne'er
emptied yet
By your wise charities, till the poor
mouse
That had its birth there shall be
starved to death?
Do you imagine he who needs your
gold
Will take your counsel also? He take
counsel!
Took Saladin e'er counsel? Hear what
happened
When last I went to him.

NATHAN.

Well?

AL-HAFI.

I arrived
When Sittah and himself had been at
chess.
His sister plays not badly. There the
game
That Saladin had given up for lost
Was standing on the board. I glanced
at it,
And saw that it was far from lost.

NATHAN.

Aha!

A great discovery for you.

AL-HAFI.

His king
But needed to advance upon the pawn
Against her check. If I could only
show you!

NATHAN.

I'll take your word for it.

AL-HAFI.

For so the rook
Were brought into the field, and she
were lost.
All that I wished to show, and called
him.—Think!

NATHAN.

He was not of your mind?

AL-HAFI.

He would not listen;
Contemptuously overturned the board.

NATHAN.

Is't possible?

AL-HAFI.

And said he would be mated.
He would be mated! Do you call that
playing?

NATHAN.

Hardly indeed; 'tis playing with the
game.

AL-HAFI.

And that for no mean stake.

NATHAN.

Gold here, gold there!
That is the least. But not to listen to
you
Upon a point so weighty—not to listen,
And not admire your eagle eye—that,
that
Cries out for vengeance—does it not?

AL-HAFI.

Nay, nay;
I do but tell you this to show the
man.
I'm at the end of all my patience with
him.
Here must I run about 'mongst dirty
Moors,
And ask who'll lend him. I who for
myself

Have never begged, must borrow now
for others.

To borrow scarce is better than to beg;
As lending, lending upon interest,
Scarce better is than stealing. With
my patrons

Beside the Ganges have I need of
neither.

And need not to become the tool of
either.

Beside the Ganges only are there men.
Here none but you is worthy of the
life

Beside the Ganges. Will you come
with me?

Leave all your trumpery at once for
him,

And so have done with it. By small
degrees

He'd have it out of you. Thus would
the torment

At once be ended. I will get your
delk.*

Come, come!

NATHAN.

I've thought of that as a reserve.
Yet I'll consider it, Al-Hafi. Wait—

AL-HAFI.

Consider it! No, no; 'tis not a matter
To be considered.

NATHAN.

Only till I've seen
The Sultan—only till I've said fare-
well—

AL-HAFI.

He who considers does but seek excuse
For lack of courage. Who cannot re-
solve

Upon the instant for himself to live,
Remains forevermore the slave of oth-
ers.

Do as you will!—Farewell!—As you
think best!

Here lies my road, there yours.

*The garb of a dervise.

NATHAN.

Al-Hafi, stay!
You'll settle your accounts before you
go?

AL-HAFI.

Oh, pshaw! My property is not worth
counting.
And for my debts—why, Sittah or
yourself
Must be my bail. Farewell! [*Goes.*]

NATHAN.

I'll be your bail.
Wild, noble, good—how shall I call
him? Truly,
The genuine beggar is the genuine
king.

ACT THIRD.

SCENE I.

Room in Nathan's house. RECHA. DAJA.

RECHA.

Tell me my father's words again, dear
Daja.
He said I might expect him every mo-
ment.
Does it not sound as if he'd soon be
here?
And yet how many moments have
gone by
Since then! Ah well, who thinks of
them, the past?
I'll only live in every coming moment.
The one that brings him must be here
at last.

DAJA.

Oh that unlucky message from the Sul-
tan!
Else Nathan would have brought him
in that instant,

RECHA.

And came he now, this instant; were
the warmest,

The fondest of my wishes now ful-
filled—

What then—what then?

DAJA.

What then? Then should I hope
My warmest wish might also be ful-
filled.

RECHA.

What would supply the place within my
breast,
Which swells no longer, uninspired by
one
Supreme desire? What? Nothing!
Ah, I tremble.

DAJA.

My wish shall take the place of yours
fulfilled—
To know you are in Europe, and in
hands
Deserving of you.

RECHA.

You're mistaken, Daja.
The motive that inspires that wish in
you
Prevents it in myself. Your fatherland
Allures you; and shall mine, shall mine
not hold me?
Shall images of home, unfaded yet
Within your soul, have greater power
than home,
With all that I can see, and touch, and
hear?

DAJA.

Resist with all your will—the ways of
Heaven
Are still the ways of Heaven. How if
through him
Who saved your life, his God for
whom he fights
Would lead you to the land and to the
people
For which your birth designed you?

RECHA.

Daja, Daja!
What mean such words? What strange
conceits you have!

"His God—for whom he fights!" Can
 God be owned?
 What sort of God were he whom man
 could own—
 Who needs defenders? How can any
 tell
 The spot of earth for which his birth
 designed him,
 If not the spot on which it placed him?
 —Daja,
 What if my father heard such words
 from you!
 What has he done that you should al-
 ways paint
 My happiness so far removed from
 him?
 What has he done that you desire to
 mix
 The seeds of understanding he has
 sown
 So pure within my soul, with weeds or
 flowers
 From your own distant land? You
 know, dear Daja,
 He'll none of your gay flowers upon
 my soil.
 I, too, confess I feel my soil is weak-
 ened,
 Exhausted by your flowers e'en though
 they grace it;
 And in their sweet, intoxicating fra-
 grance
 I grow bewildered, giddy. You, dear
 Daja,
 Are more accustomed to it. No re-
 proach
 Upon the stronger nerves that can en-
 dure it;
 Only it suits not me.—Your angel
 now;—
 My head was well-nigh turned with
 it. I blush
 E'en now, before my father, at such
 nonsense.

DAJA.

Nonsense! As if here only there were
 sense!
 If I might only speak!

RECHA.

And may you not?
 When was I not all ear to hear you
 tell

Of Christian heroes often as you
 would?
 When gave I not their deeds my ad-
 miration,
 Their sufferings my tears? True, their
 belief
 I never held their greatest heroism;
 But all the more consoling was the les-
 son
 That faith in God depends not on the
 views
 We entertain of Him. That has my
 father
 So often told us; and yourself, dear
 Daja,
 Have oft confirmed it. Why desire
 alone
 To undermine what both have helped
 to build?—
 But 'twere not well that we should
 meet our friend
 With talk like this. And yet for *me*
 it is.
 To me it matters infinitely whether—
 Hark, Daja! Comes not some one to
 the door?
 If it were he! Hark, hark!

SCENE II.

RECHA, DAJA, and the TEMPLAR, for
 whom the door is opened, with
 the words—"Be pleased to enter."

RECHA (*starts back, recovers herself,*
and is about to throw herself at his
feet).

'Tis he—'tis my preserver! Ah!

TEMPLAR.

Thus late
 I came to shun a scene like this; and
 yet—

RECHA.

Here at the feet of this proud man,
 once more
 Will I give thanks to God,—not to the
 man.
 The man desires no thanks,—desires as
 little

As does the water-bucket, kept so busy
In putting out the flames. 'Twas filled
and emptied

In total apathy. So with the man.
Like that, he was but thrust into the
fire;

By accident I fell into his arms;
There lay by accident within his arms,
E'en as a spark might lie upon his mantle,

Till something—what I know not—
threw us both
Beyond the flames. What cause for
thanks in that?

Wine urges men to other deeds in
Europe.—

'Twas but a Templar's duty. They,
like dogs

Of somewhat higher training, have to
fetch

From fire as well as water.

TEMPLAR (*who has been gazing on her
with surprise and disquiet*).

Daja, Daja!

If moments of distress and bitterness
Had made me harsh with you, why
bring to her

Each foolish word that might escape
my lips?

'Twas taking a too cruel vengeance,
Daja.

Henceforth I hope for kindlier inter-
cession.

DAJA.

Scarce think I, knight, these little
stings of yours,

Flung at her heart, have harmed your
cause with her.

RECHA.

Had you a grief, and were you of your
grief

Less generous than of life?

TEMPLAR.

Kind, gracious maiden!

How is my soul divided betwixt eye
And ear! Not this the maiden that I
saved—

It cannot, cannot be; for who had
known her

And not have saved her? who would
wait for me?

'Tis true—that fear—deforms.

[*He pauses, lost in contemplation of
her.*]

RECHA.

Yet I find you

To be the same.

[*Another pause, until, to rouse him
from his abstraction, she continues.*]

But you must tell us, knight,
Where you have been so long. I al-
most might

Ask, too, where you are now?

TEMPLAR.

I am—where I

Perhaps ought not to be.

RECHA.

And where have been?

Also, perhaps, where you should not
have been?

That is not well.

TEMPLAR.

On—on—which is the mountain?
On Sinai.

RECHA.

Sinai? Ah, I'm glad; for now
Can I learn surely if 'tis true—

TEMPLAR.

What—what?

If it be true that there the spot is
shown

Where in God's presence Moses stood,
when—

RECHA.

No;

Not that. Where'er he stood, 'twas in
God's presence.

Besides, I know enough of that al-
ready.

I only wanted you to tell me if—
 If it were true there's much less weariness
 In climbing up that mountain than descending.
 With all the mountains I have ever climbed
 'Twas just the contrary.—Well, knight,
 how now?
 You turn away—you will not look at me!

TEMPLAR.

I would the better hear you.

RECHA.

You would hide
 Your smiles at my simplicity,—your smiles
 That no more worthy question can I ask
 About that holy mountain,—would you not?

TEMPLAR.

Then must I look again into your eyes.
 Ah, now you cast them down—conceal your smiles!
 When I would read in features full of riddles
 What I distinctly hear, will you disguise them?
 Ah, Recha, truly said he, "Only know her!"

RECHA.

Who said—of whom—to you?

TEMPLAR.

Your father's words
 To me in speaking of you—"Only know her!"

DAJA.

Did I not say it? Did not also I?

TEMPLAR.

But where is he, your father? Stays he yet
 With Saladin?

RECHA.

No doubt.

TEMPLAR.

So long? Ah no!
 Forgetful that I am! he's there no longer;
 But by the convent yonder waits for me.
 So, I am sure, it was agreed between us.
 Permit me, I will go, will bring him.

DAJA.

Nay;
 Leave that to me. Stay, stay, knight!
 I will bring him
 Without delay.

TEMPLAR.

Not so, not so. Myself,
 Not you, is he expecting. And, besides,
 He may—who knows?—he may with Saladin—
 You do not know the Sultan!—may perchance
 Have met with difficulties. There is danger,
 Believe me, there is danger if I stay.

RECHA.

What danger?

TEMPLAR.

Danger to myself, to you,
 To him, unless I quickly, quickly go.
 [Goes.]

SCENE III.

RECHA and DAJA.

RECHA.

What means it, Daja? Why so quick to leave us?
 What sudden thought could thus have urged him off?

DAJA.

Let be—let be. I hold it no bad sign.

RECHA.

A sign—of what?

DAJA.

Something's astir within:
'Tis boiling, and must not be let boil
over.
Let him alone. 'Tis your turn now.

RECHA.

My turn?
You're unintelligible, like himself.

DAJA.

Soon the disquietude he made you suffer
You can requite him. Only, show
yourself
Not too severe, too unrelenting to-
wards him.

RECHA.

Whereof you speak, you must know
best yourself.

DAJA.

So calm again?

RECHA.

I am; indeed I am.

DAJA.

Confess at least that his disquietude
Rejoices you, and that to it you owe
Whate'er you have of calm.

RECHA.

Not consciously.

The most I could confess would be my
wonder

That suddenly the storm within my
heart

Should be succeeded by so deep a still-
ness.
His whole appearance, conversation,
bearing—

DAJA.

So soon have satisfied?

RECHA.

Not satisfied.
No; far from that—

DAJA.

But still your hungry longing?

RECHA.

If you will have it so.

DAJA.

Not I indeed.

RECHA.

He will be always dear to me, far
dearer
Than life itself; though at his name
my pulse
No longer varies, and my heart no
longer
Beats harder, faster when I think of
him.—
What nonsense am I talking? Come,
dear Daja,
We'll seek again the window toward
the palms.

DAJA.

'Tis not then wholly stilled, that hun-
gry longing.

RECHA.

Once more shall I behold the palms
again;
Not only him beneath.

DAJA.

This coldness then
Portends new fever.

RECHA.

Coldness? I'm not cold.
With equal pleasure do I look, though
calmly.

SCENE IV.

Audience hall in Saladin's palace.

SALADIN. SITTAH.

SALADIN (*speaking to some one with-
out as he enters*).

Admit the Jew the moment he arrives.
He's not disposed to hurry, it would
seem.

SITTAH.

He was not there perhaps, in instant
reach.

SALADIN.

O sister, sister!

SITTAH.

One would say a battle
Were threatening you.

SALADIN.

One to be waged with weapons
I never learned to use. I must dissem-
ble;
I must lay snares; must be upon my
guard;
Must walk on ice. When could I ever
that?
Where learned I ever that? And all
for what—
For what? To fish for money—all for
money!
To frighten money from a Jew—for
money!
To such mean shifts am I reduced at
last
To get the least of trifles!

SITTAH.

Every trifle,

Unduly scorned, will be revenged, dear
brother.

SALADIN.

Alas, too true. But now suppose this
Jew
Should be the wise good man the der-
vise once
Described him.

SITTAH.

If he should! Where lies the harm?
The usurious, careful, timid Jew alone
The snare is laid for—not the wise,
good man.
He without snares were ours. What
joy to hear
How such a man would extricate him-
self!
The downright force that would the
meshes break,
Or crafty cunning that would disentangle—
This pleasure will be all to boot.

SALADIN.

That's true.

It were a joy, indeed.

SITTAH.

There can arise
Naught further to disturb you. Is he
one
Of many—just a Jew like any Jew?
To such a one why be ashamed to seem
What he believes all men to be? Nay,
more;
Who should appear aught other, were to
him
A fool, a dolt.

SALADIN.

I must act meanly, therefore,
Lest I be meanly thought of by the
mean.

SITTAH.

If mean you call it, dealing with each
thing
According to its nature.

SALADIN.

What contrivance
Of woman's brain will she not palliate!

SITTAH.
Not palliate?

SALADIN.

My clumsy hands, I fear,
Will break this keen and subtle thing.
It needs
To be conducted as 'twas first con-
ceived,
With all dexterity and cunning. Well,
I can but try! I'll dance as best I may:
And yet would rather it were worse
than better.

SITTAH.

Trust not yourself too little. Do but
will!
I'll answer for you. See how men like
you
Delight to make us think that with the
sword,
The sword alone, you have achieved so
much!
The lion is ashamed, if with the fox
He've hunted—of the fox, not of the
craft.

SALADIN.

And how you women like to bring men
down
To your own level! Go, go; leave me
now;
I know my lesson.

SITTAH.

Leave you—must I go?

SALADIN.

You had not thought to stay?

SITTAH.

If not to stay—
Not in your sight—yet in the adjoining
room.

SALADIN.

That you may listen? If I'm to suc-
ceed,
That neither, sister.—Go! the curtain
stirs.
He comes!—Remain not near; I'll see
to it.

[As she leaves by one door, Nathan en-
ters by another, and Saladin seats
himself.]

SCENE V.

SALADIN and NATHAN.

SALADIN.

Come nearer, Jew, come nearer!—with-
out fear!

NATHAN.

'Tis for your foes to fear!

SALADIN.

Your name is Nathan?

NATHAN.

Yes.

SALADIN.

The wise Nathan?

NATHAN.

No.

SALADIN.

Ah! well, you may
Not call yourself so, but the people do.

NATHAN.

May be. The people!

SALADIN.

Think you I despise
The people's voice? Long have I
wished to know
The man they call the wise.

NATHAN.

If but in jest
They call him so; if to the people's
thought
The wise is but the prudent, and the
prudent
But he who understands his own ad-
vantage?

SALADIN.

His true advantage mean you?

NATHAN.

Then indeed
The selfish were the wise; then wise
and prudent
Would be indeed the same.

SALADIN.

I hear you prove
What you would fain deny. Man's true
advantage,
Mistaken by the people, is known to
you;
Or has been sought by you; has been
the theme
Of your reflections; that alone makes
wise.

NATHAN.

Which every man esteems himself to be.

SALADIN.

Enough of modesty; it nauseates
To hear but that, when we expect dry
reason.

[Starts up.]

Let us to business. But be honest,
Jew,—
Be honest!

NATHAN.

Sultan, I will surely serve you,
In manner to deserve your further cus-
tom.

SALADIN.

How serve me?

NATHAN.

You shall have the best of goods,
And at the lowest price.

SALADIN.

What speak you of—
Your merchandise? My sister presently
Will do the chaffering with you. (That
for her,
The listener!) I've no business with
the merchant.

NATHAN.

Then must you wish to learn what on
my way
I may have seen, encountered of the
foe,
Who is astir again; if openly—

SALADIN.

Nor yet is that my present business with
you,
Of that I know already all I need.—
In short—

NATHAN.

Command me, Sultan.

SALADIN.

I desire
Instruction of you in another matter—
In quite another.—Since so great your
wisdom,
I pray you tell me what belief, what
law
Has most commended itself to you.

NATHAN.

Sultan,
I am a Jew.

SALADIN.

And I a Mussulman.
Between us is the Christian. Now, but
one
Of all these three religions can be true.
A man like you stands not where acci-
dent
Of birth has cast him. If he so re-
main,
It is from judgment, reasons, choice of
best.
Impart to me your judgment; let me
hear
The reasons I've no time to seek myself.
Communicate, in confidence, of course,
The choice you have arrived at through
those reasons,
That I may make it mine.—You are
surprised—
You weigh me with your glance!—May
be that Sultan
Had ne'er such whim before; which yet
I deem
Not unbecoming in a Sultan. Speak—

Your answer! Or a moment would you have
To think upon it? Good; I grant it you,
(Can she be listening? I'll surprise her then,
And learn if I've done well.) But quick,
be quick
With your reflections, I'll not tarry long.

[*Goes into the adjoining room, as Sit-
tah had done.*]

SCENE VI.

NATHAN (*alone*).

Hm!—extraordinary—what a dilemma!
What will the Sultan have? I am prepared
For money, and he asks for truth—for truth!
And wants it hard and bare, as truth were coin.
Yes; if an ancient coin which went by weight,
I grant you; but this coinage of to-day
That's counted down, and has no other value
Except the stamp upon it;—that she's not.
Can truth be swept into the head like gold
Into a sack? Which here is most the Jew—
Is't I or he?—But stay; what if the Sultan
Were not in earnest in his search for truth?
Nay; the suspicion he could use the truth
But for a snare, would be too mean.
Too mean?
Is aught too mean for princes?—Surely, surely.
With what abruptness made he his attack!
One knocks and listens, if one comes as friend.—
I'll be upon my guard with him. But how?
To play the bigot Jew avails not here:
Still less no Jew at all. For if no Jew,

Well might he ask, why not a Mussulman?
I have it,—that will save me; for with fables
Not children only can be entertained.
He comes: well, let him come!

SCENE VII.

SALADIN and NATHAN.

SALADIN.

(The coast is clear.)

I'm not returned too soon for you, I hope;
You've brought your meditations to a close?
Speak them; no soul can hear us.

NATHAN.

I am willing
The world should hear us.

SALADIN.

Nathan is so sure
Of his good cause? Ah, that I call a sage;
Never to hide the truth; to stake on it
Your all; your soul and body, goods
and life.

NATHAN.

When necessary it shall be, and useful.

SALADIN.

With right I hope henceforth to bear
my title,
Reformer of the world and of the law.

NATHAN.

A noble title certainly. Yet, Sultan,
Ere I bestow my perfect confidence,
Permit me to relate a story to you.

SALADIN.

Why not? I ever have been fond of
stories
Well told.

NATHAN.

The telling well I do not promise.

SALADIN.

Again so proudly modest!—Come, your story!

NATHAN.

In gray antiquity there lived a man
In Eastern lands, who had received a
ring
Of priceless worth from a beloved
hand.
Its stone, an opal, flashed a hundred
colors,
And had the secret power of giving
favor,
In sight of God and man, to him who
wore it
With a believing heart. What wonder
then
This Eastern man would never put the
ring
Off from his finger, and should so pro-
vide
That to his house it be preserved for-
ever?
Such was the case. Unto the best-be-
loved
Among his sons he left the ring, en-
joining
That he in turn bequeath it to the son
Who should be dearest; and the dearest
ever,
In virtue of the ring, without regard
To birth, be of the house the prince and
head.
You understand me, Sultan?

SALADIN.

Yes; go on!

NATHAN.

From son to son the ring descending,
came
To one, the sire of three; of whom all
three
Were equally obedient; whom all three
He therefore must with equal love re-
gard.

