

And thou wert wedded to another,
 And I at last another wedded:
 I am a father, thou a mother,
 To Strangers vowed, with strangers bedded.
 For land to land, even blood to blood—
 Since leagued of yore our fathers were—
 Our manors and our birthright stood;
 And not unequal had I wooed,
 If to have wooed thee I could dare.
 But this I never dared—even yet
 When nought is left but to forget,
 I feel that I could only love:
 To sue was never meant for me,
 And least of all to sue to thee;
 For many a bar, and many a feud,
 Though never told, well understood
 Rolled like a river wide between—
 And then there was the Curse of blood,
 Which even my Heart's can not remove.
 Alas! how many things have been!
 Since we were friends; for I alone
 Feel more for thee than can be shown.

4.

How many things! I loved thee—thou
 Loved'st me not: another was
 The Idol of thy virgin vow,
 And I was, what I am, Alas!
 And what he is, and what thou art,
 And what we were, is like the rest:
 We must endure it as a test,
 And old Ordeal of the Heart.

Venice, *December 29, 1818.*
 [First published, 1901.]

STANZAS TO THE PO.

1.

RIVER, that rollest by the ancient walls,
 Where dwells the Lady of my love, when
 she
 Walks by thy brink, and there, perchance,
 recalls
 A faint and fleeting memory of me:

2.

What if thy deep and ample stream should
 be
 A mirror of my heart, where she may read
 The thousand thoughts I now betray to thee,
 Wild as thy wave, and headlong as thy
 speed!

3.

What do I say—a mirror of my heart?
 Are not thy waters sweeping, dark, and
 strong?
 Such as my feelings were and are, thou art;
 And such as thou art were my passions
 long.

4.

Time may have somewhat tamed them,—
 not for ever;
 Thou overflow'st thy banks, and not for
 aye
 Thy bosom overboils, congenial river!
 Thy floods subside, and mine have sunk
 away:

5.

But left long wrecks behind, and now again,
 Borne in our old unchanged career, we
 move;
 Thou tendest wildly onwards to the main,
 And I—to loving *one* I should not love.

6.

The current I behold will sweep beneath
 Her native walls, and murmur at her feet;
 Her eyes will look on thee, when she shall
 breathe
 The twilight air, unharmed by summer's
 heat.

7.

She will look on thee,—I have looked on
 thee,
 Full of that thought: and, from that
 moment, ne'er
 Thy waters could I dream of, name, or see,
 Without the inseparable sigh for her!

8.

Her bright eyes will be imaged in thy
 stream,—
 Yes! they will meet the wave I gaze on
 now:
 Mine cannot witness, even in a dream,
 That happy wave repass me in its flow!

9.

The wave that bears my tears returns no
 more:
 Will she return by whom that wave shall
 sweep?—
 Both tread thy banks, both wander on thy
 shore,
 I by thy source, she by the dark-blue deep.

10.

But that which keepeth us apart is not
Distance, nor depth of wave, nor space of
earth,
But the distraction of a various lot,
As various as the climates of our birth.

11.

A stranger loves the Lady of the land,
Born far beyond the mountains, but his blood
Is all meridian, as if never fanned
By the black wind that chills the polar flood.

12

My blood is all meridian; were it not,
I had not left my clime, nor should I be,
In spite of tortures, ne'er to be forgot,
A slave again of love,—at least of thee.

13.

'Tis vain to struggle—let me perish young—
Live as I lived, and love as I have loved;
To dust if I return, from dust I sprung,
And then, at least, my heart can ne'er be
moved.

June, 1819.

[First published, *Conversations of Lord
Byron*, 1824, 4^o, pp. 24-26.]

SONNET ON THE NUPTIALS OF
THE MARQUIS ANTONIO CAV-
ALLI WITH THE COUNTESS
CLELIA RASPONI OF RAVENNA.

A NOBLE Lady of the Italian shore
Lovely and young, herself a happy bride,
Commands a verse, and will not be denied,
From me a wandering Englishman; I tore
One sonnet, but invoke the muse once more
To hail these gentle hearts which Love has
tied,
In Youth, Birth, Beauty, genially allied
And blest with Virtue's soul, and Fortune's
store.

A sweeter language, and a luckier bard
Were worthier of your hopes, Auspicious
Pair!

And of the sanctity of Hymen's shrine,
But,—since I cannot but obey the Fair,¹
To render your new state your true reward,
May your Fate be like *Hers*, and unlike *mine*.

Ravenna, July 31, 1819.

[First published, 1901.]

¹ [The Countess Guiccioli, at whose instance he wrote the sonnet.]

SONNET TO THE PRINCE REGENT.

ON THE REPEAL OF LORD EDWARD
FITZGERALD'S FORFEITURE.

To be the father of the fatherless,
To stretch the hand from the throne's height,
and raise
His offspring, who expired in other days
To make thy Sire's sway by a kingdom less,—
This is to be a monarch, and repress
Envy into unutterable praise.
Dismiss thy guard, and trust thee to such
traits,
For who would lift a hand, except to bless?
Were it not easy, Sir, and is't not sweet
To make thyself beloved? and to be
Omnipotent by Mercy's means? for thus
Thy Sovereignty would grow but more
complete,
A despot thou, and yet thy people free,
And by the heart—not hand—enslaving us.
Bologna, August 12, 1819.

[First published, *Letters and Journals*,
1890, ii. 234, 235.]

STANZAS.¹

1.

COULD Love for ever
Run like a river,
And Time's endeavour
Be tried in vain—
No other pleasure
With this could measure;
And like a treasure
We'd hug the chain.
But since our sighing
Ends not in dying,
And, formed for flying,
Love plumes his wing;
Then for this reason
Let's love a season;
But let that season be only Spring.

2.

When lovers parted
Feel broken-hearted,
And, all hopes thwarted,
Expect to die;

¹ [The royal assent was given to a bill for "restoring Edward Fox Fitzgerald and his sisters Pamela and Lucy to their blood," July 13, 1819.]

A few years older,
 Ah! how much colder
 They might behold her
 For whom they sigh!
 When linked together,
 In every weather,
 They pluck Love's feather
 From out his wing—
 He'll stay for ever,
 But sadly shiver
 Without his plumage, when past the Spring.

3.
 Like Chiefs of Faction,
 His life is action—
 A formal paction
 That curbs his reign,
 Obscures his glory,
 Despot no more, he
 Such territory
 Quits with disdain.
 Still, still advancing,
 With banners glancing,
 His power enhancing,
 He must move on—
 Repose but cloy him,
 Retreat destroys him,
 Love brooks not a degraded throne.

4.
 Wait not, fond lover!
 Till years are over,
 And then recover
 As from a dream.
 While each bewailing
 The other's failing,
 With wrath and railing,
 All hideous seem—
 While first decreasing,
 Yet not quite ceasing,
 Wait not till teasing,
 All passion blight:
 If once diminished
 Love's reign is finished—
 Then part in friendship,—and b d good-night.

5.
 So shall Affection
 To recollection
 The dear connection
 Bring back with joy:
 You had not waited
 Till, tired or hated,
 Your passions sated
 Began to cloy.

Your last embraces
 Leave no cold traces—
 The same fond faces
 As through the past:
 And eyes, the mirrors
 Of your sweet errors,
 Reflect but rapture—not least though last.

6.
 True, separations
 Ask more than patience;
 What desperations
 From such have risen!
 But yet remaining,
 What is't but chaining
 Hearts which, once waning,
 Beat 'gainst their prison?
 Time can but cloy love,
 And use destroy love:
 The wingéd boy, Love,
 Is but for boys—
 You'll find it torture
 Though sharper, shorter,
 To wean, and not wear out your joys.

December 1, 1819.
 [First published, *New Monthly Magazine*, 1832, vol. xxxv. pp. 310-312.]

ODE TO A LADY WHOSE LOVER
 WAS KILLED BY A BALL,
 WHICH AT THE SAME TIME
 SHIVERED A PORTRAIT NEXT
 HIS HEART.

MOTTO.

On peut trouver des femmes qui n'ont jamais eu de galanterie, mais il est rare d'en trouver qui n'en aient jamais eu qu'une.—[*Réflexions . . . du Duc de la Rochefoucauld*, No. lxxiii.]

I.
 LADY! in whose heroic port
 And Beauty, Victor even of Time,
 And haughty lineaments, appear
 Much that is awful, more that's dear—
 Wherever human hearts resort
 There must have been for thee a Court,
 And Thou by acclamation Queen,
 Where never Sovereign yet had been.
 That eye so soft, and yet severe,
 Perchance might look on Love as Crime;

And yet—regarding thee more near—
 The traces of an unshed tear
 Compressed back to the heart,
 And mellowed Sadness in thine air,
 Which shows that Love hath once been there,
 To those who watch thee will disclose
 More than ten thousand tomes of woes
 Wrung from the vain Romancer's art.
 With thee how proudly Love hath dwelt!
 His full Divinity was felt,
 Maddening the heart he could not melt,
 Till Guilt became Sublime;
 But never yet did Beauty's Zone
 For him surround a lovelier throne,
 Than in that bosom once his own:
 And he the Sun and Thou the Clime
 Together must have made a Heaven,
 For which the Future would be given.

2.

And thou hast loved—Oh! not in vain!
 And not as common Mortals love.
 The Fruit of Fire is Ashes,
 The Ocean's tempest dashes
 Wrecks and the dead upon the rocky shore:
 True Passion must the all-searching changes
 prove,
 The Agony of Pleasure and of Pain,
 Till Nothing but the Bitterness remain;
 And the Heart's Spectre flitting through
 the brain
 Scoffs at the Exorcism which would remove.

3.

And where is He thou lovedst? in the tomb,
 Where should the happy Lover be!
 For him could Time unfold a brighter doom,
 Or offer aught like thee?
 He in the thickest battle died,
 Where Death is Pride;
 And *Thou* his widow—not his bride—
 Wert not more free
Here, where all love, till Love is made
 A bondage or a trade;
Here—thou so redolent of Beauty,
 In whom Caprice had seemed a duty,
Thou, who could'st trample and despise
 The holiest chain of human ties
 For him, the dear One in thine eyes,
 Broke it no more.
 Thy heart was withered to its Core,
 Its hopes, its fears, its feelings o'er;
 Thy Blood grew Ice when *his* was shed,
 And Thou the Vestal of the Dead.

4.

Thy Lover died, as All
 Who truly love should die;
 For such are worthy in the fight to fall
 Triumphantly.
 No Cuirass o'er that glowing heart
 That deadly bullet turned apart:
 Love had bestowed a richer Mail,
 Like Thetis on her Son;
 But hers at last was vain, and thine could
 fail—
 The hero's and the lover's race was run.
 Thy worshipped portrait, thy sweet face,
Without that bosom kept its place
 As thou *within*.
 Oh! enviously destined Ball!
 Shivering thine imaged charms and all
 Those Charms would win:
 Together pierced, the fatal Stroke hath gored
 Votary and Shrine, the adoring and the
 adored.
 That Heart's last throb was thine, that
 blood
 Baptized thine Image in its flood,
 And gushing from the fount of Faith
 O'erflowed with Passion even in Death,
 Constant to thee as in its hour
 Of rapture in the secret bower.
 Thou too has kept thy plight full well,
 As many a baffled Heart can tell,
 [First published, 1901.]

THE IRISH AVATAR.¹

"And Ireland like a bastinadoed elephant,
 kneeling to receive the paltry rider."—[*Life of*
Curran, ii. 336.]

I.

ERE the daughter of Brunswick is cold in her
 grave,
 And her ashes still float to their home o'er
 the tide,
 Lo! George the triumphant speeds over the
 wave,
 To the long-cherished Isle which he loved
 like his—bride.

¹ [The "fury" which sent Byron into this "law-
 less conscription of rhythmus," was inspired partly
 by an ungenerous attack on Moore, which appeared
 in the pages of *John Bull*, and, partly, by the
 servility of the Irish, who had welcomed George IV.
 with an outburst of enthusiastic loyalty, when he
 entered Dublin in triumph within ten days of the
 death of Queen Caroline. The pages of the
Morning Chronicle (August 8—18, 1821), supplied
 Byron with "copy" for his lyrical satire.]

2.

True, the great of her bright and brief Era
are gone,
The rain-bow-like Epoch where Freedom
could pause
For the few little years, out of centuries won,
Which betrayed not, or crushed not, or
wept not her cause.

3.

True, the chains of the Catholic clank o'er
his rags,
The Castle still stands, and the Senate's no
more,
And the Famine which dwelt on her freedom-
less crags
Is extending its steps to her desolate shore.

4.

To her desolate shore—where the emigrant
stands
For a moment to gaze ere he flies from his
hearth;
Tears fall on his chain, though it drops from
his hands,
For the dungeon he quits is the place of
his birth.

5.

But he comes! the Messiah of Royalty comes!
Like a goodly Leviathan rolled from the
waves;
Then receive him as best such an advent
becomes,
With a legion of cooks, and an army of
slaves!

6.

He comes in the promise and bloom of
threescore,
To perform in the pageant the Sovereign's
part—
But long live the Shamrock, which shadows
him o'er!
Could the Green in his *hat* be transferred
to his *heart*!

7.

Could that long-withered spot but be verdant
again,
And a new spring of noble affections arise—
Then might Freedom forgive thee this dance
in thy chain,
And this shout of thy slavery which saddens
the skies.

8.

Is it madness or meanness which clings to
thee now?
Were he God—as he is but the commonest
clay,
With scarce fewer wrinkles than sins on his
brow—
Such servile devotion might shame him
away.

9.

Aye, roar in his train! let thine orators lash
Their fanciful spirits to pamper his pride—
Not thus did thy Grattan indignantly flash
His soul o'er the freedom implored and
denied.

10.

Ever glorious Grattan! the best of the good!
So simple in heart, so sublime in the rest!
With all which Demosthenes wanted endued,
And his rival, or victor, in all he possessed.

11.

Ere Tully arose in the zenith of Rome,
Though unequalled, preceded, the task
was begun—
But Grattan sprung up like a god from the
tomb
Of ages, the first, last, the saviour, the *one*!

12.

With the skill of an Orpheus to soften the
brute;
With the fire of Prometheus to kindle
mankind;
Even Tyranny, listening, sate melted or mute,
And Corruption shrunk scorched from the
glance of his mind.

13.

But back to our theme! Back to despots
and slaves!
Feasts furnished by Famine! rejoicings by
Pain!
True Freedom but *welcomes*, while Slavery
still *raves*,
When a week's Saturnalia hath loosened
her chain.

14.

Let the poor squalid splendour thy wreck
can afford,
(As the bankrupt's profusion his ruin would
hide)
Gild over the palace, Lo! Erin thy Lord!
Kiss his foot with thy blessing — his
blessings denied!

15.

Or *if* freedom past hope be extorted at last,
 If the idol of brass find his feet are of
 clay,
 Must what terror or policy wring forth be
 classed
 With what monarchs ne'er give, but as
 wolves yield their prey?

16.

Each brute hath its nature; a King's is to
reign,—
 To *reign*! in that word see, ye ages,
 comprised
 The cause of the curses all annals contain,
 From Cæsar the dreaded to George the
 despised!

17.

Wear, Fingal, thy trapping!¹ O'Connell,
 proclaim
 His accomplishments! *His!!!* and thy
 country convince
 Half an age's contempt was an error of fame,
 And that "Hal is the rascaliest, sweetest
young prince!"

18.

Will thy yard of blue riband, poor Fingal,
 recall
 The fetters from millions of Catholic limbs?
 Or, has it not bound thee the fastest of all
 The slaves, who now hail their betrayer
 with hymns?

19.

Aye! "Build him a dwelling!" let each give
 his mite!²
 Till, like Babel, the new royal dome hath
 arisen!
 Let thy beggars and helots their pittance
 unite—
 And a palace bestow for a poor-house and
 prison!

¹["The Earl of Fingall, the leading Catholic nobleman, is to be created a Knight of St. Patrick."—*Morning Chronicle*, August 18.]

²[There was talk of a testimonial being presented to the King. O'Connell suggested that if possible it should take the form of "a palace, to which not only the rank around him could contribute, but to the erection of which every peasant could from his cottage contribute his humble mite."—*Morning Chronicle*, August 18.]

20.

Spread—spread for Vitellius, the royal repast,
 Till the gluttonous despot be stuffed to
 the gorge!
 And the roar of his drunkards proclaim him
 at last
 The Fourth of the fools and oppressors
 called "George!"

21.

Let the tables be loaded with feasts till they
 groan!
 Till they *groan* like thy people, through
 ages of woe!
 Let the wine flow around the old Bacchanal's
 throne,
 Like their blood which has flowed, and
 which yet has to flow.

22.

But let not *his* name be thine idol alone—
 On his right hand behold a Sejanus appears!
 Thine own Castlereagh! let him still be
 thine own!
 A wretch never named but with curses and
 jeers!

23.

Till now, when the Isle which should blush
 for his birth,
 Deep, deep as the gore which he shed on
 her soil,
 Seems proud of the reptile which crawled
 from her earth,
 And for murder repays him with shouts
 and a smile.

24.

Without one single ray of her genius,—without
 The fancy, the manhood, the fire of her race—
 The miscreant who well might plunge Erin
 in doubt
 If *she* ever gave birth to a being so base.

25.

If she did—let her long-boasted proverb be
 hushed,
 Which proclaims that from Erin no reptile
 can spring—
 See the cold-blooded Serpent, with venom
 full flushed,
 Still warming its folds in the breast of a King!

26.

Shout, drink, feast, and flatter! Oh! Erin,
 how low
 Wert thou sunk by misfortune and tyranny,
 till
 Thy welcome of tyrants hath plunged thee
 below
 The depth of thy deep in a deeper gulf still.

27.

My voice, though but humble, was raised
 for thy right;¹
 My vote, as a freeman's, still voted thee free;
 This hand, though but feeble, would arm in
 thy fight,
 And this heart, though outworn, had a
 throb still for *thee!*

28.

Yes, I loved thee and thine, though thou art
 not my land;
 I have known noble hearts and great souls
 in thy sons,
 And I wept with the world, o'er the patriot
 band
 Who are gone, but I weep them no longer
 as once.

29.

For happy are they now reposing afar,—
 Thy Grattan, thy Curran, thy Sheridan, all
 Who, for years, were the chiefs in the eloquent
 war,
 And redeemed, if they have not retarded,
 thy fall.

30.

Yes, happy are they in their cold English
 graves!
 Their shades cannot start to thy shouts of
 to-day—
 Nor the steps of enslavers and chain-kissing
 slaves
 Be stamped in the turf o'er their fetterless
 clay.

31.

Till now I had envied thy sons and their shore,
 Though their virtues were hunted, their
 liberties fled;
 There was something so warm and sublime
 in the core
 Of an Irishman's heart, that I envy—thy *dead.*

¹ [Byron spoke and voted in favour of the Earl of Donoughmore's motion for a Committee on the Roman Catholic claims, April 21, 1812.]

32.

Or, if aught in my bosom can quench for an
 hour
 My contempt for a nation so servile, though
 sore,
 Which though trod like the worm will not
 turn upon power,
 'Tis the glory of Grattan, and genius of
 Moore!

Ra. *September 16, 1821.*

[First published, Paris, September 19, 1821.]

STANZAS WRITTEN ON THE ROAD BETWEEN FLORENCE AND PISA.

I.

Oh talk not to me of a name great in story—
 The days of our Youth are the days of our glory;
 And the myrtle and ivy of sweet two-and-twenty
 Are worth all your laurels, though ever so
 plenty.

2.

What are garlands and crowns to the brow
 that is wrinkled?
 'Tis but as a dead flower with May-dew be-
 sprinkled:
 Then away with all such from the head that
 is hoary,
 What care I for the wreaths that can *only*
 give glory?

3.

Oh FAME!—if I e'er took delight in thy praises,
 'Twas less for the sake of thy high-sounding
 phrases,
 Than to see the bright eyes of the dear One
 discover,
 She thought that I was not unworthy to love her.

4.

There chiefly I sought thee, *there* only I found
 thee;
 Her Glance was the best of the rays that
 surround thee,
 When it sparkled o'er aught that was bright
 in my story,
 I knew it was Love, and I felt it was Glory.

November 6, 1821.[First published, *Letters and Journals*
of Lord Byron, 1830, ii. 566, note.]

STANZAS TO A HINDOO AIR.

I.

OH! my lonely—lonely—lonely—Pillow!
Where is my lover? where is my lover?
Is it his bark which my dreary dreams discover?
Far—far away! and alone along the billow?

2.

Oh! my lonely—lonely—lonely—Pillow!
Why must my head ache where his gentle
brow lay?
How the long night flags lovelessly and slowly,
And my head droops over thee like the willow!

3.

Oh! thou, my sad and solitary Pillow!
Send me kind dreams to keep my heart from
breaking,
In return for the tears I shed upon thee waking;
Let me not die till he comes back o'er the
billow.

4.

Then if thou wilt—no more my *lonely* Pillow,
In one embrace let these arms again enfold him,
And then expire of the joy—but to behold him!
Oh! my lone bosom!—oh! my lonely Pillow!
[First published, *Works of Lord Byron*,
1832, xiv. 357.]

TO——¹

I.

BUT once I dared to lift my eyes—
To lift my eyes to thee;
And since that day, beneath the skies,
No other sight they see.

2.

In vain sleep shuts them in the night—
The night grows day to me;
Presenting idly to my sight
What still a dream must be.

3.

A fatal dream—for many a bar
Divides thy fate from mine;
And still my passions wake and war,
But peace be still with thine.

[First published, *New Monthly Magazine*,
1833, vol. 37, p. 308.]

¹[Probably "To Lady Blessington," who includes them in her *Conversations of Lord Byron*.]

TO THE COUNTESS OF
BLESSINGTON.

I.

YOU have asked for a verse:—the request
In a rhymer 'twere strange to deny;
But my Hippocrene was but my breast,
And my feelings (its fountain) are dry.

2.

Were I now as I was, I had sung
What Lawrence has painted so well;¹
But the strain would expire on my tongue
And the theme is too soft for my shell.

3.

I am ashes where once I was fire,
And the bard in my bosom is dead;
What I loved I now merely admire,
And my heart is as grey as my head.

4.

My life is not dated by years—
There are *moments* which act as a plough,
And there is not a furrow appears
But is deep in my soul as my brow.

5.

Let the young and the brilliant aspire
To sing what I gaze on in vain;
For Sorrow has torn from my lyre
The string which was worthy the strain.

B.

[First published, *Letters and Journals*,
1830, ii. 635, 636.]

ARISTOMENES.²

CANTO FIRST.

I.

THE Gods of old are silent on their shore,
Since the great Pan expired, and through the
roar
Of the Ionian waters broke a dread
Voice which proclaimed "the Mighty Pan is
dead."

¹[The portrait of Lady Blessington by Sir Thomas Lawrence, P.R.A., is now in the Wallace Collection at Hertford House.]

²[Aristomenes, the Achilles of the Alexandrian poet Rhianus, is the legendary hero of the second Messenian War (B.C. 685-668). Thrice he slew a

How much died with him! false or true—the
 dream
 Was beautiful which peopled every stream
 With more than finny tenants, and adorned
 The woods and waters with coy nymphs that
 scorned
 Pursuing Deities, or in the embrace
 Of gods brought forth the high heroic race to
 Whose names are on the hills and o'er the seas.

Cephalonia, *Sept.* 10th 1823.
 [First published, 1903.]

THE BLUES :¹

A LITERARY ECLOGUE.

"Nimium ne crede colori."—VIRGIL, [*Ecl.* ii. 17].
 O trust not, ye beautiful creatures, to hue,
 Though your *hair* were as *red*, as your *stockings*
 are *blue*.

