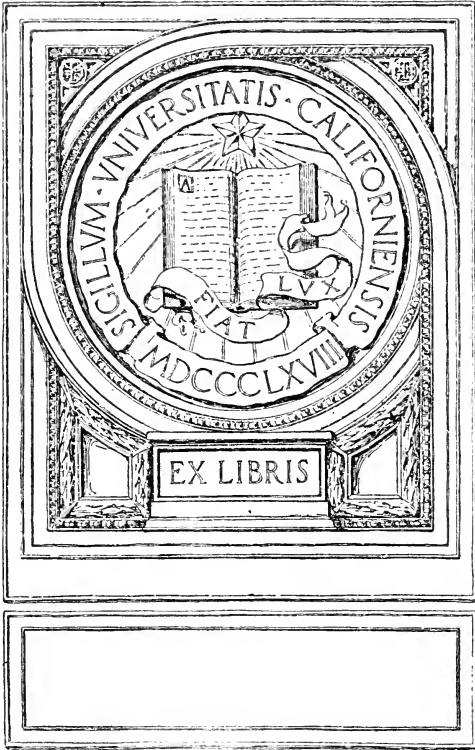


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JOHN THE BAPTIST

JOHN THE BAPTIST

A DRAMA

TRANSLATED FROM THE LATIN OF

GEORGE BUCHANAN

BY

A. GORDON MITCHELL

MINISTER OF KILLEARN

TRANSLATOR OF BUCHANAN'S "JEPHTHES"



PAISLEY: ALEXANDER GARDNER

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P R E F A C E

GEORGE BUCHANAN bequeathed a rich literary legacy to the world in his sacred dramas, *Jephthes* and *Baptistes*—the one on an Old Testament, the other on a New Testament theme, and studies respectively of loyalty to earthly and heavenly citizenship; but his pieces, though of pure gold, are debarred from the wide currency they merit, by the Latin superscription which he elected to stamp upon them. With regard to his *Baptistes*, although its form and language are those of the ancient classics, its spirit and sentiments are emphatically modern. The view which it more than hints at as to the limits of legitimate monarchic power, is proved by Buchanan's tract *De Jure Regni Apud Scotos* to be not merely incidental to the drama, but personally entertained by the poet. His promulgation of the principle of constitutional monarchy stamps him as, in the sphere of political thought, a man far in advance of his time.

A quaint translation of the *Baptistes* was published in London during the troublous times that preceded

the establishment of the Commonwealth, under the title of *Tyrannical Government Anatomised*.* A biographer of Milton stoutly asserts that this version was the work of the author of *Paradise Lost*; "but," says Irving, "his opinion is not authorised by the slightest vestige of evidence either historical or internal;" and Professor Hume Brown in his biography of Buchanan † tells us that he is assured by Professor Masson that the translation is not Milton's.‡ "Yet," says Mr. Hume Brown, "the whole drift of the drama is such as would meet Milton's most ardent approval. To the religious and political situation of 1642 it had an even more piquant application than to the circumstances of the time in which it was written. No Puritan reader could fail to see Charles I. in Herod, Laud in Malchus, and Henrietta Maria in Herodias." According to the same authority, in the original

* See Note, p. 121.

† Footnote, p. 125.

‡ "A drama with the title *Baptistes* occurs among the works of Schonaeus; and another, written by Nicholas Grimoald, and entitled *Archipropheta, sive Johannes Baptista*, was published in London in the year 1591. Milton had directed his attention to no fewer than one hundred different subjects for tragedy, and among others to that of John the Baptist."—Irving: *Memoirs of Buchanan*, Second Edition, p. 30.

intention of the author, John the Baptist might stand for the Reformer Berquin, and Malchus certainly stood for Cardinal Beaton; while the people of Bordeaux would detect in Malchus a portrayal of their own Archbishop, De Grammont, and a modern Herod and Herodias would be found in the persons of Francis I. and Louise of Savoy.

So far as plot and action are concerned, the *Baptistes*, viewed as a stage play, is, no doubt, inferior to the *Jephthes*. Nevertheless, as a work unified by an intensely tragical *motif*, abounding in striking contrasts of character and in the exhibition of conflicting passions, and rising to a sublime climax in the closing words of John the Baptist and the Chorus, it is of a high order indeed. What is, in one aspect, a defect is, in another, a beauty of the piece as a dramatic monograph. One feels that the dramatist has introduced into his play just so much of "the strife of tongues" as serves to throw into prominence the noble figure of the prophet. The play is, so to speak, a "Voice" in a setting of whispers. Personality rather than action is the key-note of the *Baptistes*. The babble of an Exchange would be no more out of place under the lofty roof of some cathedral than would intricate plot and bustling action in a drama the central person of which is so sacred and majestic as the

mighty desert-preacher that went before the face of the Lord to prepare His ways.

In his preface to his rendering of the *Jephthes* the present translator ought to have mentioned, but was ignorant of the fact at the time of writing it, that that drama had been translated into English verse by Mr. Alexander Gibb. The same writer, who is at present engaged in archæological research in Edinburgh, also published in the same volume with the *Jephthes*, a version of the *Baptistes*.*

KILLEARN MANSE,
January, 1904.

* Edinburgh : J. Moodie Miller, Lindsay Place, 1870.

To My Brother,
JAMES GORDON MITCHELL,
MINISTER OF THE PARISH OF NORRIESTON,
A PREACHER WHOSE MOST ELOQUENT
HOMILY IS HIS LIFE,
I Dedicate this Book

*Soldier that never lustedst for glory!
Star in the Sun that paledst thy ray!
Not without are thine immortal story
Trace we in page of a sacred Play.*

*Prophet that didst the desolate way make
Joyful with news of eternal Spring!
Burning and shining Beam of the Daybreak!
Herald preparing the path of the King!*

*Still dost thou speak, though thy soul's Defender
Summons His prophet (O glad release!)
Out of the shadow into the splendour,
Out of the battle into His peace.*

*Awful Voice through the centuries pealing,
Lead our steps to the Word Divine!
Star! beam on for our pathway's revealing,
Till in the light of the Christ we shine.*

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BAPTISTES
SIVE
CALUMNIA

TRAGOEDIA

AUCTORE
Georgio Buchanano
SCOTO

GEORGE BUCHANAN
TO
JAMES THE SIXTH
KING OF SCOTS
GIVES HEARTIEST GREETING.

As all my little works, since I was appointed to teach you, have familiar access to you, salute and converse with you, and rest under the shadow of your protection, so this my *Baptistes* seems for many reasons to have a more confident title to the patronage of your name; for, although abortive, it is yet my first offspring, and it calls the youth away from the common run of dramatic themes to the imitation of antiquity, and strenuously endeavours to kindle in their minds a zeal for religion, which, at the time of its composition, was everywhere persecuted. But that in it which more particularly concerns you is its clear exhibition of the torments of tyrants and the miseries which they endure even when they seem to be most prosperous. This I deem it not only advantageous but even necessary for you to understand, in order that you may betimes begin to hate what it behoves you ever to shun. Moreover,

it is my desire that this little book may be for a testimony to posterity that, if at any time, whether at the instigation of evil counsellors, or from the license of sovereignty overbearing a good education, you should in any way misconduct yourself, the blame is to be imputed not to your teachers but to yourself as having not obeyed their salutary admonitions. May the Lord grant better things of you, and, as your Sallust has it, "convert your good conduct from habit into a second nature." This is what I, in common with many others, both look and hope for. Farewell.

STIRLING, *1st November, 1576.*

THE ARGUMENT.

HERODIAS, out of hatred to John the Baptist because of his rebuking Herod for his unlawful marriage, urges the King to slay the prophet. Salome, her daughter, having obtained from Herod a promise of whatever she might ask, requests the head of John. Herod, after some hesitation, yields to her demand.

THE PERSONS.

THE SPEAKER *of the* PROLOGUE.

MALCHUS, *a Pharisee.*

GAMALIEL, *a Pharisee.*

JOHN THE BAPTIST.

CHORUS *of Jews.*

HEROD, *the King.*

HERODIAS, *the Queen.*

SALOME, *daughter to Herodias.*

A MESSENGER.

JOHN THE BAPTIST.

PROLOGUE.

IN mythic tales of old have poets writ
How Proteus was possest of infinite power
To change the form in which he met the eye,
How never chain was forged that might secure
One that, at will, flow'd into wavy stream,
Shrill'd as a flame, as furious lion roared,
Put forth his leafy branches as a tree,
Bristled as bear, or as a serpent hissed.
But I have proved that ancient tale to be
Than fatal words of Sibyl truer far ;
For all the men I see, 'tis my belief,
Are Proteuses who change their countenance,
And cast themselves into what shapes they will.

To their false charges, more than ought beside,
It is the Drama's lot to be exposed.

For, who may bring to the stage an ancient tale
But malcontents receive it with a hiss,
Cough of disdain, and gesture of disgust?
Or, who may offer any novel theme
But straightway what they crave is something old?
This they applaud, they praise, they dote upon,
While they reject with scorn ungenerous
Anything new, and hiss unheard away.
Let words be ne'er so sound, they wrest their sense
With sinister constructions—everything
They paint in colours blacker than its own.
Themselves a prey to slumber and to sloth,
Idle, they look askance on others' toil,
And all their pains upon the task bestow
Of laying hold of something they can blame.
On any fault they swoop with Lynx's eye,
And plenteously condemn with critic care;
The while from what is irreproachable,
With fingers on their ears, they fly away.
Enough: on their ungenial arrogance,
Their faces gloomy with a surly pride,
I will not waste one further word of mine.

But, if my words have access to the ear
Of some sincere discerner who (as nought
By mind of man produced from fault is free),
Making allowance for slight blemishes,
May countenance bestow and friendly aid
On one who furthers literary art,
'To him we offer this our drama new—
Or, rather, ancient tale in modern dress—
How John the Baptist to a monarch's lust,
And subtle slanders of his spiteful foes
Fell innocent prey, and died a guiltless death.

Again, who likes, according to his will,
May call my drama old or new for me.
If what was done full many an age agone
Be ancient, 'twill be then reputed old.
But, if we deem that new which yet is green
In living memory, then 'tis wholly new.
For, till the race of man shall cease to be,
New frauds, new slanders shall replace the old ;
Ever shall wicked spite distress the just,
Might vanquish right, and falsehood innocence.

MALCHUS, GAMALIEL, AND CHORUS.

Malchus.