And yet from time to time now this,
now that,
And now the third,—as each alone was
by,
The others not dividing his fond
heart,—
Appeared to him the worthiest of the
ring;
Which then, with loving weakness, he
would promise
To each in turn. Thus it continued
long.
But he must die; and then the loving
father
Was sore perplexed. It grieved him
thus to wound
Two faithful sons who trusted in his
word;
But what to do? In secrecy he calls
An artist to him, and commands of him
Two other rings, the pattern of his
own.
The artist's skill succeeds. He brings
the rings,
And e'en the father cannot tell his own.
Relieved and joyful, summons he his
sons,
Each by himself; to each one by him-
self
He gives his blessing, and his ring—
and dies.—
You listen, Sultan?

SALADIN [*who, somewhat perplexed,
has turned away.*]

Yes; I hear, I hear.

But bring your story to an end.

NATHAN.

'Tis ended;

For what remains would tell itself. The
father
Was scarcely dead, when each brings
forth his ring,
And claims the headship. Questioning
ensues,
Strife, and appeal to law; but all in
vain.
The genuine ring was not to be dis-
tinguished;—

[*After a pause, in which he awaits the
Sultan's answer.*]

As undistinguishable as with us
The true religion.

SALADIN.

That your answer to me?

NATHAN.

But my apology for not presuming
Between the rings to judge, which, with
design,
The father ordered undistinguishable.

SALADIN.

The rings?—You trifle with me. The
religions
I named to you are plain to be dis-
tinguished—
E'en in the dress, e'en in the food and
drink.

NATHAN.

In all except the grounds on which they
rest.
Are they not founded all on history,
Traditional or written? History
Can be accepted only upon trust.
Whom now are we the least inclined to
doubt?
Not our own people—our own blood;
not those
Who from our childhood up have
proved their love;
Ne'er disappointed, save when disap-
pointment
Was wholesome to us? Shall my an-
cestors
Receive less faith from me, than yours
from you?
Reverse it: Can I ask you to belie
Your fathers, and transfer your faith
to mine?
Or yet, again, holds not the same with
Christians?

SALADIN.

(By heaven, the man is right! I've
naught to answer.)

NATHAN.

Return we to our rings. As I have
said,
The sons appealed to law, and each took
oath

Before the judge that from his father's
hand
He had the ring,—as was indeed the
truth;
And had received his promise long be-
fore,
One day the ring, with all its privi-
leges,
Should be his own,—as was not less the
truth.
The father could not have been false
to him,
Each one maintained; and rather than
allow
Upon the memory of so dear a father
Such stain to rest, he must against his
brothers,
Though gladly he would nothing but the
best
Believe of them, bring charge of treach-
ery;
Means would he find the traitors to
expose,
And be revenged on them.

SALADIN.

And now the judge?
I long to hear what words you give the
judge.
Go on!

NATHAN.

Thus spoke the judge: Produce your
father
At once before me, else from my tri-
bunal
Do I dismiss you. Think you I am
here
To guess your riddles? Either would
you wait
'Until the genuine ring shall speak?—
But hold!
A magic power in the true ring resides,
As I am told, to make its wearer
loved—
Pleasing to God and man. Let that
decide.
For in the false can no such virtue lie.
Which one among you, then, do two
love best?
Speak! Are you silent? Work the
rings but backward,
Not outward? 'Loves each one himself
the best?

Then cheated cheats are all of you! The
rings
All three are false. The genuine ring
was lost;
And to conceal, supply the loss, the
father
Made three in place of one.

SALADIN.

Oh, excellent!

NATHAN.

Go, therefore, said the judge, unless my
counsel
You'd have in place of sentence. It
were this:

Accept the case exactly as it stands.
Had each his ring directly from his
father,

Let each believe his own is genuine.
'Tis possible your father would no
longer

His house to one ring's tyranny subject;
And certain that all three of you he
loved,

Loved equally, since two he would not
humble,

That one might be exalted. Let each
one

To his unbought, impartial love aspire;
Each with the others vie to bring to
light

The virtue of the stone within his ring;
Let gentleness, a hearty love of peace,

Beneficence, and perfect trust in God,
Come to its help. Then if the jewel's
power

Among your children's children be re-
vealed,

I bid you in a thousand thousand years
Again before this bar. A wiser man

Than I shall occupy this seat and speak.
Go!—Thus the modest judge dismissed
them.

SALADIN.

God!

NATHAN.

If therefore, Saladin, you feel yourself
That promised, wiser man—

SALADIN (*rushing to him, and seizing
his hand, which he holds to the end*).

O God! I? Dust!—I? Naught!

NATHAN.

What moves you, Sultan?

SALADIN.

Nathan, Nathan!
Not ended are the thousand thousand
years

Your judge foretold; not mine to claim
his seat,

Go, go!—But be my friend.

NATHAN.

No further orders
Has Saladin for me?

SALADIN.

None.

NATHAN.

None?

SALADIN.

No, none.

Why ask?

NATHAN.

An opportunity I sought
To proffer a request.

SALADIN.

Needs a request
An opportunity? Speak!

NATHAN.

I'm returned
From distant journeyings to collect my
debts.

Of ready money I've too much on hand.
Times grow again uncertain. Scarce
I know

Where safely to dispose it; and I
thought

That you, perhaps, since more is always needed
For an approaching war, might mine employ.

SALADIN (*fixing his eyes upon him*).

I will not ask you, Nathan, if Al-Hafi
Has been already with you;—will not ask
If no suspicion prompts this willing offer—

NATHAN.

Suspicion?

SALADIN.

I deserve it;—but forgive me!
Why seek to hide it? Frankly, 'twas my purpose—

NATHAN.

To ask the same of me?

SALADIN.

It was indeed.

NATHAN.

Then can we both be served. This Templar only
Prevents my sending you my whole supply.
You know the Templar. I've a heavy debt
That first must be discharged to him.

SALADIN.

A Templar?
You surely do not with your gold support
My bitterest foes?

NATHAN.

I speak but of the one
Whose life you spared.

SALADIN.

What bring you to my mind!
The youth I'd utterly forgot. You know him?
Where is he?

NATHAN.

Know you not how much your grace
Has flowed through him on me? His new-found life
He risked to save my daughter from the fire.

SALADIN.

Ah, did he so? He looked like such an one.
So had my brother done, whom he resembles.
Is he still here? Conduct him hither to me.
So often have I spoken to my sister
Of this her brother whom she never knew,
She must behold his image.—Go, go find him!
From one good deed, though born of naught but passion,
How many other noble deeds will spring!
Go, find him!

NATHAN.

Instantly!—it stands agreed
About the other. [*Goes.*]

SALADIN.

Ah, why let I not
My sister listen? To her, to her now!
How shall I ever tell her of it all?

[*Goes out in the opposite direction.*]

SCENE VIII.

Grove of palms near the Convent, where the TEMPLAR awaits NATHAN.

TEMPLAR (*walking to and fro in conflict with himself, till he thus breaks forth*).

Here must the weary victim cease his struggles.—
So be it then! I will not, must not look
Into my heart more closely, nor forecast
The future for it. Enough that flight was useless,

Useless. And yet I could do nothing
 more
 Than fly.—Now come what must!—Too
 suddenly
 To be evaded fell at last the blow
 That oft and long I had refused to
 meet.—
 To see her, her I had so little wish
 To see; to see her, and resolve my
 eyes
 Should never let her go—Resolve?
 Resolve
 Is purpose, action. I was simply pas-
 sive.
 To see her, and to feel my very being
 Was linked with hers, bound up in hers
 forever,
 Was instantaneous. Life apart from
 her
 Is inconceivable to me—were death;
 And wheresoe'er we may be after death,
 There too were death. If that be love,
 then—then—
 The Templar loves—the Christian loves
 the Jewess.
 What matter? Many a prejudice al-
 ready
 Have I discarded in the Holy Land—
 Holy to me forever for that cause.
 What will my Order further? I, the
 Templar,
 Am dead. The moment I became the
 prisoner
 Of Saladin, I died unto my Order.
 This head the Sultan gave,—is it my old
 one?
 Nay, 'tis a new one—one that has no
 knowledge
 Of the traditions by which that was
 fettered.
 A better too; and better calculated
 To breathe my native air. That can I
 feel;
 For it is giving me the very thoughts
 My father must have cherished here
 before me,
 Unless I've been imposed upon with fa-
 bles.
 Yet wherefore fables? Credible enough;
 And never to my mind more credible
 Than now, in danger as I am of stum-
 bling
 Where he has fallen.—Fallen? I will
 choose

Rather to fall with men than stand with
 children.
 His approbation is secured to me
 By his example; and whose approba-
 tion
 Could I desire besides? If Nathan's—
 Ah,
 Still less can his encouragement be
 wanting—
 More dear than approbation.—What a
 Jew!—
 Yet one who chooses to be thought a
 Jew,
 And nothing better.—Here he comes in
 haste,
 And glowing with delight, like all who
 come
 From Saladin. Ho, Nathan!

SCENE IX.

NATHAN *and the* TEMPLAR.

NATHAN.

Is it you?

TEMPLAR.

You tarried long with Saladin.

NATHAN.

Less long
 Than you imagine. I was much de-
 layed
 In my departure. Truly, truly, Curd,
 The man is equal to his fame; his fame
 Is but his shadow. I must tell you
 first
 And quickly—

TEMPLAR.

What?

NATHAN.

He will have speech with you;
 Without delay he bids you to his pres-
 ence.
 First to my house with me, where his
 affairs
 Demand my presence; then we'll go to-
 gether.

TEMPLAR.

Your house I ne'er again will enter,
Nathan,
Till—

NATHAN.

Have you been already—spoken with
her?
Say, how does Recha please you?

TEMPLAR.

Past expression!
But never—never will I see her more!
Else must you promise it may be for-
ever.

NATHAN.

How must I understand your words?

TEMPLAR (*after a pause, suddenly
throwing himself on Nathan's neck*).

My father!

NATHAN.

Young man!

TEMPLAR (*starting back from him as
suddenly*).

Not son?—I pray you, Nathan!—

NATHAN.

Friend!

TEMPLAR,

Not son?—I pray you, Nathan!—I con-
jure you—

By Nature's earliest ties! Let later
bonds

Not take precedence of them! Be con-
tent

To be a man! Reject me not!

NATHAN.

Dear friend!

TEMPLAR.

And son?—not son?—Not e'en if grati-
tude

Have in your daughter's heart prepared
the way

For love—if both were waiting but your
sign
To melt into each other!—You are si-
lent?

NATHAN.

You take me by surprise, young knight.

TEMPLAR,

Surprise?

Surprise you with your own sugges-
tions, Nathan?

Sound they then unfamiliar from my
lips?

How take you by surprise?

NATHAN.

Ere I e'en know

What Stauffen was your father?

TEMPLAR,

Nathan, Nathan!

At such a moment have you no emo-
tion

Save curiosity?

NATHAN.

For in the past

A Stauffen well I knew: his name was
Conrad.

TEMPLAR.

If 'twere my father's name?

NATHAN.

Was it indeed?

TEMPLAR,

I bear my father's name, Curd. Curd
is Conrad.

NATHAN.

My Conrad, though, could not have
been your father;

For he was like yourself—he was a
Templar;

Ne'er married.

TEMPLAR,

Such a reason!

NATHAN.
What?

TEMPLAR.
He might have been my father.

NATHAN.
You are jesting.

TEMPLAR.
And you are much too serious. Where's the harm?
A bit of bastard; a bar sinister;
A mark it is, no wise to be despised.—
But leave my ancestors unquestioned,
Nathan;
So shall your own go free. No faintest doubt
I mean to cast upon your pedigree.
No; God forbid! You trace it, branch
by branch,
As high as Abraham; and from him
still up.
I know it well myself—could swear
to it.

NATHAN.
You're bitter, but have I deserved it
from you?
Have I yet aught refused? I would
not hold you
Upon the instant to your word.* No
more.

TEMPLAR.
No more? Ah, then forgive!

NATHAN.
Come, come with me.

TEMPLAR.
And whither?—to your house? No, no;
not there—
Not there!—it burns me! I will wait
you here.
Go.—If I am to look on her again,
'Twill be to gaze my fill; if not—too
much
Already have I seen her:

NATHAN.
I will haste.

SCENE X.

THE TEMPLAR; soon afterwards DAJA.

TEMPLAR.
More than enough!—how infinitely
much
Man's brain will hold, and yet at times
grows full
So suddenly,—so suddenly grows full
With naught!—Vain, vain—be it filled
with what it may!—
But patience! Soon upon this swollen
mass
The soul will work, and space be
cleared, and light
And order reign again.—Have I ne'er
loved
Before? Was that not love, that love
I deemed?
Can only this be love?

DAJA (*approaching stealthily*).

Knight! Knight!

TEMPLAR.
Who calls?
You, Daja?

DAJA.
Unperceived by him, I passed;
Yet where you stand might he detect
us. Come,
Come nearer me. This tree shall be
our screen.

TEMPLAR.
What is it? why so secret?

DAJA.
'Tis a secret
That brings me to you; ay, a double
secret;
One known but to myself—one lent to
you.
What say you to exchanging? Give
me yours,
And mine will I confide to you.

TEMPLAR.

Right gladly,
When first I know what you consider
mine.
That doubtless shall I learn from
yours. Begin!

DAJA.

Excuse me. No, Sir Knight, you first;
I follow.
Be sure my secret will avail you
naught,
Have I not first your own. Quick,
therefore, quick!
Wait till I draw it from you, you will
then
Have not confided; mine is still mine
own,
While yours is gone.—Poor Knight!
that men should think
Such secrets can be hidden from a
woman!

TEMPLAR.

Which oft we're quite unconscious of
possessing.

DAJA.

'Tis possible. Then will I kindly first
Acquaint you with your own. What
meant it, Knight,
That with such headlong haste but now
you fled;
That you so left us wondering; that
with Nathan
You joined us not again? Made Recha,
then,
So slight impression, or so great? So
great!
So great! The flutterings of the poor
charmed bird
You make me know, that's fastened to
the perch.
Come, own you love her—love her e'en
to madness,
And I will tell you—

TEMPLAR.

Madness? Truly, there
You speak of what you know.

DAJA.

Own then the love;
I yield the madness.

TEMPLAR.

For it tells itself?
A Templar loves a Jewess!

DAJA.

Little enough
Of reason seems there in it; yet have
things
Ofttimes a deeper reason than we
think.
No new thing were it that unto him-
self
The Saviour should conduct us upon
ways
The wise would scarce have chosen.

TEMPLAR.

You are solemn.
(Yet if for Saviour read I Providence,
Is she not right?) My curiosity
Is stirred beyond its wont.

DAJA.

This is the land
Of wonders.

TEMPLAR.

(Of the wonderful indeed.
Could it be otherwise—since here the
world
Is met together?) Take for granted,
Daja,
Whatever you desire; say that I love
her;
I cannot think of life without her;
that—

DAJA.

In truth? Then swear to make her
yours, to save her,
For time and for eternity to save her.

TEMPLAR.

How so— how can I do so? Can I
then swear
What lies not in my power?

DAJA.

'Tis in your power.
One word of mine shall put it in your
power.

TEMPLAR.

That e'en her father shall have naught
against it?

DAJA.

Why father? Father! Ah, he must
consent.

TEMPLAR.

Must, Daja? Has he fallen among
thieves?

There is no must.

DAJA.

Well, well; he must be willing—
He must be glad at last.

TEMPLAR.

He must—and glad?
If I should tell you, Daja, 'tis a chord
I've struck already!

DAJA.

And he chimed not in?

TEMPLAR.

He answered with a discord that of-
fended.

DAJA.

What say you? At the shadow of a
wish

You showed for Recha, leaped he not
for joy,

But drew with coldness back, raised
difficulties?

TEMPLAR.

'Twas nearly so.

DAJA.

Then not a moment more
I hesitate.

TEMPLAR.

Yet still you hesitate?

DAJA.

So good he is in all besides! my debt
To him so great! Oh that he would
but hear!
God knows my heart is bleeding thus
to force him.

TEMPLAR.

I pray you keep me not in this sus-
pense!
Yet if yourself uncertain whether good
Or evil, culpable or laudable
Your purpose, speak not. I'll forget
there's aught
To be concealed.

DAJA.

That spurs me on, checks not.
Know then that Recha is no Jewish
maiden;
She is—a Christian.

TEMPLAR (*coldly*).

I congratulate you.

Found you the labor hard? Let not
the throes

Dismay you! Still continue zealously
To people heaven, since you can naught
for earth.

DAJA.

How, Knight! Deserves my confidence
your scorn?

Care you—you, Christian, Templar,
Love: too—

Care you so little Recha is a Christian?

TEMPLAR.

Especially a Christian of your making!

DAJA.

You take me so? No wonder then!
Not so;
I'd like to see who could convert her!
No!
It is her happiness to have been long
What she has been prevented from
becoming.

TEMPLAR.

Tell all, or go!

DAJA.

She is a Christian child:
Of Christian parents born; baptized—

TEMPLAR. (*hastily*).

And Nathan?

DAJA.

Is not her father!

TEMPLAR.

Nathan not her father!
Know you what you are saying?

DAJA.

The truth which oft
Has cost me tears of blood.—He's not
her father!

TEMPLAR.

But as his daughter brought her up?
A Christian
Brought up as Jewess?

DAJA.

Yes.

TEMPLAR.

And knows she not
What she was born? ne'er has she
learned from him
That she was born a Christian, not a
Jewess?

DAJA.

Never.

TEMPLAR.

Not only did he train the child
In this delusion, but in this delusion
Allow the maid to rest?

DAJA.

Alas, too true!

TEMPLAR.

Could Nathan, wise and good, allow
himself
The voice of Nature thus to falsify;
Thus misdirect the emotions of a heart
Which of themselves had flowed in
other channels?
A something you indeed have told me,
Daja,
Which is of weight; is big with con-
sequences;
Bewilders me; throws doubt upon my
course.—
I must have time. Go! He will come
this way,
And might surprise us. Go!

DAJA.

Ah, that were death!

TEMPLAR.

I am unfit to meet him. If you see
him,
Say that before the Sultan he shall
find me.

DAJA.

No hint to him! Reserve that till the
last,
To take from him all scruples touch-
ing Recha.

But when you take her back to Europe,
Knight,
Pray, leave me not behind.

TEMPLAR.

We'll see. Go, go!

ACT FOURTH.

SCENE I.

The cloisters of the Monastery. The LAY-BROTHER; afterwards the TEMPLAR.

LAY-BROTHER.

Ay, ay; the Patriarch's in the right;
'tis true,
Of all the matters he intrusted to me,
Not many would succeed. But why
intrust
Such matters to me? I've no knack
at plotting,
Persuading, thrusting everywhere my
nose,
In every dish my fingers. But for
this
Did I forsake the world, to be involved
More deeply in it by affairs of others?

TEMPLAR (*approaching him hurriedly*).

You're here, good brother! I have
sought you long.

LAY-BROTHER.

Me, Knight?

TEMPLAR.

Have you so soon forgotten me?

LAY-BROTHER.

Not so; I only thought that ne'er in
life
Would further sight of you be granted
me;
Although I prayed to Heaven that it
might. God knows
How much I loathed my errand to the
Knight:
He knows if ready ear I hoped to
find;
Knows how I was rejoiced, at heart
rejoiced,
That you would give it scarce a
thought, but flatly
Rejected what would ill become a
knight.—

But now you seek me. It has taken
effect.

TEMPLAR.

You know why I am come. I scarce
could tell.

LAY-BROTHER.

You have considered it; find, after all,
The Patriarch not so wrong; that fame
and fortune
Lie in his offer; that a foe's a foe,
Were he seven times our guardian
angel. That,
All that, with flesh and blood you've
balanced well,
And come and offer for the work.
Alas!

TEMPLAR.

Good man, take comfort; not for that
I come;
Not therefore do I seek the Patriarch.
His offer do I still esteem as then.
For all the world could give, I would
not lose
The approval once vouchsafed me by a
man
So honest, kind, and true. I only come
To ask the Patriarch's counsel in a
matter—

LAY-BROTHER.

The Patriarch's? Seeks a knight a
priest's—
[*Casting a frightened look around.*]

TEMPLAR.

Yes, brother;
The case is somewhat priestly.

LAY-BROTHER.

Ne'er would priest
Consult a knight, the case be e'er so
knightly.

TEMPLAR.

For 'tis the priest's prerogative to err;
One we'll not greatly envy him. Indeed,

Concerned this matter but myself
 alone,
 Were I but to myself accountable,
 What need of Patriarch? But some
 things there are
 I'd rather do amiss by others' judg-
 ment,
 Than wisely by my own. Besides, I've
 learned
 Religion also is a party thing;
 The most impartial, as he deems him-
 self,
 Defends unconsciously his favorite
 side.—
 Since so it is, we must suppose it right.

LAY-BROTHER.

I would be silent—understanding not
 The Knight.

TEMPLAR.

And yet—(what is it here I want—
 Decree or counsel?—counsel plain or
 learned?)
 Thanks, brother, for the hint. Why
 Patriarch?
 Be you my Patriarch; for it is the
 Christian
 Within the Patriarch that I would con-
 sult,
 And not the Patriarch in the Christian.
 Listen!