ECLOGUE THE FIRST.

London.—Before the door of a Lecture Room.

Enter TRACY, meeting INKEL.

Ink. YOU'RE too late.

Tra. Is it over?

Ink. Nor will be this hour.

But the benches are crammed, like a garden
 in flower,

With the pride of our belles, who have made
 it the fashion;

So, instead of "beaux arts," we may say "la
belle passion"

For learning, which lately has taken the lead in
 The world, and set all the fine gentleman
 reading.

Tra. I know it too well, and have worn out
 my patience

With studying to study your new publications.

hundred of the Spartan foe, and thrice he offered
 the Hekatomphonia on Mount Ithome. At the
 close of the second century of the Christian era,
 Pausanias made a note of Messenian maidens
 hymning his victory over the Lacedæmonians—

"From the heart of the plain he drove them,

And he drove them back to the hill:

To the top of the hill he drove them,

As he followed them, followed them still!"

¹ [*The Blues* was written, August 6, 1821, and
 published anonymously in the third number of *The
 Liberal*, April 26, 1823.]

There's Vamp, Scamp, and Mouthy, and
 Wordsworths and Co.

With their damnable——

Ink. Hold, my good friend, do you know to
 Whom you speak to?

Tra. Right well, boy, and so does "the
 Row":¹

You're an author—a poet—

Ink. And think you that I
 Can stand tamely in silence, to hear you decry
 The Muses?

Tra. Excuse me: I meant no offence
 To the Nine; though the number who make
 some pretence

To their favours is such——but the subject to
 drop,

I am just piping hot from a publisher's shop,
 (Next door to the pastry cook's; so that when I
 Cannot find the new volume I wanted to buy
 On the bibliopole's shelves, it is only two
 paces,

As one finds every author in one of those
 places:)

Where I just had been skimming a charming
 critique,

So studded with wit, and so sprinkled with
 Greek!

Where your friend—you know who—has just
 got such a threshing,

That it is, as a phrase goes, extremely "*re-
 freshing*."²

What a beautiful word!

Ink. Very true; 'tis so soft
 And so cooling—they use it a little too oft;
 And the papers have got it at last—but no
 matter.

So they've cut up our friend then?

Tra. Not left him a tatter—
 Not a rag of his present or past reputation, so
 Which they call a disgrace to the age, and
 the nation.

Ink. I'm sorry to hear this! for friendship,
 you know——

Our poor friend!—but I thought it would
 terminate so.

Our friendship is such, I'll read nothing to
 shock it.

You don't happen to have the Review in
 your pocket?

¹ [Vamp and Scamp may stand for Coleridge and
 Hazlitt. Mouthy, of course, is Southey, Inkel and
 Tracy are, possibly, Byron and Moore.]

² [This phrase is said to have been first used in
 the *Edinburgh Review*—probably by Jeffrey.]

Tra. No; I left a round dozen of authors
and others
(Very sorry, no doubt, since the cause is a
brother's)
All scrambling and jostling, like so many
imps,
And on fire with impatience to get the next
glimpse.
Ink. Let us join them.
Tra. What, won't you return to the
lecture? 40
Ink. Why the place is so crammed, there's
not room for a spectre.
Besides, our friend Scamp is to-day so
absurd—¹
Tra. How can you know that till you hear
him?
Ink. I heard
Quite enough; and, to tell you the truth, my
retreat
Was from his vile nonsense, no less than the
heat.
Tra. I have had no great loss then?
Ink. Loss!—such a palaver!
I'd inoculate sooner my wife with the slaver
Of a dog when gone rabid, than listen two
hours
To the torrent of trash which around him he
pours,
Pumped up with such effort, disgorged with
such labour, 50
That—come—do not make me speak ill of
one's neighbour.
Tra. I make you!
Ink. Yes, you! I said nothing until
You compelled me, by speaking the
truth—
Tra. *To speak ill?*
Is that your deduction?
Ink. When speaking of Scamp ill,
I certainly *follow, not set* an example.
The fellow's a fool, an impostor, a zany.
Tra. And the crowd of to-day shows that
one fool makes many.
But we two will be wise.
Ink. Pray, then, let us retire.
Tra. I would, but—

Ink. There must be attraction much
higher
Than Scamp, or the Jew's harp he nicknames
his lyre, 60
To call *you* to this hotbed.
Tra. I own it—'tis true—
A fair lady—
Ink. A spinster?
Tra. Miss Lilac.
Ink. The Blue!
Tra. The heiress! The angel!
Ink. The devil! why, man,
Pray get out of this hobble as fast as you
can.
You wed with Miss Lilac! 'twould be your
perdition:
She's a poet, a chymist, a mathematician.¹
Tra. I say she's an angel.
Ink. Say rather an *angle*.
If you and she marry, you'll certainly
wrangle.
I say she's a Blue, man, as blue as the ether.
Tra. And is that any cause for not coming
together? 70
Ink. Humph! I can't say I know any
happy alliance
Which has lately sprung up from a wedlock
with science.
She's so learned in all things, and fond of
concerning
Herself in all matters connected with learn-
ing,
That—
Tra. What?
Ink. I perhaps may as well hold my
tongue;
But there's five hundred people can tell you
you're wrong.
Tra. You forget Lady Lilac's as rich as a
Jew.
Ink. Is it miss or the cash of mamma you
pursue?
Tra. Why, Jack, I'll be frank with you—
something of both.
The girl's a fine girl.
Ink. And you feel nothing loth 80
To her good lady-mother's reversion; and
yet
Her life is as good as your own, I will bet.

¹ [It is possible that the description of Hazlitt's Lectures of 1818 is coloured by recollections of Coleridge's Lectures of 1811-1812, which Byron attended; but the substance of the attack is probably derived from Gifford's review of *Lectures on the English Poets* (*Quarterly Review*, December, 1818, vol. xix. pp. 424-434.)

¹ ["Yesterday, a very pretty letter from Annabella. . . . She is . . . very little spoiled, which is strange in an heiress. . . . She is a poetess—a mathematician—a metaphysician."—*Journal*, November 30, 1813, *Letters*, 1898, ii. 357.]

Tra. Let her live, and as long as she
likes; I demand
Nothing more than the heart of her daughter
and hand.

Ink. Why, that heart's in the inkstand—
that hand on the pen.

Tra. A propos—Will you write me a song
now and then?

Ink. To what purpose?

Tra. You know, my dear friend, that
in prose

My talent is decent, as far as it goes;
But in rhyme——

Ink. You're a terrible stick, to be sure.

Tra. I own it; and yet, in these times,
there's no lure 90

For the heart of the fair like a stanza or two;
And so, as I can't, will you furnish a few?

Ink. In your name?

Tra. In my name. I will copy them
out,

To slip into her hand at the very next rout.

Ink. Are you so far advanced as to hazard
this?

Tra. Why,
Do you think me subdued by a Blue-stockings's
eye,

So far as to tremble to tell her in rhyme
What I've told her in prose, at the least, as
sublime?

Ink. As sublime! If it be so, no need of
my Muse.

Tra. But consider, dear Ink, she's one
of the "Blues." 100

Ink. As sublime!—Mr. Tracy—I've no-
thing to say.

Stick to prose—As sublime!!—but I wish
you good day.

Tra. Nay, stay, my dear fellow—consider
—I'm wrong;

I own it; but, prithee, compose me the song.

Ink. As sublime!!

Tra. I but used the expression in haste.

Ink. That may be, Mr. Tracy, but shows
damned bad taste.

Tra. I own it, I know it, acknowledge it—
what

Can I say to you more?

Ink. I see what you'd be at:
You disparage my parts with insidious
abuse,

Till you think you can turn them best to your
own use. 110

Tra. And is that not a sign I respect
them?

Ink. Why that
To be sure makes a difference.

Tra. I know what is what:
And you, who're a man of the gay world, no
less

Than a poet of t'other, may easily guess
That I never could mean, by a word, to
offend

A genius like you, and, moreover, my friend.

Ink. No doubt; you by this time should
know what is due

To a man of——but come—let us shake
hands.

Tra. You knew,
And you *know*, my dear fellow, how heartily
I,

Whatever you publish, am ready to buy. 120

Ink. That's my bookseller's business; I
care not for sale;

Indeed the best poems at first rather fail.

There were Renegade's epics, and Botherby's
plays,¹

And my own grand romance——

Tra. Had its full share of praise.
I myself saw it puffed in the "Old Girl's
Review."²

Ink. What Review?

Tra. 'Tis the English "Journal de
Trevoux;"³

A clerical work of our Jesuits at home.

Have you never yet seen it?

Ink. That pleasure's to come.

Tra. Make haste then.

Ink. Why so?

Tra. I have heard people say
That it threatened to give up the *ghost* t'other
day.⁴ 130

Ink. Well, that is a sign of some *spirit*.

Tra. No doubt.

Shall you be at the Countess of Fiddlecome's
rout?

¹ [Sotheby's plays, *Ivan, The Death of Darnley, etc.*, were published under the title of *Five Tragedies*, in 1814.]

² [Compare—
"I've bribed my Grandmother's Review—the
British."
—*Don Juan*, Canto I. stanza ccix. line 9.]

³ [*The Journal de Trevoux*, published under the title of *Mémoires de Trévoux* (1701-1775, 265 vols. 12°), edited by members of the Society of Jesus, was an imitation of the *Journal des Savants*.]

⁴ [The publication of the *British Review* was discontinued in 1825.]

Ink. I've a card, and shall go: but at present, as soon
As friend Scamp shall be pleased to step down from the moon,
(Where he seems to be soaring in search of his wits),
And an interval grants from his lecturing fits,
I'm engaged to the Lady Bluebottle's collation,
To partake of a luncheon and learned conversation:
'Tis a sort of reunion for Scamp, on the days
Of his lecture, to treat him with cold tongue and praise.
And I own, for my own part, that 'tis not unpleasant.
Will you go? There's Miss Lilac will also be present.

Tra. That "metal's attractive."
Ink. No doubt—to the pocket.
Tra. You should rather encourage my passion than shock it.
But let us proceed; for I think by the hum——
Ink. Very true; let us go, then, before they can come,
Or else we'll be kept here an hour at their levee,
On the rack of cross questions, by all the blue bevy.
Hark! Zounds, they'll be on us; I know by the drone
Of old Botherby's spouting ex-cathedrâ tone.
Aye! there he is at it. Poor Scamp! better join
Your friends, or he'll pay you back in your own coin.

Tra. All fair; 'tis but lecture for lecture.
Ink. That's clear.
But for God's sake let's go, or the Bore will be here.
Come, come: nay, I'm off.

[*Exit* INKEL.]

Tra. You are right, and I'll follow;
'Tis high time for a "*Sic me servavit Apollo.*"
And yet we shall have the whole crew on our kibes,
Blues, dandies, and dowagers, and second-hand scribes,
All flocking to moisten their exquisite throattles
With a glass of Madeira at Lady Bluebottle's.

[*Exit* TRACY.]

ECLOGUE THE SECOND.

An Apartment in the House of LADY BLUEBOTTLE.—A Table prepared.

SIR RICHARD BLUEBOTTLE *solus.*

Was there ever a man who was married so sorry?
Like a fool, I must needs do the thing in a hurry.
My life is reversed, and my quiet destroyed;
My days, which once passed in so gentle a void,
Must now, every hour of the twelve, be employed;
The twelve, do I say?—of the whole twenty-four,
Is there one which I dare call my own any more?
What with driving and visiting, dancing and dining,
What with learning, and teaching, and scribbling, and shining
In science and art, I'll be cursed if I know
Myself from my wife; for although we are two,
Yet she somehow contrives that all things shall be done
In a style which proclaims us eternally one.
But the thing of all things which distresses me more
Than the bills of the week (though they trouble me sore)
Is the numerous, humorous, backbiting crew
Of scribblers, wits, lecturers, white, black, and blue,
Who are brought to my house as an inn, to my cost—
For the bill here, it seems, is defrayed by the host—
No pleasure! no leisure! no thought for my pains,
But to hear a vile jargon which addles my brains;
A smatter and chatter, gleaned out of reviews,
By the rag, tag, and bobtail, of those they call "BLUES";
A rabble who know not——But soft, here they come!
Would to God I were deaf! as I'm not, I'll be dumb.

Enter LADY BLUEBOTTLE, MISS LILAC, LADY BLUEMOUNT, MR. BOTHERBY,

INKEL, TRACY, MISS MAZARINE, and others, with SCAMP the Lecturer, etc., etc.

Lady Blueb. Ah! Sir Richard, good morning: I've brought you some friends.

Sir Rich. (bows, and afterwards aside). If friends, they're the first.

Lady Blueb. But the luncheon attends. I pray ye be seated, "sans cérémonie."

Mr. Scamp, you're fatigued; take your chair there, next me. [They all sit.

Sir Rich. (aside). If he does, his fatigue is to come.

Lady Blueb. Mr. Tracy—
Lady Bluemount—Miss Lilac—be pleased, pray, to place ye;

And you, Mr. Botherby—

Both. Oh, my dear Lady, I obey.

Lady Blueb. Mr. Inkel, I ought to upbraid ye:

You were not at the lecture.

Ink. Excuse me I was; But the heat forced me out in the best part— alas!

And when—

Lady Blueb. To be sure it was broiling; but then

You have lost such a lecture!

Both. The best of the ten.

Tra. How can you know that? there are two more.

Both. Because I defy him to beat this day's wondrous applause.

The very walls shook.

Ink. Oh, if that be the test, I allow our friend Scamp has this day done his best.

Miss Lilac, permit me to help you;—a wing?

Miss Lil. No more, sir, I thank you. Who lectures next spring?

Both. Dick Dunder.

Ink. That is, if he lives.

Miss Lil. And why not?

Ink. No reason whatever, save that he's a sot.

Lady Bluemount! a glass of Madeira?

Lady Bluem. With pleasure.

Ink. How does your friend Wordswords, that Windermere treasure?

Does he stick to his lakes, like the leeches he sings,¹

And their gatherers, as Homer sung warriors and kings?

¹ [Wordsworth's *Resolution and Independence*,

Lady Bluem. He has just got a place.¹

Ink. As a footman?

Lady Bluem. For shame!

Nor profane with your sneers so poetic a name.

Ink. Nay, I meant him no evil, but pitied his master;

For the poet of pedlars 'twere, sure, no disaster

To wear a new livery; the more, as 'tis not The first time he has turned both his creed and his coat.

Lady Bluem. For shame! I repeat. If Sir George could but hear—

Lady Blueb. Never mind our friend Inkel; we all know, my dear,

'Tis his way.

Sir Rich. But this place—

Ink. Is perhaps like friend Scamp's, A lecturer's.

Lady Bluem. Excuse me—'tis one in the "Stamps":

He is made a collector.

Tra. Collector!

Sir Rich. How?

Miss Lil. What? ⁶⁰

Ink. I shall think of him oft when I buy a new hat:²

There his works will appear—

Lady Bluem. Sir, they reach to the Ganges.

Ink. I shan't go so far—I can have them at Grange's.³

Lady Bluem. Oh fie!

Miss Lil. And for shame!

Lady Bluem. You're too bad.

Both. Very good!

Lady Bluem. How good?

Lady Blueb. He means nought—'tis his phrase.

Lady Bluem. He grows rude.

Lady Blueb. He means nothing; nay, ask him.

Lady Bluem. Pray, Sir! did you mean What you say?

originally entitled *The Leech-gatherer*, was written in 1802, and published in 1807.]

¹ [Wordsworth was appointed Distributor of Stamps for the County of Westmoreland, in March 1813.]

² [Byron did not know, or did not choose to remember, that hat stamps had gone out with the hat tax, which was abolished in 1811.]

³ Grange is or was a famous pastry-cook and fruiterer in Piccadilly.

Ink. Never mind if he did; 'twill be seen
That whatever he means won't alloy what
he says.

Both. Sir!

Ink. Pray be content with your portion
of praise; 69
'Twas in your defence.

Both. If you please, with submission
I can make out my own.

Ink. It would be your perdition.
While you live, my dear Botherby, never
defend

Yourself or your works; but leave both to a
friend.

A propos—Is your play then accepted at last?

Both. At last?

Ink. Why I thought—that's to say—there
had passed

A few green-room whispers, which hinted,—
you know

That the taste of the actors at best is so so.

Both. Sir, the green-room's in rapture, and
so's the Committee.

Ink. Aye—yours are the plays for exciting
our "pity
And fear," as the Greek says: for "purging
the mind," 80

I doubt if you'll leave us an equal behind.

Both. I have written the prologue, and
meant to have prayed

For a spice of your wit in an epilogue's aid.

Ink. Well, time enough yet, when the
play's to be played.

Is it cast yet?

Both. The actors are fighting for parts,
As is usual in that most litigious of arts.

Lady Blueb. We'll all make a party, and
go the *first* night.

Tra. And you promised the epilogue, Inkel.

Ink. Not quite.

However, to save my friend Botherby trouble,
I'll do what I can, though my pains must be
double. 90

Tra. Why so?

Ink. To do justice to what goes before.

Both. Sir, I'm happy to say, I've no fears
on that score.

Your parts, Mr. Inkel, are—

Ink. Never mind *mine*;
Stick to those of your play, which is quite
your own line.

Lady Bluem. You're a fugitive writer, I
think, sir, of rhymes?

Ink. Yes, ma'am; and a fugitive reader
sometimes.

On Wordswords, for instance, I seldom alight,
Or on Mouthey, his friend, without taking to
flight.

Lady Bluem. Sir, your taste is too common;
but time and posterity
Will right these great men, and this age's
severity 100

Become its reproach.

Ink. I've no sort of objection,
So I'm not of the party to take the infec-
tion.

Lady Blueb. Perhaps you have doubts that
they ever will *take*?

Ink. Not at all; on the contrary, those of
the lake

Have taken already, and still will continue
To take—what they can, from a groat to a
guinea,

Of pension or place;—but the subject's a bore.

Lady Bluem. Well, sir, the time's coming.

Ink. Scamp! don't you feel sore?
What say you to this?

Scamp. They have merit, I own;
Though their system's absurdity keeps it
unknown. 110

Ink. Then why not unearth it in one of
your lectures?

Scamp. It is only time past which comes
under my strictures.

Lady Blueb. Come, a truce with all tart-
ness;—the joy of my heart

Is to see Nature's triumph o'er all that is art.

Wild Nature!—Grand Shakespeare!

Both. And down Aristotle!

Lady Bluem. Sir George¹ thinks exactly
with Lady Bluebottle:

And my Lord Seventy-four,² who protects our
dear Bard,

And who gave him his place, has the greatest
regard

For the poet, who, singing of pedlars and
asses,

Has found out the way to dispense with
Parnassus. 120

Tra. And you, Scamp!—

¹ [Sir George Beaumont, Bart., of Coleorton, Leicestershire (1753-1827), landscape-painter, art critic, and picture-collector, married, in 1778, Margaret Willis, granddaughter of Chief Justice Willis. She corresponded with Wordsworth and his sister Dorothy, and with Coleridge.]

² [It was not Wordsworth's patron, William Lord Lonsdale, but his kinsman James, the first earl, who, towards the close of the American war, offered to build and man a ship of seventy-four guns.]

Scamp. I needs must confess I'm embarrassed.
Ink. Don't call upon Scamp, who's already so harassed
 With old *schools*, and new *schools*, and no *schools*, and all *schools*.¹
Tra. Well, one thing is certain, that *some* must be fools.
 I should like to know who.
Ink. And I should not be sorry To know who are *not*:—it would save us some worry.
Lady Blueb. A truce with remark, and let nothing control
 This "feast of our reason, and flow of the soul."
 Oh! my dear Mr. Botherby! sympathise!—I Now feel such a rapture, I'm ready to fly, 130
 I feel so elastic—"so buoyant—so buoyant!"²
Ink. Tracy! open the window.
Tra. I wish her much joy on't.
Both. For God's sake, my Lady Bluebottle, check not
 This gentle emotion, so seldom our lot
 Upon earth. Give it way: 'tis an impulse which lifts
 Our spirits from earth—the sublimest of gifts;
 For which poor Prometheus was chained to his mountain:
 'Tis the source of all sentiment—feeling's true fountain;
 'Tis the Vision of Heaven upon Earth: 'tis the gas
 Of the soul: 'tis the seizing of shades as they pass, 140
 And making them substance: 'tis something divine:—
Ink. Shall I help you, my friend, to a little more wine?
Both. I thank you: not any more, sir, till I dine.
Ink. A propos—Do you dine with Sir Humphry to-day?³
Tra. I should think with *Duke* Humphry was more in your way.
Ink. It might be of yore; but we authors now look
 To the Knight, as a landlord, much more than the Duke.

The truth is, each writer now quite at his ease is,
 And (except with his publisher) dines where he pleases.
 But 'tis now nearly five, and I must to the Park.
Tra. And I'll take a turn with you there till 'tis dark. 151
 And you, Scamp—
Scamp. Excuse me! I must to my notes, For my lecture next week.
Ink. He must mind whom he quotes Out of "Elegant Extracts."
Lady Blueb. Well, now we break up; But remember Miss Diddle¹ invites us to sup.
Ink. Then at two hours past midnight we all meet again,
 For the sciences, sandwiches, hock, and champagne!
Tra. And the sweet lobster salad!
Both. I honour that meal; For 'tis then that our feelings most genuinely—feel.
Ink. True; feeling is truest *then*, far beyond question: 160
 I wish to the Gods 'twas the same with digestion!
Lady Blueb. Pshaw!—never mind that; for one moment of feeling
 Is worth—God knows what.
Ink. 'Tis at least worth concealing For itself, or what follows—But here comes your carriage.
Sir Rich. (aside). I wish all these people were d——d with *my* marriage!
 [Exeunt.]

¹ ["Lydia White," writes Lady Morgan (*Memoirs*, 1862, ii. 236), "was a personage of much social celebrity in her day. She was an Irish lady of large fortune and considerable talent, noted for her hospitality and dinners in all the capitals of Europe."]

¹ [For "schools" of poetry, see Hazlitt's *Lectures on the English Poets* (No. viii.), 1818, p. 318.]

² Fact from life, with the *words*.

³ [Sir Humphrey Davy (1778-1829.)]

SARDANAPALUS:¹
A TRAGEDY.

TO
THE ILLUSTRIOUS GOETHE
A STRANGER
PRESUMES TO OFFER THE HOMAGE
OF A LITERARY VASSAL TO HIS LIEGE LORD,
THE FIRST OF EXISTING WRITERS,
WHO HAS CREATED
THE LITERATURE OF HIS OWN COUNTRY,
AND ILLUSTRATED THAT OF EUROPE.
THE UNWORTHY PRODUCTION
WHICH THE AUTHOR VENTURES TO INSCRIBE
TO HIM IS ENTITLED
SARDANAPALUS.²

PREFACE.

IN publishing the following Tragedies I have only to repeat, that they were not composed with the most remote view to the stage. On the attempt made by the managers in a former instance, the public opinion has been already expressed. With regard to my own private feelings, as it seems that they are to stand for nothing, I shall say nothing.

For the historical foundation of the following compositions the reader is referred to the Notes.

¹ [*Sardanapalus* was begun January 12, finished May 27, and published in the same volume with the *Two Foscari*, and *Cain*, December 19, 1821.]

² ["A manuscript dedication of *Sardanapalus* . . . was forwarded to him, with an obliging inquiry whether it might be prefixed to the tragedy. The German, who, at his advanced age, was conscious of his own powers, and of their effects, could only gratefully and modestly consider this Dedication as the expression of an inexhaustible intellect, deeply feeling and creating its own object. He was by no means dissatisfied when, after long delay, *Sardanapalus* appeared without the Dedication; and was made happy by the possession of a facsimile of it, engraved on stone, which he considered a precious memorial."—*Lebensverhältnik zu Byron, Werke*, 1833, xlvi. 221-225. (See, too, for translation, *Life*, p. 593.)]