O WRETCHED age, and goal so near at hand
Of my expiring breath ! unhappy fate !
For this have ye prolonged my vital span :
That I should see my native land enslav'd,
Her temples sacrilegiously defiled,
Her holy rites with heathenish confused ?
These eyes have seen inviolable fanes
Rifled of holy mysteries, the gold
Wrenched from the consecrated temple-doors.
Whate'er Gabinius's cupidity
Could seize, or Antony's luxury could drain,
Is gone ; and 'tis our infamous doom to be
Playthings of Cleopatra's appetite ;
And, crowning insult to our country, Herod,
Great-grandson of the Edomite Antipas,
Wiolds over us a sceptre stained with blood ;

Israel by Idumea is intralled,
Zion pays court to king of Edom's line,
The holy city, God's elected race
Are desecrated by a godless throne.
But yet, despite the hurts that cruel fate
On us inflicts, despite our thralldom sore,
Till now there gleam'd a spark of ancient glory :
As if whatever vestiges remained
Of Judah's polity must still exact
The veneration of her very foes,
The fierce usurper that subdued the land,
With many purple-vested counsellors,
Homage began to pay to Israel's laws.
Hereby, with hope renew'd, we scarce had time,
Foredone with miseries, to lift the head,
When evil rushed upon us from a source
Whence none had apprehended ought of ill ;
Witness this upstart Baptist, who his birth
Derives not from unholy ancestors,
Who ne'er was nurtured in a Gentile creed,
But of our nation, and the tribe of Levi,
One dedicate to God from infancy,
Son of a priest, and, in a little while,

To be himself a priest, if so it were
He had not chosen to pluck the fruit unripe
Of coveted glory, rather than to reap
Harvest of honour in its time mature.
This solitary, then, has made his home
In the sequestered country's lone retreats ;
And, practising upon the ignorant crowd
With semblance of a sanctity severe—
His locks unkempt, his coat of camel's hair,
His diet that of beasts—has used his sleights
That so on him are bent the eyes of all.
'Tis commonly believed a prophet new
Has, of a sudden, to the earth been sent.
By this he has attracted to himself
A host attendant of the populace :
The cities are deserted that the folk
On this one man may lavish their esteem :
The princes honour him, and kings revere.
The folly of the doltish multitude
In such wise fosters his o'erweening pride
That, as a second Moses, he, forsooth,
Will make new laws, and he pretends to wash
The soul from sin with water, and corrupts

With novel usages our ancient laws.
Then, to the end he may with greater ease
Play on the passions of the populace,
He does not cease to ply their willing ears
With railing words that wound the fathers' breasts.
Therefore, if none possess the courage rare
This frenzied robber's efforts to oppose,
That holiness which once a world admired
Will pass—aye, passes—aye, has passed away.

Gamaliel.

It is a rule becoming our profession
To let no hasty judgment pass our lips,
And gentle counsels fathers mild beseem.
The rashness of young men is pardonable,
But no excuse can screen a fault of ours.
Refrain thyself a little while from wrath ;
Let passion rest, and bid thy grief be calm.

Malchus.

Meseems, hereby, that thou, Gamaliel,
Approvest of his acts of sacrilege.

Gamaliel.

O Malchus, Malchus, nor do I approve,
Nor yet condemn, before I knowledge gain
Of what this matter is, and how it stands.
Touching this seer, so far as I have heard,
He is no wicked man, nor object fit
To be o'erburdened with the people's hate.

Malchus.

O stars of light ! O heaven and earth ! Behold,
This man, forsooth, lacks not an advocate
Who ventures to deny his wickedness.

Gamaliel.

Who sin rebukes, who teaches righteousness,
Who is himself the first to tread the way
He points to others—would'st thou have me think
That he, with truth, is called a wicked man ?

Malchus.

Who scorns our laws, who teaches pathways new,
And novel ceremonies, who assails

Our rulers with reproaches—aims at priests
His slighting speeches—would'st thou have me think
That he, with truth, is called a righteous man ?

Gamaliel.

Were we as bitter and severe to sit
In judgment on ourselves as we are harsh
To others, then the evil that we do
Would be the less exposed to common blame.
There is no measure to our flattery
Of one another, save our bent alone.
We are extolled as blessed men—as gods
The vulgar deem us—righteous, pure, and holy ;
Yet none of us from gravest faults is free.

Malchus.

Although, Gamaliel, thy words be true,
I ask thee, is it lawful for the crowd,
At their discretion, to malign their priests ?
Let common folk attend, let them obey,
Let them a life of moderation lead,
And let them not resist the curb of law.

For him that rules them, if they go astray,
Let him into the way conduct them back.
He is himself his law ; and, should he err,
There is a God that marks and visits guilt.

Gamaliel.

Doth such appear to thee a righteous rule ?

Malchus.

Most righteous.

Gamaliel.

Wherefore ?

Malchus.

For that ignorance,
Delusion, rashness, inexperience,
And blindness are the people's properties.

Gamaliel.

Men of the populace are often found
Equal to princes in intelligence.

Malchus.

Why not surrender, then, our chairs to shepherds ?

Gamaliel.

Both Moses and King David tended sheep.

Malchus.

But they in everything were taught of God.

Gamaliel.

The God that them instructed, him can teach.

Malchus.

Will God, forsaking us, instruct that man?

Gamaliel.

Our God hath no respect to sceptred sway,
To ancestry, or loveliness of form,
Or kingly wealth, but to the bosom free
From taint of cruelty, and lust, and guile :
In such a faene His Holy Spirit dwells.

Malchus.

Indeed, Gamaliel, to own the truth,
It hath for long appeared to me that thou
Art of the Baptist's sacrilegious school.

As thou dost things unworthy of thy sires,
I can no more in silence veil my mind.
Thou who, above all others, ought'st to guard
Our dignity, dost more than any man
Contend against it, as the partisan
Of a delirious youth. By God, I pray,
Tell me the end thou seekest to achieve—
The gain thou dost hereby expect to reap?
Belike, the man who utterly subverts
The honour of our class, and drags us down
To want, has wealth and fame to spare for thee.

Gamaliel.

O Malchus, thy conjectures from the mark
Of truth are far astray, if thou suppose
That we, by dint of lordly pride and scorn
And force, can vindicate our dignity.
By other means our fathers rose to fame.

Malchus.

Their ancient ways befitted ancient times,
As ours are proper to the passing day :
To every age its own observances.

Gamaliel.

Nay, rather, for the good whate'er is good
Is comely ever.

Malchus.

 If a single spark
Of our ancestral spirit we retained——

Gamaliel.

We also would obey our fathers' laws——

Malchus.

This dreamer more than menaced should have been ;
He should have paid the penalty of death.

Gamaliel.

To thirst for blood is foreign to our calling.

Malchus.

Whate'er to God is offered is devout
And holy.

Gamaliel.

 Guiltless men to sacrifice
Is undevout devotion.

Malchus.

Call'st thou him
A guiltless man who everything subverts?

Gamaliel.

If he is wrong, why dost thou not proceed
Overtly to confute him, and illume
His soul with beams from thine intelligence?
As thou art ripe in wisdom and in years,
And erudite, why not accost a raw,
Unlettered youth? It may be thine to lead
The wanderer to the path of righteousness,
And thou, for this, from all shalt glory gain.

Malchus.

To treatment mild this evil ne'er will yield
But to the gibbet, fire and sword, or still,
Of such if thou have knowledge, deadlier
Expedients than the gibbet, fire, and sword.

Gamaliel.

Although he be as evil as thou say'st,
Or even worse, if thou wilt have it so,

It yet becomes thee this at least to do :
Reprove him in a gentle, friendly way,
Lest any think that thou would'st rather gain
His downfall whose salvation stands in doubt
Than move a finger to avert his fate.
'Tis of the last concern to thy repute
To make it clear to all—aye, even thy foes,
That every one to save is thy desire,
And none to undo, save him of stubborn mind,
Who rushes headlong o'er perdition's brink.
This, prithee, do at least, ere further thou
Art borne away by passion :—ponder well
What thou by this persistency canst gain.

Malchus.

My gains are these : our foes' discomfiture,
The solace of the good, access of strength
To doubters, and of fear to brazen face,
And, by the shedding of this Baptist's blood,
The confirmation of our country's laws.

Gamaliel.

Nay, rather will men deem thee, for thy pains,
One that hath gone about by tyrant might

The fall to compass of a holy man,
Whom thou in argument could'st not defeat.

Malchus.

Be he as holy and as reverend
As it may please thee to imagine, still
He is not guided by the Spirit of God,
For our ancestral principles he slights.
But, since I may not look for help from thee,
I go to beg the King to avert our fall.

Chorus.

Gamaliel's monition sound I deem :
Do thou thereto attend. But wrath, a foe
To counsels wise, beclouds the mental sight,
And shuts the ear to warnings fraught with health.

Gamaliel.

Fuming with rage, and puffed with pride he goes.
I have been instant with my utmost powers
Admonishing a man infuriate,
Striving his savage passion to allay

With gentle words, and I to him have been
A faithful counsellor ; but yet, in place
Of thankfulness, this ingrate nurses spleen
Toward a man who well deserves of him.
But thus, in general, we live our life ;
We who deceive the people with a show
Of holiness, are men of many faults,
And 'midst the multitude the worst is here :
A man the laws of God may safely spurn,
But let him dare do ought against our rules,
We seek our foe to ruin by our gold,
To do to death by poison, to suppress
By witnesses suborned ; the royal ear
We ply with lying tales ; when ought offends
Our pride, some trumped-up rumour in revenge
We spread abroad ; within our stormy breasts
We kindle flames of rage ; we barb the dart
Of cruel anger with our calumnies.
And now this man, forgetting all restraints
Of modesty, directs his steps to Court.
There, with the veil of plausible excuse
Hiding the wickedness that lurks beneath,
He will invent some story that a sect

Has newly sprung to life : the fathers' faith
Is overborne : the King's authority
Is openly become a laughing-stock—
In short, whate'er may further his design.
Should he perceive the King by such report
Is little moved, he will draw forth a dart
Of sterner temper from his armory.
'Twill be his cry that armed conspirators
Have bound themselves by oath to slay the King :
They meet in secret council : they mature
Their infamous design : they hatch their plots :
Godless abettors eke their private means.
The spokesman, he, of wrath ungovernable
And ever savage cruelty, will vent
Figments like these, or even yet more wild.
Into the royal ear he will distil
Such poison from the limbeck of his mind.
And 'tis a well-nigh universal fault
In kings to give informers ready ear :
The crueller a lie, the liefer they
Believe it ; their imagination teems
With empty fears ; they let the fickle breeze
Of idle rumour regulate their course.