LAY-BROTHER.

No further, Knight—no further! To
 what purpose?
 The Knight mistakes me. He who has
 much knowledge
 Has many cares, and I am pledged to
 one.
 But see—he comes himself, most hap-
 pily.
 Wait where you are; already he has
 seen you.

SCENE III.

*The PATRIARCH advancing in great
 pomp on one side of the cloisters,
 and the preceding.*

TEMPLAR.

I would I could escape. He's not my
 man!

A red, fat, jolly prelate; and what
 state!

LAY-BROTHER.

See him arrayed for court! Now he
 but comes
 From visiting the sick.

TEMPLAR.

How Saladin
 Must blush before him!

PATRIARCH (*signs to the Brother*).

Here!—I see the Templar.
 What will he have?

LAY-BROTHER.

I know not.

PATRIARCH (*approaching the Templar,
 while the brother and attendants
 fall back*).

Ah, Sir Knight—
 Most glad so gallant a young man to
 greet;
 Ay, still so young! Great things will
 come of you,
 God helping.

TEMPLAR.

Scarcely greater, reverend Sir,
 Than what have come; more likely
 somewhat less.

PATRIARCH.

I hope at least a knight so pious may
 bloom
 And flourish long, an honor and a gain
 To Christendom and to the cause of
 God;
 Which cannot fail if, wisely, youthful
 daring
 Will use the ripe experience of age.
 How can I serve the Knight?

TEMPLAR.

By giving that
 In which my youth is wanting—counsel.

PATRIARCH.

Gladly,
Provided, only, counsel will be taken.

TEMPLAR.

Not blindly, certainly?

PATRIARCH.

I say not blindly.
No man indeed should fail to use the
reason
That God has given him—in its proper
place.
But is that everywhere? Oh no! For
instance:
Should God vouchsafe to show us by
an angel—
That is, a servant of His holy word—
A means of furthering, establishing
The welfare of all Christendom, the
good
Of Holy Church in an especial manner,
Who would presume to let his reason
question
The absolute authority of Him
Who made that reason—try the eternal
law
Of Heaven's high majesty by narrow
rules
Of idle honor. But enough of this.
Now on what question seeks the
Knight our counsel?

TEMPLAR.

Suppose, most reverend Father, that a
Jew
Should have an only child, an only
daughter—
Trained up in every virtue by his care,
Loved more than his own soul, who,
in return,
Loves him with fond devotion—and
'twere told
To one of us the girl was not his
daughter;
That he had bought, found, stolen her,
what you will,
In childhood; and that further it was
known
She was a Christian, and had been bap-
tized,—
The Jew had only brought her up a
Jewess,

Would only have her taken for a
Jewess,
And his own daughter. Say, most rev-
erend Father,
How shall such case be dealt with?

PATRIARCH.

Ah, I shudder!
First let the knight explain if this be
fact
Or but hypothesis; that is to say,
If he invented it, or if 'twere done,
Be doing now.

TEMPLAR.

That deem I unimportant;
I would but learn your Reverence's
opinion.

PATRIARCH.

Deem unimportant! There the Knight
may see
How pride of human reason will mis-
lead
In matters spiritual. Not unimportant;
For is the case proposed a play of wit,
It merits not my serious reflection.
I should refer the Knight to any the-
ater
Where with applause the pros and cons
are argued.
But if the Knight put no stage trick
upon me;
If this be fact; if in our diocese,
In our dear city of Jerusalem,
He have been witness to it;—then—

TEMPLAR.

What then?

PATRIARCH.

Then should be executed on the Jew,
Without delay, the penalty decreed
Against such crimes, such outrages, by
laws
Imperial and papal.

TEMPLAR.

So?

PATRIARCH.

Those laws
Decree to any Jew who from the faith
A Christian shall pervert, the stake—
the flames—

TEMPLAR.

So?

PATRIARCH.

How much more to one who shall have
torn
By violence from her baptismal vows
A Christian child! For all is violence
That's done to children, is it not?—
that is,
Excepting what the Church may do to
children.

TEMPLAR.

But if the child in misery had died,
Unless the Jew had had compassion
on it?

PATRIARCH.

It matters not; the Jew goes to the
'stake!
Better the child had died in misery here
Than thus be saved for everlasting
ruin.—
Besides, why need the Jew anticipate
God's providence? Without him God
can save,
If save he will.

TEMPLAR.

And e'en in spite of him,
I trow, accord salvation.

PATRIARCH.

Matters not;
The Jew goes to the stake!

TEMPLAR.

I grieve to hear it.
The more because the girl is trained,
'tis said,
In no religion rather than his own;
And has been taught no more nor less
of God
Than satisfies her reason.

PATRIARCH.

Matters not;
The Jew goes to the stake!—a triple
stake,
For that alone he'd merit. Let a child
Grow up with no religion—teach it
naught
Of the important duty of believing!
That is too much! I marvel, Knight,
that you—

TEMPLAR.

The rest in the confessional, God wil-
ling,
Most reverend Sir. [*About to go.*]

PATRIARCH.

You give no explanation?
You name me not this criminal, this
Jew?
Produce him not? But I have means
at hand.
I'll instantly to Saladin. The Sultan,
According to the treaty he has sworn,
Must, must protect us; in the rights,
the doctrines
That for the true religion we may claim,
He must protect us. The original,
Thank God, is ours. We have his hand
and seal.
'Twere easy to convince him, too, the
State,
By this believing nothing, is endangered;
All hold upon the citizen dissolved.
When he's permitted to believe in noth-
ing.
Away with such a scandal!

TEMPLAR.

I regret
Not having greater leisure to enjoy
So excellent a sermon. Saladin
Has summoned me.

PATRIARCH.

The Sultan?—Then—indeed—

TEMPLAR.

I will, if it shall please your Reverence,
Prepare the Sultan.

PATRIARCH.

Ah!—The Knight, I know,
Found favor with the Sultan. I but
pray

To be remembered favorably to him.
My only motive is my zeal for God.
If I in aught exceed, 'tis for his sake.
I pray the Knight will so consider it.
That tale about the Jew was but a prob-
lem—

Not so, Sir Knight? That is to say—

TEMPLAR.

A problem. [Goes.]

PATRIARCH.

(Yet one that must be sifted to the bot-
tom.

Another excellent commission that
For brother Bonafides.)—Here, my son!

[Goes out in conversation with the
Lay-brother.]

SCENE III.

*A room in the Sultan's palace. A num-
ber of slaves bring in bags and lay
them side by side upon the floor.*
SALADIN; soon afterwards SITTAH.

SALADIN (entering).

What! 'Tis not ended yet! Is much
remaining?

SLAVE.

As much again.

SALADIN.

Then take the rest to Sittah.—
Where tarries Hafi? Hafi should be
here
To take immediate charge of this. Or
were it
Not better carried to my father? Here
It will but slip away from me. 'Tis
true,
One's heart grows hard at last; and
even now

'Twould take some skill to squeeze
much out of me.

At least, until the moneys come from
Egypt,

The poor must make what shift they
can.—The alms

About the sepulchre, if only they
Might be continued; if the Christian
pilgrims

Need only not go empty-handed; if—

SITTAH.

What means all this? Why all this
gold for me?

SALADIN.

Repay yourself from it, and lay up store,
If any's over.

SITTAH.

Nathan not yet come
With the young Templar?

SALADIN.

He is everywhere
In search of him.

SITTAH.

See what I found but now,
While searching 'mongst my jewels.

[Showing him a miniature.]

SALADIN.

Ha! My brother!
'Tis he—'tis he! Was he—was he! Alas!
My noble boy! oh, why so early lost!
What might I not have done, with you
beside me?

Leave me the picture, Sittah. Well I
know it.

He gave it to your sister, to his Lilla,
One morning when she hung about his
neck,

And would not let him go. It was the
last.

He rode abroad. I let him go—alone.
Poor Lilla died of grief, and ne'er for-
gave me

That I should let him thus ride forth
alone.—

He came not back.

SITTAH.

Poor brother!

SALADIN.

Be it so!

One day we all shall go and come not
back.—

Besides—who knows—Not death alone
defeats

The hopes of such as he. More foes
he has;

And oft the strongest yields him like
the weakest.

Be with him as it may!—The Temp-
lar's face

I must compare with this;—must read
in this

How far my fancy has misled me.

SITTAH.

Yes;

For that I brought it here. But give it
me!

I'll tell you best; a woman's eye sees
quicker.

SALADIN (*to an attendant who enters*).

Who's there? If 'tis the Templar, bid
him enter.

SITTAH.

That you be not disturbed, nor he con-
fused

By my examination—

*[Seats herself upon a sofa, her face
partly averted, and drops her
veil]*

SALADIN.

That is well!

(Now for his voice—how will it be
with that?)

The tones of Assad slumber still within
me.)

SCENE IV.

The TEMPLAR and SALADIN.

TEMPLAR.

Your prisoner, Sultan—

SALADIN.

Prisoner? Grant I life,
And grant not freedom too?

TEMPLAR.

What you may grant
'Tis mine to learn, and not anticipate.

But, Sultan, thanks to offer for my life
Accords not with my character or Or-
der.

At any call that life is at your service.

SALADIN.

I ask you but to use it not against me.
My foe I grudge not one more pair of
hands;

But 'twould go hard one more such
heart to give him.

I've been in naught deceived in you,
young man—

You're Assad o'er again in form and
soul.

Yea, I might ask you where through
all these years

You've been in hiding; sleeping in what
cave;

What kindly power, within what Gin-
nistan,

Has kept my flower from year to year
so fresh.

I might attempt to call up memories
Of what we did together here or there;

Might chide you that you kept one se-
cret from me;

Excluded me from one adventure. Yes,
That might I if I look not at myself,

But only you.—Enough. Of these sweet
dreams

So much at least is true, that in my
autumn

An Assad is to bloom for me again.
Consent you, Knight?

TEMPLAR.

Whatever comes from you
Already lies, a wish, within my heart.

SALADIN.

That test we on the instant. Stay with
me,

About me. As a Mussulman or Christian,
Alike to me! In turban or in hat,
White cloak or Turkish mantle—as you
will!
I ne'er required one bark on every tree.

TEMPLAR.

Else were you not, as now you are,
the hero,
Who fain would be God's husband-
man.

SALADIN.

If thus you judge me, we are half
agreed.

TEMPLAR.

Quite!

SALADIN (*offering his hand*).

Done?

TEMPLAR (*grasping it*).

A bargain! More receive with this
Than you could force from me. I'm
wholly yours!

SALADIN.

Too much to gain in one short day—too
much!
Came *he* not with you here?

TEMPLAR.

Who?

SALADIN.

Nathan.

TEMPLAR (*coldly*).

I came alone.

SALADIN.

Yours was a noble deed;
And what a happy chance that such a
deed

Should work the good of such a man!

TEMPLAR.

Oh yes.

SALADIN.

So coldly? Nay, young man, be not so
cold
When you are made God's instrument
for good;
Nor wish through modesty so cold to
seem.

TEMPLAR.

Why are all things on earth so many-
sided,
And all their sides so hard to reconcile!

SALADIN.

Hold always to the best, and give God
thanks.
'Tis His to reconcile them. But, young
man,
If you will be so difficult, I too
Must be upon my guard with you. I
too,
Alas, have many sides which oft seem
hard
To reconcile.

TEMPLAR.

You pain me; for suspicion
Is scarce among my faults.

SALADIN.

Whom, then, suspect?
Nathan, it seems; but how? Nathan
suspected?
Explain; give your first proof of con-
fidence.

TEMPLAR.

Naught have I against Nathan; with
myself
I'm angry.

SALADIN.

And for what?

TEMPLAR.

For having dreamed
That Jew could e'er be aught but Jew;
that waking
I should have dreamed.

SALADIN.

Out with your waking dream!

TEMPLAR.

Of Nathan's daughter you have heard.
The deed
I did for her, I did—because I did it.
Too proud to reap the thanks I had
not sowed,
I haughtily refused from day to day
To see the girl. The father was away:
But he returns; he hears; he seeks me
out;
He thanks me; hopes that I may like
his daughter;
He talks of happy prospects for the
future.
And I allow myself to be persuaded;
Go, see her, find indeed a maiden—Ah,
I must take shame upon me, Sultan.

SALADIN.

Shame?
Because a Jewish maiden charmed you?
Never.

TEMPLAR.

Because my over-hasty heart, misled
By Nathan's flattering words, scarce
made resistance,
Oh fool! again I sprang into the flames;
For now I sued, and now was I dis-
dained.

SALADIN.

Disdained?

TEMPLAR.

Not utterly did he reject me,
The cautious father: but he must con-
sider;
Must make inquiries. Did I not the
same?

Did I not first consider and inquire,
When she was shrieking in the flames?
By heaven!
A noble thing to be so wise, so cau-
tious!

SALADIN.

Nay; be indulgent to his years! How
long
Will his refusal hold? till you turn
Jew?

TEMPLAR.

Who knows?

SALADIN.

Who knows? He who reads
Nathan better.

TEMPLAR.

That superstition which has grown with
us,
Know it for superstition though we
may,
Relaxes not for that its hold upon us.
Not all who scorn their chains are free.

SALADIN.

Well said;
But Nathan—

TEMPLAR.

'Tis the worst of superstitions
To deem one's own the most endurable.

SALADIN.

That may be so; but Nathan—

TEMPLAR.

As the one
In which alone purblind humanity
May trust, till it can bear the clearer
day
Of truth; the only one—

SALADIN.

Well, well; but Nathan!

Such weakness cannot be the doom of
Nathan.

TEMPLAR.

So thought I too; but if this paragon
Were so the common Jew, that Christian
children
He seeks to gain, to bring them up as
Jews—
What then?

SALADIN.

Who is it brings such charge
against him?

TEMPLAR.

That very maiden he decoyed me with,
With hope of whom he seemed so glad
to pay
The service I was not to be allowed
To render her for nothing;—she her-
self
Is not his daughter, but a Christian
child
Lost to her faith.

SALADIN.

Whom yet he could refuse you?

TEMPLAR.

Refuse or not, I have discovered him!
This tolerant pretender is exposed!
I'll set upon the track of this Jew wolf
In his sheep's clothing of philosophy,
Hounds that shall tear and worry.

SALADIN (*earnestly*).

Gently, Christian!

TEMPLAR.

What! gently, Christian? Mussulman
and Jew
Are to insist on Mussulman and Jew
And only Christians must not act a
Christian?

SALADIN (*more earnestly*).

Be gentle, Christian!

TEMPLAR.

Fully do I feel
The burden of reproach that Saladin
Compresses in those words.—If I but
knew
How Assad would have done, had he
been here!

SALADIN.

But little better; just as violent.
Who taught you thus to bribe me with
a word,
Like him? Indeed, if what you tell be
true,
I have been disappointed in this Na-
than.—
Still he's a friend: ne'er must one
friend of mine
Have quarrel with another.—Be ad-
vised;
Move cautiously; denounce him not in
haste
To your fanatics; rather hide a deed
Your priesthood would appeal to me to
avenge.
Be not a Christian to the injury
Of Jew or Mussulman.

TEMPLAR.

Almost too late!
Thanks to the Patriarch's eagerness for
blood
I shrank from being his tool.

SALADIN.

Ere seeking me
You sought the Patriarch?

TEMPLAR.

In the storm of passion,
The whirl of doubt! Forgive! No
more of Assad
Will you acknowledge in me now, I
fear.

SALADIN.

That very fear! Methinks I know the
faults
From which our virtue grows. Cherish
but this,

And those shall not weigh heavily
 against you.
 But go; seek Nathan as he sought for
 you,
 And bring him hither. I must clear
 away
 All difference between you. Are you
 earnest
 About the maiden, be at rest. She's
 yours;
 And Nathan pays the penalty for keep-
 ing
 A Christian child from eating pork.
 Now go!

SCENE V.

SALADIN *and* SITTAH.

SITTAH.

Most wonderful!

SALADIN.

Confess, a handsome boy
 My Assad must have been,

SITTAH.

If it be he
 The picture represents, and not the
 Templar.
 But how could you forget to learn his
 parents?

SALADIN.

And chief, his mother—if she e'er were
 here?
 Is that it, Sittah?

SITTAH.

You shall pay for that!

SALADIN.

Naught likelier; for such a favorite
 Was Assad with the beauteous Chris-
 tian ladies,
 Was of the Christian ladies so en-
 amored,
 The story ran— Nay, best not speak of
 it.

Enough, I have him back; with all his
 faults,
 With all the fancies of his too fond
 heart.
 Will have him back. O Sittah, must
 not Nathan
 Give him the maiden?

SITTAH.

Give her? Leave her to him!

SALADIN.

True; for what right has Nathan over
 her,
 If he be not her father? Who preserved
 Her life, alone can claim the rights of
 him
 Who gave it.

SITTAH.

How if you should place the maiden
 Beneath your own protection, Saladin—
 At once withdraw her from her
 wrongful keeper?

SALADIN.

Would that be necessary?

SITTAH.

Necessary
 Indeed 'tis not; my curiosity
 Alone suggests the counsel. There are
 men
 Of whom I'd know at once what girl
 they love.

SALADIN.

Send for her then.

SITTAH.

Have I permission, brother?

SALADIN.

Spare Nathan only; Nathan must not
 think
 We want to force her from him.

SITTAH.

Have no fear.

SALADIN.

And I myself must learn what keeps
Al-Hafi.

SCENE VI.

*The open court of Nathan's house,
looking toward the palms, as in first
scene of first act. Some of the wares
therein mentioned are lying about un-
packed. NATHAN and DAJA.*

DAJA.

Oh, all is beautiful—all exquisite!
All—such as only you could give—
Whence came
That silver stuff with golden vines up-
on it?
How costly was it?—That's a wedding-
dress!
No queen could want a better.

NATHAN.

Wedding-dress!

Why wedding-dress?

DAJA.

That was not in your mind
When you were buying; but that it
must be, Nathan;
No other one than that. 'Tis as 'twere
made
To grace a bridal. See; the ground
of silver,
A type of innocence; the golden streams
That twine themselves in all directions
on it,
A type of riches. Perfect, is it not?

NATHAN.

What fancies are you weaving? Whose
the dress
That you're so learnedly interpreting?
Are you the bride?

DAJA.

I?

NATHAN.

Who then?

DAJA.

I? Good heavens!

NATHAN.

Who then? Whose wedding-dress? All
this is yours,
Yours only.

DAJA.

Mine? All meant for me—not Recha?

NATHAN.

Another bale holds those I brought for
Recha.
Away with them! off with your silken
stuffs!

DAJA.

No, tempter; all the treasures of the
world
I would not touch, unless you swear to
me
This single opportunity to seize.
Whose like heaven scarce a second time
will grant.

NATHAN.

How seize?—the opportunity for what?

DAJA.

Feign not such ignorance!—In short,
the Templar
Loves Recha. Give her to him. Thus
your sin,
Whose secret I can keep for you no
longer,
Is ended; Recha is restored to Chris-
tians—
Becomes herself again—will be again
What at the first she was; and all your
kindness,
For which no words can give you fitting
thanks,

Heaps coals of fire no more upon your head.

NATHAN.

The same old story to another tune,
For which, I fear, it has no sense or
measure.

DAJA.

How so?

NATHAN.

Against the Templar have I naught.
Rather to him than any in the world
Would I give Recha. But—you must
have patience.

DAJA.

Patience! that's your old story o'er
again..

NATHAN.

Yet a few days have patience.—See,
who comes?
A brother from the convent? Ask his
pleasure.

DAJA.

What can he want?

[*She approaches and questions him.*]

NATHAN.

Give—and before he asks.—
(Could I approach the Knight, yet tell
him not
The motive of my curiosity!
Were that revealed and my suspicion
false,
The secret of her birth is told in vain.)
What is it?

DAJA.

He would speak with you.

NATHAN.

Admit him;

And leave us.

SCENE VII.

NATHAN and the LAY-BROTHER.

NATHAN.

(Would that Recha's father still
I might remain!—Why can I not, e'en
though
Without the name?—That she herself
would give,
Did she but know how gladly I would
own it.)
What can I do to serve you, brother?

LAY-BROTHER.

Little.—
I'm glad to see that Nathan keeps in
health.

NATHAN.

You know me then?

LAY-BROTHER.

Who knows you not? Your name
Has been imprinted in too many hands.
For many years has it been writ in
mine.

NATHAN (*feeling for his purse*).

Come, brother, come; let me refresh it.

LAY-BROTHER.

Thanks!
I take no alms; 'twere stealing from
the poorer.—
With your permission, I'd refresh in
you
The imprint of my own; for I can
boast
That in your hand a thing of no small
value
By me was laid.

NATHAN.

Your pardon—I am ashamed!
Say what it was, and take seven times
its worth
As an atonement.

LAY-BROTHER.

Hark, while I shall tell
How first to-day the memory of that
trust
By me confided to you was awakened.

NATHAN.