The Author has in one instance attempted to preserve, and in the other to approach, the "unities"; conceiving that with any very distant departure from them, there may be poetry, but can be no drama. He is aware of the unpopularity of this notion in present English literature; but it is not a system of his own, being merely an opinion, which, not very long ago, was the law of literature throughout the world, and is still so in the more civilised parts of it. But "nous avons changé tout cela," and are reaping the advantages of the change. The writer is far from conceiving that any thing he can adduce by personal precept or example can at all approach his regular, or even irregular predecessors: he is merely giving a reason why he preferred the more regular formation of a structure, however feeble, to an entire abandonment of all rules whatsoever. Where he has failed, the failure is in the architect,—and not in the art.

IN this tragedy it has been my intention to follow the account of Diodorus Siculus;¹

¹ ["Sardanapalus, the Thirtieth from Ninus, and the last King of the Assyrians, exceeded all his Predecessors in Sloth and Luxury; for besides that he was seen of none out of his family, he led a most effeminate life: for wallowing in Pleasure and wanton Dalliances, he clothed himself in Womens' attire, and spun fine Wool and Purple amongst the throngs of his Whores and Concubines. He painted likewise his Face, and decked his whole Body with other Allurements. . . . He imitated likewise a Woman's voice . . . ; and proceeded to such a degree of voluptuousness that he composed verses for his Epitaph . . . which were thus translated by a Grecian out of the Barbarian language—

Ταῦτ' ἔχω ὅσ' ἔφαγον καὶ ἐφύβρισα, καὶ μετ'
ἔρωτος
Τέρπν' ἔπαθον· τὰ δὲ πολλὰ καὶ ὄλβια κείνα
λέλειπται.

'What once I gorged I now enjoy,
And wanton Lusts me still employ;
All other things by Mortals prized
Are left as dirt by me despised.'

—*The Historical Library of Diodorus the Sicilian*, made English by G. Booth, of the City of Chester, Esquire, 1700, p. 65.

"Another king of the sort was Sardanapalus . . . And so, when Arbaces, who was one of the generals under him, a Mede by birth, endeavoured

reducing it, however, to such dramatic regularity as I best could, and trying to approach the unities. I therefore suppose the rebellion to explode and succeed in one day by a sudden conspiracy, instead of the long war of the history.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

MEN.

SARDANAPALUS, *King of Nineveh and Assyria, etc.*

ARBACES, *the Mede who aspired to the Throne.*

BELESES, *a Chaldean and Soothsayer.*

SALEMENES, *the King's Brother-in-Law.*

ALTADA, *an Assyrian Officer of the Palace.*

PANIA.

ZAMES.

SFERO.

BALEA.

WOMEN.

ZARINA, *the Queen.*

MYRRHA, *an Ionian female Slave, and the Favourite Mistress of SARDANAPALUS.*

Women composing the Harem of SARDANAPALUS, Guards, Attendants, Chaldean Priests, Medes, etc., etc.

SCENE.—A Hall in the Royal Palace of Nineveh.

to manage by the assistance of one of the eunuchs, whose name was Sparamizus, to see Sardanapalus: and when . . . he saw him painted with vermilion, and adorned like a woman, sitting among his concubines, carding purple wool, and sitting among them with his feet up, wearing a woman's robe, and with his beard carefully scraped, and his face smoothed with pumice stone (for he was whiter than milk, and pencilled under his eyes and eyebrows; and when he saw Arbaces he was putting a little more white under his eyes). Most historians, of whom Duris is one, relate that Arbaces, being indignant at his countrymen being ruled over by such a monarch as that, stabbed him and slew him. But Ctesias says that he went to war with him, and collected a great army, and then that Sardanapalus, being dethroned by Arbaces, died, burning himself alive in his palace, having heaped up a funeral pile four plethra in extent, on which he placed 150 golden couches."—*The Deipnosophistæ* . . . of Athenæus, bk. xii. c. 38, translated by C. D. Yonge, 1854, iii. 847.]

[*Sardanapale, Tragédie Imitée de Lord Byron*, par L. Alvin, was performed at the Théâtre Royal at Brussels, January 13, 16, 1834.

Sardanapalus, a Tragedy, was played for the first time at Drury Lane Theatre, April 10, 1834, and (for the twenty-second time) June 5, 1834. Macready appeared as "Sardanapalus," Miss Phillips as "Zarina," and Miss Ellen Tree as "Myrrha." [In his diary for April 11, 1834 (see *Reminiscences*, 1875, i. 414, 415) Macready wrote, "On arriving at my chambers . . . I found a letter without a signature; the seal was the head of Byron, and in the envelope was a folded sheet with merely the words, 'Werner, Nov., 1830. Byron, Ravenna, 1821,' and 'Sardanapalus, April 10th, 1834.' Encircling the name of Byron, etc., was a lock of grey hair fastened by a gold thread, which I am sure was Byron's, . . . it surprised and pleased me."]

Sardanapalus, King of Assyria, was produced at the Princess's Theatre, June 13, 1853, and played till September 2, 1853. Charles Kean appeared as "Sardanapalus," Miss Heath as "Zarina," and Mrs. Charles Kean as "Myrrha."

Sardanapale, Opéra en Trois Actes, par M. Henry Becque, Musique de M. Victorin Joncières, was performed for the first time at the Théâtre Impérial-Lyrique, February 8, 1867.

Lord Byron's Tragedy of Sardanapalus, in four acts, was performed at the Theatre Royal, Manchester, March 31—April 28, 1877. Charles Calvert (the adapter) played "Sardanapalus," Miss Hathaway "Zarina," and Miss Fanny Ensor "Myrrha"; and June 26—July 27, 1877, at the Royal Alexandra Theatre, Liverpool. Calvert's adaptation was also performed at Booth's Theatre, New York.]

ACT I.

SCENE I.—A Hall in the Palace.

Salemenes (solus). He hath wronged his queen, but still he is her lord;
He hath wronged my sister—still he is my brother;
He hath wronged his people—still he is their sovereign—
And I must be his friend as well as subject:
He must not perish thus. I will not see

The blood of Nimrod and Semiramis
Sink in the earth, and thirteen hundred years
Of Empire ending like a shepherd's tale;
He must be roused. In his effeminate heart
There is a careless courage which Corruption
Has not all quenched, and latent energies, ¹¹
Repressed by circumstance, but not de-
stroyed—
Steeped, but not drowned, in deep voluptu-
ousness.
If born a peasant, he had been a man
To have reached an empire: to an empire
born,
He will bequeath none; nothing but a name,
Which his sons will not prize in heritage:—
Yet—not all lost—even yet—he may redeem
His sloth and shame, by only being that
Which he should be, as easily as the thing ²⁰
He should not be and is. Were it less toil
To sway his nations than consume his life?
To head an army than to rule a harem?
He sweats in palling pleasures, dulls his soul,
And saps his goodly strength, in toils which
yield not
Health like the chase, nor glory like the
war—
He must be roused. Alas! there is no
sound
[*Sound of soft music heard from within.*
To rouse him short of thunder. Hark! the
lute—
The lyre—the timbrel; the lascivious tink-
lings ²⁹
Of lulling instruments, the softening voices
Of women, and of beings less than women,
Must chime in to the echo of his revel,
While the great King of all we know of earth
Lolls crowned with roses, and his diadem
Lies negligently by to be caught up
By the first manly hand which dares to snatch
it.
Lo, where they come! already I perceive
The reeking odours of the perfumed trains,
And see the bright gems of the glittering
girls,
At once his Chorus and his Council, flash ⁴⁰
Along the gallery, and amidst the damsels,
As femininely garbed, and scarce less
female,
The grandson of Semiramis, the Man-
Queen.—
He comes! Shall I await him? yes, and
front him,
And tell him what all good men tell each
other,

Speaking of him and his. They come, the
slaves
Led by the monarch subject to his slaves.

SCENE II.

*Enter SARDANAPALUS effeminately dressed,
his Head crowned with Flowers, and
his Robe negligently flowing, attended
by a Train of Women and young
Slaves.*

Sar. (*speaking to some of his attendants*).
Let the pavilion over the Euphrates
Be garlanded, and lit, and furnished forth
For an especial banquet; at the hour
Of midnight we will sup there: see nought
wanting,
And bid the galley be prepared. There is
A cooling breeze which crisps the broad clear
river:
We will embark anon. Fair Nymphs, who
deign
To share the soft hours of Sardanapalus,
We'll meet again in that the sweetest hour,
When we shall gather like the stars above us,
And you will form a heaven as bright as
theirs; ¹¹
Till then, let each be mistress of her time,
And thou, my own Ionian Myrrha, choose;
Wilt thou along with them or me?
Myr. My Lord—
Sar. My Lord!—my Life! why answerest
thou so coldly?
It is the curse of kings to be so answered.
Rule thy own hours, thou rulest mine—say,
wouldst thou
Accompany our guests, or charm away
The moments from me?
Myr. The King's choice is mine.
Sar. I pray thee say not so: my chiefest
joy ²⁰
Is to contribute to thine every wish.
I do not dare to breathe my own desire,
Lest it should clash with thine; for thou art
still
Too prompt to sacrifice thy thoughts for
others.
Myr. I would remain: I have no happi-
ness
Save in beholding thine; yet—
Sar. Yet! what YET?
Thy own sweet will shall be the only barrier
Which ever rises betwixt thee and me.
Myr. I think the present is the wanted
hour

Of council ; it were better I retire. 30

Sal. (*comes forward and says*) The Ionian
slave says well : let her retire.

Sar. Who answers? How now, brother?

Sal. The *Queen's* brother,
And your most faithful vassal, royal Lord.

Sar. (*addressing his train*). As I have
said, let all dispose their hours
Till midnight, when again we pray your
presence.

[*The court retiring.*

(*To MYRRHA, who is going.*) Myrrha! I
thought *thou* wouldst remain.

Myr. Great King,
Thou didst not say so.

Sar. But *thou* looked'st it :
I know each glance of those Ionic eyes,
Which said *thou* wouldst not leave me.

Myr. Sire! your brother!—

Sal. His *Consort's* brother, minion of
Ionia! 40
How darest *thou* name *me* and not blush?

Sar. Not blush!
Thou hast no more eyes than heart to make
her crimson

Like to the dying day on Caucasus,
Where sunset tints the snow with rosy
shadows,

And then reproach her with thine own cold
blindness,

Which will not see it. What! in tears, my
Myrrha?

Sal. Let them flow on ; she weeps for
more than one,
And is herself the cause of bitterer tears.

Sar. Curséd be he who caused those tears
to flow!

Sal. Curse not thyself—millions do that
already. 50

Sar. Thou dost forget thee : make me not
remember
I am a monarch.

Sal. Would *thou* couldst!

Myr. My sovereign,
I pray, and *thou*, too, Prince, permit my
absence.

Sar. Since it must be so, and this churl
has checked

Thy gentle spirit, go ; but recollect
That we must forthwith meet : I had rather
lose

An empire than thy presence.

[*Exit MYRRHA.*

Sal. It may be,
Thou wilt lose both— and both for ever!

Sar. Brother!
I can at least command myself, who listen
To language such as this : yet urge me not
Beyond my easy nature.

Sal. 'Tis beyond 61
That easy—far too easy—idle nature,
Which I would urge thee. O that I could
rouse thee!

Though 'twere against myself.

Sar. By the god Baal!
The man would make me tyrant.

Sal. So *thou* art.
Think'st *thou* there is no tyranny but that
Of blood and chains? The despotism of
vice,

The weakness and the wickedness of luxury,
The negligence, the apathy, the evils
Of sensual sloth—produce ten thousand
tyrants, 70

Whose delegated cruelty surpasses
The worst acts of one energetic master,
However harsh and hard in his own bearing.
The false and fond examples of thy lusts
Corrupt no less than they oppress, and sap
In the same moment all thy pageant power
And those who should sustain it ; so that
whether

A foreign foe invade, or civil broil
Distract within, both will alike prove fatal :
The first thy subjects have no heart to
conquer ; 80

The last they rather would assist than
vanquish.

Sar. Why, what makes thee the mouth-
piece of the people?

Sal. Forgiveness of the *Queen's*, my sister's
wrongs ;

A natural love unto my infant nephews ;
Faith to the King, a faith he may need
shortly,

In more than words ; respect for Nimrod's
line ;

Also, another thing *thou* knowest not.

Sar. What's that?

Sal. To thee an unknown word.

Sar. Yet speak it ;

I love to learn.

Sal. Virtue.

Sar. Not know the word!

Never was word yet rung so in my ears—
Worse than the rabble's shout, or splitting
trumpet : 91

I've heard thy sister talk of nothing else.

Sal. To change the irksome theme, then,
hear of vice.

Sar. From whom?
Sal. Even from the winds, if thou couldst listen
 Unto the echoes of the Nation's voice,
Sar. Come, I'm indulgent, as thou knowest, patient,
 As thou hast often proved—speak out, what moves thee?
Sal. Thy peril.
Sar. Say on.
Sal. Thus, then: all the nations, For they are many, whom thy father left
 In heritage, are loud in wrath against thee. 100
Sar. 'Gainst me!! What would the slaves?
Sal. A king.
Sar. And what Am I then?
Sal. In their eyes a nothing; but In mine a man who might be something still.
Sar. The railing drunkards! why, what would they have?
 Have they not peace and plenty?
Sal. Of the first More than is glorious; of the last, far less
 Than the King recks of.
Sar. Whose then is the crime, But the false satraps, who provide no better?
Sal. And somewhat in the Monarch who ne'er looks
 Beyond his palace walls, or if he stirs 110
 Beyond them, 'tis but to some mountain palace,
 Till summer heats wear down. O glorious Baal!
 Who built up this vast empire, and wert made
 A God, or at the least shimest like a God
 Through the long centuries of thy renown,
 This, thy presumed descendant, ne'er beheld
 As king the kingdoms thou didst leave as
 hero,
 Won with thy blood, and toil, and time, and
 peril!
 For what? to furnish imposts for a revel,
 Or multiplied extortions for a minion. 120
Sar. I understand thee — thou wouldst have me go
 Forth as a conqueror. By all the stars
 Which the Chaldeans read—the restless slaves
 Deserve that I should curse them with their
 wishes,
 And lead them forth to glory.
Sal. Wherefore not?
 Semiramis—a woman only—led
 These our Assyrians to the solar shores
 Of Ganges.

Sar. 'Tis most true. And *how* returned?
Sal. Why, like a *man*—a hero; baffled,
 but
 Not vanquished. With but twenty guards,
 she made 130
 Good her retreat to Bactria.
Sar. And how many
 Left she behind in India to the vultures?
Sal. Our annals say not.
Sar. Then I will say for them—
 That she had better woven within her palace
 Some twenty garments, than with twenty
 guards
 Have fled to Bactria, leaving to the ravens,
 And wolves, and men—the fiercer of the
 three—
 Her myriads of fond subjects. Is *this* Glory?
 Then let me live in ignominy ever.
Sal. All warlike spirits have not the same
 fate. 140
 Semiramis, the glorious parent of
 A hundred kings, although she failed in India,
 Brought Persia — Media — Bactria — to the
 realm
 Which she once swayed—and thou *mightst*
 sway.
Sar. I *sway* them—
 She but subdued them.
Sal. It may be ere long
 That they will need her sword more than
 your sceptre.
Sar. There was a certain Bacchus, was
 there not?
 I've heard my Greek girls speak of such—they
 say
 He was a God, that is, a Grecian god,
 An idol foreign to Assyria's worship, 150
 Who conquered this same golden realm of Ind
 Thou prat'st of, where Semiramis was
 vanquished.
Sal. I have heard of such a man; and
 thou perceiv'st
 That he is deemed a God for what he did.
Sar. And in his godship I will honour
 him—
 Not much as man. What, ho! my cup-
 bearer!
Sal. What means the King?
Sar. To worship your new God
 And ancient conqueror. Some wine, I say.
Enter Cupbearer.
Sar. (*addressing the Cupbearer*). Bring
 me the golden goblet thick with gems,
 Which bears the name of Nimrod's chalice.
 Hence, 160

Fill full, and bear it quickly. [*Exit Cupbearer.*]

Sal. Is this moment
A fitting one for the resumption of
Thy yet unslept-off revels?

Re-enter Cupbearer with wine.

Sar. (*taking the cup from him*). Noble
kinsman,
If these barbarian Greeks of the far shores
And skirts of these our realms lie not, this
Bacchus

Conquered the whole of India, did he not?

Sal. He did, and thence was deemed a
Deity.

Sar. Not so:—of all his conquests a few
columns

Which may be his, and might be mine, if I
Thought them worth purchase and convey-
ance, are 170

The landmarks of the seas of gore he shed,
The realms he wasted, and the hearts he
broke.

But here—here in this goblet is his title
To immortality—the immortal grape
From which he first expressed the soul, and
gave

To gladden that of man, as some atonement
For the victorious mischiefs he had done.
Had it not been for this, he would have been
A mortal still in name as in his grave;
And, like my ancestor Semiramis, 180

A sort of semi-glorious human monster.
Here's that which defied him—let it now
Humanise thee; my surly, chiding brother,
Pledge me to the Greek God!

Sal. For all thy realms
I would not so blaspheme our country's creed.

Sar. That is to say, thou thinkest him a
hero,

That he shed blood by oceans; and no God,
Because he turned a fruit to an enchantment,
Which cheers the sad, revives the old, inspires
The young, makes Weariness forget his
toil, 190

And Fear her danger; opens a new world
When this, the present, palls. Well, then I
pledge thee

And *him* as a true man, who did his utmost
In good or evil to surprise mankind. [*Drinks.*]

Sal. Wilt thou resume a revel at this hour?

Sar. And if I did, 'twere better than a
trophy,

Being bought without a tear. But that is not
My present purpose: since thou wilt not
pledge me,

Continue what thou pleasest.

(*To the Cupbearer.*)

Boy, retire.

[*Exit Cupbearer.*]

Sal. I would but have recalled thee from
thy dream; 200

Better by me awakened than rebellion.

Sar. Who should rebel? or why? what
cause? pretext?

I am the lawful King, descended from
A race of Kings who knew no predecessors.
What have I done to thee, or to the people,
That thou shouldst rail, or they rise up
against me?

Sal. Of what thou hast done to me, I
speak not.

Sar. But
Thou think'st that I have wronged the
Queen: is't not so?

Sal. Think! Thou hast wronged her!

Sar. Patience, Prince, and hear me.
She has all power and splendour of her
station, 210

Respect, the tutelage of Assyria's heirs,
The homage and the appanage of sovereignty.
I married her as monarchs wed—for state,
And loved her as most husbands love their
wives.

If she or thou supposedst I could link me
Like a Chaldean peasant to his mate,
Ye knew nor me—nor monarchs—nor
mankind.

Sal. I pray thee, change the theme: my
blood disdains

Complaint, and Salemenes' sister seeks not
Reluctant love even from Assyria's lord! 220
Nor would she deign to accept divided
passion

With foreign strumpets and Ionian slaves.
The Queen is silent.

Sar. And why not her brother?

Sal. I only echo thee the voice of empires,
Which he who long neglects not long will
govern.

Sar. The ungrateful and ungracious slaves!
they murmur

Because I have not shed their blood, nor led
them

To dry into the desert's dust by myriads,
Or whiten with their bones the banks of Ganges;
Nor decimated them with savage laws, 230
Nor sweated them to build up Pyramids,
Or Babylonian walls.

Sal. Yet these are trophies
More worthy of a people and their prince
Than songs, and lutes, and feasts, and
concubines,

And lavished treasures, and contemnéd
virtues.

Sar. Or for my trophies I have founded
cities:

There's Tarsus and Anchialus, both built
In one day—what could that blood-loving
beldame,

My martial grandam, chaste Semiramis,
Do more, except destroy them?

Sal. 'Tis most true; 240
I own thy merit in those founded cities,
Built for a whim, recorded with a verse
Which shames both them and thee to coming
ages.

Sar. Shame me! By Baal, the cities,
though well built,
Are not more goodly than the verse! Say
what

Thou wilt 'gainst me, my mode of life or rule,
But nothing 'gainst the truth of that brief
record.

Why, those few lines contain the history
Of all things human: hear—"Sardanapalus,
The king, and son of Anacyndaraxes, 250
In one day built Anchialus and Tarsus.
Eat, drink, and love; the rest's not worth a
fillip."

Sal. A worthy moral, and a wise inscrip-
tion,

For a king to put up before his subjects!

Sar. Oh, thou wouldst have me doubtless
set up edicts—

"Obey the king—contribute to his treasure—
Recruit his phalanx—spill your blood at
bidding—

Fall down and worship, or get up and toil."
Or thus—"Sardanapalus on this spot
Slew fifty thousand of his enemies. 260

These are his sepulchres, and this his trophy."
I leave such things to conquerors; enough
For me, if I can make my subjects feel
The weight of human misery less, and glide
Ungroaning to the tomb: I take no license
Which I deny to them. We all are men.

Sal. Thy Sires have been revered as Gods—

Sar. In dust
And death, where they are neither Gods nor
men.

Talk not of such to me! the worms are Gods;
At least they banqueted upon your Gods, 270
And died for lack of farther nutriment.

Those Gods were merely men; look to their
issue—

I feel a thousand mortal things about me,
But nothing godlike,—unless it may be

The thing which you condemn, a disposition
To love and to be merciful, to pardon
The follies of my species, and (that's human)
To be indulgent to my own.

Sal. Alas!

The doom of Nineveh is sealed.—Woe—woe
To the unrivalled city.

Sar. What dost dread? 280

Sal. Thou art guarded by thy foes: in a
few hours

The tempest may break out which over-
whelms thee,

And thine and mine; and in another day
What *is* shall be the past of Belus' race.

Sar. What must we dread?

Sal. Ambitious treachery,
Which has environed thee with snares; but yet
There is resource: empower me with thy
signet

To quell the machinations, and I lay
The heads of thy chief foes before thy feet.

Sar. The heads—how many?

Sal. Must I stay to number 289
When even thine own's in peril? Let me go;
Give me thy signet—trust me with the rest.

Sar. I will trust no man with unlimited lives.
When we take those from others, we nor know
What we have taken, nor the thing we give.

Sal. Wouldst thou not take their lives who
seek for thine?

Sar. That's a hard question—But I answer,
Yes.

Cannot the thing be done without? Who
are they

Whom thou suspectest?—Let them be arrested.

Sal. I would thou wouldst not ask me;
the next moment 300

Will send my answer through thy babbling
troop

Of paramours, and thence fly o'er the palace,
Even to the city, and so baffle all.—
Trust me.

Sar. Thou knowest I have done so ever;
Take thou the signet. [*Gives the signet.*]

Sal. I have one more request.

Sar. Name it.

Sal. That thou this night forbear
the banquet

In the pavilion over the Euphrates.

Sar. Forbear the banquet! Not for all
the plotters

That ever shook a kingdom! Let them come
And do their worst: I shall not blench for
them; 310

Nor rise the sooner; nor forbear the goblet;

Nor crown me with a single rose the less ;
Nor lose one joyous hour.—I fear them not.

Sal. But thou wouldst arm thee, wouldst
thou not, if needful?

Sar. Perhaps. I have the goodliest armour,
and
A sword of such a temper, and a bow,
And javelin, which might furnish Nimrod
forth :

A little heavy, but yet not unwieldy.
And now I think on't, 'tis long since I've
used them,
Even in the chase. Hast ever seen them,
brother? 320

Sal. Is this a time for such fantastic
trifling?—
If need be, wilt thou wear them?