By them a faithful monitor is held
Fearful, inactive, sluggish, and obtuse.
We, men ourselves of no resplendent virtue,
Have wrought a change on virtue's very name ;
And with illustrious titles, in our pride,
The uninstructed rabble we deceive.
Touching this prophet, would our order bore
A part more moderate and circumspect.
If hither he is sent by God's design,
No human power his progress may obstruct.
But, if some wicked plan he fabricates,
And artfully conceals, he whets a blade
That of a sudden shall himself transfix.
Let each, according to his understanding,
Interpret this my saying as he will.
If any to my judgment here conform,
Pure shall he keep his hands from guiltless gore,
Nor dare to spill the blood of holy men ;
Lest acts of cruelty that he has done
Against his fellows, on his head recoil.
Has Herod not enough of savagery,
Without our bearing brands of burning ire
To feed his cruel fury's raging fire ?

CHORUS.

How thick a gloom in midnight den
Enshrouds the minds of mortal men !

What murky shadows lie
Athwart the path that we must trace
By night and day with rapid pace,
Until we halt and die !

Shame is assumed by shameless folk :

The godless 'neath religion's cloak

Seem holy men, forsooth.

In visage, they of raging breast

Make lying show of inward rest,

The fraudulent of truth.

The man whose countenance austere

And reverend made him appear

A model to the age,

Now madly raves in fury's throes,

And, like a conflagration, glows

With savage flames of rage.

As vapour Etna makes disgorge
Swift-rolling boulders from her forge,
Or as the flame that leaps
From out Vesuvius in his play,
Consumes the mountain's bowels away
To arid cinder-heaps :

So him a blind vindictive spite
Impels with ruin to requite
This guiltless man of grace,
And vex with slanders void of ruth
A breast that unaffected Truth
Has made her dwelling-place.

O Lust of glory ! parent fell
Of many evils, who dost swell
With empty insolence ;
O Fame ! that, though thou lure the eye
To deem thy splendour from on high,
Art Honour's false pretence !

As soon as ye your entrance find
Into the kingdom of the mind,
With sweet but poisoned bowl

Ye witch the spirit—break the curb
Of sober Reason, and perturb
The palace of the soul.

All things of truth and faith do flee—
All that is pure and good—from thee—
Whate'er, in holier times
A blessed visitant below,
Our wickedness compelled to go,
And leave us to our crimes.

By cunning workman's wondrous sleight,
Bringing each hidden thing to light,
Piercing the spirit's inmost seat,
Revealing every dark retreat—
To mortal vision were it given
Beneath the naked ray of heav'n
To view the secrets of the mind,
Ah! there what wonders would'st thou find!
For brutes within that antre small,
Full strange and varied have their stall.
The distant Nile's and Ganges' streams,
Afric with marvels wild that teems,

'The caverns black as Erebus
Of dread-inspiring Caucasus—
More monsters than them all infest
Are harboured by the human breast.
There would'st thou find the rage insane
Of tiger red with bloody stain,
The savage heart that lioness
Conceals beneath her tawny dress,
The greedy maw and thirsty gulf
That still to slaughter urge the wolf,
The basilisk's envenomed breath
That taints the ambient air with death,
The asps that endless slumber bring,
The scorpion feared for curvèd sting,
The feigned lament of crocodile
Mid sounding sedges of the Nile,
The cunning tricks that foxes follow
Egypt's hyena's laughter hollow.

By playing a religious part
The tyrant veils his cruel heart ;
And, as a cloak, the tasselled stole
Is worn to hide the wicked soul.

Plain worth, in mean attire arrayed,
Conceals herself beneath the shade
Of rural hut, nor vaunts her claim
To pompous pride of titled name,
Smiles at the city's bustling ways—
The shifting breath of public praise,
Nor sits obsequious at the gate,
As client of some patron great,
But silent spends in country lone
Her happy life, save to herself unknown.

HERODIAS AND HEROD.

Herodias.

O THOU of ever easy mind, not yet
Dost thou perceive thy royal authority
Is tottering to its fall? Art thou so blind
As not to see devices are afoot
Against thy life? If but for one year more
This demagogue thou suffer to survive,
Thy threats of chains, and prison, and the cross
Will be in vain; already he with pride
Surveys his power; the train that follows him
Casts in the shade the palace retinue.

Herod.

What dost thou fear from a defenceless crowd?

Herodias.

If secret councils have thy sufferance,
To thee I may attribute the belief
That nothing in creation should be feared.

Herod.

But of their own accord the populace
Flock to this prophet, and he teacheth them.

Herodias.

If thus the sect is spreading, so much more
Hast thou excuse for fear.

Herod.

That charge of thine
Against this man, his sanctity repels.

Herodias.

This oft is but a cloak to cover crimes.

Herod.

The power to fear is that of governors
In purple robed.

Herodias.

The guile to fear is that
Of stern dissemblers.

Herod.

Tell me, can a man
Defenceless and unarmed, who slakes his thirst
From streams, whose meat the woods, whose grassy
couch
The earth provides, devise a stratagem
Against our throne ?

Herodias.

Thine eyes behold his dress,
His food and drink, but what he bears about
Within his breast concealed, thou canst not see.

Herod.

O wretched lot of kings, to fear the wretched !

Herodias.

Most wretched lot of all, to be the prey
Of what was never reckoned worth a fear.

Herod.

Well, then, can kings do anything with safety ?

Herodias.

All things, if they remove what lets their peace.

Herod.

Herein a good king and a tyrant differ :—
The one unto his foes extends protection,
The other is himself his subjects' foe.

Herodias.

Destroy or die are stern alternatives ;
But, if our choice between the two must lie,
'Tis better to destroy our enemy.

Herod.

When either is not needful, both are woeful.

Herodias.

Touching so rank sedition, when, as now,
The rage of the unstable crowd is kindled—
Religion, law, the King's authority
Are scorned and laughed at by the basest sort,
Is it not time to use severity ?

Beware lest some deceptive show of mercy
Should turn away thy mind from what is just.
That which seems clemency, on nearer view,
Will prove to be the height of cruelty.
While one seditious and abandoned man
Thou sparest, thou proceedest to destroy
All whom he busies him to set in arms
Against thy life. Imagine that already,
As needs must be at length, the fickle crowd
Are goaded to the fray ; on every hand
The conflagration glows of dismal war ;
The land is overrun, and left forlorn ;
Cities are given to flames ; virgins are ravished ;
And battles are, with doubtful issue, fought ;
When licence breaks the bridle of the law,
Thou'lt curse thy clemency, but all too late.
And see where comes this bane and fount of ill ;
Here is that moralist. Enquire of him :
Thou wilt hear more from him, or I mistake,
Than has been noised abroad by common talk.
I wonder not there are who scorn thy sway,
Since thou thyself by mildness temptest knaves.

Herod.

Good kings, however much is in their power,
Will yet impose restrictions on their strength.

Herodias.

Is't so indeed ? shall this man set a limit
Unto the power of thrones ? Is he to be
The oracle by whom thou art to reign ?
If but thou wert possessed of kingly spirit——

Herod.

Why dost thou not depart ? Leave these affairs
To me.

Herodias.

Why do I not depart, in case
He should once more insult me to my face ?
Who hopes for justice when, unvenged, a Queen
Precedence gives to meanest of the mean ?

HEROD, JOHN, AND CHORUS.

Herod.

HAS she departed yet? . . . She has departed.
Meanwhile, let us confer on this affair.
It should in no wise trouble thee, or strange
Be deemed by thee, if an offended woman,
Rich, noble, puissant, in short a queen,
Should, beyond what becomes her, be incensed.
None, surely, can attest so well as thou
How I have ever forwarded thy weal.
For thee a universal hate assails,
And, as a criminal, demands for doom :
The nobles are aggrieved, the priests enraged.
And briefly shall I tell thee what it is
That thus excites the public discontent.
In thy abusive speeches, openly
Thou railest at all classes of the people ;
Spreading the deadly slime of doctrines new,
The vulgar, ignorant of ancient laws,

Thou snarest ; and with treasonable talk
Thou shak'st the common weal and public peace ;
Thou soldiers their commander, and the people
The Emperor forbiddest to obey,
The while thou holdest forth unto the crowd
The promise of new kingdoms, and release
From foreign yoke, exciting in their breasts
A fruitless hope, nor suffering a race
Rebellious to maintain tranquillity ;
And thou, as if too light our load of woes,
Dost madly court afresh the arms of Rome.
Nor do I doubt what thou hast dared to do,
When absent from my sight, since to my face
Thou hast decried my marriage as unchaste ;
And thou hast striven to kindle fires of hate
Against me in the bosoms of the people,
And done thine utmost to make war between
My brother and myself—nay more, as though
Thou, that against the weal of all alike
Durst all things, hadst too little ill achieved,
Thou now addressest thee to war with heaven,
And sacred usages, whereby this realm
Hereto hath stood, essay'st to abrogate.

At this the people murmur with one voice,
And make complaint against me as remiss
In vindication of our country's laws.
But, yet, in thy despite no single act
Of harshness is ascribable to me.
Nay, but whatever benefit a judge
Benevolent and friendly can bestow,
Unstintedly I will to thee vouchsafe.
For no Assyrian or Egyptian sire
Hath me begot, that I should be a tyrant,
And thirst for blood : the self-same spot of earth
Is parent, nourisher, and country both
Alike to thee and me. As oft as one,
Albeit of the meanest order, dies,
It is as though a limb incorporate
With mine own flesh were rudely torn away ;
Meseems that blood from mine own veins is shed.
In Herod thou a fair and clement judge
Wilt find. If thou be able to rebut
The other charges, what at any time
Thou may'st against myself or mine have said,
I do forgive thee. Thou shalt understand,
The people bearing witness, I ignore

A private, and avenge a public wrong.
O would thou couldst so purge the residue
Of thine offences, as by innocence
To leave no room for my severity !

Chorus.

Perséver as thou dost begin :
Dear to thy country thou shalt be,
And thou hereby a name shalt win,
Will live to late posterity.
Know neither gold nor armèd ward
To realms affords security,
But loving subjects' true regard,
And Faith the fruit of Equity.

John.