Trust you confided me?

LAY-BROTHER.

Not long ago,
On Quarantana, near to Jericho,
I dwelt—a hermit. Arab robbers came,
Destroyed my cell and little house of
God,
And took me captive; but I happily
Escaped their hands, and to the Patri-
arch
I hither fled to beg another place,
Where I might serve my God in soli-
tude
Until my blessed end.

NATHAN.

I'm on the rack,
Good brother. Make it brief! The trust
—the trust
Confided to me!

LAY-BROTHER.

Yet a moment, Nathan,
The earliest vacant hermitage on Tabor
The Patriarch promised me, and bade
me stay
Meanwhile within the convent as a
brother.
There am I now, and hundred times a
day
I long for Tabor; for the Patriarch
Puts every loathsome errand on me.
Thus—

NATHAN.

Be quick, I pray you.

LAY-BROTHER.

This is it.—A Jew,
So some one whispered in his ear to-
day,

Is living here among us, who has
trained
A Christian child as though she'd been
his daughter.

NATHAN (*amazed*).

What?

LAY-BROTHER.

Hear me out!—When he commis-
sions me
To ferret out this Jew without delay,
No matter where; and flies into a pas-
sion
Against so black a crime, which he es-
teems
The very sin against the Holy Ghost—
The sin, that is, which of all other sins
Brings greatest guilt upon us; though,
thank God,
We know not well in what that sin con-
sists—
Then suddenly my conscience was
awakened;
The thought arose that possibly myself,
In years gone by, had furnished the
occasion
For this unpardonable sin. For say,
Did not a groom deliver to your care,
Some eighteen years ago, an infant
child?

NATHAN.

How say you?—'Twas indeed—yes,
surely—

LAY-BROTHER.

Nathan,
Look at me well!—That groom was I!

NATHAN.

Was you?

LAY-BROTHER.

The Knight from whom I brought it
you was named,
If I mistake not, Filneck—Wolf von
Filneck.

NATHAN.

You're right.

LAY-BROTHER.

The mother had but lately died;
The father was commanded suddenly
To throw himself on—Gazza, as I
think,
Where the poor baby could not follow
him,
And so was sent to you. 'Twas in
Darun,
I think, we found you,

NATHAN.

Right!

LAY-BROTHER.

It were no wonder
If memory played me false; so many
masters
I've served and this one for too brief
a season.
At Askalon soon afterward he fell.
A man to love he was.

NATHAN.

He was indeed.
How many, many services I owe him!
He more than once preserved me from
the sword.

LAY-BROTHER.

Good; all the readier must you then
have been
To adopt his little child.

NATHAN.

You may believe it!

LAY-BROTHER.

Where is she, then? She surely is not
dead!
Grant she may not have died! If no
one else
Have learned her story; happy is her
fate.

NATHAN.

You think so?

LAY-BROTHER.

Trust me, Nathan; thus I argue:

If close beside the good which I pro-
pose
Great evil lurk, I leave the good un-
done;
Since of the evil can be little doubt,
But of the good there's much. 'Twas
natural
If you would train the Christian's
daughter well,
To train her as your own.—This have
you done
In love and truth—but to be so reward-
ed?
I'll not believe it.—Wiser had it been
The Christian to have trained at sec-
ond-hand
A Christian; but you would not then
have loved
The little daughter of your friend; and
children
Need love, though but a wild beast's
love it be,
In those first years, above Christianity.
Christianity will still find time enough.
Have but the child in health and in-
nocence
Grown up before your eyes, in sight of
God
She's as she was—Has not Christianity
Its root in Judaism? It oft has vexed,
Provoked me e'en to tears, to see how
Christians
Forgot our Savior was himself a Jew.

NATHAN.

Good Brother, you must intercede for
me
When hatred and hypocrisy shall rise
Against me for a deed—ah, for a deed—
You, you alone shall know it. Bear it
with you—
Into your grave. Ne'er yet has vanity
Seduced me into telling it to man.
I tell it only to yourself. I tell it
To pious simplicity alone; for that
Alone can know what victories over
self
Are possible to the devout believer.

LAY-BROTHER.

Your heart is stirred; the tears are in
your eyes!

NATHAN.

You found me at Darun—the child and you.
 You did not know that Christians just before
 Had murdered all the Jews that were in Gath—
 Men, women, children; knew not that my wife
 And sons, seven hopeful sons, were there among them,
 And in my brother's house, where they had fled
 For safety, must have perished in the flames.

LAY-BROTHER.

All-gracious God!

NATHAN.

Three days and nights I'd lain
 In dust and ashes before God, and wept
 When you arrived. Wept? I had wrestled hard
 At times with God; had stormed and raved; had cursed
 Myself and all the world; had sworn a hate
 Against the Christians, unappeasable.

LAY-BROTHER.

I can believe it!

NATHAN.

Gradually my reason
 Returned to me. She spoke with gentle voice:
 "And yet God is; e'en this was God's decree!
 Up, then! and practise what you've long believed.
 To practise cannot be more difficult
 Than to believe, if you but will. Rise up!"
 I stood erect and cried to God: "I will!
 Oh, will Thou that I will!"—Dismounting then,
 You handed me the child, wrapped in your cloak.
 All that you said to me, or I to you,

Has been forgot. I know but this: I took
 The child; I laid it on my bed; I kissed it;
 I threw myself upon my knees, and sobbed,
 "O God! of seven, Thou grantest me one again!"

LAY-BROTHER.

You are a Christian, Nathan! Yes, by heaven,
 You are a Christian! Never was a better!

NATHAN.

What makes of me a Christian in your eyes,
 Makes you in mine a Jew.—Happy for both!
 But let us not unman each other longer.
 This calls for deeds.—Although a sevenfold love
 Soon bound me to this lonely stranger girl—
 Although the thought of losing all my sons
 Again in her is death—if Providence
 Should claim her back from me, I will obey.

LAY-BROTHER.

That perfects all! That was the very counsel
 My heart had longed to give you, and already
 Had it been prompted by your own good spirit.

NATHAN.

Only must not the very first who comes
 Expect to tear her from me!

LAY-BROTHER.

Surely not!

NATHAN.

Who has no greater right to her than I,
 Must prove at least an earlier—

LAY-BROTHER.

Surely, surely!

NATHAN,

Which nature and the ties of blood
confer.

LAY-BROTHER,

That I acknowledge.

NATHAN,

Name me then the man
Who bears relationship to her as
brother,
Or uncle, cousin—any kith or kin:
To him I'll not refuse her—her so
formed
By nature and by training to become
The jewel of every house, of every
faith.—
You knew your master and his lineage
More fully than myself, I hope.

LAY-BROTHER,

But little.
I served the Knight, as you already
know,
Too short a time.

NATHAN,

The mother's family,
Know you not that at least? Was she
a Stauffen?

LAY-BROTHER,

'Tis possible. Methinks she was.

NATHAN,

Her brother,
Was he not Conrad? was he not a
Templar?

LAY-BROTHER,

If I mistake not. Stay; I have a book
That was the Knight's. I took it from
his breast
The day we buried him at Askalon.

NATHAN,

Well?

LAY-BROTHER,

There are prayers in it—a breviary,
We call it. That, thought I, a Chris-
tian man
May still find useful. Not myself in-
deed;
I cannot read—

NATHAN,

No matter! To the point!

LAY-BROTHER,

I have been told that in this little book,
At the beginning and the end, stand
written
The names of both their families, in-
scribed
With his own hand.

NATHAN,

The very thing we want!
Run, fetch me quick this book: Its
weight in gold
I'll give you, and a thousand thanks
besides.
Run!

LAY-BROTHER,

Willingly; but 'tis in Arabic
The Knight has written.

NATHAN,

No matter; let me have it!
God! if I might the maiden still retain,
And let her purchase for me such a
son!—
Scarce possible!—Well, come what will
of it!—
But who betrayed it to the Patriarch?
I'll not forget to ask.—If it were Daja!

SCENE VIII.

DAJA and NATHAN.

DAJA (*hurried and embarrassed*).

Think, Nathan!

NATHAN.

Well?

DAJA.

How terrified she was,
Poor child! There came just now a
message from—

NATHAN.

The Patriarch?

DAJA.

From the Sultan's sister, Sittah.

NATHAN.

And not the Patriarch?

DAJA.

Sittah! Hear you not?

The princess Sittah sends for her.

NATHAN.

Whom? Recha?

The princess send for her? If it be
Sittah,

And not the Patriarch, sends—

DAJA.

Why think of him?

NATHAN.

Have you heard naught from him of
late? Quite sure?

And naught betrayed to him?

DAJA.

I, him?

NATHAN.

But say,
Where stand the messengers?

DAJA.

Before the house.

NATHAN.

'Twere best confer with them in person.
Come!

If but the Patriarch have no hand in
this! [Goes.]

DAJA.

And I—I tremble with another fear.
The fancied only daughter of a Jew
So rich as he, might tempt a Mussul-
man.

'Tis over with the Templar—he is lost,
If I accomplish not the second step,
And tell the girl her story.—Courage—
courage!

I'll seize the earliest moment we're
alone—

The coming one, if I go with her there.
A little hint of it upon the way

Can do no harm.—On! Now or never!
Courage! [Follows him.]

ACT FIFTH.

SCENE I.

*A room in Saladin's palace, where the
money-bags are still lying.*

SALADIN; soon after, various
MAMELUKES.

SALADIN [*as he enters*].

The gold still there! and none can find
the dervise!

He's stumbled on some chessboard and
forgot

Himself: why not me also!—Patience!
—Well?

A MAMELUKE.

The longed-for tidings, Sultan! Sul-
tan, joy!

The caravan approaches from Kahira
With seven years' tribute from the
fruitful Nile.

SALADIN.

Good, Ibrahim; you're a welcome mes-
senger.—

At last, at last!—My thanks for your good news!

MAMELUKE [*waiting*].

(Out with them, then!)

SALADIN.

Why wait you? You may go.

MAMELUKE.

Naught else then for the welcome messenger?

SALADIN.

What would you else?

MAMELUKE.

No present for the bearer?—
I'm then the first whom Saladin has learned
To pay with words. What honor! I the first
He haggles with!

SALADIN.

Take one of yonder bags.

MAMELUKE.

Not now; not though you offered me the whole.

SALADIN.

Defiant! Come, these two are yours.—
In earnest?

He goes? is more magnanimous than I?
For to refuse must harder be for him
Than 'tis for me to give.—Here, Ibrahim!

What has come o'er me that so near
my end
Would make me seem another than myself?

Will Saladin not die as Saladin?
Then Saladin he must not live.

SECOND MAMELUKE.

News, Sultan!

SALADIN.

If you are come to tell me—

SECOND MAMELUKE.

That the transport
From Egypt has arrived.

SALADIN.

I've heard already.

SECOND MAMELUKE.

Then I am come too late.

SALADIN.

Wherefore too late?
Bear off a sack or two for your goodwill.

SECOND MAMELUKE.

Say three!

SALADIN.

If you can count as much.—Go, take them!

SECOND MAMELUKE.

There's still a third to come—if come he can.

SALADIN.

How so?

SECOND MAMELUKE.

I know not but his neck is broken.
Soon as we knew the caravan was come,
Each started off full speed. The foremost fell.
I got the start and kept it to the city,
Where Ibrahim had more knowledge of the streets.

SALADIN.

But he who fell, my friend! The man who fell!
Ride back to meet him!

SECOND MAMELUKE.

That indeed will I!
If he's alive, the half of that is his.

[*Goes.*]

SALADIN.

Another noble fellow! Who besides
Can boast such Mamelukes? May I not
think
'Twas my example helped to fashion
them?
Away then with the thought that at
the last
They should grow used to any other!

THIRD MAMELUKE.

Sultan,—

SALADIN.

Was't you who fell?

THIRD MAMELUKE.

No. I but come to announce
That Emir Mansor, leader of the trans-
port,
Is now dismounting.

SALADIN.

Bring him hither—quick!
Ah, here he is!

SCENE II.

EMIR MANSOR and SALADIN.

SALADIN.

You're welcome, Emir, welcome!
How has all gone with you?—O Man-
sor, Mansor,
You kept us waiting long.

MANSOR.

This letter tells
What tumult in Thebais your Abulkas-
sem
Was forced to quell, ere it was safe to
start.
I made all possible dispatch in coming.

SALADIN.

I will believe you.—Take at once, good
Mansor—

And gladly will you not?—another es-
cort;
For you must on at once to Lebanon,
With more than half this treasure to
my father.

MANSOR.

Right willingly!

SALADIN.

Make not your guard too weak.
Things are no longer safe on Lebanon.
Have you not heard?—the Templars
are astir.
Be on your guard!—But come, where
halts the transport?
I'd see and urge it forward.—Then to
Sittah!

SCENE III.

The palms before Nathan's house.

THE TEMPLAR (*walking to and fro*).

I will not enter.—He'll appear at last.—
How quick, how eager to observe me
once!
The time may come when e'en my fre-
quent presence
Before his house he will forbid.—Hm—
hm!
But I am most unreasonable, too.—
Why so enraged against him? As he
said,
He yet has naught refused; and Saladin
Has promised to persuade him.—Does
the Christian
Hold me in closer bonds than him the
Jew?—
Who knows himself? Why should I
else begrudge
This little theft, that with abundant
pains
He wrested from the Christians? Little
theft?
A creature such as she! A creature!—
whose?
Not of the slave who set the block
adrift
On life's waste shore, and there de-
serted it.
Nay, rather of the artist who con-
ceived

In the rejected block the godlike form,
 And brought it into life.—Recha's true
 father
 Must be, despite the Christian who be-
 got her,
 Must be in all eternity the Jew.—
 If I conceive her as a Christian maiden,
 Deprived of all that only such a Jew
 Could give—say, heart—what were her
 charm for you?
 But little, nothing!—e'en her smile were
 naught
 But gentle soft contraction of the
 muscles;
 And that which prompts it would be
 undeserving
 Of all the grace it wears upon her lips.
 No, no—not e'en her smile! As fair or
 fairer
 I've seen bestowed upon conceit and
 folly,
 On mocking jests, and flatterers and
 gallants.
 Did such enchant me or inspire the
 wish
 To flutter out my life within their
 beams?
 I was unconscious of it; yet am angry
 With him by whom alone this higher
 charm
 Was given.—Deserved I then the irony
 Of Saladin at parting? Shame enough
 That Saladin should think it! Oh, how
 small,
 How despicable must I seem to him!—
 All for a girl!—Curd! Curd! Allow it
 not!
 Assert your manhood—'Twas but Daja's
 gossip;
 It may be nothing she could prove.—
 But see!
 He comes at last, engrossed in talk.
 With whom?
 My friend the Brother! Then he
 knows it all;
 Has been discovered to the Patriarch!
 What has my madness done? Oh that
 one spark
 Of passion should consume our reason
 thus!
 Decide at once what next!—I'll stand
 aside,
 And watch if they may not part com-
 pany.

SCENE IV.

NATHAN *and the* LAY-BROTHER.

NATHAN.

Thanks once again, good Brother!

LAY-BROTHER.

Mine to you.

NATHAN:

Your thanks to me? for what? My
 obstinacy
 In pressing on you what you do not
 want?
 If yours had yielded—good; but you
 were firm—
 You would not be a richer man than I.

LAY-BROTHER.

Besides, the book's not mine; it is the
 daughter's—
 The daughter's sole paternal heritage.—
 She has yourself indeed. God grant that
 ne'er
 You may repent your goodness to her!

NATHAN.

Never;

That can I never! Fear not!

LAY-BROTHER.

Nay, but then—
 The Patriarchs and the Templars—

NATHAN.

Can inflict

No evil that shall make me aught re-
 gret.—
 Enough of that!—But are you well as-
 sured
 A Templar set your Patriarch on the
 scent?

LAY-BROTHER.

Another scarce seems possible. A Tem-
 plar
 Had hardly left him when I heard the
 story.

NATHAN.

There is but one in all Jerusalem,
And him I know: he is a friend; a man,
Young, noble, frank.

LAY-BROTHER.

Right; 'tis the very same.
A difference lies between what one
must seem
Before the world, and what one is.

NATHAN.

Too true.—
Whoe'er he be, I dare his worst or best!
Your book, good brother, bids me all
defy.
I go with it straightway to Saladin.

LAY-BROTHER.

Good-luck to you! Here will I leave
you then.

NATHAN.

Without a sight of her? Come soon
again,
And often.—If the Patriarch but to-day
Might not be told!—Yet wherefore?
Nay; this day
Disclose whate'er you will.

LAY-BROTHER.

Not I. Farewell! [*Goes.*]

NATHAN.

Forget us not, good Brother!—Gracious
God!
Why can I not fall down upon my knees
Beneath this open heaven! How has
this knot,
So long my secret terror, come un-
loosed
As of itself! How light my heart has
grown
To think there's nothing further in the
world
I need to hide; that I can walk erect
Before my fellow-men as in Thy sight,
O Thou, who needest not to judge of
man

According to his deeds—so seldom his!

SCENE V.

NATHAN *and the* TEMPLAR.

TEMPLAR.

Wait; take me with you, Nathan; wait!

NATHAN.

Who calls?
You, Knight? Where were you that I
met you not
Before the Sultan?

TEMPLAR.

We mistook each other.
Take it not ill!

NATHAN.

Not I! but Saladin—

TEMPLAR.

You just had left him when—

NATHAN.

You spoke with him?
Then all is well.

TEMPLAR.

But he would speak with both.

NATHAN.

So much the better. Come! I'm on my
way.

TEMPLAR.

May I inquire who quitted you but now?

NATHAN.

You do not know him then?

TEMPLAR.

If it were not
That honest Brother who is oft em-
ployed
To start the Patriarch's game?

NATHAN.

May be the same;
He's with the Patriarch.

TEMPLAR.

Not a bad device
To make simplicity the villain's scout.

NATHAN.

It must be dull simplicity—not honest.

TEMPLAR.

No Patriarch would acknowledge any
honest.

NATHAN.

I'd vouch for this. The man would ne'er
assist
His Patriarch in aught evil.

TEMPLAR.

So at least
He'd have us think.—But said he naught
of me?

NATHAN.

He named you not—knows not your
name, perhaps.

TEMPLAR.

No; hardly.

NATHAN.

Of a Templar said he something—

TEMPLAR.

What?

NATHAN.

That which clearly proved he meant
not you.

TEMPLAR.

Who knows? Let's hear.

NATHAN.

That one of you accused me
Before the Patriarch—

TEMPLAR.

One accused you? No;
There, with his leave, he lied. Believe
me, Nathan!

I'm not a man who would disown his
deeds.

What I have done, I've done. Nor am
I one

Who would defend his every deed as
right.

Why be ashamed of a mistake? Re-
solved

Am I to remedy it; and convinced,
Man may redeem his errors.—Hear me,
Nathan!

I am the Brother's Templar who, he
says,

Accused you to the Patriarch. Well
you know

The provocation which had made my
blood

Rush boiling through my veins. Fool!—
I had come

With all my heart and soul to throw
myself

Into your arms. How coldly you re-
ceived me;

With what indifference; an indifference
worse

Than coldness; how intent you were
politely

To rid yourself of me; how you con-
trived

Ingenious questions in the place of an-
swers;—

These things I must not dare to think
of yet,

If I would keep my temper.—Hear me,
Nathan!—

In this excitement, Daja stole upon me.
And flung her secret in my face. The

key
It seemed to all your contradictions.

NATHAN.

How?

TEMPLAR.

Nay, hear me out!—I fancied you un-
willing

To give again into a Christian hand
What from the Christians you had

stolen, and thought
By furnishing the arms against your

life,

To silence you for good.

NATHAN.

For good you thought!
I see no good about it.

TEMPLAR.

Hear me, Nathan!
I grant I did not well. You are not
guilty.
That foolish Daja knows not what she
says.
She likes you not; hoped thus to injure
you,
May be—may be! I am a simpleton—
Forever in extremes;—now much too
hot,
And now as much too cold. That grant
I too!
Forgive me, Nathan!

NATHAN.

If you take me so—

TEMPLAR.

But one word more. I sought the Patri-
arch,
But named you not. That, as I said,
was false.
I only set before him such a case
To learn his judgment. That I might
have spared.
Knew I him not already for a knave?
Why not have called you to account
myself?
Wherefore, poor girl, expose her to the
risk
Of losing such a father?—What befell?
The Patriarch's baseness, faithful to
itself,
Restored me to my senses.—Hear me,
Nathan—
Hear to the end! Suppose he knew your
name—
What then? He has no right to take the
girl
If she belong to any but yourself.
From your home only can he have the
right
To drag her to the cloister.—Therefore
give—

Give her to me, and let him come. Aha!
Let him beware how he shall take my
wife!

Give her me—quick!—be she your child
or not!

A Christian, Jewess, nothing—naught
care I!

I'll put no questions to you—neither now
Nor ever in my life. Be as it may!

NATHAN.