Sar. Will I not?
Oh! if it must be so, and these rash slaves
Will not be ruled with less, I'll use the sword
Till they shall wish it turned into a distaff.

Sal. They say thy Sceptre's turned to that
already.

Sar. That's false! but let them say so:
the old Greeks,
Of whom our captives often sing, related
The same of their chief hero, Hercules,
Because he loved a Lydian queen: thou seest
The populace of all the nations seize 331
Each calumny they can to sink their
sovereigns.

Sal. They did not speak thus of thy fathers.

Sar. No;
They dared not. They were kept to toil and
combat ;
And never changed their chains but for their
armour :

Now they have peace and pastime, and the
license
To revel and to rail ; it irks me not.

I would not give the smile of one fair girl
For all the popular breath that e'er divided
A name from nothing. What are the rank
tongues 340

Of this vile herd, grown insolent with feeding,
That I should prize their noisy praise, or dread
Their noisome clamour?

Sal. You have said they are men ;
As such their hearts are something.

Sar. So my dogs' are ;
And better, as more faithful :—but, proceed ;
Thou hast my signet :—since they are
tumultuous,

Let them be tempered, yet not roughly, till
Necessity enforce it. I hate all pain,

Given or received ; we have enough within us,
The meanest vassal as the loftiest monarch,
Not to add to each other's natural burthen 351
Of mortal misery, but rather lessen,
By mild reciprocal alleviation,
The fatal penalties imposed on life :
But this they know not, or they will not know.
I have, by Baal! done all I could to soothe
them :

I made no wars, I added no new imposts,
I interfered not with their civic lives,
I let them pass their days as best might suit
them,

Passing my own as suited me.

Sal. Thou stopp'st 360
Short of the duties of a king ; and therefore
They say thou art unfit to be a monarch.

Sar. They lie.—Unhappily, I am unfit
To be aught save a monarch ; else for me
The meanest Mede might be the king instead.

Sal. There is one Mede, at least, who seeks
to be so.

Sar. What mean'st thou!—'tis thy secret ;
thou desirest

Few questions, and I'm not of curious nature.
Take the fit steps ; and, since necessity 369
Requires, I sanction and support thee. Ne'er
Was man who more desired to rule in peace
The peaceful only : if they rouse me, better
They had conjured up stern Nimrod from his
ashes,

“The Mighty Hunter!” I will turn these
realms

To one wide desert chase of brutes, who *were*,
But *would* no more, by their own choice, be
human.

What they have found me, they belie ; *that*
which

They yet may find me—shall defy their wish
To speak it worse ; and let them thank them-
selves.

Sal. Then thou at last canst feel?

Sar. Feel! who feels not
Ingratitude?

Sal. I will not pause to answer 381
With words, but deeds. Keep thou awake
that energy

Which sleeps at times, but is not dead within
thee,

And thou may'st yet be glorious in thy reign,
As powerful in thy realm. Farewell!

[*Exit* SALEMENES.]

Sar. (*solus*). Farewell!
He's gone ; and on his finger bears my signet,
Which is to him a sceptre. He is stern

As I am heedless ; and the slaves deserve
To feel a master. What may be the danger,
I know not : he hath found it, let him quell
it. 390

Must I consume my life—this little life—
In guarding against all may make it less?
It is not worth so much ! It were to die
Before my hour, to live in dread of death,
Tracing revolt ; suspecting all about me,
Because they are near ; and all who are
remote,
Because they are far. But if it should be
so—

If they should sweep me off from Earth and
Empire,
Why, what is Earth or Empire of the
Earth?

I have loved, and lived, and multiplied my
image ; 400

To die is no less natural than those
Acts of this clay ! 'Tis true I have not shed
Blood as I might have done, in oceans, till
My name became the synonyme of Death—
A terror and a trophy. But for this
I feel no penitence ; my life is love :
If I must shed blood, it shall be by force.
Till now, no drop from an Assyrian vein
Hath flowed for me, nor hath the smallest
coin

Of Nineveh's vast treasures e'er been
lavished 410

On objects which could cost her sons a tear :
If then they hate me, 'tis because I hate not :
If they rebel, 'tis because I oppress not.

Oh, men ? ye must be ruled with scythes, not
sceptres,

And mowed down like the grass, else all we
reap

Is rank abundance, and a rotten harvest
Of discontents infecting the fair soil,
Making a desert of fertility.—

I'll think no more.—Within there, ho !

Enter an ATTENDANT.

Sar. Slave, tell
The Ionian Myrrha we would crave her
presence. 420

Attend. King, she is here.

MYRRHA enters.

Sar. (*apart to Attendant.*) Away !
(*Addressing MYRRHA.*) Beautiful being !
Thou dost almost anticipate my heart ;
It throbbed for thee, and here thou comest :
let me

Deem that some unknown influence, some
sweet oracle,

Communicates between us, though unseen,
In absence, and attracts us to each other.

Myr. There doth.

Sar. I know there doth, but not its name :
What is it?

Myr. In my native land a God,
And in my heart a feeling like a God's,
Exalted ; yet I own 'tis only mortal ; 430
For what I feel is humble, and yet happy—
That is, it would be happy ; but—

[MYRRHA pauses.]

Sar. There comes
For ever something between us and what
We deem our happiness : let me remove
The barrier which that hesitating accent
Proclaims to thine, and mine is sealed.

Myr. My Lord !—

Sar. My Lord — my King — Sire —
Sovereign ; thus it is—

For ever thus, addressed with awe. I ne'er
Can see a smile, unless in some broad
banquet's

Intoxicating glare, when the buffoons 440
Have gorged themselves up to equality,
Or I have quaffed me down to their abase-
ment.

Myrrha, I can hear all these things, these
names,

Lord — King — Sire — Monarch—nay, time
was I prized them ;

That is, I suffered them—from slaves and
nobles ;

But when they falter from the lips I love,
The lips which have been pressed to mine, a
chill

Comes o'er my heart, a cold sense of the
falsehood

Of this my station, which represses feeling
In those for whom I have felt most, and
makes me 450

Wish that I could lay down the dull tiara,
And share a cottage on the Caucasus
With thee—and wear no crowns but those of
flowers.

Myr. Would that we could !

Sar. And dost *thou* feel this?—Why?

Myr. Then thou wouldst know what thou
canst never know.

Sar. And that is—

Myr. The true value of a heart ;
At least, a woman's.

Sar. I have proved a thousand—
A thousand, and a thousand.

Myr. Hearts?
Sar. I think so.
Myr. Not one! the time may come thou
 may'st.
Sar. It will.
 Hear, Myrrha; Salemenes has declared— 460
 Or why or how he hath divined it, Belus,
 Who founded our great realm, knows more
 than I—
 But Salemenes hath declared my throne
 In peril.
Myr. He did well.
Sar. And say'st *thou* so?
 Thou whom he spurned so harshly, and
 now dared
 Drive from our presence with his savage
 jeers,
 And made thee weep and blush?
Myr. I should do both
 More frequently, and he did well to call me
 Back to my duty. But thou spakest of peril—
 Peril to thee—
Sar. Aye, from dark plots and snares 470
 From Medes—and discontented troops and
 nations.
 I know not what—a labyrinth of things—
 A maze of muttered threats and mysteries:
 Thou know'st the man—it is his usual
 custom.
 But he is honest. Come, we'll think no more
 on't—
 But of the midnight festival.
Myr. 'Tis time
 To think of aught save festivals. Thou hast
 not
 Spurned his sage cautions?
Sar. What?—and dost thou fear?
Myr. Fear!—I'm a Greek, and how should
 I fear death?
 A slave, and wherefore should I dread my
 freedom? 480
Sar. Then wherefore dost thou turn so
 pale?
Myr. I love.
Sar. And do not I? I love thee far—far
 more
 Than either the brief life or the wide realm,
 Which, it may be, are menaced;—yet I
 blench not.
Myr. That means thou lovest not thyself
 nor me;
 For he who loves another loves himself,
 Even for that other's sake. This is too
 rash:
 Kingdoms and lives are not to be so lost.

Sar. Lost!—why, who is the aspiring chief
 who dared
 Assume to win them?
Myr. Who is he should dread 490
 To try so much? When he who is their
 ruler
 Forgets himself—will they remember him?
Sar. Myrrha!
Myr. Frown not upon me: you have
 smiled
 Too often on me not to make those frowns
 Bitterer to bear than any punishment
 Which they may augur.—King, I am your
 subject!
 Master, I am your slave! Man, I have
 loved you!—
 Loved you, I know not by what fatal
 weakness,
 Although a Greek, and born a foe to
 monarchs—
 A slave, and hating fetters—an Ionian, 500
 And, therefore, when I love a stranger, more
 Degraded by that passion than by chains!
 Still I have loved you. If that love were
 strong
 Enough to overcome all former nature,
 Shall it not claim the privilege to save you?
Sar. Save me, my beauty! Thou art very
 fair,
 And what I seek of thee is love—not safety.
Myr. And without love where dwells
 security?
Sar. I speak of woman's love.
Myr. The very first
 Of human life must spring from woman's
 breast, 510
 Your first small words are taught you from
 her lips,
 Your first tears quenched by her, and your
 last sighs
 Too often breathed out in a woman's hearing,
 When men have shrunk from the ignoble
 care
 Of watching the last hour of him who led them.
Sar. My eloquent Ionian! thou speak'st
 music:
 The very chorus of the tragic song
 I have heard thee talk of as the favourite pastime
 Of thy far father-land. Nay, weep not—calm
 thee.
Myr. I weep not.—But I pray thee, do not
 speak 520
 About my fathers or their land.
Sar. Yet oft
 Thou speakest of them.

Myr. True—true : constant thought
Will overflow in words unconsciously ;
But when another speaks of Greeks, it wounds
me.

Sar. Well, then, how wouldst thou *save*
me, as thou saidst ?

Myr. By teaching thee to save thyself, and not
Thyself alone, but these vast realms, from all
The rage of the worst war—the war of brethren.

Sar. Why, child, I loathe all war, and
warriors ;

I live in peace and pleasure : what can man 530
Do more ?

Myr. Alas ! my Lord, with common men
There needs too oft the show of war to keep
The substance of sweet peace ; and, for a king,
'Tis sometimes better to be feared than loved.

Sar. And I have never sought but for the last.

Myr. And now art neither.

Sar. Dost *thou* say so, Myrrha ?

Myr. I speak of civic popular love, *self-love*,
Which means that men are kept in awe and law,
Yet not oppressed—at least they must not
think so,

Or, if they think so, deem it necessary, 540
To ward off worse oppression, their own
passions.

A King of feasts, and flowers, and wine, and
revel,

And love, and mirth, was never King of Glory.

Sar. Glory ! what's that ?

Myr. Ask of the Gods thy fathers.

Sar. They cannot answer ; when the priests
speak for them,

'Tis for some small addition to the temple.

Myr. Look to the annals of thine Empire's
founders.

Sar. They are so blotted o'er with blood,
I cannot.

But what wouldst have ? the Empire *has been*
founded.

I cannot go on multiplying empires. 550

Myr. Preserve thine own.

Sar. At least, I will enjoy it.

Come, Myrrha, let us go on to the Euphrates :

The hour invites, the galley is prepared,

And the pavilion, decked for our return,

In fit adornment for the evening banquet,

Shall blaze with beauty and with light, until

It seems unto the stars which are above us

Itself an opposite star ; and we will sit

Crowned with fresh flowers like——

Myr. Victims.

Sar. No, like sovereigns,

The Shepherd Kings of patriarchal times 560

Who knew no brighter gems than summer
wreaths,
And none but tearless triumphs. Let us on.

Enter PANIA.

Pan. May the King live for ever !

Sar. Not an hour
Longer than he can love. How my soul hates
This language, which makes life itself a lie,
Flattering dust with eternity. Well, Pania !
Be brief.

Pan. I am charged by Salemenes to
Reiterate his prayer unto the King,
That for this day, at least, he will not quit
The palace : when the General returns, 570
He will adduce such reasons as will warrant
His daring, and perhaps obtain the pardon
Of his presumption.

Sar. What ! am I then cooped ?
Already captive ? can I not even breathe
The breath of heaven ? Tell prince Salemenes,
Were all Assyria raging round the walls
In mutinous myriads, I would still go forth.

Pan. I must obey, and yet——

Myr. Oh, Monarch, listen.—
How many a day and moon thou hast reclined
Within these palace walls in silken dalliance,
And never shown thee to thy people's longing ;
Leaving thy subjects' eyes ungratified, 582
The satraps uncontrolled, the Gods un-
worshipped,

And all things in the anarchy of sloth,
Till all, save evil, slumbered through the realm !
And wilt thou not now tarry for a day,—
A day which may redeem thee ? Wilt thou not
Yield to the few still faithful a few hours,
For them, for thee, for thy past father's race,
And for thy sons' inheritance ?

Pan. 'Tis true ! 590
From the deep urgency with which the Prince
Despatched me to your sacred presence, I
Must dare to add my feeble voice to that
Which now has spoken.

Sar. No, it must not be.

Myr. For the sake of thy realm !

Sar. Away !

Pan. For that
Of all thy faithful subjects, who will rally
Round thee and thine.

Sar. These are mere fantasies :
There is no peril :—'tis a sullen scheme
Of Salemenes, to prove his zeal,
And show himself more necessary to us. 600

Myr. By all that's good and glorious take
this counsel.

Sar. Business to-morrow.

Myr. Aye—or death to-night.

Sar. Why let it come then unexpectedly,
'Midst joy and gentleness, and mirth and love;
So let me fall like the plucked rose!—far better
Thus than be withered.

Myr. Then thou wilt not yield,
Even for the sake of all that ever stirred
A monarch into action, to forego
A trifling revel.

Sar. No.

Myr. Then yield for *mine*;
For my sake!

Sar. Thine, my Myrrha!

Myr. 'Tis the first 610
Boon which I ever asked Assyria's king.

Sar. That's true, and, wer't my kingdom,
must be granted.

Well, for thy sake, I yield me. Pania, hence!
Thou hear'st me.

Pan. And obey. [Exit PANIA.]

Sar. I marvel at thee.
What is thy motive, Myrrha, thus to urge me?

Myr. Thy safety; and the certainty that
nought
Could urge the Prince thy kinsman to require
Thus much from thee, but some impending
danger.

Sar. And if I do not dread it, why shouldst
thou?

Myr. Because *thou* dost not fear, I fear for
thee. 620

Sar. To-morrow thou wilt smile at these
vain fancies.

Myr. If the worst come, I shall be where
none weep,
And that is better than the power to smile.
And thou?

Sar. I shall be King, as heretofore.

Myr. Where?

Sar. With Baal, Nimrod, and Semiramis,
Sole in Assyria, or with them elsewhere.
Fate made me what I am—may make me
nothing—

But either that or nothing must I be:
I will not live degraded.

Myr. Hadst thou felt
Thus always, none would ever dare degrade
thee. 630

Sar. And who will do so now?

Myr. Dost thou suspect none?

Sar. Suspect!—that's a spy's office. Oh!
we lose
Ten thousand precious moments in vain
words,

And vainer fears. Within there!—ye slaves,
deck

The Hall of Nimrod for the evening revel;
If I must make a prison of our palace,
At least we'll wear our fetters jocundly;
If the Euphrates be forbid us, and
The summer-dwelling on its beauteous border,
Here we are still unmenaced. Ho! within
there! [Exit SARDANAPALUS. 640]

Myr. (sola). Why do I love this man?
My country's daughters
Love none but heroes. But I have no country!
The slave hath lost all save her bonds. I love
him;

And that's the heaviest link of the long chain—
To love whom we esteem not. Be it so:
The hour is coming when he'll need all love,
And find none. To fall from him now were
baser

Than to have stabbed him on his throne
when highest

Would have been noble in my country's creed:
I was not made for either. Could I save him,
I should not love *him* better, but myself; 651
And I have need of the last, for I have fallen
In my own thoughts, by loving this soft
stranger:

And yet, methinks, I love him more, perceiving
That he is hated of his own barbarians,
The natural foes of all the blood of Greece.
Could I but wake a single thought like those
Which even the Phrygians felt when battling
long

'Twixt Ilion and the sea, within his heart,
He would tread down the barbarous crowds,
and triumph. 660

He loves me, and I love him; the slave loves
Her master, and would free him from his vices.
If not, I have a means of freedom still,
And if I cannot teach him how to reign,
May show him how alone a King can leave
His throne. I must not lose him from my
sight. [Exit.]

ACT II.

SCENE I.—*The Portal of the same Hall of
the Palace.*

Beleses (solus). The Sun goes down: me-
thinks he sets more slowly,
Taking his last look of Assyria's Empire.
How red he glares amongst those deepening
clouds,
Like the blood he predicts. If not in vain,
Thou Sun that sinkest, and ye stars which rise,

I have outwatched ye, reading ray by ray
The edicts of your orbs, which make Time
tremble

For what he brings the nations, 'tis the furthest
Hour of Assyria's years. And yet how calm!
An earthquake should announce so great a
fall—

10

A summer's sun discloses it. Yon disk,
To the star-read Chaldean, bears upon
Its everlasting page the end of what
Seemed everlasting; but oh! thou true Sun!
The burning oracle of all that live,
As fountain of all life, and symbol of
Him who bestows it, wherefore dost thou limit
Thy lore unto calamity? Why not
Unfold the rise of days more worthy thine
All-glorious burst from ocean? why not dart
A beam of hope athwart the future years, 21
As of wrath to its days? Hear me! oh, hear
me!

I am thy worshipper, thy priest, thy servant—
I have gazed on thee at thy rise and fall,
And bowed my head beneath thy mid-day
beams,

When my eye dared not meet thee. I have
watched

For thee, and after thee, and prayed to thee,
And sacrificed to thee, and read, and feared
thee,

And asked of thee, and thou hast answered—
but

Only to thus much: while I speak, he sinks—
Is gone—and leaves his beauty, not his know-
ledge,

31

To the delighted West, which revels in
Its hues of dying glory. Yet what is
Death, so it be but glorious? 'Tis a sunset;
And mortals may be happy to resemble
The Gods but in decay.

Enter ARBACES by an inner door.

Arb. Beleses, why
So wrapt in thy devotions? Dost thou stand
Gazing to trace thy disappearing God
Into some realm of undiscovered day?
Our business is with night—'tis come.

Bel. But not 40
Gone.

Arb. Let it roll on—we are ready.

Bel. Yes.

Would it were over!

Arb. Does the prophet doubt,
To whom the very stars shine Victory?

Bel. I do not doubt of Victory—but the
Victor.

Arb. Well, let thy science settle that.
Meantime

I have prepared as many glittering spears
As will out-sparkle our allies—your planets.
There is no more to thwart us. The she-king,
That less than woman, is even now upon 49
The waters with his female mates. The order
Is issued for the feast in the pavilion.
The first cup which he drains will be the last
Quaffed by the line of Nimrod.

Bel. 'Twas a brave one.

Arb. And is a weak one—'tis worn out—
we'll mend it.

Bel. Art sure of that?

Arb. Its founder was a hunter—
I am a soldier—what is there to fear?

Bel. The soldier.

Arb. And the priest, it may be: but
If you thought thus, or think, why not retain
Your king of concubines? why stir me up?
Why spur me to this enterprise? your own
No less than mine?

Bel. Look to the sky!

Arb. I look. 61

Bel. What seest thou?

Arb. A fair summer's twilight, and
The gathering of the stars.

Bel. And midst them, mark
Yon earliest, and the brightest, which so
quivers,

As it would quit its place in the blue ether.

Arb. Well?

Bel. 'Tis thy natal ruler—thy birth planet.

Arb. (*touching his scabbard*). My star is in
this scabbard: when it shines,

It shall out-dazzle comets. Let us think
Of what is to be done to justify

Thy planets and their portents. When we
conquer, 70

They shall have temples—aye, and priests—
and thou

Shalt be the pontiff of—what Gods thou wilt;
For I observe that they are ever just,

And own the bravest for the most devout.

Bel. Aye, and the most devout for brave—
thou hast not

Seen me turn back from battle.

Arb. No; I own thee

As firm in fight as Babylonia's captain,
As skilful in Chaldea's worship: now,

Will it but please thee to forget the priest,
And be the warrior?

Bel. Why not both;

Arb. The better; 80

And yet it almost shames me, we shall have

So little to effect. This woman's warfare
Degrades the very conqueror. To have
plucked

A bold and bloody despot from his throne,
And grappled with him, clashing steel with
steel,

That were heroic or to win or fall;
But to upraise my sword against this silkworm,
And hear him whine, it may be——

Bel. Do not deem it:
He has that in him which may make you
strife yet;

And were he all you think, his guards are
hardy, 90

And headed by the cool, stern Salemenes.

Arb. They'll not resist.

Bel. Why not? they are soldiers.

Arb. True,
And therefore need a soldier to command them.

Bel. That Salemenes is.

Arb. But not their King.
Besides, he hates the effeminate thing that
governs,
For the Queen's sake, his sister. Mark you
not

He keeps aloof from all the revels?

Bel. But

Not from the council—there he is ever constant.

Arb. And ever thwarted: what would you
have more

To make a rebel out of? A fool reigning, 100
His blood dishonoured, and himself disdained:
Why, it is *his* revenge we work for.

Bel. Could

He but be brought to think so: this I doubt of.

Arb. What, if we sound him?

Bel. Yes—if the time served.

Enter BALEA.

Bal. Satraps! The king commands your
presence at
The feast to-night.

Bel. To hear is to obey.
In the pavilion?

Bal. No; here in the palace.

Arb. How! in the palace? it was not thus
ordered.

Bal. It is so ordered now.

Arb. And why?

Bal. I know not.

May I retire?

Arb. Stay.

Bel. (*to Arb. aside*). Hush! let him go his
way. 110

(*Alternately to Bal.*) Yes, Balea, thank the
Monarch, kiss the hem
Of his imperial robe, and say, his slaves
Will take the crumbs he deigns to scatter
from

His royal table at the hour—was't midnight?

Bal. It was: the place, the hall of Nimrod.

Lords,

I humble me before you, and depart.

[*Exit* BALEA.

Arb. I like not this same sudden change of
place;

There is some mystery: wherefore should he
change it?

Bel. Doth he not change a thousand times
a day?

Sloth is of all things the most fanciful— 120
And moves more parasangs in its intents

Than generals in their marches, when they
seek

To leave their foe at fault.—Why dost thou
muse?

Arb. He loved that gay pavilion,—it was
ever

His summer dotage.

Bel. And he loved his Queen—

And thrice a thousand harlotry besides—

And he has loved all things by turns, except
Wisdom and Glory.

Arb. Still—I like it not.

If he has changed—why, so must we: the
attack

Were easy in the isolated bower, 130

Beset with drowsy guards and drunken
courtiers;

But in the hall of Nimrod——

Bel. Is it so?

Met thought the haughty soldier feared to
mount

A throne too easily—does it disappoint thee

To find there is a slipperier step or two
Than what was counted on?

Arb. When the hour comes,

Thou shalt perceive how far I fear or no.
Thou hast seen my life at stake—and gaily
played for:

But here is more upon the die—a kingdom,
Bel. I have foretold already—thou wilt
win it: 140

Then on, and prosper.

Arb. Now were I a soothsayer,

I would have boded so much to myself.
But be the stars obeyed—I cannot quarrel
With them, nor their interpreter. Who's
here?

Enter SALEMENES.