The man to whom the reins of government
Have been by God entrusted, many things
Should hear : it needs not that he credit all.
By interest, spite and favour, grief and fear,
The truth is oft suppress. If any one
Among the people or the fathers deem,
In ought that I have said concerning him,

That I too much severity have used,
He his own life must censure, ere he blame
My speech. 'Tis my invariable rule
Public offences to rebuke in public :
I nothing in concealment teach or do.
I do not lie in wait in dark retreats :
I censure not men's persons, but their faults.
What time the soldiers did of me demand
How they could serve alike their king and God,
I charged them not unjustly to accuse,
Or ravish, or do any violence,
Or by deceit the unwary to defraud ;
But to adjust desire to pay assigned.
Nor do I publish any hope of change
Save that which, from the ancient seers derived,
Ye, like myself, embrace ; and, meanwhile, none
Out of full many thousands can be found
Who, at my instigation, has despised
His prince. Such things as have been noised abroad
By rumour, or devised by anger blind,
Instinct, to headlong madness, with desire
Of wounding, easily the naked truth
Will of itself refute. I deem that nought

Is clearer proof of how religiously
I have observed our ancient rites and laws
Than that my crimes' illustrious detector
Appears not in the open light of day,
But mutters secretly where place is found
For easy fabrication of his lies.
Whereas I have declared the law forbids
That thou should have thy brother's spouse to wife,
Reason with thine own self upon this thing :—
If 'tis more righteous thee to please, or God.
Would that as many as devote themselves
To monarchs' friendship, had the heart to choose
Rather to utter salutary truths
Than honeyed words, the harbingers of harm.
How this would bar the avenue whereby
Hosts of our ills and troubles gain access !
Whate'er in any words of mine displays
Something of blunt and free veracity,
Do thou, as good and fair,—a thing most right
In Right's defender—well and fairly take,
And judge the limits of thy power to be
Determined by the measure of the laws.
The sway thou bear'st o'er others, God, the King

Of all, o'er thee and other kings maintains.
Therefore, whatever sentence on my life
Thou passest, God shall surely pass on thine.

Herod.

Discourse of heaven when thou hast reached the
stars ;
Endure earth's laws while earth is thine abode.

John.

I reverence the kingdoms of the earth,
And render my allegiance to their kings :
The Kingdom everlasting I esteem
My country, and its sovereign I adore.

Herod.

The question cries for answer, in how far
Thou kings obeyest, who would'st have the king
Himself obedience render to thy laws.

John.

If to make laws were mine, I would ordain
That subjects kings obey, and kings their God.

Herod.

Enough of disputation : once again
Conduct him hence : the thing is intricate :
Till all more clearly is disclosed and known,
I am determined nothing to decide.

Chorus.

Let whoso deems that he can reach
A subtle tyrant's meaning through his speech,
Assure himself that he relies
On too obscure a mirror for his eyes.
Oh may the heavenly Father prosper all !
Yet the mind dreads to bode that which it fears may
 fall.

Herod.

No tongue in words can fully make it plain,
No keen intelligence, on thought bestowed,
Can wholly grasp how heavy-fraught with care
And wretchedness is the estate of kings.
The crowd esteem that we, whom want besets,
Alarm torments, and thraldom loads with woe,
Alone among mankind are blest and free.

Whate'er the people love, desire, or dread,
Without restraint they dare confess ; afar
From fear, their frugal substance they enjoy :
But, out of doors, we must assume a mask
Of princely virtue ; we are forced to yield
Courteous assurances with beaming face ;
To be fair spoken in our public talk ;
Wrath to reserve in our dissembling breast ;
Hate to repress against convenient hour ;
To threaten loudest, when our troubled heart
Is burdened with the gravest cause for dread.
The commonalty scorn a gentle prince,
And hate a harsh one. The capricious crowd
Must both be served and ruled ; no masterdom
Have I o'er mine own actions. If I slay
This prophet, I the people shall offend :
But, if I save him, then too slight regard
I render to the interests of my throne.
What, therefore must be done ? Is there a doubt ?
Regard must be bestowed upon my rule,
For I am nearest neighbour to myself.
If I must serve the people for the sake
Of sovereignty, what could be more inept

Than that, in the attempt to please the crowd
I should my sway destroy? The common folk
Anger and gladness fitfully assume,
And fitfully discard.

I am resolved

To seal my throne's authority with blood.
When that is done, 'twill be an easy task
The commonalty to propitiate.
If I permit this bane to spread abroad,
It will prevail against all antidotes :
For lo ! he dared reproach me to my face
With shameless marriage. If I suffer that
From him, without inflicting punishment,
Not there will this man's shamelessness be stay'd.
'Twill be his pleasure that the sceptre bend
Compliant to his statutes : he will load
His prisoners with chains : not to be ruled,
Rather to rule will he desire : to kings
He will give laws, and what is excellent
With basest will confound : for waxing ill
Let means of cure be used without delay :
Quench the new-kindled flame before it spread :
By mild endurance of a former wrong,

'Thou courtest fresh affront. If I can take
The people with me in exacting doom,
The service of the favourable people
I will not disregard ; but, if I cannot,
I am resolved on this : before ought else
To serve the interests of my sovereignty.
As for that fellow Malchus, and his prate
Of law—the questions nice he flings about,
With disputations indeterminate—
I judge that such are no concern of mine,
Provided only that the people know
This single law must be by them observed,
To wit :—That force of statute appertain
To ought that it may please me to ordain.

CHORUS.

THOU WHO the spacious universe foundedst,
Who, at Thy will mak'st all things to tremble—
Heaven with glittering fires overspangled—
Earth with diversified culture adornèd—
Ocean that swells at the beck of the tide-waves—
Hath not History brought to our hearing—
History holding the ken of the ages—
Glorious deeds of an epoch departed,
When, by the strength of Thy puissant right hand,
Kingdoms proud of their substance and treasure
Thou hast uprooted and cast into darkness,
That in their vineyards Thou mightest plant us,
Not by the javelin, not by the sword-blade,
Not by our craft or our armament marshalled ?
Only the favour of God, the all-powerful
Guided us safe through their barbarous squadrons.

Art Thou not He that is Israel's Sovereign ?
Art Thou not God of the race of the Hebrews,

Under Whose leadership, faithless encampments
Trampled in dust have we, crushing our foemen ?
Confident, not in the strength of our right hand,
Only in Thee as our Guide and Director,
Oft have we won bright palms for our home-land.

Father ! O why hast Thou wholly deserted
People in whom Thou aforetime delightedst ?
Why are we left for a proverb to foemen ?

Slighted is godliness : faith is subverted :
Purple Deceit in our palace is reigning :
Like to a victim, Thy consecrate nation
Yield meek necks to the pitiless axe-blade ;
Perish Thy seers by the sword of the Despot :
Glory Thy foes in the voice of our mourning :
Cloaked in religion, persons deserving
Punishment govern : persons deserving
Governance, guiltless are punished with bondage.

Rise Thou ! vouchsafe Thy support to Thy people !
Rise Thou ! most merciful Father, and show Thee
Such to our foemen as when, for our grandsires,

Deep Thou engulfedst the war-cars of Egypt—
Such as of old did the prophet's attendant,
When Thou hadst opened the eyes of the stripling,
See Thee chariots fiery impelling
Till one flame spread over the champaign.

Drive from our spirits the blackness of darkness—
Error that quenches the light of the reason—
Buries the soul in a cloud as of midnight.
Let wide Earth, from the parts of it warming
Under the beams of the orient sunshine,
Unto the parts that the Light-giver witness
Flame as of red gold bathe in the ocean,
One true God and omnipotent own Thee.

MALCHUS AND JOHN.

Malchus.

IN such wise ordered is the lot of man,
Should God vouchsafe to offer thee thy choice,
Thou doubttest what to take, and what refuse.
Dost thou for thine and for thyself desire
Advantage, fame, abundance? Often these
Have them destroyed that compassed what they
craved.

Is it thy prayer that foes be put to flight—
Be chained, and held in durance? Often hence
Comes forth their crowning triumph, thy defeat.
To seek no further proof, that this is true
I learn from jeopardy wherein I stand :
For, while, ensconced in mountain heights remote,
This upstart Baptist charmed the populace,
And drew to him a credulous multitude,
I stood my lonely ground as champion—
All others flinching from the pious fray—

Of honour of the name of Pharisee :
I used all means to compass my design ;
Nor from my efforts ceased, till guilty hands
With iron chains were shackled, and the hold
Confined the public foe : and I have filled
The palace with the story of his crimes.
But yet, I see, all this avails me nought—
Prison, and chains, and charges are in vain.
So strong a gripe upon the public mind
Has been secured by this unholy pest—
The souls of all have of the venom drunk
So deeply, that his danger makes them groan,
And, by his overthrow, he honour gains.
Where'er I go, they curse me, point me out,
And eye me with a countenance of hate.
That man of sacrilege—that leveller
Of differences in nature and in rank—
They favour him, and keep their watch and ward
Before the bolted gateway to his cell.

I know no wretchedness like ours who lay
Aside all other matters to bestow
Our services upon the common weal.

Let who so binds himself thereto, discern
He takes upon himself a thankless task.
For 'tis the people's fixt and evil mind
The excellent to scorn, the base befriend.

Whither shall I betake myself? What first
Shall I complain of? Who shall bear the brunt
Of my intensest anger? or to whom
Shall I my earliest support convey?
The godless crowd this prophet false revere;
The Rabbins mumble; and the King connives
At his proceedings; and the nobles pay
No heed; I only, with these shoulders, prop—
With these my feeble shoulders—ancient rites
That totter to their fall, no hand put forth
To render me assistance—I alone
The general reverse deplore: what then?
Shall I desert the office that I fill?—
Become a traitor to our holy laws,
And to the dignity of my degree,
And sport afford unto mine enemies?
Indeed I shall. What other can I do?
Am I alone to bear what none will lift?

Shall I take up my solitary stand
Beneath the crashing fabric of the State ?
Let God Himself maintain the cause divine :
And, since it is the fashion of the day
For each his private interest to regard,
Myself unto myself am chief concern.
If I should fail in bearing up the State,
Upon my head its ruin will incline :
Those who most cherish me while yet I stand,
Will first lift heel against me when I fall.
Should I succeed, I ill bestow my pains,
I lay up nought but envy for myself.
Thus late Gamaliel's counsel I approve,
If one may late to wisdom's path return.
Wherefore I choose that they should feel the lack
Of my persistency in this affair,
Rather than, when the thing is done, impose
A penalty on my foolhardiness.
Let each man think as best him seems ; for me,
I will myself set free from mine annoy,
And patch me up a friendship with this seer.
My overtures the simple-minded man
Will not, I think, reject. But, if he prove

Implacable, all means I will employ
Whereby the populace I may dissuade
From thinking that he perished by my arts.
If I can but conciliate the people,
The consequence will not be wholly bad.
And lo ! he comes, I think . . . in sooth 'tis he :
Behold the attendant crowd that follows him—
The man of sacrilege : and, meantime, we
Among deserted chairs supinely rest
Within the city : but I first would fain
Give ear to what this master has to say.