Deem you it necessary for me then
To hide the truth?

TEMPLAR.

Be as it may!

NATHAN.

I ne'er
To you or any who had claim to know
Denied she was a Christian, and to me
But an adopted daughter. Why, you
say
Conceal it from herself? To her alone
Need I excuse myself.

TEMPLAR.

Not e'en to her!
Let her ne'er look on you with other
eyes.
Oh, spare her the disclosure! You
alone
Have still disposal of her. Give her me!
I pray you, Nathan, give her me! I
only
Again can save her to you, and I will.

NATHAN.

Could—could! No longer possible—too
late!

TEMPLAR.

How so—too late?

NATHAN.

Thanks to the Patriarch—

TEMPLAR.

Thanks to the Patriarch! Wherefore
thanks to him?

Has he desired to earn our thanks? For what?

NATHAN.

That we have learned her family; have learned
Into whose hands she may be given up.

TEMPLAR.

The thanks I leave to those he has obliged.

NATHAN.

From theirs must you receive her now, not mine.

TEMPLAR.

Poor Recha, how must all this fall on you!

What were a happiness to other orphans

Is your misfortune.—Nathan!—Where are they,
These relatives?

NATHAN.

Where are they?

TEMPLAR.

Who are they?

NATHAN.

A brother first; from him she must be sought.

TEMPLAR.

A brother! And this brother, what is he?

Priest—soldier? Let me hear what hope I have.

NATHAN.

Neither or both. I've not yet learned him quite.

TEMPLAR.

What more?

NATHAN.

An honest man; to whom our Recha May well be trusted.

TEMPLAR.

Yet a Christian!—Nathan,
How can I understand you?—Be not angry!—

Must she not play the Christian with the Christians,

And take at last the character she plays? Will not the grain you sowed so pure, be choked

By weeds at last? And you so careless of it!

This notwithstanding can you say—you say—

She may be safely trusted with her brother?

NATHAN.

I think it—hope it. Should she want for aught

With him, has she not still yourself and me?

TEMPLAR.

Can any thing be wanting her with him?

Will not dear brother give his little sister

Enough of food and clothing, finery And dainties? What can little sister want

Besides?—A husband, to be sure! Well, well;

That too, in time, dear brother will provide.

They're always to be had; and all the better

The more he is a Christian.—Nathan, Nathan!

Why fashion such an angel to be marred

By other men?

NATHAN.

Fear not; she will remain Abundantly deserving of our love.

TEMPLAR.

Nay, say not that; of my love say it not!
My love will brook no change in her—
not one;
No veriest trifle—e'en a name.—But hold!
Has a suspicion reached her of her fate?

NATHAN.

Perhaps; yet hardly could I tell from whom.

TEMPLAR.

It matters not;—I must, I will be first
To let her know the fate that threatens her.
My purpose ne'er to see, ne'er speak with her
Till I might call her mine, is changed.
I haste—

NATHAN.

Stay; whither would you go?

TEMPLAR.

To her; to her,
To learn if in her maiden soul there lie
Enough of manhood for the one resolve
Which only would be worthy of her.

NATHAN.

What?

TEMPLAR.

To let her heart no longer dwell on you
Or on her brother—

NATHAN.

But?—

TEMPLAR.

To follow me;

Though 'twere to make herself a Moslem's wife.

NATHAN.

Stay; you would find her not. She is with Sittah,
The Sultan's sister.

TEMPLAR.

When was that—and why?

NATHAN.

If you would see the brother with them—come!

TEMPLAR.

Whose brother? Sittah's—Recha's?

NATHAN.

Both, perhaps.
But come with me—I pray you, come with me!
[Leads him away.]

SCENE VI.

Sittah's harem. SITTAH and RECHA in conversation.

SITTAH.

What pleasure shall I take in you, sweet child!
But be not so reserved, so shy, so troubled;—
Be gay; more talkative; more friendly with me.

RECHA.

Princess—

SITTAH.

No, no; not Princess; call me Sittah—
Your friend—your sister—mother, if you will!
That might I almost be.—So young, so wise,
So good; with so much knowledge!—
Ah, how much
You must have read!

RECHA.

I must have read!—Ah, Sittah,
You're laughing at your foolish little
sister.

I scarce know how to read.

SITTAH.

What? story-teller!
You scarce know how?

RECHA.

My father's hand a little.
I thought you spoke of books.

SITTAH.

Yes, yes—of books.

RECHA.

No; I should find it hard to read in
books.

SITTAH.

Are you in earnest?

RECHA.

I am quite in earnest.
My father cares not for that cold book-
learning
That's printed on the brain by lifeless
signs.

SITTAH.

What do you tell me!—Yet he's partly
right.
Then all you know—

RECHA.

Is only from his lips.
Scarce anything, but I could tell you
how,
And where, and why, my father taught
it me.

SITTAH.

Thus all is better woven into one:
The whole soul learns at once.

RECHA.

And Sittah too—
Has surely little read, or nothing.

SITTAH.

Why?
I would not boast the contrary; but
why?
Your reason; tell me candidly—your
reason?

RECHA.

She is so true and honest; so un-
spoiled;
Acts out herself so naturally;—

SITTAH.

Well?

RECHA.

My father says books rarely leave us so.

SITTAH.

How wise a man he is!

RECHA.

Yes; is he not?

SITTAH.

How near he hits the mark!

RECHA.

Ah, does he not?
And yet this father—

SITTAH.

What disturbs you, love?

RECHA.

This father—

SITTAH.

Heavens! You weep?

RECHA.

This father—Ah,
I must speak out;—my heart must have
relief!

[Throws herself, overpowered by her
tears, at Sittah's feet.]

SITTAH.

Recha! What ails you, child?

RECHA.

This father—must—

Ah, must I lose!

SITTAH.

Must lose your father! Why?
Compose yourself!—Impossible!—Stand
up!

RECHA.

It shall not be in vain that you have of-
fered
To be my friend, my sister!

SITTAH.

I am both.
But rise; else must I call for help.

RECHA [*controls herself, and rises*].

Forgive;
Your pardon!—In my grief I had for-
got
To whom I spoke. No moaning, no de-
spair
Avails with Sittah. Naught has power
with her
But cold, calm reason. Whosoever
cause
That pleads before her, conquers.

SITTAH.

Well?

RECHA.

My friend,
My sister, suffer not—oh, suffer not
Another father to be forced upon me!

SITTAH.

Another father forced upon you, love?
Who has the power, the wish to do it?

RECHA.

Who?
My good, bad Daja has the wish, and
claims

The power. Know you her not, this
good, bad Daja?
God pardon her for it—reward her
for it!
Such good as she has done me—and
such harm!

SITTAH.

Done harm to you! Small good is in
her then.

RECHA.

Nay, much—how much!

SITTAH.

Who is she?

RECHA.

She's a Christian,
Who tended me in childhood with such
care;
You cannot think! She scarcely let me
miss
My mother.—God reward her!—But be-
sides,
She so distressed and tortured me!

SITTAH.

With what?

And wherefore?

RECHA.

Ah, poor woman! As I said,
She is a Christian, and from very love
Must torture me. She is of those
fanatics
Who think they know the universal,
true,
And only road to God.

SITTAH.

I understand.

RECHA.

And feel a charge upon them to con-
duct
The feet of every wanderer thither-
ward.

They scarce can otherwise. If it be true

This is the only road that leads aright,
Can they resign themselves to see their friends

Advancing on another which descends
To death, eternal death? They needs must love

And hate one at the selfsame time.—
Not that

Has forced from me such loud complaints

Against her. Gladly would I still have borne

Her sighs and prayers, her threats and warnings—gladly!

For good and useful were the thoughts they roused.

Besides, how not be flattered too at heart

At being held so precious and so dear
By any, that the thought of losing us
For all eternity cannot be borne?

SITTAH.

'Tis true.

RECHA.

But this—this is too much! 'Gainst this
I've no defence; not patience, not reflection,

Not anything!

SITTAH.

What? Whom?

RECHA.

What she but now
Pretended to reveal.

SITTAH.

Reveal but now?

RECHA.

But now.—Upon our way to you we neared

A ruined Christian temple. Suddenly
She stopped; appeared to struggle with herself;

Directed now to heaven and now on me

Her streaming eyes. "Come," finally she said,

"We'll take the shortest path through yonder temple."

She went; I followed, gazing with affright

Upon the tottering ruins. Once again
She stopped; and I beheld myself with her

Before the steps of a decaying altar.

Ah, how I felt, when here, with burning tears

And wringing of her hands, she threw herself

Upon the ground before me!—

SITTAH.

Darling child!

RECHA.

And by the Deity who there had heard
So many prayers, and worked so many wonders,

Conjured me—yes, with looks of true compassion—

Conjured me to have pity on myself!—
At least to pardon her, for she must tell

Her 'Church's claim upon me.

SITTAH.

Ah, poor girl;

'Tis as I thought.

RECHA.

I had been born, she said,
Of Christian parents; I had been baptized;

I was not Nathan's child—he not my father!

God! God! He not my father!—Sittah! Sittah!

Here at your feet again behold me—

SITTAH.

Recha!

I pray you, rise! My brother comes!
Stand up!

SCENE VII.

SALADIN *and the preceding.*

SALADIN.

What trouble, Sittah?

SITTAH.

She's beside herself!

SALADIN.

Who is it?

SITTAH.

You remember—

SALADIN.

Nathan's daughter!

What ails her?

SITTAH.

Child, control yourself!—The Sultan—

RECHA [*her head bowed to the ground, drags herself upon her knees to Saladin's feet*].

I rise not; look not on the Sultan's face;

Behold not on his brow and in his eyes
The bright reflection of eternal love
And justice, till—

SITTAH.

Rise; rise!

RECHA.

He promise me—

SALADIN.

I promise;—be it what it may!

RECHA.

No more
Nor less than this—to leave to me my
father,And me to him. I know not who be-
sides
Would be my father; who can want to
be.I will not know.—But is it only blood
That makes the father—only blood?SALADIN (*raising her*).

I see.

Who was so heartless as to name the
thing
To you? Is it already settled—proved?

RECHA.

It must be;—Daja says 'twas from my
nurse
She learned it.

SALADIN.

From your nurse?

RECHA.

Who felt constrained
Upon her death-bed to confess it to her.

SALADIN.

Upon her death-bed? Possibly she wan-
dered.—But were it true—your're right! The
blood aloneMakes not the father—scarce a wild
beast's father.At most, it but confers the earliest right
To earn the name. Fear not;—hark to
my counsel!When these two fathers come to quar-
rel for you,Dismiss them both and take the third;—
take me

To be your father!

SITTAH.

Yes, dear Recha, yes!

SALADIN.

I'd make a right good father.—Hold;—
still better!What need of fathers? What if they
should die?

But seek betimes for one who would
brave all
To live for you. Has none such yet
been found?

SITTAH.

Make her not blush!

SALADIN.

The very thing I wished!
If blushes make the ugly fair, they
surely
Will make the fair still fairer.—I have
bid
Your father, Nathan, hither, and an-
other—
Another with him. Guess you not his
name?
Hither—with your permission, Sittah.

SITTAH.

Brother!

SALADIN.

Call up a rosy blush for him, dear
child.

RECHA.

A blush—for whom?

SALADIN.

Ah, little hypocrite!
Grow pale then, if you choose;—just
as you will
And can.

[A female slave enters and addresses
Sittah.]

Are they arrived already?

SITTAH.

Good;
You may admit them.—It is they, dear
brother!

LAST SCENE.

NATHAN and the TEMPLAR, with the
preceding.

SALADIN.

Welcome, my dear, good friends!—
You, Nathan, you
Must I address the first. Send you and
fetch
Your money back whene'er you want it.

NATHAN.

Sultan—

SALADIN.

'Tis now my turn to be of service;—

NATHAN.

Sultan—

SALADIN.

The caravan is come. I'm rich again
As I've not been for many a day.
Come, come;
Say what you need to start some enter-
prise
Of magnitude. You tradesmen, like our-
selves,
Can scarce have too much money.

NATHAN.

Why begin
With such a trifle?—There are weeping
eyes
That I am more concerned with dry-
ing.—Recha!

[Approaches her.]

You have been weeping;—what dis-
tresses you?
Are you not still my daughter?

RECHA.

O my father!

NATHAN.

We understand each other. 'Tis
enough!—
Be cheerful; be collected.—Let your
heart
Be still your own: let but no other loss
Have threatened that—your father is
not lost!

RECHA.

No other; none.

TEMPLAR.

None! Then I was deceived.
What we fear not to lose, we never
thought
Nor wished to own.—So be it.—That
changes all.
We came here, Saladin, at your com-
mand.
But I misled you;—take no further
trouble.

SALADIN.

Hasty again, young man! Must every-
thing
Concern yourself—have reference but
to you?

TEMPLAR.

But, Sultan—hear you, see you not your-
self?

SALADIN.

I do indeed;—pity you made not sure
Of your position.

TEMPLAR.

'Tis no longer doubtful.

SALADIN.

Who thus presumes upon a benefit,
Revokes it. What you saved is not
your own
Because you saved it. Else as good a
hero
Were any thief whose greed will brave
the fire.

[Approaches Recha to lead her to the
Templar.]

Come, darling, come; be not too strict
with him.
Were he aught else, were he less hot
and proud,
He might not have preserved you. Let
the one
Excuse the other.—Come; put him to
shame;
Do that which should be his—confess
your love—

Give him your hand; and if he should
d disdain you—

Should he forget how infinitely more
You did for him by this than he for
you—

What did he then for you? get singed a
little!

But what was that?—then has he naught
of Assad,

Naught of my brother; wears his like-
ness only,

And not his heart.—Come, love!

SITTAH.

Yes; go, love, go!
Your gratitude would deem that little—
nothing.

NATHAN.

Hold, Saladin! hold, Sittah!

SALADIN.

What—you also?

NATHAN.

There is another has a right to speak.

SALADIN.

Who doubts it? Such a foster-father,
Nathan,
Unquestionably has a voice—the first,
If you desire. You see I know the
whole.

NATHAN.

Not quite the whole.—I speak not of
myself.

There is another, quite another, Sultan,
Whom I entreat to hear me ere he
speak.

SALADIN.

Who—who?

NATHAN.

Her brother.

SALADIN.

Recha's brother?

NATHAN.

Yes.

RECHA.

My brother! Have I then a brother?

TEMPLAR [*rousing himself from his brooding*].

Where?

Where is this brother? Not yet here?

'Twas here

I was to meet him.

NATHAN.

Patience!

TEMPLAR.

He's imposed

A father on her—why not find a brother?

SALADIN.

That is too much. Shame, Christian!

A suspicion

So base would ne'er have come from Assad's lips.—

Say on!

NATHAN.

Forgive him! I forgive him gladly.

Should we do better, circumstanced like him,

And young?

[*Approaching the Templar kindly.*]

Quite natural that want of trust

Should breed suspicion, Knight. Had you confessed

Your rightful name at once—

TEMPLAR.

How?

NATHAN.

You're no Stauffen.

TEMPLAR.

Who am I then?

NATHAN.

Your name's not Curd von Stauffen.

TEMPLAR.

What then?

NATHAN.

'Tis Leu von Filneck.

TEMPLAR.

How?

NATHAN.

You start!

TEMPLAR.

With reason. Who asserts it?

NATHAN.

I; and more

Have I to tell you. Yet I charge you

not
With falsehood.

TEMPLAR.

No?

NATHAN.

That name may be your own

With equal right.

TEMPLAR.

Ay, truly! (It is God

Who bids him speak.)

NATHAN.

Your mother was a Stauffen.

Her brother, to whose charge in Germany

You were committed when the ungenial air

Had forced your parents to the East again,

Was Curd von Stauffen, who adopted you

Perhaps in place of children of his own. How long since you came hither? Lives he still?

TEMPLAR.

What shall I answer?—All is as you say;
But he himself is dead. I came not hither
Until the last detachment of our Order—
But—but—how bears all this on Recha's brother?

NATHAN.

Your father—

TEMPLAR.

How? Him too—you knew him too?

NATHAN.

He was my friend.

TEMPLAR.

Your friend! How possible?

NATHAN.

The name of Wolf von Filneck did he bear;
But was no German—

TEMPLAR.

Know you also that?

NATHAN.

Was wedded to a German, and had followed
Your mother into Germany awhile.

TEMPLAR.

No more, I pray!—But Recha's brother,
Nathan—
Her brother?

NATHAN.

Is yourself.

TEMPLAR.

I—I her brother!

RECHA.

Ah, he my brother!

SALADIN.

They are brother and sister.

SITTAH.

They brother and sister!

RECHA (*advancing to him*).

Ah, my brother!

TEMPLAR (*drawing back*).

Brother!

RECHA (*checking herself, and turning to Nathan*).

It cannot—cannot be! There's no response
Within his heart.—We are impostors!
God!

SALADIN (*to the Templar*).

Impostors! Do you think it—can you think it?

Yourself the impostor! All in you is false;

Face, voice, and bearing—nothing yours.
Refuse

To acknowledge such a sister? Go—
begone!

TEMPLAR (*approaching him humbly*).

Mistake not you too, Sultan, my surprise.

Ne'er saw you Assad at a time like this.

Oh, be not thus unjust to him and me!

[*Hurrying to Nathan*.]

You give me, Nathan, and you take away—

With full hands both.—But no; you give me more,

More infinitely than you take away.

[*Embracing Recha*.]

My sister, O my sister!

NATHAN.

Henceforth Blanda
Von Filneck.

TEMPLAR.

Blanda—Blanda—no more Recha—
Your Recha then no more? God!—You
reject her—
You give her back her Christian name—
reject her
Because of me! Oh, wherefore call on
her
To make atonement, Nathan?

NATHAN.

What atonement?—
My children, O my children! For will
he,
The brother of my daughter, not be-
come
Another child to me?

[While Nathan gives himself up to their
caresses, Saladin, surprised and un-
easy, turns to Sittah.]

SALADIN.

What say you, Sittah?

SITTAH.

For what?

SALADIN (to Nathan).

A word with you—a word!

[As Nathan joins the Sultan, Sittah ap-
proaches the brother and sister to ex-
press her sympathy; Nathan and Sala-
din speak in whispers.]

Hark to me, Nathan;—
Did you not say—

NATHAN.

What?

SALADIN.

That from Germany
Their father came not—was no Ger-
man born?

What was he then—whence came he?

NATHAN.

That he ne'er
Confided to me. Naught of it I learned
From his own lips.

SALADIN.

And was he then no Frank—
No native of the West?

NATHAN.

That he confessed.
He spoke most readily in Persian.

SALADIN.

Persian!
What need I more? It is—it was him-
self!

NATHAN.

Who?

SALADIN.

'Twas my brother, surely—'twas my
Assad!

NATHAN.

Since you yourself have guessed it, read
in this
Its confirmation.

[Handing him the breviary.]

SALADIN [opening it eagerly].

Ah, his hand—that too
I recognize again!

NATHAN.

They know of naught.
It rests with you alone to say how much
They e'er shall know.

SALADIN [turning over the leaves].

And shall I not acknowledge
My brother's children—my own blood—
my children—
Not own them? Shall I give them up
to you?

[Aloud].

'Tis they—'tis they, dear Sittah—it is they!

My brother's and your brother's children—both!

[*He hastens to embrace them.*]

SITTAH [*following*].

What do I hear?—Ah, should it not be so?

SALADIN [*to the Templar*].

You must—must love me now, hot-headed boy!

[*To Recha.*]

Now am I really what I asked to be—Like it or not!

SITTAH.

I too—I too!

SALADIN [*again to the Templar*].

My son—

My Assad—Assad's son!

TEMPLAR.

I of your blood!

Then were those dreams that clustered round my childhood

Not merely empty dreams.

[*Falls at the Sultan's feet.*]

SALADIN [*raising him*].

Behold the knave!

He something knew of this, and yet could wish

To make me be his murderer. Ah, the knave!

[*They embrace.*]

(*The curtain falls.*)

GOTTHOLD EPHRAIM LESSING

(1729-1781).