Sal. Satraps!
Bel. My Prince!
Sal. Well met—I sought ye both,
 But elsewhere than the palace.
Arb. Wherefore so?
Sal. 'Tis not the hour.
Arb. The hour!—what hour?
Sal. Of midnight.
Bel. Midnight, my Lord!
Sal. What, are you not invited?
Bel. Oh! yes—we had forgotten.
Sal. Is it usual
 Thus to forget a Sovereign's invitation? 150
Arb. Why—we but now received it.
Sal. Then why here?
Arb. On duty.
Sal. On what duty?
Bel. On the state's.
 We have the privilege to approach the
 presence;
 But found the Monarch absent.
Sal. And I too
 Am upon duty.
Arb. May we crave its purport?
Sal. To arrest two traitors. Guards!
 Within there!

Enter Guards.

Sal. (*continuing*). Satraps,
 Your swords.
Bel. (*delivering his*). My lord, behold my
 scimitar.
Arb. (*drawing his sword*). Take mine.
Sal. (*advancing*). I will.
Arb. But in your heart the blade—
 The hilt quits not this hand.
Sal. (*drawing*). How! dost thou
 brave me?
 'Tis well—this saves a trial, and false mercy.
 Soldiers, hew down the rebel!
Arb. Soldiers! Aye— 161
 Alone you dare not.
Sal. Alone! foolish slave—
 What is there in thee that a Prince should
 shrink from
 Of open force? We dread thy treason, not
 Thy strength: thy tooth is nought without
 its venom—
 The serpent's, not the lion's. Cut him down.
Bel. (*interposing*). Arbaces! Are you mad?
 Have I not rendered
 My sword? Then trust like me our Sovereign's
 justice.

Arb. No—I will sooner trust the stars thou
 prat'st of,
 And this slight arm, and die a king at least
 Of my own breath and body—so far that 171
 None else shall chain them.

Sal. (*to the Guards*). You hear *him* and *me*.
 Take him not,—kill.

[*The Guards attack ARBACES, who
 defends himself valiantly and
 dexterously till they waver.*

Sal. Is it even so; and must
 I do the hangman's office? Recreants! see
 How you should fell a traitor.

[SALEMENES attacks ARBACES.

Enter SARDANAPALUS and Train.

Sar. Hold your hands—
 Upon your lives, I say. What, deaf or
 drunken?
 My sword! O fool, I wear no sword: here,
 fellow,
 Give me thy weapon. [*To a Guard.*
 [SARDANAPALUS snatches a sword from
 one of the soldiers, and rushes between
 the combatants—they separate.

Sar. In my very palace!
 What hinders me from cleaving you in twain,
 Audacious brawlers?

Bel. Sire, your justice.

Sal. Or— 180
 Your weakness.

Sar. (*raising the sword*). How?

Sal. Strike! so the blow's repeated
 Upon yon traitor—whom you spare a moment,
 I trust, for torture—I'm content.

Sar. What—him!
 Who dares assail Arbaces?

Sal. I!

Sar. Indeed!
 Prince, you forget yourself. Upon what
 warrant?

Sal. (*showing the signet*). Thine.

Arb. (*confused*). The King's!

Sal. Yes! and let the King confirm it.

Sar. I parted not from this for such a
 purpose.

Sal. You parted with it for your safety—I
 Employed it for the best. Pronounce in person.
 Here I am but your slave—a moment past
 I was your representative.

Sar. Then sheathe 191
 Your swords.

[ARBACES and SALEMENES return their
 swords to the scabbards.

Sal. Mine's sheathed: I pray you sheathe
not yours:
'Tis the sole sceptre left you now with safety.
Sar. A heavy one; the hilt, too, hurts my
hand.
(*To a Guard.*) Here, fellow, take thy weapon
back. Well, sirs,
What doth this mean?
Bel. The Prince must answer that.
Sal. Truth upon my part, treason upon
theirs.
Sar. Treason—Arbaces! treachery and
Beleses!
That were an union I will not believe. 199
Bel. Where is the proof?
Sal. I'll answer that, if once
The king demands your fellow-traitor's sword.
Arb. (*to Sal.*) A sword which hath been
drawn as oft as thine
•Against his foes.
Sal. And now against his brother,
And in an hour or so against himself.
Sar. That is not possible: he dared not;
no—
No—I'll not hear of such things. These vain
bickerings
Are spawned in courts by base intrigues, and
baser
Hirelings, who live by lies on good men's
lives.
You must have been deceived, my brother.
Sal. First 210
Let him deliver up his weapon, and
Proclaim himself your subject by that duty,
And I will answer all.
Sar. Why, if I thought so—
But no, it cannot be: the Mede Arbaces—
The trusty, rough, true soldier—the best
captain
Of all who discipline our nations—No,
I'll not insult him thus, to bid him render
The scimitar to me he never yielded
Unto our enemies. Chief, keep your weapon.
Sal. (*delivering back the signet.*) Monarch,
take back your signet.
Sar. No, retain it;
But use it with more moderation.
Sal. Sire, 220
I used it for your honour, and restore it
Because I cannot keep it with my own.
Bestow it on Arbaces.
Sar. So I should:
He never asked it.
Sal. Doubt not, he will have it,
Without that hollow semblance of respect.

Bel. I know not what hath prejudiced the
Prince
So strongly 'gainst two subjects, than whom
none
Have been more zealous for Assyria's weal.
Sal. Peace, factious priest, and faithless
soldier! thou
Unit'st in thy own person the worst vices 230
Of the most dangerous orders of mankind.
Keep thy smooth words and juggling homilies
For those who know thee not. Thy fellow's sin
Is, at the least, a bold one, and not tempered
By the tricks taught thee in Chaldea.
Bel. Hear him,
My liege—the son of Belus! he blasphemes
The worship of the land, which bows the knee
Before your fathers.
Sar. Oh! for that I pray you
Let him have absolution. I dispense with
The worship of dead men; feeling that I 240
Am mortal, and believing that the race
From whence I sprung are—what I see them
—ashes.
Bel. King! Do not deem so: they are
with the stars,
And—
Sar. You shall join them ere they will rise,
If you preach farther—Why, this is rank
treason.
Sal. My lord!
Sar. To school me in the worship of
Assyria's idols! Let him be released—
Give him his sword.
Sal. My Lord, and King, and Brother,
I pray ye pause.
Sar. Yes, and be sermonised,
And dinned, and deafened with dead men
and Baal, 250
And all Chaldea's starry mysteries.
Bel. Monarch! respect them.
Sar. Oh! for that—I love them;
I love to watch them in the deep blue vault,
And to compare them with my Myrrha's eyes;
I love to see their rays redoubled in
The tremulous silver of Euphrates' wave,
As the light breeze of midnight crisps the
broad
And rolling water, sighing through the sedges
Which fringe his banks: but whether they
may be 259
Gods, as some say, or the abodes of Gods,
As others hold, or simply lamps of night,
Worlds—or the lights of Worlds—I know
nor care not.
There's something sweet in my uncertainty

I would not change for your Chaldean lore;
Besides, I know of these all clay can know
Of aught above it, or below it—nothing.
I see their brilliancy and feel their beauty—
When they shine on my grave I shall know
neither.

Bel. For neither, Sire, say better.

Sar. I will wait,
If it so please you, Pontiff, for that know-
ledge. 270

In the meantime receive your sword, and
know

That I prefer your service militant
Unto your ministry—not loving either.

Sal. (*aside*). His lusts have made him
mad. Then must I save him,
Spite of himself.

Sar. Please you to hear me, Satraps!
And chiefly thou, my priest, because I doubt
thee

More than the soldier; and would doubt
thee all

Wert thou not half a warrior: let us part
In peace—I'll not say pardon—which must
be

Earned by the guilty; this I'll not pronounce
ye, 280

Although upon this breath of mine depends
Your own; and, deadlier for ye, on my fears.
But fear not—for that I am soft, not fearful—
And so live on. Were I the thing some
think me,

Your heads would now be dripping the last
drops

Of their attained gore from the high gates
Of this our palace, into the dry dust,
Their only portion of the coveted kingdom
They would be crowned to reign o'er—let
that pass.

As I have said, I will not deem ye guilty, 290
Nor doom ye guiltless. Albeit better men
Than ye or I stand ready to arraign you;
And should I leave your fate to sterner
judges,

And proofs of all kinds, I might sacrifice
Two men, who, whatso'er they now are,
were

Once honest. Ye are free, sirs.

Arb. Sire, this clemency—

Bel. (*interrupting him*). Is worthy of your-
self; and, although innocent,

We thank—

Sar. Priest! keep your thanksgivings
for Belus;

His offspring needs none.

Bel. But being innocent—

Sar. Be silent.—Guilt is loud. If ye are
loyal, 300
Ye are injured men, and should be sad, not
grateful.

Bel. So we should be, were justice always
done

By earthly power omnipotent; but Innocence
Must oft receive her right as a mere favour.

Sar. That's a good sentence for a homily,
Though not for this occasion. Prithee keep
it

To plead thy Sovereign's cause before his
people.

Bel. I trust there is no cause.

Sar. No cause, perhaps;
But many causers:—if ye meet with such 309
In the exercise of your inquisitive function
On earth, or should you read of it in heaven
In some mysterious twinkle of the stars,
Which are your chronicles, I pray you note,
That there are worse things betwixt earth and
heaven

Than him who ruleth many and slays none;
And, hating not himself, yet loves his fellows
Enough to spare even those who would not
spare him

Were they once masters—but that's doubt-
ful. Satraps!

Your swords and persons are at liberty
To use them as ye will—but from this hour
I have no call for either. Salemenes! 321
Follow me.

[*Exeunt* SARDANAPALUS, SALEMENES,
and the Train, etc., leaving ARBACES
and BELESES.

Arb. Beleses!

Bel. Now, what think you?

Arb. That we are lost.

Bel. That we have won the kingdom.

Arb. What? thus suspected—with the
sword slung o'er us

But by a single hair, and that still wavering,
To be blown down by his imperious breath
Which spared us—why, I know not.

Bel. Seek not why;
But let us profit by the interval.

The hour is still our own—our power the
same—

The night the same we destined. He hath
changed 330

Nothing except our ignorance of all
Suspicion into such a certainty

As must make madness of delay.

Arb. And yet—

Bel. What, doubting still?
Arb. He spared our lives, nay, more,
 Saved them from Salemenes.
Bel. And how long
 Will he so spare? till the first drunken
 minute.
Arb. Or sober, rather. Yet he did it
 nobly;
 Gave royally what we had forfeited
 Basely——
Bel. Say bravely.
Arb. Somewhat of both, perhaps—
 But it has touched me, and, whate'er betide,
 I will no further on.
Bel. And lose the world! 341
Arb. Lose any thing except my own
 esteem.
Bel. I blush that we should owe our lives
 to such
 A king of distaffs!
Arb. But no less we owe them;
 And I should blush far more to take the
 grantor's!
Bel. Thou may'st endure whate'er thou
 wilt—the stars
 Have written otherwise.
Arb. Though they came down,
 And marshalled me the way in all their
 brightness,
 I would not follow.
Bel. This is weakness—worse
 Than a scared beldam's dreaming of the
 dead, 350
 And waking in the dark.—Go to—go to.
Arb. Methought he looked like Nimrod as
 he spoke,
 Even as the proud imperial statue stands
 Looking the monarch of the kings around
 it,
 And sways, while they but ornament, the
 temple.
Bel. I told you that you had too much
 despised him,
 And that there was some royalty within him—
 What then? he is the nobler foe.
Arb. But we
 The meaner.—Would he had not spared us!
Bel. So—
 Wouldst thou be sacrificed thus readily? 360
Arb. No—but it had been better to have
 died
 Than live ungrateful.
Bel. Oh, the souls of some men!
 Thou wouldst digest what some call treason,
 and

Fools treachery—and, behold, upon the
 sudden,
 Because for something or for nothing, this
 Rash reveller steps, ostentatiously,
 'Twi'th thee and Salemenes, thou art turned
 Into—what shall I say?—Sardanapalus!
 I know no name more ignominious.
Arb. But
 An hour ago, who dared to term me such
 Had held his life but lightly—as it is, 371
 I must forgive you, even as he forgave us—
 Semiramis herself would not have done it.
Bel. No—the Queen liked no sharers of
 the kingdom,
 Not even a husband.
Arb. I must serve him truly——
Bel. And humbly?
Arb. No, sir, proudly—being honest.
 I shall be nearer thrones than you to heaven;
 And if not quite so haughty, yet more lofty.
 You may do your own deeming—you have
 codes,
 And mysteries, and corollaries of 380
 Right and wrong, which I lack for my
 direction,
 And must pursue but what a plain heart
 teaches.
 And now you know me.
Bel. Have you finished?
Arb. Yes—
 With you.
Bel. And would, perhaps, betray as well
 As quit me?
Arb. That's a sacerdotal thought,
 And not a soldier's.
Bel. Be it what you will—
 Truce with these wranglings, and but hear
 me.
Arb. No—
 There is more peril in your subtle spirit
 Than in a phalanx.
Bel. If it must be so—
 I'll on alone.
Arb. Alone!
Bel. Thrones hold but one. 390
Arb. But this is filled.
Bel. With worse than vacancy—
 A despised monarch. Look to it, Arbaces:
 I have still aided, cherished, loved, and urged
 you;
 Was willing even to serve you, in the hope
 To serve and save Assyria. Heaven itself
 Seemed to consent, and all events were
 friendly,
 Even to the last, till that your spirit shrunk

Into a shallow softness ; but now, rather
Than see my country languish, I will be
Her saviour or the victim of her tyrant— 400
Or one or both—for sometimes both are one ;
And if I win—Arbaces is my servant.

Arb. Your servant !

Bel. Why not? better than be slave.
The pardoned slave of *she* Sardanapalus !

Enter PANIA.

Pan. My Lords, I bear an order from the
king.

Arb. It is obeyed ere spoken.

Bel. Notwithstanding,
Let's hear it.

Pan. Forthwith, on this very night,
Repair to your respective satrapies
Of Babylon and Media.

Bel. With our troops?

Pan. My order is unto the Satraps and 410
Their household train.

Arb. But——

Bel. It must be obeyed :
Say, we depart.

Pan. My order is to see you
Depart, and not to bear your answer.

Bel. (*aside*). Aye!
Well, Sir—we will accompany you hence.

Pan. I will retire to marshal forth the
guard

Of honour which befits your rank, and wait
Your leisure, so that it the hour exceeds not.

[*Exit PANIA.*

Bel. Now then obey !

Arb. Doubtless.

Bel. Yes, to the gates
That grate the palace, which is now our
prison— 419

No further.
Arb. Thou hast harped the truth indeed !
The realm itself, in all its wide extension,
Yawns dungeons at each step for thee and
me.

Bel. Graves !

Arb. If I thought so, this good sword
should dig
One more than mine.

Bel. It shall have work enough.
Let me hope better than thou augrest ;
At present, let us hence as best we may.

Thou dost agree with me in understanding
This order as a sentence?

Arb. Why, what other
Interpretation should it bear? it is

The very policy of Orient monarchs— 430

Pardon and poison—favours and a sword—

A distant voyage, and an eternal sleep.

How many Satraps in his father's time—

For he I own is, or at least *was*, bloodless—

Bel. But *will* not—*can* not be so now.

Arb. I doubt it.

How many Satraps have I seen set out
In his Sire's day for mighty Vice-royalties,
Whose tombs are on their path! I know
not how,

But they all sickened by the way, it was
So long and heavy.

Bel. Let us but regain 440

The free air of the city, and we'll shorten
The journey.

Arb. 'Twill be shortened at the gates,
It may be.

Bel. No ; they hardly will risk that.

They mean us to die privately, but not

Within the palace or the city walls,

Where we are known, and may have partisans :

If they had meant to slay us here, we were

No longer with the living. Let us hence.

Arb. If I but thought he did not mean my
life—

Bel. Fool! hence — what else should
despotism alarmed 450

Mean? Let us but rejoin our troops, and
march.

Arb. Towards our provinces?

Bel. No ; towards your kingdom.

There's time—there's heart, and hope, and
power, and means—

Which their half measures leave us in full
scope.—

Away !

Arb. And I even yet repenting must

Relapse to guilt !

Bel. Self-defence is a virtue,

Sole bulwark of all right. Away, I say !

Let's leave this place, the air grows thick and
choking,

And the walls have a scent of night-shade—
hence !

Let us not leave them time for further
council. 460

Our quick departure proves our civic zeal ;

Our quick departure hinders our good
escort,

The worthy Pania, from anticipating

The orders of some parasangs from hence :

Nay, there's no other choice, but——hence

I say.

[*Exit with ARBACES, who follows reluctantly.*

Enter SARDANAPALUS and SALEMENES.

Sar. Well, all is remedied, and without bloodshed,
That worst of mockeries of a remedy ;
We are now secure by these men's exile.

Sal. Yes,
As he who treads on flowers is from the adder
Twined round their roots.

Sar. Why, what wouldst have me do ? 470

Sal. Undo what you have done.

Sar. Revoke my pardon ?

Sal. Replace the crown now tottering on
your temples.

Sar. That were tyrannical.

Sal. But sure.

Sar. We are so.

What danger can they work upon the frontier ?

Sal. They are not there yet—never should
they be so,

Were I well listened to.

Sar. Nay, I *have* listened
Impartially to thee—why not to them ?

Sal. You may know that hereafter ; as it is,
I take my leave to order forth the guard.

Sar. And you will join us at the banquet !

Sal. Sire, 480

Dispense with me—I am no wassailer :
Command me in all services save the Bacchant's.

Sar. Nay, but 'tis fit to revel now and then.

Sal. And fit that some should watch for
those who revel

Too oft. Am I permitted to depart ?

Sar. Yes—Stay a moment, my good
Salemene,

My brother—my best subject—better Prince
Than I am King. You should have been
the monarch,

And I—I know not what, and care not ; but
Think not I am insensible to all 490

Thine honest wisdom, and thy rough yet kind,
Though oft-reproving sufferance of my follies.

If I have spared these men against thy counsel,
That is, their lives—it is not that I doubt

The advice was sound ; but, let them live :
we will not

Cavil about their lives—so let them mend
them.

Their banishment will leave me still sound
sleep,

Which their death had not left me.

Sal. Thus you run

The risk to sleep for ever, to save traitors—
A moment's pang now changed for years
of crime. 500

Still let them be made quiet.

Sar. Tempt me not ;
My word is past.

Sal. But it may be recalled.

Sar. 'Tis royal.

Sal. And should therefore be decisive.
This half-indulgence of an exile serves
But to provoke—a pardon should be full,
Or it is none.

Sar. And who persuaded me
After I had repealed them, or at least
Only dismissed them from our presence, who
Urged me to send them to their satrapies ?

Sal. True ; that I had forgotten ; that
is, Sire, 510

If they e'er reached their Satrapies—why,
then,

Reprove me more for my advice.

Sar. And if
They do not reach them—look to it!—in
safety,

In safety, mark me—and security—
Look to thine own.

Sal. Permit me to depart ;
Their *safety* shall be cared for.

Sar. Get thee hence, then ;
And, prithee, think more gently of thy brother.

Sal. Sire, I shall ever duly serve my
sovereign.

[*Exit SALEMENES.*]

Sar. (*solus*). That man is of a temper
too severe ;

Hard but as lofty as the rock, and free 520
From all the taints of common earth—
while I

Am softer clay, impregnated with flowers :
But as our mould is, must the produce be.

If I have erred this time, 'tis on the side
Where Error sits most lightly on that sense,

I know not what to call it ; but it reckons
With me oftentimes for pain, and sometimes
pleasure ;

A spirit which seems placed about my heart
To count its throbs, not quicken them,
and ask

Questions which mortal never dared to ask
me, 530

Nor Baal, though an oracular deity—
Albeit his marble face majestic

Frowns as the shadows of the evening dim
His brows to changed expression, till at times

I think the statue looks in act to speak.
Away with these vain thoughts, I will be

joyous—
And here comes Joy's true herald.

Enter MYRRHA.

Myr. King! the sky
Is overcast, and musters muttering thunder,
In clouds that seem approaching fast, and
show
In forkéd flashes a commanding tempest. 540
Will you then quit the palace?
Sar. Tempest, say'st thou?
Myr. Aye, my good lord.
Sar. For my own part, I should be
Not ill content to vary the smooth scene,
And watch the warring elements; but this
Would little suit the silken garments and
Smooth faces of our festive friends. Say,
Myrrha,
Art thou of those who dread the roar of clouds?
Myr. In my own country we respect their
voices
As auguries of Jove.
Sar. Jove!—aye, your Baal—
Ours also has a property in thunder, 550
And ever and anon some falling bolt
Proves his divinity,—and yet sometimes
Strikes his own altars.
Myr. That were a dread omen.
Sar. Yes—for the priests. Well, we will
not go forth
Beyond the palace walls to-night, but make
Our feast within.
Myr. Now, Jove be praised! that he
Hath heard the prayer thou wouldst not
hear. The Gods
Are kinder to thee than thou to thyself,
And flash this storm between thee and
thy foes,
To shield thee from them.
Sar. Child, if there be peril, 560
Methinks it is the same within these walls
As on the river's brink.
Myr. Not so; these walls
Are high and strong, and guarded. Treason
has
To penetrate through many a winding way,
And massy portal; but in the pavilion
There is no bulwark.
Sar. No, nor in the palace,
Nor in the fortress, nor upon the top
Of cloud-fenced Caucasus, where the eagle sits
Nested in pathless clefts, if treachery be:
Even as the arrow finds the airy king, 570
The steel will reach the earthly. But be calm;
The men, or innocent or guilty, are
Banished, and far upon their way.
Myr. They live, then?

Sar. So sanguinary? *Thou!*
Myr. I would not shrink
From just infliction of due punishment
On those who seek your life: were't other-
wise,
I should not merit mine. Besides, you heard
The princely Salemenes.
Sar. This is strange;
The gentle and the austere are both against me,
And urge me to revenge.
Myr. 'Tis a Greek virtue. 580
Sar. But not a kingly one—I'll none
on't; or
If ever I indulge in't, it shall be
With kings—my equals.
Myr. These men sought to be so.
Sar. Myrrha, this is too feminine, and
springs
From fear—
Myr. For you.
Sar. No matter, still 'tis fear.
I have observed your sex, once roused to wrath,
Are timidly vindictive to a pitch
Of perseverance, which I would not copy.
I thought you were exempt from this, as from
The childish helplessness of Asian women. 590
Myr. My Lord, I am no boaster of my love,
Nor of my attributes; I have shared your
splendour,
And will partake your fortunes. You may live
To find one slave more true than subject
myriads:
But this the Gods avert! I am content
To be beloved on trust for what I feel,
Rather than prove it to you in your griefs,
Which might not yield to any cares of mine.
Sar. Grief cannot come where perfect
love exists,
Except to heighten it, and vanish from 600
That which it could not scare away. Let's in—
The hour approaches, and we must prepare
To meet the invited guests who grace our feast.
[*Exeunt.*]

ACT III.

SCENE I.—*The Hall of the Palace illuminated—SARDANAPALUS and his Guests at Table. — A storm without, and Thunder occasionally heard during the Banquet.*

Sar. Fill full! why this is as it should
be: here
Is my true realm, amidst bright eyes and faces
Happy as fair! Here sorrow cannot reach.

Zam. Nor elsewhere — where the King
is, pleasure sparkles.

Sar. Is not this better now than Nimrod's
huntings,
Or my wild Grandam's chase in search
of kingdoms
She could not keep when conquered?

Alt. Mighty though
They were, as all thy royal line have been,
Yet none of those who went before have reached
The acmé of Sardanapalus, who 10
Has placed his joy in peace—the sole true glory.

Sar. And pleasure, good Altada, to which
glory
Is but the path. What is it that we seek?
Enjoyment! We have cut the way short to it,
And not gone tracking it through human
ashes,
Making a grave with every footstep.

Zam. No;
All hearts are happy, and all voices bless
The King of peace—who holds a world in
jubilee.

Sar. Art sure of that? I have heard other-
wise;
Some say that there be traitors.