John.

O mighty Ruler, Maker, Judge of all !
Whatso the vast expanse of air enfolds,
Whatso the earth supports, whatso the sea
Nurses beneath his billows, own thy sway
Divine, and feel that Thou their Father art,
And willingly in changeless course observe
The laws that Thou hast once for all ordained.
At Thy command the Spring bepaints with flowers
The meadows, and the Summer yields her fruits,

And plenteous Autumn pours his spilth of wine,
And hoary Winter robes the hills in snow,
The winding rivers roll their vasty flood
Into the deep, the Ocean ebbs and flows,
The Moon illumes the night, the Sun the day,
Circling the globe with torch of restless fire ;
Nor is there ought at all in heaven or earth
That does does not joyfully its King obey,
Its Parent love, and, with its utmost powers,
Devout regard to Him that made it, show.
But man, who, more than all created things
By far, his rule of life and his delight
Should find in the commandments of his God,
Alone regards their claim with sovereign scorn.
The statutes of his Maker he contemns,
And flings away the bridle of His laws,
Careers with headlong speed in paths of sin,
Metes law by lust, and poises right with might.

Malchus.

So far thy doctrine is without reproach.

John.

Nor at the Gentiles marvel I so much,
In vagrant error o'er the earth dispread,
As at the race that boasts itself the lot
Of God's inheritance—assails with taunts
The residue, and godless men decries ;
Though never sun in all the globe looked down
Upon a race of more licentious life.

Malchus.

So far, indeed, thou speakest but the truth.

John.

Nor are the fickle crowd alone to blame.
Thou Levite, shining far in snowy stole !
Thou Scribe puft up with knowledge of the law !
Ye Elders, to be had in reverence
For age mature ! misjudging Error leads
Your minds into her winding maze away ;
Widows and orphans plead their cause in vain
At your tribunals ; rich men grind the poor ;
And right and wrong are both alike for sale.

Malchus.

My anger rends me : do I silent hear ?

John.

For you, O Rabbins, who pretend to excel
All other men in holiness of life,
And knowledge ! ye of hallowed priestly rank !
Thou Pontiff, o'er the solemn Sanhedrim
Presiding ! every marketable herb
That earth produces do ye tithe ; not one
Escapes you—*anise, garlic, mint,*
Nor rue nor nettle nor the verdant hay ;
But, if ye be required to read or teach
The oracles of prophecy divine,
Or point the pathway to a holy life,
Then, sooth to say, no monitory word
Out of your mouth proceeds : dumb dogs are ye
That bark not in this case, nor drive away
The wolves that howl around your sheepfold—wolves
Why say I ?—ye yourselves are wolves, ye flay
The flock. Their wool is your attire, their milk
Your thirst, their flesh your appetite
Allays : the flock ye feed not, but yourselves.

Malchus.

Go, Friendship, to perdition hence away !
Still further shall I bear to hear my Order
So insolently slandered ? Nay, from heaven
Were God to send me, by His law enjoined
To listen, I would rather disobey
Than in my hearing let this fellow talk.
No more can I endure. . . . Ho ! thou good man,
Thou only master of the multitude,
Is this, indeed thy doctrine ? this the lore
That thou dost teach the simple populace ?

John.

To thee, if thou be righteous, what I say
Pertaineth not.

Malchus.

Pertaineth it to thee
The priesthood to revile ?

John.

I deem the ill
I speak of evil men is spoken well.

Malchus.

'Tis fit a youth his elders should obey.

John.

'Tis fitter every one should God obey.

Malchus.

Does God command thee, then, to speak these words?

John.

Truth all commands to utter what is true.

Malchus.

Full many have often found it profit them
To hold their peace concerning what is true.

John.

Profit I disregard, with sin conjoined.

Malchus.

It seems a sin to thee to speak no sin.

John.

It seems a sin to me to stand at gaze
On ruin of so many thousand souls,
When I can lead them back into the way.

Malchus.

What, thou? Are we not shepherds of the flock?

John.

Yes, if it be the same to feed and flay.

Malchus.

Mind thou thine own affairs: leave ours alone.

John.

That which concerns my neighbour, me concerns.

Malchus.

Who, then, art thou, I pray thee, who art charged
With such authority? Art thou that Christ
Whom God hath promised to our ancestors?

I am not He.

John.

Malchus.

Art thou that prophet?

John.

No.

Malchus.

Art thou Elias?

John.

I am not Elias.

Malchus.

If none of these thou art—nor Christ our hope,
 Nor yet that prophet, nor Elias, how
 Dost thou presume to institute a new
 Baptismal rite? To what conclusion, say,
 Are we to come concerning who thou art?

John.

I am a Voice, on mountain heights afar
 That cries:—Prepare the way: make straight the
 paths

For progress of the Lord, at Whose approach
The hollow valleys shall unfold in plains,
And craggy peaks be levelled with the ground.
I in His name the people wash with water,
Whose shoe to loose, as slave, from off His foot
I am unworthy: Who, by none confest,
Yet dwells and walks among you all the while.

Malchus.

Lo, how the fellow twines his subtleties,
And parries question by his fence of tongue!
What miracle hast thou to show in proof
Of this alleged authority of thine?

John.

I, on the other hand, may ask of thee
What miracle hast thou to show in proof
Of thine authority?

Malchus.

What insolence!
Do all thou canst to hide, yet all men know
The end that into frenzy spurs thy mind.

Truly thou would'st by our disfavour rise—
Successful wax and famous by our fall ;
And power thou seek'st, by wicked arts achieved,
Yet thou not us deceivest, but thyself.
Neither art thou the first that hath this path
Of simulation trod ; would thou might'st be
The last to pay the penalty condign !
Or, rather, would thou might'st address thy mind
To better things at my admonishment,
And, as thou hast misled the multitude,
Repent, and lead them back into the way !
Men have I seen, who in their dress displayed
A sanctimony stern, to gain repute
For temperance and simpleness of soul,
When once their arts have compassed wealth and
 fame,
By slow degrees expose their proper mind,
With open scorn regard that righteousness
Which, while it served their purpose, they assumed,
And loose the bridle of their nature true.
But, if by shifts like these thou dost essay
To scale the peaks of fame, thine ignorance
Betrays thine inexperience of life :

Not such the path that leads to glory's heights !
Unless experience, that not the worst
Of teachers, and its parent, length of days
With gross deception practise on my mind,
Thou better wilt advance thy fame and weal,
If thou at safety, not at splendour aim.

John.

If true my words, if right my actions be,
Why, then, should any bid me hold my peace ?
If not, do thou, a sage, instruct a man
Unlearnèd, as to that wherein he errs.

Malchus.

Thou shalt repent of this, when doomed to die.

John.

Threaten that fate to those whom it affrights.

Malchus.

If life remains, I will cut short thy joy
In this contempt. Thou shalt know what it is

To slight the Elders, and with cutting speech
To rail against the Scribes, and to provoke
The Rabbins with thy words of insolence ;
And, since our friendship is not to thy mind,
Perchance what old men's hate can do thou'lt find.

CHORUS.

HE that prepares to thieve by night
Endeavours to avoid the light :
The murderer hates the torch's ray
That would his deed of blood betray :
The boy the draught medicinal
Rejects, of bitter taste as gall :
From healing plaster shrinks the flesh
Whereof the gashes gape afresh :
The man whose solitary breast
Is gnawed by ills to none confest,
To be a grievous burden feels
Truth that his troubled heart reveals.
But, O ye hypocrites severe,
That with a stern and frowning cheer
In gains ill-gotten take delight !
With howsoever cunning sleight
Around your crimes ye fling a cloak,
And cheat the minds of simple folk,
With whatso art to hide ye think

Your godless bosoms' filthy sink,
Your secret conscience gnaws within
And still convicts you of your sin.
Yea, deep within your vitals pight,
And viewless all to mortal sight,
The mental hangman takes his stand,
And plies his scourge with heavy hand.

Thrice happy he, and happier still,
Of taintless heart and guiltless will,
That never is arraigned before
The Judge that sits within his core,
Nor bears, in bursting bosom hemmed,
The Torturer of souls condemned !

MALCHUS, CHORUS AND HERODIAS.

Malchus.

No certain hope can in the King be placed :
By tortuous intrigue he has betrayed
Alike the public interest, and his own :
While painfully he seeks to please the crowd,
And hunts the breath of popular esteem,
He, by a show of clemency, has striven
To make me subject to the rabble's hate,
And, at my peril, fain would right his wrongs.
For, truly, if he see the Baptist's death
Awake displeasure in the public breast,
He is prepared immediately to soothe
The anger of the people with my head.
If he perceive they take without concern
The doom of him who leads this novel sect,
He would be thought to have avenged himself
With brightest glory : such his craftiness.
'Tis thus that kings before their mental sight

By turns present a scene of subjects' blood,
And ring the changes on the theme of death.
They lay a claim to what the crowd approves :
Give out that it by them was brought to pass :
Appropriate our industry in toil
To their applause. But, if the fickle breeze
Of popular goodwill should veer and blow
From other quarter than they thought and wished,
Upon their ministers they lay the blame,
And, at the cost of our offenceless blood
And life despised, they shun the brand of guilt.

But one is left who shares in our distress—
The Queen, as tigress reft of whelps, enraged,
Because the Baptist has, before the King,
Rebuked her breach of former marriage bond,
And publicly as lawless has condemned
The King's alliance with his brother's wife.
My blazing brands, while yet her heart is hot
With the new-kindled flames of burning rage,
I will into her seething bosom fling,
And with fit speeches fan her frenzy's fire. . . .
But, see, how opportunely we are met !

Chorus.

Now flame to flame, and bane to bane draws nigh ;
The hour of utmost danger is at hand.

Malchus.

Hail, Queen, the shining glory of our race,
Peerless in thy deserving to adorn
The diadem of this thy famous realm !

Queen.

Good Rabbi Malchus ! but what makes thee sad ?

Malchus.

That which, I trow, hath stung thee to the soul.

Queen.

That may be : but say plainly what it is.

Malchus.

Wherefore dost thou contempt of thine estate
So meekly brook, and suffer through the world
The blest prerogative of Majesty

To be as worthless held, the sceptre dread
To furnish sport unto the rabblement?

Queen.

Well, what to do? Point out the remedy.

Malchus.

Oh, now at last conceive within thy breast
Anger that fits thy spirit, thy descent,
Thy nuptials.

Queen.