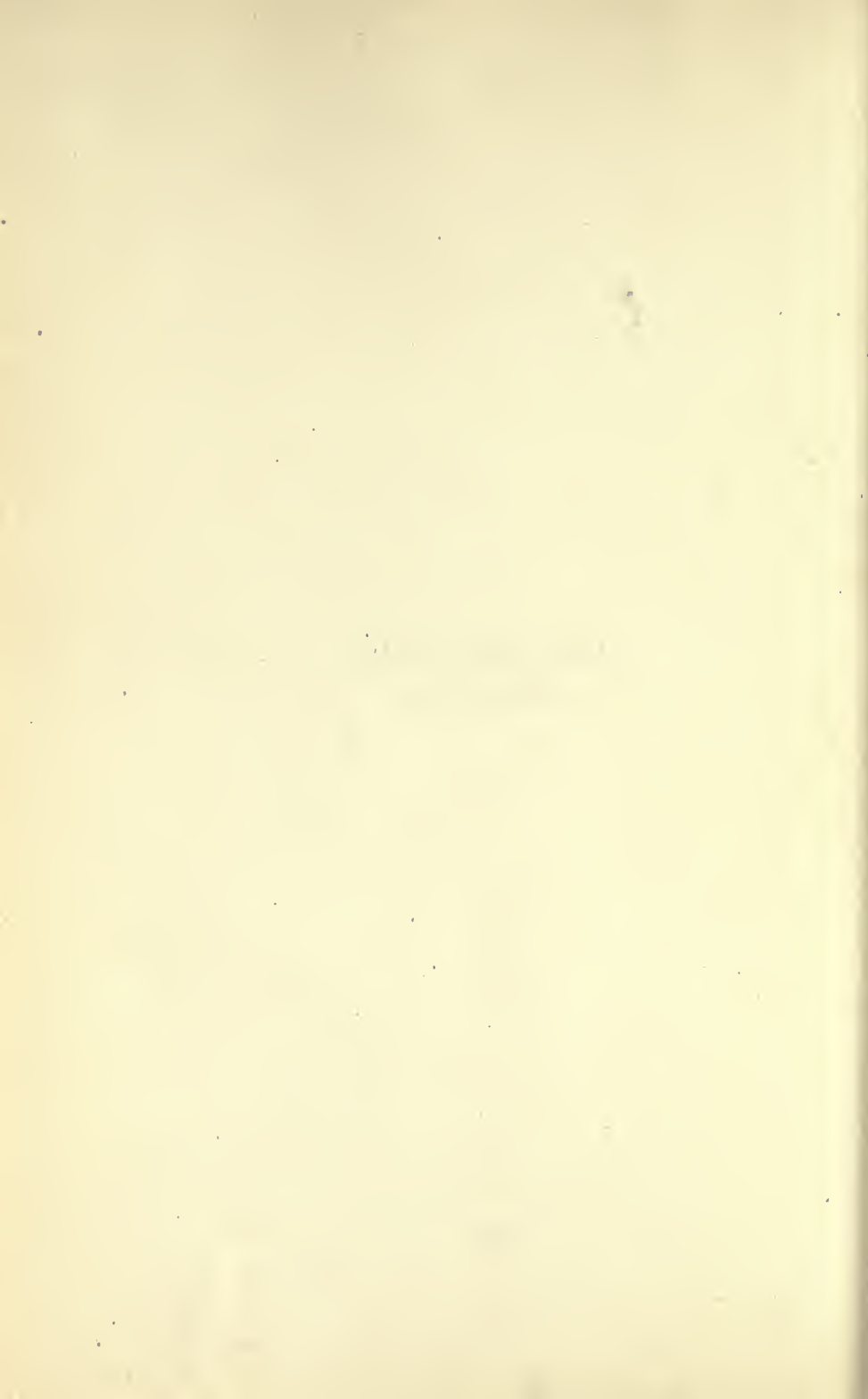
Translated by ELLEN FROTHINGHAM

(1835-1902).



TORQUEMADA

[EXTRACTS]



TORQUEMADA

[Extracts.]

ACT II.

SCENE I.

THE MARQUIS DE FUENTEL, MOSES-
BEN-HABIB, *Grand Rabbi.*

(*Both enter through the secret door.*)

THE MARQUIS.

There's need of gold. Be lavish of your
gold.

[THE GRAND RABBI *points to the dish
loaded with crowns in the middle
of the table. THE MARQUIS exam-
ines the heap of gold.*]

Good.

THE RABBI.

Thirty piles of gold, and every pile
Contains a thousand crowns.

THE MARQUIS.

A first-rate plan.

THE RABBI.

The Queen is greedy.

THE MARQUIS.

And the King is thriftless.
Truth lodges at the bottom of a well;
Intrigue in golden mines. By dint of
presents

The leave to live may be won from the
great.

To 'scape a master or a cozening judge,
Or prince or priest, a poor man must be
rich.

All kings are beggars, and require that
 alms
Be given without stint.

[*To THE RABBI.*]

Away! Descend
The little staircase, Jew. The King is
near.

THE RABBI.

Your goodness I implore, my lord.
 There still
Is time to save the Jewish people?

THE MARQUIS.

Yes.
The peril's urgent. [*Dismissing him.*]
Go!

THE RABBI.

I count on you.

THE MARQUIS.

Nay, count upon thy gold.

THE RABBI.

Shall we be let,
A hopeless, weeping crowd, prostrate
 ourselves
Before the King and Queen?

THE MARQUIS.

Yes; be it so.
But, for the moment, go.

THE RABBI.

Oh, day of wrath!
A hundred aged Jews, unless the King
Be our protector, must be burned alive
Here, even in this city of Seville;
And all the rest, alas! must exiles be.

THE MARQUIS [*sad and thoughtful*].

Yes; all's prepared for that auto-da-fe
That has been long proclaimed.

THE RABBI.

Pray, it is true
The King this evening leaves?

THE MARQUIS.

Yes, for one day;
To-morrow he returns. Our oldest law
The charter of King Tulgás, sets apart
The morrow of an execution as
A day the King and Queen must spend
in prayer
Within the convent of Triana.

THE RABBI.

Ah!
No need to offer prayers to save the
dead,
If they who pray were not their slayers.
Try
To save us, lord.

THE MARQUIS.

Speak low, and get thee gone.

[*THE GRAND RABBI bows to the ground,
and leaves through the door in the
tapestry, which closes on him.*]

THE MARQUIS [*gazing on the door by
which he has left, aside.*]

'Tis not thy Jewish hide or people's woe
That stimulates my anguish and my zeal,
And drives me to risk all. Alas! when-
e'er

I hear the hideous funeral knell that's
toll'd

For the auto-da-fe, I shrink with dread.
Don Sancho's in a convent, and declines
To be a monk, is stubborn and un-
yielding.

He may be flung at any moment on
The flaming stake. I tremble for him.

Ah,
Thou frightful cloister, he must leave
thee! How?

.

SCENE II.

THE MARQUIS, THE KING, GUCHO.
THE KING *seems to see nothing.* He
appears to be deeply preoccupied.

THE KING [*aside*].

No need to hurry matters. Better wait.

THE MARQUIS [*to THE KING, making
a reverence.*]

A great disaster will occur to-day,
Unless the King prevent.

[*THE KING raises his head. THE
MARQUIS points towards the out-
side of the palace hidden by the
great curtain of the gallery at the
back.*]

On yonder square
A great auto-da-fe takes places in which
A multitude are to be burned alive.
There is an edict also which expels
The Jews, a loyal people whom a monk
Deprives your Highness of.

THE KING.

A horde we chase,
A crackling stake. Is this thy great
disaster?

[*He perceives the dish laden with
money on the table.*]

Whence comes this gold?
[*To THE MARQUIS.*] From whom?

THE MARQUIS.

The Jews.

THE KING.

How much?

THE MARQUIS.

The sum amounts to thirty thousand
crowns;
It is an offering made in the name
Of thirty cities.

THE KING.

Well, what do they ask?

THE MARQUIS.

That they be left in quiet.

THE KING.

It is much.

I cannot leave in quiet those who still
Continue to be Jews.

THE MARQUIS.

My gracious lord,
Deign to accept this gold a people lays
In fealty at your feet and at your
queen's.
They humbly ask their sovereign to
forbid
The burning of a hundred of their race.

THE KING.

'Tis much.

THE MARQUIS.

A hundred?

THE KING.

No. 'Tis much to ask
That I forbid an auto-da-fe. There is
My wife who preaches at me; and
there is
The Pope. Both are relentless, and I
must
Allow them to burn some persons now
and then,
Else I should have no peace. What is
the news?

THE MARQUIS.

Oh, nothing of importance. Stakes are
lit
In Cordova, Tudela, Saragossa.

THE KING.

And nothing further?

THE MARQUIS.

Yes. Count Requesens
One day, when he was drunk, swore by
the saints;
His coronet, my liege, did not avail
To save him from the stake in his own
town,

Girone. As no lackey had denounced
This nobleman accused of blasphemy,
His household was held guilty, and
atoned
By fire and torture for their master's
crime.
His very fool was burned.

[GUCHO leaps up as if startled in
his sleep.]

GUCHO [aside].

I'll turn at once
Familiar of the Inquisition! Why,
The devil take me if I don't begin
My work upon the spot. Zounds!
burned alive!
A plague upon me, if that's what I
want!

THE KING [looking at the heap of
gold.]

The issue of a bleeding of the Jews;
The race seems made of gold.

GUCHO [aside.]

I am content
To be a looker-on while others roast.

THE MARQUIS [to THE KING.]

The Hebrews—

THE KING.

Call them Jews!

THE MARQUIS.

The Jews, my liege,
A numerous, hard-working people, ask,
Prostrate before the King, that he allow
them
To live in Spain, nor view with angry
eyes
The humble slaves that grovel at his feet.
They ask in fine, my liege, that you
revoke
The edict which exiles them.

THE KING.

After that,
What do they want?

THE MARQUIS.

To die upon the soil
Whereon their fathers died, and to
remain
In their own country, sire; and I
present
Their ransom. Take it.

THE KING.

If the Queen consent,
I will consent. Go beg her to come here.

[*At a sign from THE KING, GUCHO goes to the door at the back, and opens it. An officer of the palace appears at the entrance. GUCHO speaks to him in a low voice. The officer bows and retires. The door closes. GUCHO returns to his former position.*]

THE MARQUIS.

The Jews will pass their lives in prayer
for you.

THE KING.

It is their money, not their prayers, I
want.
Their prayers insult me.

THE MARQUIS.

Gracious King, your fathers
Liked to reign over them. The Jews
exiled,
There is a people less within your realm.

THE KING [*imperiously.*]

Enough of this. Much care I for a
people!
A girl concerns me more.

THE MARQUIS.

Ah! but you'll have to deal—

THE KING.

To deal with whom?

THE MARQUIS.

But—

THE KING.

Speak.

THE MARQUIS.

With Torquemada.

THE KING.

What! I, the King!

THE MARQUIS.

And he the inquisitor!

THE KING.

Ah, pshaw!

THE MARQUIS.

My liege, in him the Church exists.
If he grow wrathful—

THE KING.

Well?

THE MARQUIS.

The Church lays hold
Of everything with ease, but does not
lose

Her grasp with equal readiness. He is
Inquisitor. His office is to see
That convents have their full supply.

Nor nun

Nor monk can fraud or force tear from
his hands!

He prowls around the cloisters, shows
his teeth,

And bites all who approach the tender
lambs

This tawny wolf has under watch and
ward.

The king who braves the priest, sire, is
not wise.

Your path, my liege, is barred by Tor-
quemada.

He checks your course, and all your
wrath is vain.

THE KING.

He is a man and easy to corrupt.

THE MARQUIS.

Well, try.

THE KING.

If 'tis my wish to tame this monk—

THE MARQUIS.

Sire, try.

THE KING.

I can bestow all man desires.
Before me proudest heads are lowliest
bent;
And first, to get the better of a priest,
Why, there are women.

THE MARQUIS.

He is old.

THE KING.

Well, then,
We have the mitre, purple, a grandee-
ship,
And many dignities and honours.

THE MARQUIS.

Sire,
He will continue monk.

THE KING.

And money.

THE MARQUIS.

Sire,
He will continue poor.

THE KING.

Ah, yes, this man
Is strong, with all the strength of low-
liness
And poverty and age.

[THE KING *crosses his arms and
muses.*]

Close by myself
To feel that sombre poverty which casts
A shadow on my throne! which, in its
power,
Stands on a level with the king!

THE MARQUIS.

Ay, higher!

THE KING.

No!

THE MARQUIS.

Women, honours, gold are powerless
Against this monk.

THE KING.

I could find other means.
Dost understand?

THE MARQUIS.

No. Which?

THE KING.

The right ones, eh?
Dost understand?

THE MARQUIS.

No.

THE KING.

Why, old Arbuez
Was stabbed upon the very altar steps.
Was not that system good?

THE MARQUIS.

It turned-out bad.
Old Arbuez became Saint Arbuez,
And that was all. You reign, and you
allot
Domains and dignities, or, if you will,
The headsman's axe. But with the hand
that tries
To hold the Church, she strives with
fiery zeal.
You persecute her and you make her
stronger.
The priests have this distinctive
quality,—
That when you kill them, they're the
more alive.
They never disappear. From hecatombs
Springs into life that spectral form, the
priest.
Their blood's eternal, and their bones
are fruitful.
We crush them living, we invoke them
dead.

Ah, sire! you think to break the Church's power.
 She bursts at once her bonds by palms and hymns,
 By tears and martyrdom. Yes, massacre
 The cloister's hypocrite, with malice drunk!
 Strike! It is well. Now raise to heaven
 your eyes.
 'Tis filled with saints of your own making, sire!
 Fold reverent hands and fall upon your knees.
 I do admire the Church. For, slave or queen,
 She has her final say. She swarms below
 Here on this earth; she swarms in heaven above,
 And crushed as vermin, rises as a star.

THE KING [*depressed.*]

She's the disease, and I am the diseased.
 Thou sayest truth. Brave Rome, and you repent.
 We must resign ourselves.

THE MARQUIS [*aside.*]

What does he mean?
 The danger with him is that if you want
 A certain course to be pursued by him
 You must advise the opposite, and if
 You wish him to go north, you needs
 must urge
 His footsteps towards the south. This
 time I see
 That he believes my words. My ruse
 has failed!
 The tortuous path that I have found
 so useful
 Avails not here. I must aim at my
 goal,
 And change my style.

[*Aloud.*]

Ah! you have let the monk
 Grow all too great, and now he has
 become
 Of monstrous size.

THE KING [*musings.*]

This Torquemada—

THE MARQUIS.

Sire,
 Holds Spain. He is her Pontiff, and
 where'er
 You lay your finger-nail he puts his claw.
 He fills your seat. Ah! sire, the time
 is past
 When at your royal pleasure you might
 go
 Into a convent, and with threatening
 frown
 Compel this stubborn Church to own
 your power.
 You then might hang a monk. You dare
 not touch
 His frock at present. Ah, your monk's
 a trial!
 Your gibbets! Strike the priests!
 Attempt it, sire!
 Your laws have everything to fear from
 his;
 And surely he would laugh to see a fight
 Between your scaffold and his fiery
 stake.
 The duel is unequal. Sire, the earth
 Owns as its lord this monk; and as wild
 oats
 Are set on fire by peasants, living men
 Are turned to ashes by his flaming torch.
 The palaces appalled like cloisters look;
 On every side the clergy sprouts and
 grows
 Like brier and bramble. Everything
 gives way
 Before the frowning monk. "The devil
 take
 The hindmost" is the cry. The proud-
 est crawl,
 The bravest tremble. What, my liege,
 is done
 From Cadiz to Tortosa through your
 realm?
 Your subjects are denouncing one
 another,
 Two cousins of your Highness are in
 chains,
 The Marquis Alfonzo and Prince of
 Viana,
 And that coarse hand has even been
 laid upon
 The Infante of Tudela. Lately gay
 Was every town and village in our
 Spain;
 To-day a pall of silence over all.

No more the innocent laugh, no more
 the feast,
 A banquet is suspected. Terror, fear,
 And mourning reign in all parts of our
 land,
 And this huge Spain is like a festival
 When all the lights are quenched. Your
 forests, sire,
 Are used for scaffolds; wood begins
 to fail.
 Crimes true and false are intermingled.
 All
 Is good to feed the fagots. You have
 seen
 Some one pass by you, you are his
 accomplice.
 A son betrays his father, father son.
 Who, unaware, lets fall a crucifix
 Is burned alive. A word, a gesture, is
 A heresy. This horrible monk has
 looked
 On Jesus with a madman's eye. All acts
 Are heinous crimes. To swear by
 Solomon,
 To have the air of whispering to the
 devil,
 To pare the nails, go barefoot on fast
 days,
 To wed a wife that's too old or too
 young,
 To turn a corpse's face towards the
 wall,
 Or not to fly before those who bind
 tight
 Their loins with leathern cord, to lay
 a cloth
 Upon one's table on a Saturday,
 To drive the ox at Christmas from the
 stable,
 To name God oftener than Jesus, or
 To hide one's self,—all these lead to
 the stake.
 Repeating verses in a funeral train,
 Or weeping, in the shade, behind a door,
 Or watching in some lonely desert spot
 The rising of night's earliest star,—
 these, too,
 Are crimes. These blazing piles devour,
 O King,
 And mount and ever mount, and more
 and more
 With this red dawn empurple all the
 sky
 Above you, sire. It is your subjects'
 blood

Which you are robbed of. Soon you
 shall not have
 The soldiers which your wars require.
 Just now—
 But what avail my words! the King
 cares not,—
 The King, who by a word could change
 it all.
 But no!—The Holy Office lately placed
 All Spain within a padded cell, and it
 Has come to pass your subjects scarcely
 know you.

[*He points to the gallery at the back
 and the curtain which closes it.
 GUCHO is listening attentively.*]

This very day, O King, beneath your
 window
 A monstrous pile of fire will flame to
 heaven,
 And there beneath the gaze of wanton
 eyes
 Shall women turn and writhe clad but
 with flame.
 At the four corners statues will arise,—
 Four huge, black prophets built of hol-
 low stone,
 And full of living men,—Colossuses,
 Whose hideous bellowing will be heard
 around.
 The shuddering fire will lick their open
 mouths,
 And at the end naught but these giants
 stand.
 Your people, haggard, horror-stricken,
 see
 You and your kingdoms vanish in the
 smoke
 That wraps up these four phantoms;
 for all light
 Comes from the hateful Quemadero.
 Sire,
 You disappear when you're surrounded
 by
 The shadow of the executioner.

[*THE KING sits down on a folding-stool,
 overwhelmed.*]

THE KING.

All this is for the Church's gain.

THE MARQUIS.

And for
The kingdom's loss. Castile with
charnel houses
Is covered. Far and near rise cries of
fright.

[*Drawing near to THE KING.*]

Alas! you struggle vainly. You are
caught.
Above your Spain is stretched a sombre
web,
Through which you may see God, like
some vague star;
A gloomy net, that Satan fixed to earth
And spun out, thread by thread, from
Jehovah's bowels;
A snare in which the wretched human
mind
Is spent and broken; an immense rose-
window,
Belonging to an infinite church, through
which
The light of hell on the high altar
gleams.
There shudder horror, night and deadly
fear;
And earth regards with woful eyes
that thing
Which it has ever o'er it in the dark.
It dreams of that old Baal in whose
clasp
It erstwhile stifled. To grow great is
wrong;
To think, a grievous sin; to live is
boldness.
Existence is a peril. At the centre
Of that dark web is seen the priest,
that spider,
And always, close by him, that fly, the
King.

[*THE KING bends his head. THE MAR-
QUIS watches him, and continues.*]

Faith, it is strange and terrible as well
That out of that vile yarn, vows,
cloister, rule,
And dogma, there should spring a web
so vast
That it could snare an eagle; but 'tis
done.
The eagle's caught, and at the present
hour

Gives but one little tremble of his wing
Within the net. Before you threaten-
ing stand
The missal, Bible, gospel; and for you
To will is an impossibility,
To love you dare not; you dare reign
no longer.
The kings of old, hard as the mountain
rock,
And long-haired as the woods, had
prouder thoughts.
Ah, well; the present is, more than the
past,
But dust. A maiden's beauty wins a
king.
This gentle sovereign crawls along, nor
tries
A single royal roar. There is no more
Aught great upon the earth except the
priest;
And he, this monk—oh, why do children
dare
Come into life!—this monk is King.
He has
Beneath his sandals you! He drives
the bolts
Upon the human soul. He's greater far
Than bishop or than abbess in the eyes
Of deacon or of nun. He comes; the
law
Bows down before him. Lowly, like
a reed,
The sceptre bends. The sword is ter-
rified.
His fixed eyes a boundless stupor
spread.
Man is his target, empire is his goal,
And this dark spy of God, who throws
o'er all
His terrible shadow, ambushes the
world.

[*Looking THE KING in the face.*]

A time will come when history shall
say:
"It was the age of fire. It was the time
Of slavery and darkness. Its great
work?—
'Twas ashes; and a fork to stir the
embers
Replaced the sceptre once Pelagio held.
The name borne by the monarch?
Torquemada."

THE KING [*rising.*]

Thou liest, Marquis, in thy throat. His name
Was Ferdinand, and neither monk nor Pope
Shall bring to pass that it be otherwise,
Or that I be not King,—I, who am both
The tiger and the lion! and I'll prove
My kingly state by cutting off some heads.
Go, get me men, and see they have their
swords;
Then straightway to the Assumption
Convent march,
And seize the Infanta. Smite all who
resist;
'Tis my good pleasure. Let all bend
the knee,
And be reduced to utter nothingness,
As much before you as if on a sudden
They had beheld my face! And now
the order.