Zam. Traitors they 20
Who dare to say so!—'Tis impossible.
What cause?

Sar. What cause? true,—fill the goblet up;
We will not think of them: there are none such,
Or if they be, they are gone.

Alt. Guests, to my pledge!
Down on your knees, and drink a measure to
The safety of the King—the monarch, say I?
The God Sardanapalus!
[ZAMES and the Guests kneel, and exclaim—
Mightier than
His father Baal, the God Sardanapalus!
[It thunders as they kneel; some start up in
confusion.

Zam. Why do you rise, my friends? in that
strong peal
His father gods consented.

Myr. Menaced, rather. 30
King, wilt thou bear this mad impiety?

Sar. Impiety!—nay, if the sires who reigned
Before me can be Gods, I'll not disgrace
Their lineage. But arise, my pious friends;
Hoard your devotion for the Thunderer there:
I seek but to be loved, not worshipped.

Alt. Both—
Both you must ever be by all true subjects.

Sar. Methinks the thunders still increase: it is
An awful night.

Myr. Oh yes, for those who have
No palace to protect their worshippers. 40

Sar. That's true, my Myrrha; and could
I convert
My realm to one wide shelter for the wretched,
I'd do it.

Myr. Thou'rt no God, then—not to be
Able to work a will so good and general,
As thy wish would imply.

Sar. And your Gods, then,
Who can, and do not?

Myr. Do not speak of that,
Lest we provoke them.

Sar. True—, they love not censure
Better than mortals. Friends, a thought has
struck me:
Were there no temples, would there, think ye, be
Air worshippers? that is, when it is angry, 50
And pelting as even now.

Myr. The Persian prays
Upon his mountain.

Sar. Yes, when the Sun shines.

Myr. And I would ask if this your palace
were
Unroofed and desolate, how many flatterers
Would lick the dust in which the King lay low?

Alt. The fair Ionian is too sarcastic
Upon a nation whom she knows not well;
The Assyrians know no pleasure but their
King's,
And homage is their pride.

Sar. Nay, pardon, guests,
The fair Greeks' readiness of speech.

Alt. Pardon! sire: 60
We honour her of all things next to thee.
Hark! what was that?

Zam. That! nothing but the jar
Of distant portals shaken by the wind.

Alt. It sounded like the clash of—hark again!

Zam. The big rain pattering on the roof.

Sar. No more.
Myrrha, my love, hast thou thy shell in order?
Sing me a song of Sappho; her, thou know'st,
Who in thy country threw—

*Enter PANIA, with his sword and garments
bloody, and disordered. The guests rise
in confusion.*

Pan. (to the Guards). Look to the portals;
And with your best speed to the walls without.
Your arms! To arms! The King's in danger.
Monarch 70

Excuse this haste,—'tis faith.

Sar. Speak on.

Pan. It is
As Salemenes feared; the faithless Satraps—
Sar. You are wounded—give some wine.
Take breath, good Pania.
Pan. 'Tis nothing—a mere flesh wound.
I am worn
More with my speed to warn my sovereign,
Than hurt in his defence.
Myr. Well, Sir, the rebels?
Pan. Soon as Arbaces and Beleses reached
Their stations in the city, they refused
To march; and on my attempt to use the power
Which I was delegated with, they called 80
Upon their troops, who rose in fierce defiance.
Myr. All?
Pan. Too many.
Sar. Spare not of thy free speech,
To spare mine ears—the truth.
Pan. My own slight guard
Were faithful, and what's left of it is still so.
Myr. And are these all the force still faithful?
Pan. No—
The Bactrians, now led on by Salemenes,
Who even then was on his way, still urged
By strong suspicion of the Median chiefs,
Are numerous, and make strong head against
The rebels, fighting inch by inch, and forming
An orb around the palace, where they mean 91
To centre all their force, and save the King.
(*He hesitates.*) I am charged to—
Myr. 'Tis no time for hesitation.
Pan. Prince Salemenes doth implore the
King
To arm himself, though but for a moment,
And show himself unto the soldiers: his
Sole presence in this instant might do more
Than hosts can do in his behalf.
Sar. What, ho!
My armour there.
Myr. And wilt thou?
Sar. Will I not?
Ho, there!—but seek not for the buckler: 'tis
Too heavy:—a light cuirass and my sword. 101
Where are the rebels?
Pan. Scarce a furlong's length
From the outward wall the fiercest conflict
rages.
Sar. Then I may charge on horseback.
Sfero, ho!
Order my horse out.—There is space enough
Even in our courts, and by the outer gate,
To marshal half the horsemen of Arabia.
[*Exit Sfero for the armour.*]
Myr. How I do love thee!
Sar. I ne'er doubted it.

Myr. But now I know thee.
Sar. (*to his Attendant*). Bring down my
spear too—
Where's Salemenes?
Pan. Where a soldier should be, 110
In the thick of the fight.
Sar. Then hasten to him—Is
The path still open, and communication
Left 'twixt the palace and the phalanx?
Pan. 'Twas
When I late left him, and I have no fear;
Our troops were steady, and the phalanx
formed.
Sar. Tell him to spare his person for the
present,
And that I will not spare my own—and say,
I come.
Pan. There's victory in the very word.
[*Exit PANIA.*]
Sar. Altada—Zames—forth, and arm ye!
There
Is all in readiness in the armoury. 120
See that the women are bestowed in safety
In the remote apartments: let a guard
Be set before them, with strict charge to quit
The post but with their lives—command it,
Zames.
Altada, arm yourself, and return here;
Your post is near our person.
[*Exeunt ZAMES, ALTADA, and all save
MYRRHA.*]
*Enter Sfero and others with the King's
Arms, etc.*
Sfe. King! your armour.
Sar. (*arming himself*). Give me the cuirass
—so: my baldric; now
My sword: I had forgot the helm—where
is it?
That's well—no, 'tis too heavy; you mistake,
too—
It was not this I meant, but that which bears
A diadem around it.
Sfe. Sire, I deemed 131
That too conspicuous from the precious stones
To risk your sacred brow beneath—and trust
me,
This is of better metal, though less rich.
Sar. You deemed! Are you too turned a
rebel? Fellow!
Your part is to obey: return, and—no—
It is too late—I will go forth without it.
Sfe. At least, wear this.
Sar. Wear Caucasus! why, 'tis
A mountain on my temples.

Sfe. Sire, the meanest
Soldier goes not forth thus exposed to battle.
All men will recognise you—for the storm 141
Has ceased, and the moon breaks forth in
her brightness.

Sar. I go forth to be recognised, and thus
Shall be so sooner—Now—my spear! I'm
armed.

[*In going stops short, and turns to SFERO.*
Sfero—I had forgotten—bring the mirror.¹

Sfe. The mirror, Sire?

Sar. Yes, sir, of polished brass,
Brought from the spoils of India—but be
speedy. [*Exit SFERO.*

Sar. Myrrha, retire unto a place of safety.
Why went you not forth with the other damsels?

Myr. Because my place is here.

Sar. And when I am gone—

Myr. I follow.

Sar. You! to battle?

Myr. If it were so, 151
'Twere not the first Greek girl had trod the path.
I will await here your *return*.

Sar. The place
Is spacious, and the first to be sought out,
If they prevail; and, if it be so,
And I return not—

Myr. Still we meet again.

Sar. How?

Myr. In the spot where all must meet at
last—
In Hades! if there be, as I believe,
A shore beyond the Styx; and if there be not,
In ashes.

Sar. Darest thou so much?

Myr. I dare all things 160
Except survive what I have loved, to be
A rebel's booty: forth, and do your bravest.

¹ ["In the third act, when Sardanapalus calls for a *mirror* to look at himself in his *armour*, recollect to quote the Latin passage from *Juvenal* upon Otho (a similar character, who did the same thing: Gifford will help you to it). The trait is, perhaps, too familiar, but it is historical (of Otho, at least), and natural in an effeminate character."—Letter to Murray, May 30, 1821, *Letters*, 1901, v. 301. The quotation was not made in the first edition, 1821, nor in any subsequent issue, till 1832. It is from *Juvenal*, *Sat.* ii. lines 199-203—

"This grasps a mirror—pathic Otho's boast
(Aurunca Actor's spoil), where, while his host,
With shouts, the signal of the fight required,
He viewed his mailed form; viewed, and admired!
Lo, a new subject for the historic page,
A MIRROR, midst the arms of civil rage!"

--GIFFORD.]

Re-enter SFERO with the mirror.

Sar. (*looking at himself*). This cuirass
fits me well, the baldric better,
And the helm not at all. Methinks I seem
[*Flings away the helmet after trying it again.*
Passing well in these toys; and now to
prove them.

Altada! where's Altada?

Sfe. Waiting, Sire,

Without: he has your shield in readiness.

Sar. True—I forgot—he is my shield-
bearer

By right of blood, derived from age to age.
Myrrha, embrace me;—yet once more—once
more— 170

Love me, whate'er betide. My chiefest
glory

Shall be to make me worthier of your love.

Myr. Go forth, and conquer!

[*Exeunt SARDANAPALUS and SFERO.*

Now, I am alone:

All are gone forth, and of that all how few
Perhaps return! Let him but vanquish, and
Me perish! If he vanquish not, I perish;
For I will not outlive him. He has wound
About my heart, I know not how nor why.
Not for that he is King; for now his kingdom
Rocks underneath his throne, and the earth
yawns 180

To yield him no more of it than a grave;
And yet I love him more. Oh, mighty Jove!
Forgive this monstrous love for a barbarian,
Who knows not of Olympus! yes, I love
him

Now—now—far more than—Hark—to the
war shout!

Methinks it nears me. If it should be so,

[*She draws forth a small vial.*

This cunning Colchian poison, which my
father

Learned to compound on Euxine shores, and
taught me

How to preserve, shall free me! It had
freed me

Long ere this hour, but that I loved,
until 190

I half forgot I was a slave:—where all
Are slaves save One, and proud of servitude,
So they are served in turn by something lower
In the degree of bondage: we forget
That shackles worn like ornaments no less
Are chains. Again that shout! and now the
clash

Of arms—and now—and now—

Enter ALTADA.

Alt. Ho, Sfero, ho!

Myr. He is not here; what wouldst thou
with him? How
Goes on the conflict?

Alt. Dubiously and fiercely.

Myr. And the King?

Alt. Like a king. I must find Sfero,
And bring him a new spear with his own
helmet. 201

He fights till now bare-headed, and by far
Too much exposed. The soldiers knew his
face,

And the foe too; and in the moon's broad light,
His silk tiara and his flowing hair
Make him a mark too royal. Every arrow
Is pointed at the fair hair and fair features,
And the broad fillet which crowns both.

Myr. Ye Gods,
Who fulminate o'er my father's land, protect
him!

Were you sent by the King?

Alt. By Salemenes, 210
Who sent me privily upon this charge,
Without the knowledge of the careless
sovereign.

The King! the King fights as he revels! ho!
What, Sfero! I will seek the armoury—
He must be there. [*Exit* ALTADA.]

Myr. 'Tis no dishonour—no—
'Tis no dishonour to have loved this man.
I almost wish now, what I never wished
Before—that he were Grecian. If Alcides
Were shamed in wearing Lydian Omphale's
She-garb, and wielding her vile distaff;
surely 220

He, who springs up a Hercules at once,
Nursed in effeminate arts from youth to
manhood,

And rushes from the banquet to the battle,
As though it were a bed of love, deserves
That a Greek girl should be his paramour,
And a Greek bard his minstrel—a Greek
tomb

His monument. How goes the strife, sir?

Enter an Officer.

Officer. Lost,
Lost almost past recovery. Zames! Where
Is Zames?

Myr. Posted with the guard appointed
To watch before the apartment of the
women. 230

[*Exit Officer.*]

Myr. (sola). He's gone; and told no more
than that all's lost!

What need have I to know more? In those
words,

Those little words, a kingdom and a king,
A line of thirteen ages, and the lives
Of thousands, and the fortune of all left
With life, are merged; and I, too, with the
great,

Like a small bubble breaking with the wave
Which bore it, shall be nothing. At the least,
My fate is in my keeping: no proud victor
Shall count me with his spoils.

Enter PANIA.

Pan. Away with me, 240
Myrrha, without delay; we must not lose
A moment—all that's left us now.

Myr. The King?

Pan. Sent me here to conduct you hence,
beyond

The river, by a secret passage.

Myr. Then
He lives—

Pan. And charged me to secure your life,
And beg you to live on for his sake, till
He can rejoin you.

Myr. Will he then give way?

Pan. Not till the last. Still, still he does
whate'er

Despair can do; and step by step disputes
The very palace.

Myr. They are here, then:—aye, 250
Their shouts come ringing through the
ancient halls,

Never profaned by rebel echoes till
This fatal night. Farewell, Assyria's line!
Farewell to all of Nimrod! Even the name
Is now no more.

Pan. Away with me—away!

Myr. No: I'll die here!—Away, and tell
your King
I loved him to the last.

Enter SARDANAPALUS and SALEMENES
with Soldiers. PANIA quits MYRRHA,
and ranges himself with them.

Sar. Since it is thus,
We'll die where we were born—in our own
halls.

Serry your ranks—stand firm. I have
despatched

A trusty satrap for the guard of Zames, 260
All fresh and faithful; they'll be here anon.

All is not over.—Pania, look to Myrrha.

[PANIA returns towards MYRRHA.]

Sal. We have breathing time; yet once more charge, my friends—
One for Assyria!

Sar. Rather say for Bactria!
My faithful Bactrians, I will henceforth be King of your nation, and we'll hold together This realm as province.

Sal. Hark! they come—they come.

Enter BELESES and ARBACES with the Rebels.

Arb. Set on, we have them in the toil.
Charge! charge!

Bel. On! on!—Heaven fights for us, and with us—On!

[*They charge the King and SALEMENES with their troops, who defend themselves till the arrival of ZAMES with the Guard before mentioned. The Rebels are then driven off, and pursued by SALEMENES, etc. As the King is going to join the pursuit, BELESES crosses him.*]

Bel. Ho! tyrant—I will end this war.

Sar. Even so, 270
My warlike priest, and precious prophet, and Grateful and trusty subject: yield, I pray thee.

I would reserve thee for a fitter doom,
Rather than dip my hands in holy blood.

Bel. Thine hour is come.

Sar. No, thine.—I've lately read,
Though but a young astrologer, the stars;
And ranging round the zodiac, found thy fate
In the sign of the Scorpion, which proclaims
That thou wilt now be crushed.

Bel. But not by thee.

[*They fight; BELESES is wounded and disarmed.*]

Sar. (*raising his sword to despatch him, exclaims*)—

Now call upon thy planets, will they shoot 280
From the sky to preserve their seer and credit?

[*A party of Rebels enter and rescue BELESES. They assail the King, who in turn, is rescued by a Party of his Soldiers, who drive the Rebels off.*]

The villain was a prophet after all.
Upon them—ho! there—victory is ours.

[*Exit in pursuit.*]

Myr. (*to Pan.*) Pursue! Why stand'st thou here, and leavest the ranks
Of fellow-soldiers conquering without thee?

Pan. The King's command was not to quit thee.

Myr. *Me!*

Think not of me—a single soldier's arm
Must not be wanting now. I ask no guard,
I need no guard: what, with a world at stake,

Keep watch upon a woman? Hence, I say, 290

Or thou art ashamed! Nay, then, I will go forth,

A feeble female, 'midst their desperate strife,
And bid thee guard me *there*—where thou shouldst shield

Thy sovereign. [*Exit MYRRHA.*]

Pan. Yet stay, damsel!—She's gone.

If aught of ill betide her, better I
Had lost my life. Sardanapalus holds her
Far dearer than his kingdom, yet he fights
For that too; and can I do less than he,
Who never flashed a scimitar till now?
Myrrha, return, and I obey you, though 300
In disobedience to the monarch.

[*Exit PANIA.*]

Enter ALTADA and SFERO by an opposite door.

Alt. Myrrha!
What, gone? yet she was here when the
fight raged,

And Pania also. Can aught have befallen them?

Sfe. I saw both safe, when late the rebels fled;

They probably are but retired to make
Their way back to the harem.

Alt. If the King
Prove victor, as it seems even now he must,
And miss his own Ionian, we are doomed
To worse than captive rebels.

Sfe. Let us trace them:
She cannot be fled far; and, found, she
makes 310

A richer prize to our soft sovereign
Than his recovered kingdom.

Alt. Baal himself
Ne'er fought more fiercely to win empire, than
His silken son to save it: he defies
All augury of foes or friends; and like
The close and sultry summer's day, which
bodes

A twilight tempest, bursts forth in such
thunder

As sweeps the air and deluges the earth.
The man's inscrutable.

Sfe. Not more than others.
All are the sons of circumstance: away— 320
Let's seek the slave out, or prepare to be
Tortured for his infatuation, and
Condemned without a crime. [*Exeunt.*]

Enter SALEMENES and Soldiers, etc.

Sal. The triumph is
Flattering: they are beaten backward from
the palace,
And we have opened regular access
To the troops stationed on the other side
Euphrates, who may still be true; nay,
must be,
When they hear of our victory. But where
Is the chief victor? where's the King?

*Enter SARDANAPALUS, cum suis, etc., and
MYRRHA.*

Sar. Here, brother.

Sal. Unhurt, I hope.

Sar. Not quite; but let it pass. 330
We've cleared the palace—

Sal. And I trust the city.
Our numbers gather; and I've ordered onward
A cloud of Parthians, hitherto reserved,
All fresh and fiery, to be poured upon them
In their retreat, which soon will be a flight.

Sar. It is already, or at least they marched
Faster than I could follow with my Bactrians,
Who spared no speed. I am spent: give me
a seat.

Sal. There stands the throne, Sire.

Sar. 'Tis no place to rest on,
For mind nor body: let me have a couch, 340
[*They place a seat.*]

A peasant's stool, I care not what: so—now
I breathe more freely.

Sal. This great hour has proved
The brightest and most glorious of your life.

Sar. And the most tiresome. Where's my
cupbearer?

Bring me some water.

Sal. (smiling). 'Tis the first time he
Ever had such an order: even I,
Your most austere of counsellors, would now
Suggest a purpler beverage.

Sar. Blood—doubtless.
But there's enough of that shed: as for wine,
I have learned to-night the price of the pure
element: 350

Thrice have I drank of it, and thrice renewed,
With greater strength than the grape ever
gave me,

My charge upon the rebels. Where's the
soldier

Who gave me water in his helmet? ¹

One of the Guards. Slain, Sire!
An arrow pierced his brain, while, scattering
The last drops from his helm, he stood in
act

To place it on his brows.

Sar. Slain! unrewarded!
And slain to serve my thirst: that's hard, poor
slave!

Had he but lived, I would have gorged him
with

Gold: all the gold of earth could ne'er repay 359
The pleasure of that draught; for I was
parched

As I am now. [*They bring water—he drinks.*
I live again—from henceforth

The goblet I reserve for hours of love,
But war on water.

Sal. And that bandage, Sire,
Which girds your arm?

Sar. A scratch from brave Beleses.

Myr. Oh! he is wounded!

Sar. Not too much of that;
And yet it feels a little stiff and painful,
Now I am cooler.

Myr. You have bound it with—

Sar. The fillet of my diadem: the first time
That ornament was ever aught to me, 370
Save an encumbrance.

Myr. (to the Attendants). Summon speedily
A leech of the most skilful: pray, retire:
I will unbind your wound and tend it.

Sar. Do so,
For now it throbs sufficiently: but what

¹ ["When 'the king was almost dying with thirst' . . . the eunuch Satibarzanes sought every place for water. . . . After much search he found one of those poor Caunians had about two quarts of bad water in a mean bottle, and he took it and carried it to the king. After the king had drawn it all up, the eunuch asked him, 'If he did not find it a disagreeable beverage?' Upon which he swore by all the gods, 'That he had never drunk the most delicious wine nor the lightest and clearest water with so much pleasure. I wish only,' continued he, 'that I could find the man who gave it thee, that I might make him a recompense. In the mean time I entreat the gods to make him happy and rich.'"]—Plutarch's *Artaxerxes*, Langhorne's translation, 1838, p. 694. Poetry as well as history repeats itself. Compare the "water green" which Gunga Din brought, at the risk of his own life, to fill the wounded soldier's helmet (*Barrack-Room Ballads*, by Rudyard Kipling, 1892, p. 25).]

Know'st thou of wounds? yet wherefore do I
ask?

Know'st thou, my brother, where I lighted on
This minion?

Sal. Herding with the other females,
Like frightened antelopes.

Sar. No: like the dam
Of the young lion, femininely raging
(And femininely meaneth furiously, 380
Because all passions in excess are female,
Against the hunter flying with her cub,
She urged on with her voice and gesture, and
Her floating hair and flashing eyes, the
soldiers,
In the pursuit.

Sal. Indeed!

Sar. You see, this night
Made warriors of more than me. I paused
To look upon her, and her kindled cheek;
Her large black eyes, that flashed through her
long hair
As it streamed o'er her; her blue veins that
rose

Along her most transparent brow; her nostril
Dilated from its symmetry; her lips 391
Apart; her voice that clove through all the
din,

As a lute pierceth through the cymbal's clash,
Jarred but not drowned by the loud brattling;
her

Waved arms, more dazzling with their own
born whiteness
Than the steel her hand held, which she
caught up
From a dead soldier's grasp;—all these things
made

Her seem unto the troops a prophetess
Of victory, or Victory herself,
Come down to hail us hers.

Sal. (aside). This is too much. 400
Again the love-fit's on him, and all's lost,
Unless we turn his thoughts. (*Aloud*). But
pray thee, Sire,

Think of your wound—you said even now
'twas painful.

Sar. That's true, too; but I must not think
of it.

Sal. I have looked to all things needful,
and will now
Receive reports of progress made in such
Orders as I had given, and then return
To hear your further pleasure.

Sar. Be it so.

Sal. (in retiring). Myrrha!

Myr. Prince!

Sal. You have shown a soul to-night,
Which, were he not my sister's lord— But
now 410

I have no time: thou lovest the King?

Myr. I love
Sardanapalus.

Sal. But wouldst have him King still?

Myr. I would not have him less than what
he should be.

Sal. Well then, to have him King, and
yours, and all

He should, or should not be; to have him *live*,
Let him not sink back into luxury.

You have more power upon his spirit than
Wisdom within these walls, or fierce rebellion
Raging without: look well that he relapse not.

Myr. There needed not the voice of
Salemene 420

To urge me on to this: I will not fail.

All that a woman's weakness can—

Sal. Is power
Omnipotent o'er such a heart as his:

Exert it wisely. [*Exit SALEMENES.*]

Sar. Myrrha! what, at whispers
With my stern brother? I shall soon be jealous.

Myr. (smiling). You have cause, Sire; for
on the earth there breathes not
A man more worthy of a woman's love,
A soldier's trust, a subject's reverence,
A king's esteem—the whole world's admira-
tion!

Sar. Praise him, but not so warmly. I
must not 430
Hear those sweet lips grow eloquent in aught
That throws me into shade; yet you speak
truth.

Myr. And now retire, to have your wound
looked to;
Pray lean on me.

Sar. Yes, love! but not from pain.
[*Exeunt omnes.*]

ACT IV.

SCENE I.—SARDANAPALUS *discovered sleep-
ing upon a Couch, and occasionally dis-
turbed in his slumbers, with MYRRHA
watching.*

Myr. (sola, gazing). I have stolen upon his
rest, if rest it be,
Which thus convulses slumber: shall I wake
him?