That has long ere now been done.
My anger rends me, I lament, I storm,
I clamour: but my anger and my tears
Avail me nought; my words are flung to the winds.

Malchus.

Had he conceded thee that share of power
Which is the rightful portion of a wife,
Would he have suffered, unavenged, thy wrongs,
Or, yet more truly let me say, his own?

Queen.

Malchus, thou see'st thyself the people's zeal,
Perchance the King hath reckoned that restraint
Would blunt the biting spirit of the man,
And tame his daring heart.

Malchus.

 If thou suppose
This robber's savage spirit is confined
By prison and by chains, thou dost mistake.
The fury of wild beasts that break away
Out of their shattered cage is sharper-edged
Than that of those in lofty forest bred
Among the pathless mountains. What, I pray,
Will he not do whose chains the populace
Now venerate, if suffered to go free ?
'Tis hard to quench the fire of kindled wrath,
But easy to inflame it ; by affronts
To ecstasy uplift, the stormy heart
Is hurried on to frenzy.

Queen.

 Nay, if he
Who by his waywardness had been undone,

Is by his sovereign's clemency set free,
This grace will rather pacify his wrath.

Malchus.

What thou esteemest grace he thinks a wrong.
More often will he call to mind that thou
Didst bind him, than that thou didst set him free.

Queen.

Thou dost report him of a bitter heart.

Malchus.

Such beats well-nigh in every mortal breast :
Do good : thy thanks immediately expire ;
Do ill : it shall be ever had in mind.
Hateful to almost all are services
That are in memory to disservice linked.
Whene'er the Baptist calls thy grace to mind,
Know, he will likewise recollect his crime :
In thy forgiveness he will not believe ;
But think that, in thy judgment guilty still,
He has, from crooked policy, been freed,
And that his punishment is but deferred,
Thy wrath suppress against convenient time.

Queen.

The savage heart is soothed by gentleness.

Malchus.

Thou wilt with ease much greater break than bend
The heart inveterate in hardness grown.

Queen.

Why, then, if this be so, dost thou delay
To counsel one uncertain what to do?

Malchus.

If thou thy confidence in me repose,
I easily will make this matter clear.

Queen.

Say on : I will in no wise hinder thee.

Malchus.

By effort, action, foresight, not by ease
Great enterprise attains to good success.

Queen.

If effort, action, foresight nought avail,
Hadst thou not better take thine ease than ply
A bootless task, and others move to mirth ?

Malchus.

Where force has failed, there labour oft succeeds.
Not at one blow is felled the lofty oak ;
Not to one onset of the battering-ram
Do city walls succumb : ofttimes it haps
That which impossible thou deem'st, by lapse
Of time, comes round : where all but vain the siege
Of reason, importunity may storm.
Wherefore, crave on : mingle thy prayers with tears,
Anger with counsel, sweet discourse with jars :
Be instant every way soliciting
Thy husband : every opportunity
Embrace : and, if the thing by open means
Is unattainable, resort to guile.
For me, I firm in resolution stand,
Ne'er, till the thing is done, to stay my hand.

CHORUS.

Now have malice and bitterness,
Spurred by godless ferocity,
Urged the force of their violence
'Gainst the prophet of righteousness.
Here doth pitiless calumny,
Leagued with horrible tyranny,
Ply ill weapons of treachery.
There doth innocent verity,
Unassisted, companionless,
Scorn the fearfullest menaces.
Flights of arrows are aimed at him,
Likewise many an artifice,
One young life is contrived against.
Yet the prophet, unmoveable,
Fronts his enemies fearlessly,
E'en as oak in its hardihead
Strook by furious hurricane—
Rock that waves multitudinous
Buffet, but to regurgitate.

O supernal divinity,
Deep of all to be revered,
Thou immaculate Verity !
Who 'gainst terror of armament,
'Gainst devices of fraudulence
Stand maintainest impregnable,
Thou alone art undaunted by
Whatso grievous vicissitudes
Come through Fortune's inconstancy :
Thou, to evil superior,
Casest bosoms in armour of
Strength and temper invincible—
Suff'rest never the Destinies'
Hand untrammelled, controller of
Life and death, to o'erburden us.

But I delay my meeting with the seer ;
Oh how shall I the ears of all possess
With my most heavy tidings ? . . . And, behold,
Before the very prison doors he stands ! . . .
Of holy parents offspring holier still !
Sole confidence of ancient innocence !
Take means to save thyself, while time permits.

The Rabbi Malchus weaves for thee his wiles ;
Of reason reft, in secret raves the Queen ;
The palace flatters, and the King his mind
Dissembles ; others hold their peace from truth ;
The hour of utmost crisis is at hand.

JOHN AND CHORUS.

John.

WHAT is the danger?

Chorus.

Death, the end of all,
Besets thee.

John.

Is that all the impending ill?

Chorus.

No greater ill could any man befall.

John.

Although the tyrant's power and craft should cease,
Mere length of time itself will bring us death
That sinners dread and guiltless men desire.

Chorus.

Heedless of thine own safety as thou art,
Yet let regard to us-ward move thy breast,

And let thy lofty spirit from its height
Some little way descend : beseech the King
To turn from his design : it is my hope
He will not prove relentless to thy friends.

John.

This perseveringly have I not done ?

Chorus.

May God a mind vouchsafe thee so to do.

John.

Bootless are prayers ; the King hath long ere now
Resolved on my destruction, and he hastes
To satisfy his anger with my blood :
I, for my part, am not averse from death.
Whereby may I more perfectly appease
The King than by such concord with his will
As that we wish and do not wish the same ?

Chorus.

Thy words are brave.

John.

What, then, dost thou advise?

Two Kings respectively upon me lay
 Injunctions that conflict : the one divine,
 Good, kind, and merciful : the other King
 Earthly and evil, harsh and pitiless.
 One threatens death ; the other gives command
 That death I should not fear, and, if I dread
 No violence, He proffers a reward.
 The one is able to destroy my body :
 The other both my body and my soul
 Can torture in inevitable flames.
 Advise me which of these opposing Kings
 I should obey.

Chorus.

If now should pass away
 The present season, never any more
 Will it be given thee Herod to appease :
 God's anger ever can be turned away.

John.

The slower is the wrath divine to burn,
 The sterner doom, when kindled, it exacts.

Chorus.

Dost thou so scorn what God has willed that men
Should fear? To the end the holy league between
The soul and body may not be annulled
On pretext rash, he has entwined the soul
And body with a chain of mutual love.

John.

I scorn not—but by momentary death
I death eternal flee : the loan of light
That God to me has granted, I restore
With willing mind when He demands it back.

Chorus.

Dost thou, a father, leave thine orphans thus?

John.

No orphan shall he be who is assured
That God his Father is.

Chorus.

Do not thy kin,
Thy weeping friends, whom thou abandonest
To a most cruel tyrant, move thy heart?

John.

I them do not, but rather do they me
Abandon. For I run toward my doom
The way ordained since first the world began.
Such is, in sooth, the law imposed from birth
On us who boon of blessed light enjoy—
Such the condition binding on us all:—
To death we tend: no day that yields to night
But brings our footsteps nearer to the grave.
By God's decree a penalty is death
To evil-doers, but to righteous men
A haven and a weary journey's end,
The door of more abundant life, wherethrough
We pass, more truly born anew than dead,
Into the shining home of light eterne.
Death is our exit from a prison-house,
And passage to a life that never dies:
This is the way that all our fathers trod
Before, and all shall follow in their steps.
What runner, when he leaves the starting-place
But darts with heart of mettle to the goal?
What seafarer, uncertain of his way,
Beset by murk, and buffeted by storm,

Will shun the shelter of the peaceful port?
What exile, wandering o'er the desert wilds
Of alien soil, would grieve at swift return
Into his native land?

Therefore, with joy
Methinks my race is run, the goal attained:
Now, all but free, life's ocean overpast,
I from the narrow seas behold the shore:
I travel homeward from a foreign land
To see my Father, first and best of all—
That Father, namely, Who hath girt the land
With billowy ocean, canopied the earth
With skyey cope, and Whose unerring hand
Controls the course of the revolving spheres—
Maker, Preserver, Governor of all,
To Whom all live, alike the quick and dead.

As 'tis the property of flame to wind
Upward in spiral tongue, as breaking waves
Continual curve, and downward rush to foam,
As every creature holds upon the path
To its peculiar good, so now for long
My heaven-begotten spirit hath aspired

After the Father of the universe
That dwells amid the everlasting light,
Whom to behold is life, and not to see
Is death. Though dreadful Caucasus with snows,
The sky with storm, and with her swell the wave,
And trackless deserts with their burning heat
Beset my path, shall I not Godward fare—
Shall I not force my way, that I may see
So many leaders, prophets, judges just,
And kings?

My spirit, therefore, longs to quit
Its open prison-house, and fly away
Where all the world, or soon or late, will go.
For length of days I deem to be nought else
Than longsome bondage in a dreary cell.

O Death, the heavy-laden toiler's rest!
O Death, the haven of grief, surcease of ill!
By few confest to be the boon thou art!
Feared by the wicked, longed for by the good!
This shipwreckt body in thine arms embay,
And lead me to the home of endless peace
That force and fraud and slander ne'er invade.

Chorus.

Blessed art thou, O faithful heart and true !
Wretched are we whom tardy fear deprives
Of fellowship in thy beatitude.
Since, then, thyself art ware what must befall
We say : farewell ! farewell for evermore !

How are the minds of mortals to and fro
In jarring strife betossed ! He fears not death
Whose due it is not : who deserves to die,
If death should gently breathe an idle threat,
Grows pale and trembles with ignoble fear.
As basely wicked mortals flee their end
Through fire and water and the rocky wilds,
So eagerly the good their noble souls
Through hardness fling into the arms of death.
For death is fraught with benefits unknown
To evil men ; and life more blessed far
Approaches hand in hand with mortal doom.
We do not wholly die : our better part
Disdains the hungry sepulchre, and high
Ascends into the skies from which it came.
Souls innocent a sure abode awaits

Among the shining citizens of heaven :
But as for shades of evil self-accused,
The Furies from whose heads there twine for hair
Swart snakes, the gulf of greedy Cerberus,
Plenty of Tantalus, with want that pines,
Torment them in the sulphurous lake : herefrom
The sinner's terror, and the good man's hope,
And bosoms lavish of a feeble life,
As life imperishable is their aim.