[*He approaches the table, takes a pen
and sheet of parchment, and writes
rapidly.*]

"Submit, it is the law. Whatever act
The Marquis does, it is willed by the
King."

[*He signs and hands the parchment
to THE MARQUIS*]

And if there be resistance, smite,
destroy,
Burn, crush, exterminate, and leave no
man
Alive, or standing wall when you have
quit
The curséd spot on which that convent
stood.

[*GUCHO is listening with more atten-
tion than ever.*]

THE MARQUIS.

And if some monk should—

THE KING.

Death!

THE MARQUIS.

Or trooper?

THE KING.

Chains!
A hundred cut-throats of my African
guard
Take with you. You'll find they're
enough to force
The barriers of one convent.

THE MARQUIS [*aside.*]

And of two.

[*Aloud.*]

Although it has the sanction of the
King,
This stroke is hazardous, my gracious
liege.

THE KING.

Ah! the monks are strong,
The priests are great! Ah! Torquemada
reigns!
Well, we shall see.

[*The voice of an usher, outside
announcing*]:

The Queen, our sovereign Lady.

[*Enter THE QUEEN, all in jet-black,
with the royal crown on her head.
She makes a profound reverence
to THE KING, who returns it, with-
out taking off his cap. THE QUEEN
proceeds to one of the arm-chairs
at the extremity of the table and
sits down; then remains motion-
less, as if she neither saw nor
heard anything. THE KING and
THE QUEEN have each a rosary at
the girdle.*]

THE KING [*in a low voice to
THE MARQUIS*].

Make haste; for speed is vital to success.
Go, Marquis, do what I have bid thee
do.

[*Enter THE DUKE OF ALAVA. He
proceeds towards THE KING.*]

What is it, Duke?

THE DUKE [*after saluting THE KING and QUEEN*].

The deputies, my liege,
Sent by the Jews you banish from your
realm,
Sue for the favour, gracious King and
Queen,
Of lying prostrate at your Highness'
feet.

THE KING.

'Tis granted. Let them enter.

[THE DUKE *leaves*.]

[*In a low voice to THE MARQUIS*.]

Run at once
To the Assumption Convent, and lay
hold
Of the Infanta.

THE MARQUIS [*aside*].

Then to San Antonio.

THE KING.

Away!

THE MARQUIS.

But—

THE KING.

What?

THE MARQUIS.

If the Inquisitor?—

THE KING.

That monk indeed! He is the earth-
worm, and
The dragon I.

SCENE III.

The KING, The QUEEN, The JEWS.

*Through the door at the back,
wide open, come a frightened and
ragged crowd between two rows*

*of halberds and pikes. They are the
deputies of the Jews, men, women and
children, all covered with ashes and
in tattered clothes, barefooted, with
ropes about their necks. Some, mutil-
ated and enfeebled by torture, drag
themselves along on crutches or
stumps; others, deprived of their eyes,
are led by children. At their head is
the Grand Rabbi, MOSES-BEN-HABIB.
All have the yellow badge prescribed
for their race on their torn apparel.
At some distance from the table THE
RABBI stops and falls on his knees.
All behind him prostrate themselves.
The old men strike the floor with their
foreheads. Neither THE KING nor
THE QUEEN looks at them. They
seem to be gazing at vacancy, above
all these heads.*

THE RABBI [*on his knees*].

Your Highness of Castile,
Of Aragon, our sovereign King and
Queen!
Your trembling subjects are in sore
distress,
And, praying first to God, we come to
you,
With naked feet and rope about our
necks,
And bring our groans and tears to you,
O King!
For we are lying in death's very
shadow,
A number of us are about to be
Flung on the fagots, and for all the rest,
Old men and women, exile is decreed.
Your edicts, King and Queen, o'erwhelm
us all.
We weep, our fathers shudder in their
graves,—
You cause the mournful sepulchres to
tremble.
Be merciful. Our hearts are meek and
true.
Shut up within our little homes, we live
Alone and humble. All our laws are
plain,—
So very simple that a little child
Might set them down in writing. Never
Jew
Is seen to sing or laugh. We pay the
tribute;

We never ask how large the sum
 may be.
 We're trod upon while lying on the
 ground;
 We're like the garment of a murdered
 man.
 To God be glory! But must Israel
 Defenceless, driving ox and ass and dog.
 Before him, flee, dispersed in every
 sense,
 With new-born suckling babes and chil-
 dren weaned!
 Must we ne'er be a people, wanderers
 ever!
 O King and Queen, do not let us be
 chased
 With goad of pike, and God for you
 shall open
 Celestial gates. Have mercy on us. We
 Are dashed to earth. Shall we no longer
 see
 Our trees and fields of corn? Shall
 mothers have
 No longer milk within their breasts?
 The beasts
 Are in the forests, happy with their
 mates;
 The nests sleep calmly, couched beneath
 the leaves;
 The hind brings up her little ones in
 peace.
 Ah! let us also live within our caves,
 Beneath our squalid roofs. For there
 we dwell
 Almost like slaves within a convict pen,
 But near our fathers' graves. In mercy
 deign
 To suffer us to rest beneath your feet
 Which we have bathed with tears!
 Alas! the woe
 Of wandering along the distant ways!
 Then let us drink the waters of our
 streams,
 And live upon our fields, and pros-
 perous days.
 Shall wait upon your steps. Alas! we
 wring
 Our hands in desperation. Spare us,
 King,
 The agony of exile, and the dole
 Of stern, eternal, endless loneliness!
 Grant us our country, grant our native
 skies!
 The bread we eat with tears is bitter
 bread.

Be not the wind, though we be but the
 dust.

[*Pointing to the gold on the table.*]

Behold our ransom. Deign to take it,
 King,
 And, oh! protect us. Look on our
 despair.
 Be angels o'er us, but not angels dark,
 But angels good and mild. The shadow
 cast
 By gloomy wings is not the same, O
 King,
 As that the white wing leaves. Recall
 your ban.
 We beg it in the name of those great
 Kings,
 Your sacred ancestors, the lion-hearted,
 And by the tombs of sovereigns august,
 Who shone serene in wisdom's light.
 We place
 Our hearts, O rulers of the human race,
 Our prayers, our sorrows in the little
 hands
 Of Joan, the Infanta, innocent
 And like unto the wildwood strawberry
 Where lights the bee. O King, O Queen,
 have mercy!

[*A moment of silence. Absolute im-
 passiveness of THE KING and
 QUEEN. Neither turns the eye.
 THE DUKE OF ALAVA, who is stand-
 ing before the table with naked
 sword, touches the shoulder of THE
 GRAND RABBI with the flat. THE
 GRAND RABBI rises, and, with the
 other Jews, retires backward with
 head bent down. The guards
 form a line and force them back.
 The door remains open after they
 have gone. THE KING beckons to
 THE DUKE OF ALAVA, who ap-
 proaches.*]

THE KING [*to the DUKE*].

The Queen and I would privately discuss
 The edict. Duke, arrest whoever comes,
 Although he be a prince. Whoever dares
 To enter here shall surely lose his head.
 Go, close the door, and guard the pas-
 sage well.

[THE DUKE lowers his sword, bows, raises his sword again, and goes. The two leaves of the door shut. THE KING and QUEEN are alone. During this scene GUCHO has disappeared under the tapestry that covers the table, where he is concealed.]

SCENE IV.

THE KING, THE QUEEN, GUCHO under the table. THE KING and QUEEN regard each other earnestly and silently for a time. At last THE QUEEN lowers her eyes and looks at the money on the table.

THE QUEEN.

A sum of thirty thousand marks of gold.

THE KING.

A sum of thirty thousand marks of gold.

THE QUEEN.

But they are an accursed race, and all Star-gazers.

THE KING.

Thirty thousand marks of gold
Make up six hundred thousand piasters,
And that is twenty million sequins.

THE QUEEN.

Sequins?

THE KING.

Yes, sequins, which, to Moorish besants changed,
Would make enough to load a galley,
Queen!

THE QUEEN.

But still a Jew becomes invisible
By lighting fingers of a buried child.

THE KING.

'Tis true, no doubt.

THE QUEEN.

They would a vessel load?

THE KING.

Ay, to the very deck.

THE QUEEN.

With besants?

THE KING.

Yes,
And changed to silver douros, we would
have
In weight as much again.

THE QUEEN.

My mind's confused,
Suppose we said a pater?

[She takes her rosary. A moment of silence. THE KING touches the piles of gold and stirs them.]

THE KING [in an undertone.]

With this gold
I might without expense on Boabdil
Make war.

THE QUEEN [all the time telling her beads.]

If I should be the first to die,
Swear to me, sir, to take no other wife.

THE KING [in an undertone].

Yes, with this gold make war—

THE QUEEN.

Will you not swear?

THE KING.

Swear what?—Oh, yes, of course.

[Musing.]

This gold would pay
For all expenses, all. Granada would
Be ours, a jewel in our diadem.

THE QUEEN, [*having finished her prayers, places the rosary on the table.*]

THE QUEEN.

Sir, let us take the gold, and, all the same,
Exile the Jews, whom I cannot accept
As subjects.

[THE KING raises his head. THE QUEEN speaks more strongly.]

Then let us exile the Jews
And keep their money.

THE KING.

I was thinking of it.
But such a deed might well discourage
others
From acting like the Jews.

THE QUEEN [*looking at the money*].
With all this gold!
And in your hands—

THE KING.

In yours.

THE QUEEN.

Might more be asked?

THE KING.

Well, later on.

[*He handles the piles of gold.*]

Granada I could wrest
From the vile bastard crescent. Though
we kept
The Jews, yet still we might expel the
Moors.

THE QUEEN [*wavering.*]

'Tis true.

THE KING.

A compensation.

THE QUEEN.

Yes, a choice
Between Gomorrahs.

THE KING.

Then do we accept
The money?

THE QUEEN.

Yes.

[*He takes a pen and writes some lines on a parchment, after consulting THE QUEEN by a look.*]

THE KING.

Well, then. "The edict is
Annulled which banishes that miscreant
tribe,
The Jews, and parts them from the
Spanish people;
It is forbid to light the stake prepared;
'Tis ordered that imprisoned Jews be
freed."

[THE KING signs, then hands the pen
and parchment to THE QUEEN].

THE QUEEN [*taking the pen.*]

'Tis settled.

[*Just as THE QUEEN is about to sign, the great door opens with much noise. THE KING and QUEEN turn around in amazement. GUCHO thrusts out his head. TORQUEMADA appears on the threshold in his Dominican robe and with an iron crucifix in his hand.*]

SCENE V.

THE KING, THE QUEEN, TORQUEMADA.

TORQUEMADA looks neither at THE KING nor THE QUEEN. He has his eyes fixed on the crucifix.

TORQUEMADA.

Once for thirty silver pieces
Did Judas sell thee; now this King and
Queen
Sell thee for thirty thousand golden
crowns.

THE QUEEN.

O Heaven!

TORQUEMADA [*casting the crucifix on the pile of gold.*]

Advance, and seize him, Jews!

THE QUEEN.

Good father!

TORQUEMADA.

Rejoice, ye Jews! this King and Queen,
as it
Is writ, deliver to you Jesus Christ.

THE QUEEN.

My father!

TORQUEMADA [*looking them both in the face.*]

King, be thou accursed! be thou
Accursed, O Queen!

THE QUEEN.

Forgiveness!

TORQUEMADA [*stretching his arm above them.*]

On your knees!

[THE QUEEN *falls on her knees*; THE KING *hesitates, trembling.*]

Both!

[THE KING *falls on his knees.*]

[*Pointing to ISABEL.*]

On this side, the Queen.

[*Pointing to FERDINAND.*]

On that, the King.

A pile of gold between. Ah! you are
king,
And you are queen!

[*He seizes the crucifix, and raises it high above his head.*]

And this is God. Behold!
I have surprised you in the very act,
Red-handed. Kiss the ground.

[THE QUEEN *prostrating herself.*]

Forgive us, father!

TORQUEMADA.

Oh, horror!

THE QUEEN.

Give us absolution, father!

TORQUEMADA.

Measureless insolence!—It is thy reign,
O Antichrist, at last! The Jews
restored!

The auto-da-fe proscribed! The helpful
stake

To be no longer lit! These sovereigns
Forbid it. So, that wretch, the sceptre,
dares

To touch the cross! The prince, that
bandit, dares

To close his ears to all that Christ
hath said!

The time has come when ye must be
forewarned.

The Holy Office has its rights o'er you.
The Pope alone's exempt from its
decrees,

But kings are not. Our banner has the
right

To go into your palaces, proud Kings!
At every hour, e'en while you sleep
or eat,

And with it bring its melancholy doom!
Kings, those false gods, have ever been
the aim

At which the thunderbolts of Heaven
are hurled,

For Heaven hates kings. O princes, all
your laws

Are vain and worthless. Ours alone
are true:

We are the wheat, and you the tares.
Some day

The reaper's scythe shall cut enormous swaths!
 Kings, we endure you, but denounce your crimes.
 Each day into the gulf we cast your names
 Where dark and lonely pangs await your advent!
 The floors of hell are paved with skulls of kings.
 Ah, yes! because your ports are filled with sails,
 Because your soldiers throng your camps, you think
 That you are strong. God with quiescent eye
 Amid the stars is meditating. Tremble.

THE QUEEN.

Forgive!

THE KING [*rising*].

My lord inquisitor, the King
 And Queen, with contrite heart, and as a sign
 Of their devotion to the faith, intend
 Repairing wrongs they were about to do.
 The Jews shall be expelled; and we, besides,
 Empower you, father, and the Holy Office,
 And all your holy priests to light at once
 The stake.

TORQUEMADA.

And do you think I waited?

[*He descends the three steps, goes to the gallery at the back, and violently draws the curtain aside.*]

Look!

[*Night is beginning to fall. Through the wide, open lattice at the back of the gallery, the square of La Tablada is seen covered with an immense crowd. In the centre of the square is the Quemadero. An enormous piece of masonry all bristling with flames, filled with stakes and posts, and with those*

condemned in sanbenitos, who are seen through the smoke. Barrels of lighted pitch are nailed to the tops of the posts, and empty in flames on the heads of the condemned: Women, whom the fire has rendered naked, are burning, fastened to piles. Cries are heard. At the four corners of the Quemadero are four gigantic statues, called the four Evangelists, reddened by the blaze. They have holes and openings through which are seen men howling and arms writhing like living brands. The whole has a terrific aspect of torture and conflagration. THE KING and THE QUEEN look on, appalled. GUCHO, under the table, stretches his neck and tries to see. TORQUEMADA in meditation, sates his eyes with the Quemadero.]

TORQUEMADA.

O festival of glory and of joy!
 O grand and terrible clemency of flames!
 Deliverance forever! O ye damned!
 Ye are absolved! The stake on earth hath quenched
 The hell below. O blessed stake, by which
 The soul mounts up! Thou honourest the fire,
 The shame of hell. O outlet bordering on
 The radiant pathway, gate of paradise,
 Once more reopened for the human race!
 O ardent pity with thy numberless
 Caresses, mystic ransom of hell's slaves.
 Auto-da-fe! thou'rt pardon, kindness, light,
 And fire and life! a dazzling splendour on
 The face of God! Oh, what a grand demise!
 What souls are saved! Jews, sinners, infidels,—
 Ah, my dear children, one brief, sudden pang
 Rewards you with eternal happiness;
 Man is no more accursed, no more exiled.

Salvation opens in the depths of heaven.
Love wakes, and yonder is his wondrous triumph!
What ecstasy! to enter heaven at once!
Not languish by the way!

[*Cries heard from the stakes.*]

Hear ye the howls
Of Satan as he sees them all escape?
Let the eternal felon weep and wail
In his eternal den. With these two hands
I've pushed his huge red door. Oh,
how he gnashed,
When on him I made fast those hideous leaves,
Forever, Never! And the Wicked One
Remains behind the sombre wall.

[*He looks up to the sky.*]

Oh, I
Have healed the grisly wound his shadow made.
Ah! paradise was maimed; and in the side
Of heaven was that ulcer, burning hell,
Ensanguined hell; o'er hell I've placed the flame,
The healing flame, and as mine eyes behold
The boundless sky, I see the cicatrice
It was the spear-thrust in thy side, O Christ!
Hosanna! the eternal wound is cured.

[*He looks at the Quemadero.*]

Ye rubies of the flame! Ye precious stones
Of fiery coals! Blaze up, ye brands!
burn, embers!
O sovran fire, beam brightly! shine, O stake!
Thou casket of bright sparks soon to be stars!
The soul, freed from the body's vesture,
flies,
And from the bath of torments bliss comes forth!
O splendour! fierce magnificence of flame!

Ha! Satan, my black foe, what sayest thou?

[*In an ecstasy.*]

O fire, thou washest all foul stains away!
Supreme transfiguration! act of faith!
We are two fork-bearers, the Fiend and I,
Two masters of the flames. I succour souls,
And he is man's destroyer. We are both
Two executioners, and by like means
We make—one, heaven, and the other, hell;
He makes the evil, and I make the good;
He's in the sewer, in the temple I;
And the black, quivering shadow views us both.

[*He turns again to the condemned.*]

O dear, beloved brethren! but for me
You all were lost. You now are cleansed from sin
In that piscina by its writhing flames.
Ah! for the passing moment you will curse me;
But ah! dear children! you will give me thanks
When you behold from what you have escaped;
Because, like Michael the archangel, I
Have also slain; because white seraphim,
Who stoop above the pit of sulphur, mock
The marvelous miscarriage of the gulf;
Because your howls of hatred in the light
Shall stammer, and, in stupefaction, end
In songs of love! Alas! what pangs were mine
To see you in the torture chambers lie,
With wails and tears and shrieks and writhing limbs!
To see you by the vice and pincers torn!
But now you're free! Depart! ascend to heaven!
Pass into paradise!
[*He stoops and seems to be looking at something beneath the earth.*]
No, thou shalt have
No longer souls!

[*He stands erect.*]

The Lord hath given us
The help we asked, and man's freed
from the gulf.
Depart! away! across the burning
gloom
And through the great winged flames,
the whirling smoke
Bears to the skies the living spirit saved
From the dead flesh! and all old human
crimes
Are torn up by the roots. One had his
sins,
Another had his errors, fault or vice;
Each soul had in itself a monster who
Would nibble at its light and champ
its wings.

The angel faded fast, the demon's prey.
Now all is burned, and by the light of
tombs,
And in the presence of our Saviour,
Christ,
The radiant and august division's made.
Fall into dust, ye dragons! Take your
flight,
Ye doves! For you whom hell had in
its grip
'Tis liberty! From darkness mount to
light!
For time take in exchange eternity!

VICTOR HUGO
(1802-1885.)



THE SPANISH GYPSY

[SELECTIONS FROM BOOK II]

THE SPANISH GYPSY

[*Selections from Book II.*]

[*DON SILVA, a Spanish Duke; SEPHARDO, a Jew.*]

DON SILVA.

Yes, they are warriors, too—
Your animals. Your judgment limps,
Sephardo:
Death is the king of this world; 'tis his
park
Where he breeds life to feed him. Cries
of pain
Are music for his banquet; and the
masque—
The last grand masque for his diver-
sion, is
The Holy Inquisition.

SEPHARDO.

Ay, anon

I may chime in with you. But not the
less
My judgment has firm feet. Though
death were king,
And cruelty his right-hand minister,
Pity insurgent in some human breasts
Makes spiritual empire, reigns supreme
As persecuted faith in faithful hearts.
Your small physician, weighing ninety
pounds,
A petty morsel for a healthy shark,
Will worship mercy throned within his
soul
Though all the luminous angels of the
stars
Burst into cruel chorus on his ear,
Singing, "We know no mercy," He
would cry
"I know it" still, and soothe the fright-
ened bird
And feed the child a-hungered, walk
abreast
Of persecuted men, and keep most hate

For rational torturers. There I stand
firm.
But you are bitter, and my speech rolls
on
Out of your note.

DON SILVA.

No, no, I follow you.

I, too, have that within which I will
worship
In spite of . . . Yes, Sepharo, I
am bitter.
I need your counsel, foresight, all your
aid.
Lay these small guests to bed, then we
will talk.

SEPHARDO.

See, they are sleeping now. The boy
has made
My leg his pillow. For my brother
sage,
He'll never heed us; he knit long ago
A sound ape-system, wherein men are
brutes
Emitting doubtful noises. Pray, my
lord,
Unlade what burthens you: my ear and
hand
Are servants of a heart much bound to
you.

DON SILVA.

Yes, yours is love that roots in gifts
bestowed
By you on others, and will thrive the
more
The more it gives. I have a double
want:
First a confessor—not a Catholic;
A heart without a livery—naked inan-
hood.

SEPHARDO.