No, he seems calmer. Oh, thou God of Quiet!
Whose reign is o'er sealed eyelids and soft
dreams,

Of deep, deep sleep, so as to be unfathomed,
Look like thy brother, Death,—so still, so
stirless—

For then we are happiest, as it may be, we
Are happiest of all within the realm
Of thy stern, silent, and unawakening Twin.
Again he moves—again the play of pain 10
Shoots o'er his features, as the sudden gust
Crisps the reluctant lake that lay so calm
Beneath the mountain shadow; or the blast
Ruffles the autumn leaves, that drooping cling
Faintly and motionless to their loved boughs.
I must awake him—yet not yet; who knows
From what I rouse him? It seems pain; but
if

I quicken him to heavier pain? The fever
Of this tumultuous night, the grief too of
His wound, though slight, may cause all this,
and shake 20

Me more to see than him to suffer. No:
Let Nature use her own maternal means,
And I await to second, not disturb her.

Sar. (*awakening*). Not so—although ye
multiplied the stars,
And gave them to me as a realm to share
From you and with you! I would not so pur-
chase

The empire of Eternity. Hence—hence—
Old Hunter of the earliest brutes! and ye,
Who hunted fellow-creatures as if brutes!
Once bloody mortals—and now bloodier idols,
If your priests lie not! And thou, ghastly
Beldame! 31

Dripping with dusky gore, and trampling on
The carcasses of Inde—away! away!
Where am I? Where the spectres? Where
—No—that

Is no false phantom: I should know it 'midst
All that the dead dare gloomily raise up
From their black gulf to daunt the living.
Myrrha!

Myr. Alas! thou art pale, and on thy brow
the drops
Gather like night dew. My beloved, hush—
Calm thee. Thy speech seems of another
world, 40

And thou art lord of this. Be of good cheer;
All will go well.

Sar. Thy *hand*—so—'tis thy hand;
'Tis flesh; grasp—clasp—yet closer, till I feel
Myself that which I was.

Myr. At least know me
For what I am, and ever must be—thine.

Sar. I know it now. I know this life again.
Ah, Myrrha! I have been where we shall be.

Myr. My lord!

Sar. I've been i' the grave—where worms
are lords
And kings are—But I did not deem it so;
I thought 'twas nothing.

Myr. So it is; except 50
Unto the timid, who anticipate
That which may never be.

Sar. Oh, Myrrha! if
Sleep shows such things, what may not Death
disclose?

Myr. I know no evil Death can show, which
Life

Has not already shown to those who live
Embodied longest. If there be indeed
A shore where Mind survives, 'twill be as Mind
All unincorporate: or if there flits
A shadow of this cumbrous clog of clay,
Which stalks, methinks, between our souls
and heaven, 60

And fetters us to earth—at least the phantom,
Whate'er it have to fear, will not fear Death.

Sar. I fear it not; but I have felt—have
seen—
A legion of the dead.

Myr. And so have I.
The dust we tread upon was once alive,
And wretched. But proceed: what hast thou
seen?

Speak it, 'twill lighten thy dimmed mind.

Sar. Methought—

Myr. Yet pause, thou art tired—in pain—
exhausted; all
Which can impair both strength and spirit: seek
Rather to sleep again.

Sar. Not now—I would not 70
Dream; though I know it now to be a dream
What I have dreamt:—and canst thou bear
to hear it?

Myr. I can bear all things, dreams of life or
death,
Which I participate with you, in semblance
Or full reality.

Sar. And this looked real,
I tell you: after that these eyes were open,
I saw them in their flight—for then they fled.

Myr. Say on.

Sar. I saw, that is, I dreamed myself
Here—here—even where we are, guests as
we were,

Myself a host that deemed himself but guest,
Willing to equal all to social freedom; 81
But, on my right hand and my left, instead
Of thee and Zames, and our custom'd meeting,
Was ranged on my left hand a haughty, dark,

And deadly face ; I could not recognise it,
Yet I had seen it, though I knew not where :
The features were a Giant's, and the eye
Was still, yet lighted ; his long locks curled
down

On his vast bust, whence a huge quiver rose
With shaft-heads feathered from the eagle's
wing, 90
That peeped up bristling through his serpent
hair.

I invited him to fill the cup which stood
Between us, but he answered not ; I filled it ;
He took it not, but stared upon me, till
I trembled at the fixed glare of his eye :
I frowned upon him as a king should frown ;
He frowned not in his turn, but looked upon me
With the same aspect, which appalled me more,
Because it changed not ; and I turned for refuge
To milder guests, and sought them on the right,
Where thou wert wont to be. But——

[*He pauses.*]

Myr. What instead? 101

Sar. In thy own chair—thy own place in
the banquet—

I sought thy sweet face in the circle—but
Instead—a grey-haired, withered, bloody-eyed,
And bloody-handed, ghastly, ghostly thing,
Female in garb, and crowned upon the brow,
Furrowed with years, yet sneering with the
passion

Of vengeance, leering too with that of lust,
Sate :—my veins curdled.

Myr. Is this all?

Sar. Upon
Her right hand—her lank, bird-like, right
hand—stood 110

A goblet, bubbling o'er with blood ; and on
Her left, another, filled with—what I saw not,
But turned from it and her. But all along
The table sate a range of crownéd wretches,
Of various aspects, but of one expression.

Myr. And felt you not this a mere vision?

Sar. No:

It was so palpable, I could have touched them.
I turned from one face to another, in
The hope to find at last one which I knew
Ere I saw theirs : but no—all turned upon me,
And stared, but neither ate nor drank, but
stared, 121

Till I grew stone, as they seemed half to be,
Yet breathing stone, for I felt life in them,
And life in me : there was a horrid kind
Of sympathy between us, as if they
Had lost a part of death to come to me,
And I the half of life to sit by them.

We were in an existence all apart
From heaven or earth——And rather let me see
Death all than such a being !

Myr. And the end? 130

Sar. At last I sate, marble, as they, when rose
The Hunter and the Crone ; and smiling
on me—

Yes, the enlarged but noble aspect of
The Hunter smiled upon me—I should say,
His lips, for his eyes moved not—and the
woman's

Thin lips relaxed to something like a smile.
Both rose, and the crowned figures on each
hand

Rose also, as if aping their chief shades—
Mere mimics even in death—but I sate still :
A desperate courage crept through every
limb, 140

And at the last I feared them not, but laughed
Full in their phantom faces. But then—then
The Hunter laid his arm on mine : I took it,
And grasped it—but it melted from my own ;
While he too vanished, and left nothing but
The memory of a hero, for he looked so.

Myr. And was : the ancestor of heroes, too,
And thine no less.

Sar. Aye, Myrrha, but the woman,
The female who remained, she flew upon me,
And burnt my lips up with her noisome
kisses ; 150

And, flinging down the goblets on each hand,
Methought their poisons flowed around us, till
Each formed a hideous river. Still she clung ;
The other phantoms, like a row of statues,
Stood dull as in our temples, but she still
Embraced me, while I shrunk from her, as if,
In lieu of her remote descendant, I
Had been the son who slew her for her incest.¹
Then—then—a chaos of all loathsome things
Thronged thick and shapeless : I was dead,
yet feeling— 160

Buried, and raised again—consumed by
worms,

Purged by the flames, and withered in the air !
I can fix nothing further of my thoughts,
Save that I longed for thee, and sought for thee,
In all these agonies,—and woke and found thee.

Myr. So shalt thou find me ever at thy side,
Here and hereafter, if the last may be.
But think not of these things—the mere
creations

Of late events, acting upon a frame 169

¹ [For the story of Semiramis and Ninia, see
Justinus Hist., lib. i. cap. ii.]

Unused to toil, yet overwrought by toil—
Such as might try the sternest.

Sar. I am better.
Now that I see thee once more, *what was seen*
Seems nothing.

Enter SALEMENES.

Sal. Is the king so soon awake?

Sar. Yes, brother, and I would I had not
slept;

For all the predecessors of our line
Rose up, methought, to drag me down to them.
My father was amongst them, too; but he,
I know not why, kept from me, leaving me
Between the hunter-founder of our race,
And her, the homicide and husband-killer,
Whom you call glorious.

Sal. So I term you also, 181
Now you have shown a spirit like to hers.
By daybreak I propose that we set forth,
And charge once more the rebel crew, who still
Keep gathering head, repulsed, but not quite
quelled.

Sar. How wears the night?

Sal. There yet remain some hours
Of darkness: use them for your further rest.

Sar. No, not to-night, if 'tis not gone:
methought

I passed hours in that vision.

Myr. Scarcely one;
I watched by you: it was a heavy hour, 190
But an hour only.

Sar. Let us then hold council;
To-morrow we set forth.

Sal. But ere that time,
I had a grace to seek.

Sar. 'Tis granted.

Sal. Hear it
Ere you reply too readily; and 'tis
For *your* ear only.

Myr. Prince, I take my leave.

[*Exit MYRRHA.*]

Sal. That slave deserves her freedom.

Sar. Freedom only!
That slave deserves to share a throne.

Sal. Your patience—
'Tis not yet vacant, and 'tis of its partner
I come to speak with you.

Sar. How! of the Queen?

Sal. Even so. I judged it fitting for their
safety, 200
That, ere the dawn, she sets forth with her
children

For Paphlagonia, where our kinsman Cotta¹

¹[See Diod. Siculi *Bibl. Hist.*, lib. ii. 80 c.
Cotta was not a kinsman, but a royal tributary.]

Governs; and there, at all events, secure
My nephews and your sons their lives, and
with them

Their just pretensions to the crown in case—

Sar. I perish—as is probable: well thought—
Let them set forth with a sure escort.

Sal. That
Is all provided, and the galley ready
To drop down the Euphrates; but ere they
Depart, will you not see—

Sar. My sons? It may 210
Unman my heart, and the poor boys will weep;
And what can I reply to comfort them,
Save with some hollow hopes, and ill-worn
smiles?

You know I cannot feign.

Sal. But you can feel!
At least, I trust so: in a word, the Queen
Requests to see you ere you part—for ever.

Sar. Unto what end? what purpose? I
will grant
Aught—all that she can ask—but such a
meeting.

Sal. You know, or ought to know, enough
of women,
Since you have studied them so steadily, 220
That what they ask in aught that touches on
The heart, is dearer to their feelings or
Their fancy, than the whole external world.

I think as you do of my sister's wish;
But 'twas her wish—she is my sister—you
Her husband—will you grant it?

Sar. 'Twill be useless:
But let her come.

Sal. I go. [*Exit SALEMENES.*]

Sar. We have lived asunder
Too long to meet again—and *now* to meet!
Have I not cares enow, and pangs enow, 229
To bear alone, that we must mingle sorrows,
Who have ceased to mingle love?

Re-enter SALEMENES and ZARINA.

Sal. My sister! Courage:
Shame not our blood with trembling, but
remember,

From whence we sprung. The Queen is
present, Sire.

Zar. I pray thee, brother, leave me.

Sal. Since you ask it.

[*Exit SALEMENES.*]

Zar. Alone with him! How many a year
has passed,
Though we are still so young, since we have met,
Which I have worn in widowhood of heart.
He loved me not; yet he seems little changed—

Changed to me only—would the change were mutual!

He speaks not—scarce regards me—not a word,

Nor look—yet he *was* soft of voice and aspect, Indifferent, not austere. My Lord!

Sar. Zarina!

Zar. No, *not* Zarina—do not say Zarina. That tone—That word—annihilate long years, And things which make them longer.

Sar. 'Tis too late To think of these past dreams. Let's not reproach—

That is, reproach me not—for the *last* time—

Zar. And *first*. I ne'er reproached you.

Sar. 'Tis most true; And that reproof comes heavier on my heart Than—But our hearts are not in our own power.

Zar. Nor hands; but I gave both.

Sar. Your brother said It was your will to see me, ere you went From Nineveh with—*(He hesitates.)*

Zar. Our children: it is true. I wish to thank you that you have not divided My heart from all that's left it now to love— Those who are yours and mine, who look like you,

And look upon me as you looked upon me Once—but *they* have not changed.

Sar. Nor ever will. I fain would have them dutiful.

Zar. I cherish Those infants, not alone from the blind love Of a fond mother, but as a fond woman. They are now the only tie between us.

Sar. Deem not I have not done you justice: rather make them

Resemble your own line than their own Sire. I trust them with you—to you: fit them for A throne, or, if that be denied—You have heard

Of this night's tumults?

Zar. I had half forgotten, And could have welcomed any grief save yours, Which gave me to behold your face again.

Sar. The throne—I say it not in fear—but 'tis

In peril: they perhaps may never mount it; But let them not for this lose sight of it. I will dare all things to bequeath it them; But if I fail, then they must win it back Bravely—and, won, wear it wisely, not as I Have wasted down my royalty.

Zar. They ne'er Shall know from me of aught but what may honour Their father's memory.

Sar. Rather let them hear The truth from you than from a trampling world.

If they be in adversity, they'll learn Too soon the scorn of crowds for crownless Princes,

And find that all their father's sins are theirs. My boys!—I could have borne it were I childless.

Zar. Oh! do not say so—do not poison all My peace left, by unwishing that thou wert A father. If thou conquerest, they shall reign, And honour him who saved the realm for them, So little cared for as his own; and if—

Sar. 'Tis lost, all Earth will cry out, "thank your father!" And they will swell the echo with a curse.

Zar. That they shall never do; but rather honour

The name of him, who, dying like a king, In his last hours did more for his own memory Than many monarchs in a length of days, Which date the flight of time, but make no annals.

Sar. Our annals draw perchance unto their close; But at the least, whate'er the past, their end Shall be like their beginning—memorable.

Zar. Yet, be not rash—be careful of your life, Live but for those who love.

Sar. And who are they? A slave, who loves from passion—I'll not say Ambition—she has seen thrones shake, and loves;

A few friends who have revelled till we are As one, for they are nothing if I fall; A brother I have injured—children whom I have neglected, and a spouse—

Zar. Who loves.

Sar. And pardons?

Zar. I have never thought of this, And cannot pardon till I have condemned.

Sar. My wife!

Zar. Now blessings on thee for that word! I never thought to hear it more—from thee.

Sar. Oh! thou wilt hear it from my subjects. Yes—

These slaves whom I have nurtured, pampered, fed, And swoln with peace, and gorged with plenty, till

They reign themselves—all monarchs in their
mansions—

Now swarm forth in rebellion, and demand
His death, who made their lives a jubilee;
While the few upon whom I have no claim
Are faithful! This is true, yet monstrous.

Zar. 'Tis
Perhaps too natural; for benefits
Turn poison in bad minds.

Sar. And good ones make 320
Good out of evil. Happier than the bee,
Which hives not but from wholesome flowers.

Zar. Then reap
The honey, nor inquire whence 'tis derived.
Be satisfied—you are not all abandoned.

Sar. My life insures me that. How long,
bethink you,
Were not I yet a king, should I be mortal;
That is, where mortals *are*, not where they
must be?

Zar. I know not. But yet live for my—
that is,
Your children's sake!

Sar. My gentle, wronged Zarina!
I am the very slave of Circumstance 330
And Impulse—borne away with every breath!
Misplaced upon the throne—misplaced in life.
I know not what I could have been, but feel
I am not what I should be—let it end.

But take this with thee: if I was not formed
To prize a love like thine, a mind like thine,
Nor dote even on thy beauty—as I've doted
On lesser charms, for no cause save that such
Devotion was a duty, and I hated 339

All that looked like a chain for me or others
(This even Rebellion must avouch); yet hear
These words, perhaps among my last—that
none

E'er valued more thy virtues, though he knew
not

To profit by them—as the miner lights
Upon a vein of virgin ore, discovering
That which avails him nothing: he hath
found it,

But 'tis not his—but some superior's, who
Placed him to dig, but not divide the wealth
Which sparkles at his feet; nor dare he lift
Nor poise it, but must grovel on, upturning 350
The sullen earth.

Zar. Oh! if thou hast at length
Discovered that my love is worth esteem,
I ask no more—but let us hence together,
And I—let me say *we*—shall yet be happy.
Assyria is not all the earth—we'll find
A world out of our own—and be more blessed

Than I have ever been, or thou, with all
An empire to indulge thee.

Enter SALEMENES.

Sal. I must part ye—
The moments, which must not be lost, are
passing.

Zar. Inhuman brother! wilt thou thus
weigh out 360
Instants so high and blest?

Sal. Blest!

Zar. He hath been
So gentle with me, that I cannot think
Of quitting.

Sal. So—this feminine farewell
Ends as such partings end, in *no* departure.
I thought as much, and yielded against all
My better bodings. But it must not be.

Zar. Not be!

Sal. Remain, and perish—

Zar. With my husband—

Sal. And children.

Zar. Alas!

Sal. Hear me, sister, like
My sister:—all's prepared to make your safety
Certain, and of the boystoo, our last hopes; 370
'Tis not a single question of mere feeling,
Though that were much—but 'tis a point of
state:

The rebels would do more to seize upon
The offspring of their sovereign, and so
crush—

Zar. Ah! do not name it.

Sal. Well, then, mark me: when
They are safe beyond the Median's grasp, the
rebels

Have missed their chief aim—the extinction of
The line of Nimrod. Though the present King
Fall, his sons live—for victory and vengeance.

Zar. But could not I remain, alone?

Sal. What! leave 380
Your children, with two parents and yet
orphans—

In a strange land—so young, so distant?

Zar. No—

My heart will break.

Sal. Now you know all—decide.

Sar. Zarina, he hath spoken well, and we
Must yield awhile to this necessity.
Remaining here, you may lose all; departing,
You save the better part of what is left,
To both of us, and to such loyal hearts
As yet beat in these kingdoms.

Sal. The time presses.

Sar. Go, then. If e'er we meet again, perhaps

I may be worthier of you—and, if not, 391
Remember that my faults, though not atoned
for,
Are ended. Yet, I dread thy nature will
Grieve more above the blighted name and
ashes
Which once were mightiest in Assyria—
than——
But I grow womanish again, and must not;
I must learn sternness now. My sins have all
Been of the softer order——*hide thy tears—*
I do not bid thee *not* to shed them—'twere
Easier to stop Euphrates at its source 400
Than one tear of a true and tender heart—
But let me not behold them; they unman me
Here when I had remanned myself. My
brother,
Lead her away.
Zar. Oh, God! I never shall
Behold him more!
Sal. (*striving to conduct her*). Nay, sister,
I *must* be obeyed.
Zar. I must remain—away! you shall not
hold me.
What, shall he die alone?—*I live alone?*
Sal. He shall *not die alone*; but lonely you
Have lived for years.
Zar. That's false! I knew *he* lived,
And lived upon his image—let me go! 410
Sal. (*conducting her off the stage*). Nay,
then, I must use some fraternal force,
Which you will pardon.
Zar. Never. Help me! Oh!
Sardanapalus, wilt thou thus behold me
Torn from thee?
Sal. Nay—then all is lost again,
If that this moment is not gained.
Zar. My brain turns—
My eyes fail—where is he? [*She faints.*]
Sar. (*advancing*). No—set her down;
She's dead—and you have slain her.
Sal. 'Tis the mere
Faintness of o'erwrought passion: in the air
She will recover. Pray, keep back.—[*Aside.*]
I must
Avail myself of this sole moment to 420
Bear her to where her children are embarked,
I' the royal galley on the river.
[*SALEMENES bears her off.*]
Sar. (*solus*). This, too—
And this too must I suffer—I, who never
Inflicted purposely on human hearts
A voluntary pang! But that is false—
She loved me, and I loved her.—Fatal passion!
Why dost thou not expire at *once* in hearts

Which thou hast lighted up at once? Zarina!
I must pay dearly for the desolation
Now brought upon thee. Had I never loved 430
But thee, I should have been an unopposed
Monarch of honouring nations. To what gulfs
A single deviation from the track
Of human duties leads even those who claim
The homage of mankind as their born due,
And find it, till they forfeit it themselves!

Enter MYRRHA.

Sar. You here! Who called you?
Myr. No one—but I heard
Far off a voice of wail and lamentation,
And thought——
Sar. It forms no portion of your duties
To enter here till sought for.
Myr. Though I might, 440
Perhaps, recall some softer words of yours
(Although they *too were chiding*), which
reproved me,
Because I ever dreaded to intrude;
Resisting my own wish and your injunction
To heed no time nor presence, but approach
you
Uncalled for:—I retire.
Sar. Yet stay—being here.
I pray you pardon me: events have soured
me
Till I wax peevish—heed it not: I shall
Soon be myself again.
Myr. I wait with patience,
What I shall see with pleasure.
Sar. Scarce a moment 450
Before your entrance in this hall, Zarina,
Queen of Assyria, departed hence.
Myr. Ah!
Sar. Wherefore do you start?
Myr. Did I do so?
Sar. 'Twas well you entered by another
portal,
Else you had met. That pang at least is
spared her!
Myr. I know to feel for her.
Sar. That is too much,
And beyond nature—'tis nor mutual
Nor possible. You cannot pity her,
Nor she aught but——
Myr. Despise the favourite slave?
Not more than I have ever scorned myself.
Sar. Scorned! what, to be the envy of
your sex, 461
And lord it o'er the heart of the World's lord?
Myr. Were you the lord of twice ten
thousand worlds—

As you are like to lose the one you swayed—
I did abase myself as much in being
Your paramour, as though you were a
peasant—

Nay, more, if that the peasant were a Greek.

Sar. You talk it well——

Myr. And truly.

Sar. In the hour
Of man's adversity all things grow daring
Against the falling; but as I am not 470
Quite fall'n, nor now disposed to bear
reproaches,

Perhaps because I merit them too often,
Let us then part while peace is still between
us.

Myr. Part!

Sar. Have not all past human beings
parted,
And must not all the present one day part?

Myr. Why?

Sar. For your safety, which I will have
looked to,

With a strong escort to your native land;
And such gifts, as, if you had not been all
A Queen, shall make your dowry worth a
kingdom.

Myr. I pray you talk not thus.

Sar. The Queen is gone:
You need not shame to follow. I would fall
Alone—I seek no partners but in pleasure.

Myr. And I no pleasure but in parting
not. 483

You shall not force me from you.

Sar. Think well of it—
It soon may be too late.

Myr. So let it be;
For then you cannot separate me from you.

Sar. And will not; but I thought you
wished it.

Myr. I!

Sar. You spoke of your abasement.

Myr. And I feel it
Deeply—more deeply than all things but
love.

Sar. Then fly from it.

Myr. 'Twill not recall the past—
'Twill not restore my honour, nor my heart.
No—here I stand or fall. If that you con-
quer, 492

I live to joy in your great triumph: should
Your lot be different, I'll not weep, but share
it.

You did not doubt me a few hours ago.

Sar. Your courage never—nor your love
till now;

And none could make me doubt it save your-
self.

Those words——

Myr. Were words. I pray you, let the
proofs

Be in the past acts you were pleased to praise
This very night, and in my further bearing,
Beside, wherever you are borne by fate. 501

Sar. I am content: and, trusting in my
cause,

Think we may yet be victors and return
To peace—the only victory I covet.
To me war is no glory—conquest no
Renown. To be forced thus to uphold my
right

Sits heavier on my heart than all the wrongs
These men would bow me down with.
Never, never

Can I forget this night, even should I live
To add it to the memory of others. 510

I thought to have made mine inoffensive rule
An era of sweet peace 'midst bloody annals,
A green spot amidst desert centuries,
On which the Future would turn back and
smile,

And cultivate, or sigh when it could not
Recall Sardanapalus' golden reign.

I thought to have made my realm a paradise,
And every moon an epoch of new pleasures.

I took the rabble's shouts for love—the breath
Of friends for truth—the lips of woman for 520
My only guerdon—so they are, my Myrrha:

[*He kisses her.*

Kiss me. Now let them take my realm and
life!

They shall have both, but never *thee*!

Myr. No, never!