O Siren, mighty in thy magic charms !
O fleeting Life that lovest seeming good !
On us thou closest, with caresses soft,
The way of egress from an evil state,
And block'st the haven sweet of endless rest ;
Where never sounds the voice of dreadful war,
Nor battle-trumpet bellows hoarse alarm,
Nor ravening pirate fills the main with dread,
Nor thieving ruffian haunts the silent grove,
Nor robber, mad with wretched lust for power,
Accomplishes a people's overthrow—
Bears down the poor to ruin, that alone
He may indulge his sloth in tranquil ease,

Nor he that, for the vanity of fame,
Barters the woeful rabble's lives despised ;
But calm repose and bounteous bliss abide,
And artless righteousness inherits all :
Day cannot learn to make for darksome night,
And life that never any more can die,
And joy that knows no plaintive grief are found.

O pleasant lodging ! prison-house too sweet !
O carnal husband of a deathless bride !
Loose from thy magic bonds the heaven-born soul
That, drunk with lulling Lethe's drowsy bane,
Finds joy in the base thralldom of thy bed,
And, to thy bosom claspt, forgets her home.
O trustless covert of the garb of clay !
Resolve into thy dust and pass away ;
Restore the spirit to her country bright
Therein to bask in beams of cloudless light ;
Do thou by death thy noisome labours flee,
And from her cares the o'erfraught mind set free.

HERODIAS.

Herodias.

THE Pharisee has, then, belied my hope ;
The King has both himself and me betrayed
With like deception, while he fears the talk
Of the loquacious crowd. I sorely doubt.
How goes it with my daughter, unto whom,
After a recent banquet thronged with guests,
The King, as a reward for dancing, made
A promise of whatever she might ask.
She has agreed that she will beg of him
The head of John the Baptist in a charger,
And she will get it—yes, indeed, she will,
Else I know little of the King's desire.
Herein himself uncensured, as I think,
He willingly the people's hate will bend
Upon my head ; but, so the thing be done,
That with a ready mind I will support ;
Reproaches I will weigh against the joy
Of vengeance, and the blot against the gain.

'Tis shameful in a woman to be cruel—
Aye, shameful, were it not more shameful still
That injuries of kings be unavenged. . . .
But from the house the King and damsel both
Approach: the nearer hope of my intent
The fiercer burns my fear: God speed the event!

HEROD, HERODIAS, AND SALOME.

Herod.

SEEMS it to thee that with sufficient care
Thou hast considered what thou wilt request ?

Salome.

I have enough considered ; if, indeed,
Kings' promises are sure enough, and royal.

Herod.

Doubt not my steadfast word of promise passed,
And ratified by witnesses : demand
The half of my dominion, or, if ought
Thou deemest more to be desired than rule,
Declare it : nothing can withstand our will.

Salome.

Soon shall we know the value of thy word.

Herod.

Do but demand ; 'tis certain.

Salome.

Of thy realm

I have no need, since, while thou bearest rule,

I deem it mine as much as if by me

Possesst ; I seek a fair and easy thing.

Herod.

Thereof not I—thyself the attainment stay'st.

Salome.

Give to me, from his body cut away,

The head of John the Baptist in this charger.

Herod.

Maiden ! what hasty word escapes thy lips ?

Salome.

It is not hasty.

Herod.

This request of thine
Misseems a virgin.

Salome.

To despatch a foe
Is no disgraceful fact.

Herod.

Does, then, this foe
Deserve the indignation of a king?

Salome.

He wrath deserves that earns it by his crimes.

Herod.

What cure, then, shall I find for public hate?

Salome.

The people should obey the King's command,

Herod.

But what the King commandeth should be just.

Salome.

That which aforetime was unjust, the King,
By his commanding it, can render just.

Herod.

The law sets limits to the King's command.

Salome.

If that be right which gratifies the prince,
Then does not law impose its bounds on kings,
Rather the King sets limits to the laws.

Herod.

Report will vouch me despot, not a king.

Salome.

Thy sceptre overawes it.

Herod.

Yet it prates.

Salome.

Then check it by the sword.

Herod.

The fear of force
But poorly wards a State.

Salome.

Impunity
Of crime will surely overthrow a State.

Herod.

Safe is the king his lieges' faith defends.

Salome.

Kings must be feared : it needs not they be loved.

Herod.

Hatred pursues the cruel.

Salome.

In a king
Mildness is by the populace despised.

Herodias.

Methinks that all thy talk is aimed at this :—
That thy vain word of promise pass away.

To me thou seem'st not yet to understand
What appertains to occupants of thrones.
If fair or foul thou deemest in a king
That which the vulgar fair or foul esteem,
Thou art deceived ; brothers and sisters both,
The father and the son by marriage-tie,
Friends, intimates have bonds to bind the poor :
To monarchs they are nought but empty words.
Whoso with diadem invests his brow,
Degrees of common duty should forego.
He should think nothing base that serves the king—
No deed that for his welfare's sake he does,
Should he esteem unmeet. The people's weal
Upon the king depends : he, therefore, helps
The people's weal that venerates the king.
So precious shall this paltry fellow's blood
Be deemed, for anxious thoughts thou canst not rest
By day or night ? Remove from us this dread.
Save thou from shame the sceptre, towns from sack
And devastation, all from civil war.
Thou should'st proclaim by instance great and new
That kings to mortals are inviolable.
If crime he has committed, let him die

The death : if crime he has committed none,
Yet for thy spouse's sake destroy him. Give
Thy wife her foe : but, if thou slight thy wife,
The promise thou hast made unto thy child,
As thou art king and father both, redeem.

Herod.

Assuredly I shall to the uttermost
Keep faith with her ; but, if by me advised,
She will determine on a wiser choice.

Herodias.

If my advice she take, she will not swerve
From her decision.

Herod.

Is it so indeed ?
Behoved it me to swear so rash an oath ?
To pledge my word in this wise to the maid ?
And thus my safety, realm, estate and life
And death to render to a woman's will ?

Herodias.

Let truth declare the word of kings is sure.

Herod.

Since to deny is lawless, though that be
Alone the lawful course, thee yet again
I warn and pray not to be driven by wrath
To do a thing unworthy of thy blood,
Thy sex, and royal eminence.

Herodias.

Despatch

This thing; leave us to see to the rest.

Herod.

If any harsh design ye have conceived
Against this prophet, yours will be the blame,
And yours the risk.

Herodias.

Now is the King's estate

At last delivered for the time to come
From open ridicule. Now shall I make
The stiff-necked crowd be careful what they say
Of kings, or else by penalty be taught,
And, just or unjust be a king's commands,
They'll know to take all meekly at his hands.

CHORUS.

O DAVID'S realm, Salem of many a tower,
Seat of rich Solomon in all his power,
Whence all thy fury dire
Against the holy seers ?
Thy thirst that burns like fire
To drink the innocent blood ?
The man whose life should be a rule
Whereby to measure what is good,
In wickedness is destitute of peers.
To rob, to outrage, and to slay,
To practise fraud, to snatch thy prey ;
These are the first employments of thy school.

Religion moveth not the priest
To keep his hands from shameful fraud ;
As for the people, they have ceased
To serve the living God,
The Father and the Lord of all.
To idol worship now they fall :

They worship stones and stocks ;
To them they offer sacrifice,
Feeding their altar-fires
With younglings from their herds and flocks.
The workman worships what his hands devise :
The live illicitly implores
For life inanimate blocks :
The speaker from the voiceless speech desires :
The rich the poor adores :
The master to the servant suppliant cries,
And every ancient rite and holy dies.

The poor proclaim thy guilt ;
The plaint of widows fills the sky ;
The offenceless blood of prophets thou hast spilt
Hales thee before the Judge that sits on high.

Therefore for thee remain,
Unless my prophecy be vain,
Just vengeance of thy sin
And no illusive pain.
For He that bringeth down the proud—
The Judge of earth and sea and sky—

Beholds His people from on high :
He hears them when to Him they call aloud,
Records each tear and cry ;
And soon shall He begin,
With His avenging hand,
The due of deeds of horror to demand.

The battlements that are thy boast,
The conqueror's insulting host
Shall make a ruinous heap :
A Gentile soldiery shall hold thy land :
To a strange lord the vine-dresser shall pay
Thy vintage all away :
Where now the sacred walls and grand
Of Solomon's temple stand,
Lifting their pinnacles high
Until they seem to pierce the sky,
An alien husbandman shall harvest reap.

Therefore, while yet the grace
Of God vouchsafes thee space,
Repent thee of thy life of crime,
Thy shameful deeds of former time ;

Cast thou away thine idols vain,
Banish the worship of a foreign clime,
Curb thine unhallowed lust of gain,
And for thy brother's blood thy raging thirst
restrain.

But thou wilt not repent thy life of crime,
Nor banish from the holy fane
The images and worship of a foreign clime.
And thou wilt not restrain
Thy thirst for blood, thy lust of gain.

Therefore an evil plague on thee shall prey ;
Famine and war shall eat thy strength away ;
In want and leanness shalt thou pine,
Until thou undergo the doom of death condign.

MESSENGER AND CHORUS.

Messenger.

Who will point out to me where I may find
The prophet's company, that I to them
My tidings sad may tell ?

Chorus.

Unless thou hap
To be in haste, a little stay thy steps :
Speak briefly : I thy tidings fain would hear.

Messenger.

If thou should'st get thy wish and hear my words,
Fain would'st thou have thine ignorance again.

Chorus.

Be as that may, grudge not a moment's pause.

Messenger.

Know'st thou for what the maid besought the King?

Chorus.

The prophet's severed head in a charger.

Messenger.

She

Has got the prophet's severed head in a charger.

Chorus.

O savage deed ! that face of heavenly power
And glory, withered by the woeful blight
Of death ! those lips that lately breathed of God,
By outrage fell, in silence sealed for ever !

Messenger.

Why weep'st thou? Cease to outpour thy vain
lament.

Chorus.

When things I see and hear that call for tears,
Dost thou my tears forbid to flow ?

Messenger.

If death

Should be bewept, let those alone bewEEP
The dead, whose hope lies with the corse interred,
Who deem not that the body, laid to sleep
A very little while, shall rise again,
And that there is a life beyond the grave.
Let none but wretched men bewail the dead,
And let them mourn the wretched dead alone :
'Tis not in fortune's power to make us wretched :
Though one event awaits the good and bad,
Yet none shall ill decease that well has lived.
If, in thy judgment, men are miserable
According to the kind of death they die,
Then wilt thou wretched deem the multitude
Of holy fathers that by cross and sword
And wave and flame of fire have been cut off.
Nay : when a follower of truth lays down
His life for faith, and for his country's laws,
He should be bade God-speed, and, by our prayers
And life, a like departure we should seek.

Chorus.