My lord, I will be frank; there's no
 such thing
 As naked manhood. If the stars look
 down
 On any mortal of our shape, whose
 strength
 Is to judge all things without prefer-
 ence,
 He is a monster, not a faithful man.
 While my heart beats it shall wear
 livery—
 My people's livery, whose yellow badge
 Marks them for Christian scorn. I will
 not say
 Man is first man to me, then Jew or
 Gentile:
 That suits the rich *marranos*; but to me
 My father is first father and then man.
 So much for frankness' sake. But let
 that pass.
 'Tis true at least, I am no Catholic
 But Salomo SepharDO, a born Jew,
 Willing to serve Don Silva.

DON SILVA.

Oft you sing

Another strain, and melt distinctions
 down
 As no more real than the wall of dark
 Seen by small fishes' eyes, that pierce
 a span
 In the wide ocean. Now you league
 yourself
 To hem me, hold me prisoner in bonds
 Made, say you—how?—by God or Dem-
 iurge,
 By spirit or flesh—I care not! Love
 was made
 Stronger than bonds, and where they
 press must break them.
 I came to you that I might breathe
 at large,
 And now you stifle me with talk of
 birth,
 Of race and livery. Yet you knew
 Fedalma.
 She was your friend, SepharDO. And
 you know
 She is gone from me—know the hounds
 are loosed
 To dog me if I seek her.

SEPHARDO.

Yes, I know.

Forgive me that I used untimely speech,
 Pressing a bruise. I loved her well,
 my lord:
 A woman mixed of such fine elements
 That were all virtue and religion dead
 She'd make them newly, being what
 she was.

DON SILVA.

Was? say not *was*, SepharDO! She still
 lives—
 Is, and is mine; and I will not re-
 nounce
 What heaven, nay, what she gave me.
 I will sin,
 If sin I must, to win my life again.
 The fault lie with those powers who
 have embroiled
 The world in hopeless conflict, where
 all truth
 Fights manacled with falsehood, and
 all good
 Makes but one palpitating life with ill.

(DON SILVA *pauses*. SEPHARDO is
silent.)

SepharDO, speak! am I not justified?
 You taught my mind to use the wing
 that soars
 Above the petty fences of the herd:
 Now, when I need your doctrine, you
 are dumb.

SEPHARDO.

Patience! *Hidalgos* want interpreters
 Of untold dreams and riddles; they in-
 sist
 On dateless horoscopes, on formulas
 To raise a possible spirit, nowhere
 named.
 Science must be their wishing-cap; the
 stars
 Speak plainer for high largesse. No,
 my lord!
 I cannot counsel you to unknown
 deeds.
 This much I can divine; you wish to
 find
 Her whom you love—to make a secret
 search.

DON SILVA.

That is begun already: a messenger
Unknown to all has been dispatched
this night.

But forecast must be used, a plan de-
vised,

Ready for service when my scout re-
turns,

Bringing the invisible thread to guide
my steps

Toward that lost self my life is aching
with.

Sephardo, I will go: and I must go
Unseen by all save you; though, at our
need,

We may trust Alvar.

SEPHARDO.

A grave task, my lord.

Have you a shapen purpose, or mere
will

That sees the end alone and not the
means?

Resolve will melt no rocks.

DON SILVA.

But it can scale them.

This fortress has two private issues:
one,

Which served the Gypsies' flight, to
me is closed:

Our bands must watch the outlet, now
betrayed

To cunning enemies. Remains one
other,

Known to no man save me: a secret
left

As heirloom in our house: a secret
safe

Even from him—from Father Isidor.
'Tis he who forces me to use it—he:

All's virtue that cheats bloodhounds.
Hear, Sephardo

Given, my scout returns and brings me
news

I can straight act on, I shall want your
aid.

The issue lies below this tower, your
fastness,

Where, by my charter, you rule abso-
lute.

I shall feign illness; you with mystic
air

Must speak of treatment asking vig-
ilance

(Nay I *am* ill—my life has half ebbed
out).

I shall be whimsical, devolve command
on Don Diego, speak of poisoning.

Insist on being lodged within this
tower,

And rid myself of tendance save from
you

And perhaps from Alvar. So I shall
escape

Unseen by spies, shall win the days I
need

To ransom her and have her safe en-
shrined.

No matter, were my flight disclosed at
last;

I shall come back as from a duel fought
Which no man can undo. Now you
know all.

Say, can I count on you?

SEPHARDO.

For faithfulness

In aught that I may promise, yes, my
lord.

But—for a pledge of faithfulness—this
warning.

I will betray naught for your personal
harm:

I love you. But note this—I am a Jew;
And while the Christian persecutes my
race,

I'll turn at need even the Christian's
trust

Into a weapon and a shield for Jews.

Shall Cruelty crowned—wielding the
savage force

Of multitudes, and calling savageness
God

Who gives it victory—upbraid deceit

And ask for faithfulness? I love you
well.

You are my friend. But yet you are a
Christian,

Whose birth has bound you to the
Catholic kings.

There may come moments when to
share my joy

Would make you traitor, when to share
your grief

Would make me other than a Jew. . .

DON SILVA.

What need
To urge that now, Sephardo? I am
one
Of many Spanish nobles who detest
The roaring bigotry of the herd, would
fain
Dash from the lips of king and queen
the cup
Filled with besotting venom, half in-
fused
By avarice and half by priests. And
now—
Now when the cruelty you flout me with
Pierces me, too, in the apple of my eye,
Now when my kinship scorches me like
hate
Flashed from a mother's eye, you
choose this time
To talk of birth as of inherited rage
Deep-down, volcanic, fatal, bursting
forth
From under hard-taught reason? Won-
drous friend
My uncle Isidor's echo, mocking me,
From the opposing quarter of the
heavens,
With iteration of the thing I know,
That I'm a Christian knight and Span-
ish duke!
The consequence? Why, that I know.
It lies
In my own hands and not on raven
tongues.
The knight and noble shall not wear
the chain
Of false-linked thoughts in brains of
other men.
What question was there 'twixt us two,
of aught
That makes division? When I come to
you
I come for other doctrine than the
Prior's.

SEPHARDO.

My lord, you are o'erwrought by pain.
My words
That carried innocent meaning, do but
float
Like little emptied cups upon the flood
Your mind brings with it. I but an-
swered you

With regular proviso, such as stands
In testaments and charters, to forefend
A possible case which none deem likeli-
hood;
Just turned my sleeve, and pointed to
the brand
Of brotherhood that limits every pledge.
Superfluous nicety—the student's trick,
Who will not drink until he can define
What water is and is not. But enough.
My will to serve you now knows no
division
Save the alternate beat of love and fear.
There's danger in this quest—name,
honor, life—
My lord, the stake is great, and are you
sure. . . .

DON SILVA.

No, I am sure of naught but this,
Sephardo,
That I will go. Prudence is but con-
ceit
Hoodwinked by ignorance. There's
naught exists
That is not dangerous and holds not
death
For souls or bodies. Prudence turns
its helm
To flee the storm and lands 'mid pesti-
lence.
Wisdom would end by throwing dice
with folly
But for dire passion which alone makes
choice.
And I have chosen as the lion robbed
Chooses to turn upon the ravisher.
If love were slack, the Prior's im-
perious will
Would move it to outmatch him. But,
Sephardo,
Were all else mute, all passive as sea-
calm,
My soul is one great hunger—I must
see her.
Now you are smiling. Oh, you merci-
ful men
Pick up coarse griefs and fling them
in the face
Of us whom life with long descent has
trained
To subtler pains, mocking your ready
balms.
You smile at my soul's hunger.

SEPHARDO.

Science smiles
And sways our lips in spite of us, my
lord,
When thought weds fact—when maiden
prophecy
Waiting, believing, sees the bridal torch.
I use not vulgar measures for your
grief,
My pity keeps no cruel feasts; but
thought
Has joys apart, even in blackest woe,
And seizing some fine thread of verity
Knows momentary godhead.

DON SILVA.

And your thought?

SEPHARDO.

Seized on the close agreement of your
words
With what is written in your horoscope.

DON SILVA.

Reach it me now.

SEPHARDO.

By your leave, Annibal.

.

DON SILVA.

I wish, by new appliance of your skill,
Reading afresh the records of the sky,
You could detect more special augury.
Such chance oft happens, for all char-
acters
Must shrink or widen, as our wine-
skins do,
For more or less that we can pour in
them;
And added years give ever a new key
To fixed prediction.

SEPHARDO (*returning with the parch-
ment and reseating himself*).

True; our growing thought
Makes growing revelation. But demand
not

Specific augury, as of sure success
In meditated projects, or of ends
To be foreknown by peeping in God's
scroll.
I say—nay, Ptolemy said it, but wise
books
For half the truths they hold are hon-
ored tombs—
Prediction is contingent of effects
Where causes and concomitants are
mixed
To seeming wealth of possibilities
Beyond our reckoning. Who will pre-
tend
To tell the adventures of each single
fish
Within the Syrian Sea? Show me a
fish,
I'll weigh him, tell his kind, what he
devoured,
What would have devoured *him*—but
for one Blas
Who netted him instead; nay, could I
tell
That had Blas missed him, he would
have died
Of poisonous mud, and so made car-
rion,
Swept off at last by some sea-scav-
enger?

DON SILVA.

Ay, now you talk of fishes, you get
hard.
I note you merciful men: you can en-
dure
Torture of fishes and hidalgos. Fol-
lows?

SEPHARDO.

By how much, then, the fortunes of a
man
Are made of elements refined and
mixed
Beyond a tunny's, what our science
tells
Of a star's influence hath contingency
In special issues. Thus, the loadstone
draws,
Acts like a will to make the iron sub-
miss;
But garlic rubbing it, that chief effect
Lies in suspense; the iron keeps at
large,

And garlic is controller of the stone.
 And so, my lord, your horoscope de-
 clares
 Not absolutely of your sequent lot,
 But, by our lore's authentic rules, sets
 forth
 What gifts, what dispositions, likeli-
 hoods
 The aspects of the heavens conspired
 to fuse
 With your incorporate soul. Aught
 more than this
 Is vulgar doctrine. For the ambient,
 Though a cause regnant, is not absolute,
 But suffers a determining restraint
 From action of the subject qualities.
 In proximate motion.

DON SILVA.

Yet you smiled just now
 At some close fitting of my horoscope
 With present fact—with this resolve of
 mine
 To quit the fortress?

SEPHARDO.

Nay, not so; I smiled,
 Observing how the temper of your soul
 Sealed long tradition of the influence
 shed
 By the heavenly spheres. Here is your
 horoscope:
 The aspects of the Moon with Mars
 conjunct,
 Of Venus and the Sun with Saturn,
 lord
 Of the ascendant, make symbolic speech
 Whereto your words gave running para-
 phrase.

DON SILVA. (*impatiently*).

What did I say?

SEPHARDO.

You spoke as oft you did
 When I was schooling you at Cordova,
 And lessons on the noun and verb were
 drowned
 With sudden stream of general debate
 On things and actions. Always in that
 stream

I saw the play of babbling currents,
 saw
 A nature o'er-endowed with opposites
 Making a self alternate; where each
 hour
 Was critic of the last, each mood too
 strong
 For tolerance of its fellow in close
 yoke.
 The ardent planets stationed as su-
 preme,
 Potent in action, suffer light malign
 From luminaries large and coldly bright
 Inspiring meditative doubt, which
 straight
 Doubts of itself, by interposing act
 Of Jupiter in the fourth house fortified
 With power ancestral. So, my lord, I
 read
 The changeless in the changing; so I
 read
 The constant action of celestial powers
 Mixed into waywardness of mortal men,
 Whereof no sage's eye can trace the
 course
 And see the close.

DON SILVA.

Fruitful result, O sage!
 Certain uncertainty.

SEPHARDO.

Yea, a result
 Fruitful as seeded earth, where cer-
 tainty
 Would be as barren as a globe of gold.
 I love you, and would serve you well,
 my lord.
 Your rashness vindicates itself too
 much,
 Puts harness on of cobweb theory
 While rushing like a cataract. Be
 warned.
 Resolve with you is a fire-breathing
 steed,
 But it sees visions, and may feel the
 air
 Impassable with thoughts that come too
 late,
 Rising from out the grave of murdered
 honor.
 Look at your image in your horoscope:
 (*Laying the horoscope before Don
 SILVA.*)

You are so mixed, my lord, that each
to-day
May seem a maniac to its morrow.

DON SILVA (*pushing away the horoscope,
rising and turning to look out at the
open window*).

No!
No morrow e'er will say that I am mad
Not to renounce her. Risks! I know
them all.
I've dodged each lurking, ambushed
consequence.
I've handled every chance to know its
shape
As blind men handle bolts. Oh, I'm too
sane!
I see the Prior's nets. He does my
deed;
For he has narrowed all my life to
this—
That I must find her by some hidden
means.

(*He turns and stands close in front of
SEPHARDO.*)

One word, SepharDO—leave that horo-
scope,
Which is but iteration of myself,
And give me promise. Shall I count
on you
To act upon my signal? Kings of Spain
Like me have found their refuge in a
Jew,
And trusted in his counsel. You will
help me?

SEPHARDO,

Yes, my lord, I will help you. Israel
Is to the nations as the body's heart:
Thus writes our poet Jehuda. I will act
So that no man may ever say through
me
"Your Israel is naught," and make my
deeds
The mud they fling upon my brethren.
I will not fail you, save—you know the
terms:
I am a Jew, and not that infamous life
That takes on bastardy, will know no
father,
So shrouds itself in the pale abstract,
Man.

You should be sacrificed to Israel
If Israel need it.

DON SILVA.

I fear not that.
I am no friend of fines and banishment,
Or flames that, fed on heretics, still
gape,
And must have heretics made to feed
them still.
I take your terms, and for the rest,
your love
Will not forsake me.

SEPHARDO,

'Tis hard Roman love,
That looks away and stretches forth
the sword
Bared for its master's breast to run
upon,
But you will have it so. Love shall
obey.

(*DON SILVA turns to the window again,
and is silent for a few moments,
looking at the sky.*)

DON SILVA.

See now, SepharDO, you would keep no
faith
To smooth the path of cruelty. Con-
fess,
The deed I would not do, save for the
strait
Another brings me to (quit my com-
mand,
Resign it for brief space, I mean no
more)—
Were that deed branded, then the brand
should fix
On him who urged me.

SEPHARDO,

Will it, though, my lord?

DON SILVA.

I speak not of the fact, but of the
right.

SEPHARDO.

My lord, you said but now you were resolved.
 Question not if the world will be unjust
 Branding your deed. If conscience has two courts
 With differing verdicts, where shall lie the appeal?
 Our law must be without us or within.
 The Highest speaks through all our people's voice,
 Custom, tradition, and old sanctities;
 Or he reveals himself by new decrees
 Of inward certitude.

DON SILVA.

My love for her
 Makes highest law, must be the voice
 of God.

SEPHARDO.

I thought, but now, you seem to make excuse,
 And plead as in some court where Spanish knights
 Are tried by other laws than those of love.

DON SILVA.

'Twas momentary. I shall dare it all.
 How the great planet glows, and looks at me,
 And seems to pierce me with his effluence!
 Were he a living God, these rays that stir
 In me the pulse of wonder were in him
 Fullness of knowledge. Are you certified,
 SepharDO, that the astral science shrinks
 To such pale ashes, dead symbolic forms
 For that congenital mixture of effects
 Which life declares without the aid of lore?
 If there are times propitious or malign
 To our first framing, then must all events
 Have favoring periods: you cull your plants
 By signal of the heavens, then why not trace
 As others would by astrologic rule

Times of good augury for momentous acts,—
 As secret journeys?

SEPHARDO.

Oh, my lord, the stars
 Act not as witchcraft or as muttered spells.
 I said before they are not absolute,
 And tell no fortunes. I adhere alone
 To such tradition of their agencies
 As reason fortifies.

DON SILVA.

A barren science!
 Some argue now 'tis folly. 'Twere as well
 Be of their mind. If those bright stars
 had will—
 But they are fatal fires, and know no love.
 Of old, I think, the world was happier
 With many gods, who held a struggling life,
 As mortals do, and helped men in the straits
 Of forced misdoing. I doubt that horoscope.

(DON SILVA turns from the window and reseats himself opposite SEPHARDO.)

I am most self-contained, and strong to bear.
 No man save you has seen my trembling lip
 Utter her name, since she was lost to me.
 I'll face the progeny of all my deeds.

SEPHARDO.

May they be fair! No horoscope makes slaves.
 'Tis but a mirror, shows one image forth,
 And leaves the future dark with endless "ifs."

DON SILVA.

I marvel, my SepharDO, you can pinch
 With confident selection these few grains,

And call them verity, from out the dust
Of crumbling error. Surely such
thought creeps,
With insect exploration of the world.
Were I a Hebrew, now, I would be
bold.
Why should you fear, not being Cath-
olic?

SEPHARDO.

Lo! you yourself, my lord, mix subtle-
ties
With gross belief; by momentary lapse
Conceive, with all the vulgar, that we
Jews
Must hold ourselves God's outlaws, and
defy
All good with blasphemy, because we
hold
Your good is evil; think we must turn
pale
To see our portraits painted in your
hell,
And sin the more for knowing we are
lost.

DON SILVA.

Read not my words with malice. I but
meant,
My temper hates an over-cautious
march.

SEPHARDO.

The Unnameable made not the search
for truth
To suit hidalgos' temper. I abide
By that wise spirit of listening rever-
ence
Which marks the boldest doctors of our
race.
For Truth, to us, is like a living child
Born of two parents: if the parents
part
And will divide the child, how shall it
live?
Or, I will rather say: Two angels guide
The path of man, both aged and yet
young,
As angels are, ripening through endless
years.
On one he leans: some call her Mem-
ory.
And some, Tradition; and her voice is
sweet,

With deep mysterious accords: the
other,
Floating above, holds down a lamp
which streams
A light divine and searching on the
earth,
Compelling eyes and footsteps. Mem-
ory yields,
Yet clings with loving check, and shines
anew
Reflecting all the rays of that bright
lamp
Our angel Reason holds. We had not
walked
But for Tradition; we walk evermore
To higher paths, by brightening Rea-
son's lamp.
Still we are purblind, tottering. I hold
less
Than Aben-Ezra, of that aged lore
Brought by long centuries from Chal-
daean plains;
The Jew-taught Florentine rejects it
all.
For still the light is measured by the
eye,
And the weak organ fails. I may see ill:
But over all belief is faithfulness,
Which fulfills vision with obedience.
So, I must grasp my morsels: truth is
oft
Scattered in fragments round a stately
pile
Built half of error; and the eye's de-
fect
May breed too much denial. But, my
lord,
I weary your sick soul. Go now with
me
Into the turret. We will watch the
spheres,
And see the constellations bend and
plunge
Into a depth of being where our eyes
Hold them no more. We'll quit our-
selves and be
The red Aldebaran or bright Sirius,
And sail as in a solemn voyage, bound
On some great quest we know not.

.

GEORGE ELIOT
(1819-1880).



THE MERCHANT OF VENICE

[EXTRACT]

THE MERCHANT OF VENICE

[Extract.]

ACT I.

SCENE III.

ANTONIO.

Well, Shylock, shall we be beholding to you?

SHYLOCK.

Signior Antonio, many a time and oft
In the Rialto you have rated me
About my moneys and my usances:
Still have I borne it with a patient shrug;
For sufferance is the badge of all our
tribe.

You call me misbeliever, cut-throat dog,
And spit upon my Jewish gaberdine,
And all for use of that which is mine
own.

Well then, it now appears you need my
help:

Go to, then; you come to me, and you
say

'Shylock, we would have moneys:' you
say so;

You, that did void your rheum upon my
beard

And foot me as you spurn a stranger cur
Over your threshold: moneys is your
suit.

What should I say to you? Should I
not say

'Hath a dog money? Is it possible
A cur can lend three thousand ducats?'
or

Shall I bend low and in a bondman's key,
With bated breath and whispering
humbleness,

Say this,—

'Fair sir, you spit on me on Wednesday
last;

You spurn'd me such a day; another
time
You call'd me dog; and for these cour-
tesies
I'll lend you thus much moneys?'

ACT III.

SCENE I.

SHYLOCK.

....He hath disgraced me, and hindered
me half a million; laughed at my losses,
mocked at my gains, scorned my nation,
thwarted my bargains, cooled my friends,
heated mine enemies; and what's his
reason? I am a Jew. Hath not a Jew
eyes? Hath not a Jew hands, organs,
dimensions, senses, affections, passions?
Fed with the same food, hurt with the
same weapons, subject to the same dis-
eases, healed by the same means, warmed
and cooled by the same winter and sum-
mer, as a Christian is? If you prick us,
do we not bleed? if you tickle us, do we
not laugh? if you poison us, do we not
die? and if you wrong us, shall we not
revenge? If we are like you in the rest,
we will resemble you in that. If a Jew
wrong a Christian, what is his humility?
Revenge. If a Christian wrong a Jew
what should his sufferance be by Chris-
tian example? Why, revenge. The vil-
lany you teach me, I will execute; and it
shall go hard but I will better the in-
struction.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE
(1564-1616)



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