Most true, indeed, are all these words of thine ;
But, drawn away by error and surmise,
We fools rush on our fate, while fate we flee.
The wave engulfs the man that fire has spared :
The venom of some pestilential air
Cuts off the life delivered from the sea :
The soldier that survives a long campaign,
Wasted by sickness, dies. 'Tis God's decree
We cannot shun, we but defer our fate :
Disease and danger, grief and weary care
Are usury we pay for loan prolonged
Of life. Nor is a long existence ought
But one long chain of evils, link on link,
Extending to the very gates of death.
We wretched men, enfeathered by this chain,
Delude us with the thought we are at large,
And dread our bondage less than our discharge.

APPENDIX.

THE METRES OF *BAPTISTES*.

THE greater portion of Buchanan's Tragedies is written in Iambic Trimeter ; for practically their whole action is expressed in lines of this metre. It contains six feet, the 2nd, 4th, and 6th being each an Iambus. The 1st, with the 3rd and 5th, may be either an Iambus, an Anapaest, a Dactyl or a Tribach. The 4th foot is not infrequently a Tribach.

THE CHORUSES.

The first Chorus is written in the verse known as Sapphic. Three lines of lesser Sapphic (each consisting of Trochee, Spondee, Dactyl, and two Trochees) are followed by an Adonic line consisting of a Dactyl and Spondee. In this Chorus the four last Adonic lines are separated from one another by 9, 10, and 10 Sapphics respectively.

The metre of the second Chorus is Anapaestic Dimeter, consisting of four feet, each of which, without restriction, may be an Anapaest, a Spondee, or a Dactyl.

The third Chorus is written in Iambic Dimeter consisting (as it appears in Buchanan) of four feet, of which the 4th is an Iambus (or Pyrrhicius), the 2nd an Iambus or Tribrach, while the 1st and 3rd places are occupied by an Iambus, a Spondee, or an Anapaest. The 1st foot is occasionally, and the 3rd foot rarely, a Tribrach or a Dactyl.

The fourth Chorus is written in Glyconian verse or Choriambic Trimeter, composed of a Spondee, a Choriambus and an Iambus.

The fifth Chorus is written in lesser Sapphic with the exception of two lines which are Adonic. In the second and in the fourth Chorus the translator has attempted to reproduce the classical rhythm.

NOTES.

Preface, p. 2. The full title of the translation of 1642 is as follows:—"Tyrannical Government Anatomised, or A Discourse concerning Evil Counsellors, Being the Life and Death of John the Baptist, And Presented to The King's Most Excellent Majesty by the Author, Die Martis, 30 Januarii 1642." Then follows the *Imprimatur* :—

"It is ordered by the Committee of the House of Commons concerning Printing that this Book be forthwith printed and published.

"JOHN WHITE."

The Persons of the Tragedy are quaintly styled:—"The Collocutors and Complaynants or Persons Speaking."

As examples of the style, showing that this translation is not without a certain rugged strength of its own, two passages may be quoted, one from the last chorus but one, the other from the last speech of the Baptist :—

" Drifts do menace death
To this young man, yet like the hardy Holme
With north-east winds assaulted, or a Rock

That's beaten by the Sea's returning flow,
 He with no fear is moved. O power divine
 By all men to be honoured, candid Truth !
 Whom neither force of arms with trembling fear,
 Nor fraud with all her projects can depell
 From her firm station or unmoved estate.
 The grievous changes of unstable fortune
 Thou only fearest not, and dost arm thy breast,
 Obnoxious to no changes, with a strength
 Insuperable, and th' impartial hand
 Of the three Ladies, both of life and death,
 Forbid'st us to be grieved at."

" If Caucasus rough-grown with hoary frost,
 The ayre with tempests and the sea with storms,
 And whole Region with excessive heats
 Should all resist me, thither I would go.
 To see so many Leaders, Prophets, Kings,
 And pious Judges shall I not make way,
 Though with a thousand deaths I be opposed ?
 My spirit, therefore, from this body freed
 (This carnall prison) thither longs to fly,
 Even whither all the world betimes or late
 Shall be despatched ; for long life I concede
 Is nothing but a gentle servitude
 In a hard, painful prison. O sweet Death
 That art of heavy Toils the sole Release,
 The haven where all grief and trouble cease,
 Yet unto few men profitable known !
 Receive this shipwrackt body to thy bosom
 And bring it where eternal Peace abides
 Whither no impious Violence, Deceit,
 Or Calumny shall follow it."

It may be mentioned that *Baptistes* has also been translated into French * and Dutch. †

The name Malchus.—This name is derived from the Hebrew root מלך to be King. The only person so named in the New Testament is that servant of the High Priest whose ear was cut off by Peter (John xviii. 10). “There were Nabatean Kings (Euting, *Nab. Inscr.* 63, 81 ff., 91), of this name, which is written by Josephus μάλλος or μάλιχος.” (Hastings’s *Bible Dictionary*, Vol. III., p. 223.) The name occurs in the Tragedy of *Antony and Cleopatra* (Act III. sc. vi.), as that of a King of Arabia.

P. 20. MALCHUS: *Gabinus’s cupidity.*—Aulus Gabinius, a commander of the Roman forces, was Proconsul of Syria, B.C. 57-55. He appears to have been possessed of no mean military and administrative qualities. He was accused of receiving bribes, and, though defended by Cicero, was banished and died at Salona about 40 B.C. Josephus speaks well of him. “When Gabinius,” he says, “had performed great and glorious actions in his management of the war, he returned to Rome, and delivered the government to Crassus” (*Antiq.*

* *Baptiste ou la Calomnie, Tragédie traduite du Latin de Bucanan*, par M. Brinon. Jean Osmont : 1613, 12mo.

† *Baptistes of Dooper. Truwerspel getrocken ayt de Latynsche Vaersen van G. B.* Door J. de Decker : 1656.

xiv. vi. 4). Crassus, he tells us, "took away all the gold that was in the Temple" (*Antiq.* xiv. vii. 1).

P. 20. MALCHUS: *Antony and Cleopatra*.—Life-like indeed is the portrayal of these personages on the dramatic canvas of Shakespeare. Antony is a Colossus alike in his valour and in his vices.

" His taints and honours
Waged equal with him."

Act V. sc. i.

The play is a study of guilty passion becoming, in a manner, spiritualised in the hour of catastrophe.

" Where souls do couch on flowers, we'll hand in hand,
And with our sprightly port make the ghosts gaze :"

Act IV. sc. xiv.

" I am fire and air ; my other elements
I give to baser life."

Act V. sc. ii.

P. 20. MALCHUS: *Great-grandson of the Edomite Antipas*.—The following is an outline of Herod's genealogy:—

Antipas or Antipater.

|
Antipater.

|
Herod the Great=Malthace.

|
Herod Antipas.

P. 35. GAMALIEL: *If hither he is sent by God's design.*—Buchanan anticipates the sentiments expressed by Gamaliel in his speech to the Sanhedrin at the trial of the Apostles (Acts v. 34-39). The famous Rabbi Gamaliel, the instructor of the Apostle Paul, is not mentioned in the Gospels. So great was his reputation that, in the words of the Mishna, “with his death the glory of the Torah ceased, and purity and sanctity died away.”

P. 39. CHORUS: *Egypt's hyena*—Literally *Pharian hyena*.—Pharos, the name of the islet over against Alexandria, famous for its lighthouse, in ancient literature frequently, by metonymy, signifies Egypt; *e.g.*, Petimus Pharon, *we make for Egypt*, (Lucan, 87, 443); Pharia unda, *the Nile*, (*ib.* 3, 260).

P. 56. HEROD: *I am resolved.*—This makes out Herod to be guilty of duplicity in his talk with Herodias and her daughter. Yet Matthew and Mark speak of his sorrow in complying with their request (Matth., xiv. 9, Mark, vi. 26). Josephus says (*Antiq.* xviii. v. 2), “Herod, who feared lest the great influence John had over the people might put it into his power and inclination to raise a rebellion (for they seemed ready to do anything he should advise) thought it best, by putting him to death, to prevent any mischief he might cause.” On the other hand Morrison says (*The Jews under Roman Rule*, p. 107), “Antipas was not a man of a cruel or

bloodthirsty disposition, and it is not probable that he ever intended to put the Baptist to death—his imprisonment of John being rather a measure of precaution than an act of punishment—but it was not easy for him to defeat the settled purpose of a woman like Herodias.”

P. 60. CHORUS: *Such as of old did the prophet's attendant.*—Benhadad, King of Syria, on learning that Elisha had repeatedly apprised the King of Israel of ambush laid for him, sends “horses and chariots, and a great host” to Dothan to seize the prophet. In answer to prayer, God vouchsafes to the prophet's servant a vision of the spiritual hosts that keep watch and ward around Elisha. “His servant said unto him, Alas, my master, how shall we do? And he answered, Fear not: for they that be with us are more than they that be with them. And Elisha prayed and said, Lord, I pray Thee open his eyes, that he may see. And the Lord opened the eyes of the young man; and he saw: and, behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha.” II. Kings, vi. 15-17.

P. 87. CHORUS: *E'en as oak in its hardihead
Strook by furious hurricane.*

The Latin runs—*Ille ut tunsæ furentibus Ilex dura aquilonibus.* Some editors have changed *tunsæ* into *tonsa*, misled apparently by these lines of Horace:—

“ Duris ut ilex tonsa bipennibus
 Nigrae feraci frondis in Algido,
 Per damna, per caedes, ab ipso
 Ducit opes animumque ferro.”

Carm. IV., iv. 57-60.

P. 99. CHORUS: *O trustless covert of the garb of clay.*
 The Latin is *O fallax lutei tegmen amicali.* Cp.
 Shakespeare: *This muddy vesture of decay.* *Merchant*
of Venice, Act V. sc. i.

P. 102. SALOME.—Josephus mentions (*Antiq.* xviii. v.
 4) that this was the name of the daughter of Herodias.
 Buchanan simply calls her *puella*.

P. 112. CHORUS: *Solomon's temple.* — Solomon's
 temple, after standing for four hundred years, was burned
 to the ground (B.C. 586). The Temple of John the
 Baptist's day was the third, or, as some say, the second
 rebuilt and improved. It was known as the temple
 of Herod, and was a building of great magnificence.
 “When the morning sun burst upon the white marble
 of the Temple, Mount Moriah glittered like a hill of
 snow; and when its rays struck the golden roof of the
 sacred edifice, the whole mount gleamed and sparkled
 as if it were in flames.” (Morrison: *The Jews under*
Roman Rule, p. 83.)

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