Man may despoil his brother man of all
That's great or glittering—kingdoms fall—
hosts yield,

Friends fail—slaves fly—and all betray—and,
more

Than all, the most indebted—but a heart
That loves without self-love! 'Tis here—now
prove it.

Enter SALEMENES.

Sal. I sought you—How! *she* here again?

Sar. Return not

Now to reproof: methinks your aspect speaks
Of higher matter than a woman's presence.

Sal. The only woman whom it much im-
ports me 532

At such a moment now is safe in absence—
The Queen's embarked.

Sar. And well? say that much.
Sal. Yes.
 Her transient weakness has passed o'er; at least,
 It settled into tearless silence: her
 Pale face and glittering eye, after a glance
 Upon her sleeping children, were still fixed
 Upon the palace towers as the swift galley
 Stole down the hurrying stream beneath the
 starlight; 540
 But she said nothing.
Sar. Would I felt no more
 Than she had said!
Sal. 'Tis now too late to feel.
 Your feelings cannot cancel a sole pang:
 To change them—my advices bring sure
 tidings
 That the rebellious Medes and Chaldees,
 marshalled
 By their two leaders, are already up
 In arms again; and, serrying their ranks,
 Prepare to attack: they have apparently
 Been joined by other Satraps.
Sar. What! more rebels?
 Let us be first, then.
Sal. That were hardly prudent 550
 Now, though it was our first intention. If
 By noon to-morrow we are joined by those
 I've sent for by sure messengers, we shall
 be
 In strength enough to venture an attack,
 Aye, and pursuit too; but, till then, my
 voice
 Is to await the onset.
Sar. I detest
 That waiting: though it seems so safe to
 fight
 Behind high walls, and hurl down foes into
 Deep fosses, or behold them sprawl on spikes
 Strewed to receive them, still I like it not—
 My soul seems lukewarm; but when I set on
 them, 561
 Though they were piled on mountains, I
 would have
 A pluck at them, or perish in hot blood!—
 Let me then charge.
Sal. You talk like a young soldier.
Sar. I am no soldier, but a man: speak
 not
 Of soldiership, I loathe the word, and those
 Who pride themselves upon it; but direct me
 Where I may pour upon them.
Sal. You must spare
 To expose your life too hastily; 'tis not
 Like mine or any other subject's breath; 570

The whole war turns upon it—with it; this
 Alone creates it, kindles, and may quench
 it—
 Prolong it—end it.
Sar. Then let us end both!
 'Twere better thus, perhaps, than prolong
 either;
 I'm sick of one, perchance of both.
A trumpet sounds without.
Sal. Hark!
Sar. Let us
 Reply, not listen.
Sal. And your wound!
Sar. 'Tis bound—
 'Tis healed—I had forgotten it. Away!
 A leech's lancet would have scratched me
 deeper;
 The slave that gave it might be well ashamed
 To have struck so weakly.
Sal. Now, may none this hour
 Strike with a better aim!
Sar. Aye, if we conquer; 581
 But if not, they will only leave to me
 A task they might have spared their king.
 Upon them!
[Trumpet sounds again.]
Sal. I am with you.
Sar. Ho, my arms! again, my arms!
[Exeunt.]

ACT V.

SCENE I.—*The same Hall in the Palace.*

MYRRHA and BALEA.

Myr. (*at a window*). The day at last has
 broken. What a night
 Hath ushered it! How beautiful in heaven!
 Though varied with a transitory storm,
 More beautiful in that variety!
 How hideous upon earth! where Peace and
 Hope,
 And Love and Revel, in an hour were
 trampled
 By human passions to a human chaos,
 Not yet resolved to separate elements—
 'Tis warring still! And can the sun so rise,
 So bright, so rolling back the clouds into
 Vapours more lovely than the unclouded sky,
 With golden pinnacles, and snowy mountains,
 And billows purpler than the Ocean's, making
 In heaven a glorious mockery of the earth,
 So like we almost deem it permanent;
 So fleeting, we can scarcely call it aught
 Beyond a vision, 'tis so transiently

Scattered along the eternal vault : and yet
It dwells upon the soul, and soothes the soul,
And blends itself into the soul, until 20
Sunrise and sunset form the haunted epoch
Of Sorrow and of Love ; which they who
mark not,

Know not the realms where those twin genii
(Who chasten and who purify our hearts,
So that we would not change their sweet rebukes
For all the boisterous joys that ever shook
The air with clamour) build the palaces
Where their fond votaries repose and breathe
Briefly ;—but in that brief cool calm inhale
Enough of heaven to enable them to bear 30
The rest of common, heavy, human hours,
And dream them through in placid sufferance,
Though seemingly employed like all the rest
Of toiling breathers in allotted tasks
Of pain or pleasure—*two* names for *one* feeling,
Which our internal, restless agony
Would vary in the sound, although the sense
Escapes our highest efforts to be happy.

Bal. You muse right calmly : and can
you so watch

The sunrise which may be our last ?

Myr. It is 40

Therefore that I so watch it, and reproach
Those eyes, which never may behold it more,
For having looked upon it oft, too oft,
Without the reverence and the rapture due
To that which keeps all earth from being
as fragile

As I am in this form. Come, look upon it,
The Chaldee's God, which, when I gaze upon,
I grow almost a convert to your Baal.

Bal. As now he reigns in heaven, so
once on earth

He swayed.

Myr. He sways it now far more, then ;
never 50

Had earthly monarch half the power and glory
Which centres in a single ray of his.

Bal. Surely he is a God !

Myr. So we Greeks deem too ;
And yet I sometimes think that gorgeous orb
Must rather be the abode of Gods than one
Of the immortal sovereigns. Now he breaks
Through all the clouds, and fills my eyes
with light

That shuts the world out. I can look no more.

Bal. Hark ! heard you not a sound ?

Myr. No, 'twas mere fancy ;
They battle it beyond the wall, and not 60
As in late midnight conflict in the very
Chambers : the palace has become a fortress

Since that insidious hour ; and here, within
The very centre, girded by vast courts
And regal halls of pyramid proportions,
Which must be carried one by one before
They penetrate to where they then arrived,
We are as much shut in even from the sound
Of peril as from glory.

Bal. But they reached
Thus far before.

Myr. Yes, by surprise, and were 70
Beat back by valour : now at once we have
Courage and vigilance to guard us.

Bal. May they
Prosper !

Myr. That is the prayer of many, and
The dread of more : it is an anxious hour ;
I strive to keep it from my thoughts. Alas !
How vainly !

Bal. It is said the King's demeanour
In the late action scarcely more appalled
The rebels than astonished his true subjects.

Myr. 'Tis easy to astonish or appal
The vulgar mass which moulds a horde
of slaves ; 80

But he did bravely.

Bal. Slew he not Beleses ?

I heard the soldiers say he struck him down.

Myr. The wretch was overthrown, but
rescued to
Triumph, perhaps, o'er one who vanquished
him

In fight, as he had spared him in his peril ;
And by that heedless pity risked a crown.

Bal. Hark !

Myr. You are right ; some steps approach
but slowly.

*Enter Soldiers, bearing in SALEMENES
wounded, with a broken javelin in his
side : they seat him upon one of the
couches which furnish the Apartment.*

Myr. Oh, Jove !

Bal. Then all is over.

Sal. That is false.

Hew down the slave who says so, if a soldier.

Myr. Spare him — he's none : a mere
court butterfly, 90

That flutters in the pageant of a monarch.

Sal. Let him live on, then.

Myr. So wilt thou, I trust.

Sal. I fain would live this hour out,
and the event,

But doubt it. Wherefore did ye bear me here ?

Sol. By the King's order. When the
javelin struck you,

You fell and fainted : 'twas his strict command

To bear you to this hall.

Sal. 'Twas not ill done :
For seeming slain in that cold dizzy trance,
The sight might shake our soldiers—but—
'tis vain,
I feel it ebbing !

Myr. Let me see the wound ; 100
I am not quite skillless : in my native land
'Tis part of our instruction. War being
constant,
We are nerved to look on such things.

Sol. Best extract
The javelin.

Myr. Hold ! no, no, it cannot be.

Sal. I am sped, then !

Myr. With the blood that fast must follow
The extracted weapon, I do fear thy life.

Sal. And I *not* death. Where was the
King when you
Conveyed me from the spot where I was
stricken ?

Sol. Upon the same ground, and en-
couraging
With voice and gesture the dispirited troops 110
Who had seen you fall, and faltered back.

Sal. Whom heard ye
Named next to the command ?

Sol. I did not hear.

Sal. Fly, then, and tell him, 'twas my
last request

That Zames take my post until the junction,
So hoped for, yet delayed, of Ofratanes,
Satrap of Susa. Leave me here : our troops
Are not so numerous as to spare your absence.

Sol. But Prince——

Sal. Hence, I say ! Here's a courtier and
A woman, the best chamber company.

As you would not permit me to expire 120
Upon the field, I'll have no idle soldiers
About my sick couch. Hence ! and do my
bidding ! [*Exeunt the Soldiers.*]

Myr. Gallant and glorious Spirit ! must
the earth
So soon resign thee ?

Sal. Gentle Myrrha, 'tis
The end I would have chosen, had I saved
The monarch or the monarchy by this ;
As 'tis, I have not outlived them.

Myr. You wax paler.

Sal. Your hand ; this broken weapon
but prolongs
My pangs, without sustaining life enough
To make me useful : I would draw it forth 130
And my life with it, could I but hear how
The fight goes.

Enter SARDANAPALUS and Soldiers.

Sar. My best brother !

Sal. And the battle
Is lost ?

Sar. (*despondingly*). You see *me here*.

Sal. I'd rather see you *thus* !
[*He draws out the weapon from
the wound, and dies.*]

Sar. And *thus* I will be seen ; unless
the succour,
The last frail reed of our beleagured hopes,
Arrive with Ofratanes.

Myr. Did you not
Receive a token from your dying brother,
Appointing Zames chief ?

Sar. I did.

Myr. Where's Zames ?

Sar. Dead.

Myr. And Altada ?

Sar. Dying.

Myr. Pania ? Sfero ?

Sar. Pania yet lives ; but Sfero's fled
or captive. 140

I am alone.

Myr. And is all lost ?

Sar. Our walls,
Though thinly manned, may still hold out
against

Their present force, or aught save treachery :
But i' the field——

Myr. I thought 'twas the intent
Of Salemenes not to risk a sally
Till ye were strengthened by the expected
succours.

Sar. I over-ruled him.

Myr. Well, the *fault's* a brave one.

Sar. But fatal. Oh, my brother ! I would
give

These realms, of which thou wert the
ornament,

The sword and shield, the sole-redeeming
honour, 150

To call back——But I will not weep for thee ;
Thou shalt be mourned for as thou wouldst
be mourned.

It grieves me most that thou couldst quit
this life

Believing that I could survive what thou
Hast died for——our long royalty of race.

If I redeem it, I will give thee blood
Of thousands, tears of millions, for atonement

(The tears of all the good are thine already).
If not, we meet again soon,—if the spirit

Within us lives beyond : — thou readest
mine, 160

And dost me justice now. Let me once clasp
That yet warm hand, and fold that throbbless
heart

[*Embraces the body.*

To this which beats so bitterly. Now, bear
The body hence.

Soldier. Where?

Sar. To my proper chamber.
Place it beneath my canopy, as though
The King lay there: when this is done, we will
Speak further of the rites due to such ashes.
[*Exeunt Soldiers with the body of SALEMENES.*

Enter PANIA.

Sar. Well, Pania! have you placed the
guards, and issued
The orders fixed on?

Pan. Sire, I have obeyed.

Sar. And do the soldiers keep their
hearts up?

Pan. Sire?

Sar. I am answered! When a king asks
twice, and has

171

A question as an answer to *his* question,
It is a portent. What! they are disheartened?

Pan. The death of Salemenes, and the shouts
Of the exulting rebels on his fall,
Have made them—

Sar. Rage—not droop—it should have been.
We'll find the means to rouse them.

Pan. Such a loss
Might sadden even a victory.

Sar. Alas!
Who can so feel it as I feel? but yet,
Though cooped within these walls, they
are strong, and we
Have those without will break their way
through hosts,
To make their sovereign's dwelling what
it was—

180

A palace, not a prison—nor a fortress.

Enter an Officer, hastily.

Sar. Thy face seems ominous. Speak!

Offi. I dare not.

Sar. Dare not?
While millions dare revolt with sword in hand!
That's strange. I pray thee break that
loyal silence

Which loathes to shock its sovereign; we
can hear

Worse than thou hast to tell.

Pan. Proceed—thou hearest.

Offi. The wall which skirted near the
river's brink

Is thrown down by the sudden inunda-
tion

190

Of the Euphrates, which now rolling, swoln
From the enormous mountains where it rises,
By the late rains of that tempestuous region,
O'erfloods its banks, and hath destroyed the
bulwark.

Pan. That's a black augury! it has been
said

For ages, "That the City ne'er should yield
"To man, until the River grew its foe."

Sar. I can forgive the omen, not the
ravage.

How much is swept down of the wall?

Offi. About

Some twenty stadia.¹

Sar. And all this is left 200
Pervious to the assailants?

Offi. For the present
The River's fury must impede the assault;
But when he shrinks into his wonted channel,
And may be crossed by the accustomed barks,
The palace is their own.

Sar. That shall be never.
Though men, and gods, and elements, and
omens,
Have risen up 'gainst one who ne'er
provoked them,

My father's house shall never be a cave
For wolves to horde and howl in.

Pan. With your sanction,
I will proceed to the spot, and take such
measures

210

For the assurance of the vacant space
As time and means permit.

Sar. About it straight,
And bring me back, as speedily as full
And fair investigation may permit,
Report of the true state of this irruption
Of waters. [*Exeunt PANIA and the Officer.*

Myr. Thus the very waves rise up
Against you.

Sar. They are not my subjects, girl,
And may be pardoned, since they can't be
punished.

Myr. I joy to see this portent shakes you
not.

Sar. I am past the fear of portents: they
can tell me
Nothing I have not told myself since mid-
night:

220

Despair anticipates such things.

Myr. Despair!

¹ About two miles and a half.

Sar. No; not despair precisely. When we know
All that can come, and how to meet it, our
Resolves, if firm, may merit a more noble
Word than this is to give it utterance.
But what are words to us? we have well nigh
done
With them and all things.

Myr. Save *one deed*—the last
And greatest to all mortals; crowning act
Of all that was, or is, or is to be— 230
The only thing common to all mankind,
So different in their births, tongues, sexes,
natures,
Hues, features, climes, times, feelings,
intellects,
Without one point of union save in this—
To which we tend, for which we're born, and
thread
The labyrinth of mystery, called life.

Sar. Our clue being well nigh wound out,
let's be cheerful.
They who have nothing more to fear may
well
Indulge a smile at that which once appalled;
As children at discovered bugbears.

Re-enter PANIA.

Pan. 'Tis 240
As was reported: I have ordered there
A double guard, withdrawing from the wall,
Where it was strongest, the required addition
To watch the breach occasioned by the
waters.

Sar. You have done your duty faithfully,
and as
My worthy Pania! further ties between us
Draw near a close—I pray you take this key:
[*Gives a key.*]

It opens to a secret chamber, placed
Behind the couch in my own chamber—(Now
Pressed by a nobler weight than e'er it
bore— 250

Though a long line of sovereigns have lain
down
Along its golden frame—as bearing for
A time what late was Salemenes.)—Search
The secret covert to which this will lead you;
'Tis full of treasure; take it for yourself
And your companions: there's enough to
load ye,
Though ye be many. Let the slaves be
freed, too;

And all the inmates of the palace, of
Whatever sex, now quit it in an hour.

Thence launch the regal barks, once formed
for pleasure, 260

And now to serve for safety, and embark.
The river's broad and swoln, and uncom-
manded,
(More potent than a king) by these besiegers.
Fly! and be happy!

Pan. Under your protection!
So you accompany your faithful guard.

Sar. No, Pania! that must not be; get
thee hence,
And leave me to my fate.

Pan. 'Tis the first time
I ever disobeyed: but now—

Sar. So all men
Dare beard me now, and Insolence within
Apes Treason from without. Question no
further; 270

'Tis my command, my last command. Wilt
thou

Oppose it? *thou!*

Pan. But yet—not yet.

Sar. Well, then,
Swear that you will obey when I shall give
The signal.

Pan. With a heavy but true heart,
I promise.

Sar. 'Tis enough. Now order here
Faggots, pine-nuts, and withered leaves,
and such

Things as catch fire and blaze with one
sole spark;

Bring cedar, too, and precious drugs, and
spices,

And mighty planks, to nourish a tall pile;
Bring frankincense and myrrh, too, for it is
For a great sacrifice I build the pyre! 281
And heap them round yon throne.

Pan. My Lord!

Sar. I have said it,
And *you* have sworn.

Pan. And could keep my faith
Without a vow.

[*Exit PANIA.*]

Myr. What mean you?

Sar. You shall know
Anon—what the whole earth shall ne'er forget.

PANIA, returning with a Herald.

Pan. My King, ingoing forth upon my duty,
This herald has been brought before me,
craving
An audience.

Sar. Let him speak.

Her. The King Arbaces—

Sar. What, crowned already? — But,
proceed.

Her. Beleses,
The anointed High-priest——

Sar. Of what god or demon?
With new kings rise new altars. But,
proceed; 291
You are sent to prate your master's will,
and not
Reply to mine.

Her. And Satrap Ofratanes——

Sar. Why, *he is ours.*

Her. (*showing a ring*). Be sure that he is now
In the camp of the conquerors; behold
His signet ring.

Sar. 'Tis his. A worthy triad!
Poor Salemenes! thou hast died in time
To see one treachery the less: this man
Was thy true friend and my most trusted
subject.

Proceed.

Her. They offer thee thy life, and
freedom 300
Of choice to single out a residence
In any of the further provinces,
Guarded and watched, but not confined
in person,
Where thou shalt pass thy days in peace;
but on
Condition that the three young princes are
Given up as hostages.

Sar. (*ironically*). The generous Victors!

Her. I wait the answer.

Sar. Answer, slave! How long
Have slaves decided on the doom of kings?

Her. Since they were free.

Sar. Mouthpiece of mutiny!
Thou at the least shalt learn the penalty 310
Of treason, though its proxy only. Pania!
Let his head be thrown from our walls within
The rebels' lines, his carcass down the river.
Away with him!

[PANIA and the Guards seizing him.]

Pan. I never yet obeyed
Your orders with more pleasure than the
present.
Hence with him, soldiers! do not soil
this hall
Of royalty with treasonable gore;
Put him to rest without.

Her. A single word:
My office, King, is sacred.

Sar. And what's mine?
That thou shouldst come and dare to ask
of me 320
To lay it down?

Her. I but obeyed my orders,
At the same peril if refused, as now
Incurred by my obedience.

Sar. So there are
New monarchs of an hour's growth as despotic
As sovereigns swathed in purple, and
enthroned
From birth to manhood!

Her. My life waits your breath.
Yours (I speak humbly)—but it may be—
yours

May also be in danger scarce less imminent:
Would it then suit the last hours of a line
Such as is that of Nimrod, to destroy 330
A peaceful herald, unarmed, in his office;
And violate not only all that man
Holds sacred between man and man —
but that

More holy tie which links us with the Gods?

Sar. He's right.—Let him go free.—My
life's last act

Shall not be one of wrath. Here, fellow, take
[*Gives him a golden cup from a table near.*
This golden goblet, let it hold your wine,
And think of *me*; or melt it into ingots,
And think of nothing but their weight and
value.

Her. I thank you doubly for my life,
and this 340
Most gorgeous gift, which renders it more
precious.

But must I bear no answer?

Sar. Yes,—I ask
An hour's truce to consider.

Her. But an hour's?

Sar. An hour's: if at the expiration of
That time your masters hear no further
from me,

They are to deem that I reject their terms,
And act befittingly.

Her. I shall not fail
To be a faithful legate of your pleasure.

Sar. And hark! a word more.

Her. I shall not forget it,
Whate'er it be.

Sar. Commend me to Beleses; 350
And tell him, ere a year expire, I summon
Him hence to meet me.

Her. Where?

Sar. At Babylon.
At least from thence he will depart to meet me.

Her. I shall obey you to the letter.

[*Exit Herald.*

Sar. Pania!—
Now, my good Pania!—quick—with what
I ordered.

Pan. My Lord,—the soldiers are already charged.
And see! they enter.

Soldiers enter, and form a Pile about the Throne, etc,

Sar. Higher, my good soldiers,
And thicker yet; and see that the foundation
Be such as will not speedily exhaust 359
Its own too subtle flame; nor yet be quenched
With aught officious aid would bring to quell
it.

Let the throne form the *core* of it; I would not
Leave that, save fraught with fire unquench-
able,

To the new comers. Frame the whole as if
'Twere to enkindle the strong tower of our
Inveterate enemies. Now it bears an aspect!
How say you, Pania, will this pile suffice
For a King's obsequies?

Pan. Aye, for a kingdom's.
I understand you, now.

Sar. And blame me?

Pan. No— 369
Let me but fire the pile, and share it with you.

Myr. That *duty*'s mine.

Pan. A woman's!

Myr. 'Tis the soldier's
Part to die *for* his sovereign, and why not
The woman's with her lover?

Pan. 'Tis most strange!

Myr. But not so rare, my Pania, as thou
think'st it.

In the meantime, live thou.—Farewell: the pile
Is ready.

Pan. I should shame to leave my sovereign
With but a single female to partake
His death.

Sar. Too many far have heralded
Me to the dust already. Get thee hence;
Enrich thee.

Pan. And live wretched?

Sar. Think upon 380
Thy vow:—'tis sacred and irrevocable.

Pan. Since it is so, farewell.

Sar. Search well my chamber,
Feel no remorse at bearing off the gold;
Remember, what you leave you leave the slaves
Who slew me: and when you have borne away
All safe off to your boats, blow one long blast
Upon the trumpet as you quit the palace.
The river's brink is too remote, its stream
Too loud at present to permit the echo 389
To reach distinctly from its banks. Then fly,—
And as you sail, turn back; but still keep on

Your way along the Euphrates: if you reach
The land of Paphlagonia, where the Queen
Is safe with my three sons in Cotta's court,
Say what you *saw* at parting, and request
That she remember what I *said* at one
Parting more mournful still.

Pan. That royal hand!
Let me then once more press it to my lips;
And these poor soldiers who throng round
you, and
Would fain die with you!

[*The Soldiers and PANIA throng round
him, kissing his hand and the hem
of his robe.*

Sar. My best! my last friends! 400
Let's not unman each other: part at once;
All farewells should be sudden, when for ever,
Else they make an eternity of moments,
And clog the last sad sands of life with tears.
Hence, and be happy: trust me, I am not
Now to be pitied; or far more for what
Is past than present;—for the future, 'tis
In the hands of the deities, if such
There be. I shall know soon. Farewell—
Farewell.

[*Exeunt PANIA and Soldiers.*

Myr. These men were honest: it is comfort
still 410
That our last looks should be on loving faces.

Sar. And *lovely* ones, my beautiful!—but
hear me!
If at this moment,—for we now are on
The brink,—thou feel'st an inward shrinking
from

This leap through flame into the future, say it:
I shall not love thee less; nay, perhaps more,
For yielding to thy nature: and there's time
Yet for thee to escape hence.

Myr. Shall I light
One of the torches which lie heaped beneath
The ever-burning lamp that burns without,
Before Baal's shrine, in the adjoining hall? 421

Sar. Do so. Is that thy answer?

Myr. Thou shalt see.

[*Exit MYRRHA.*

Sar. (*solus*). She's firm. My fathers!
whom I will rejoin,
It may be, purified by death from some
Of the gross stains of too material being,
I would not leave your ancient first abode
To the defilement of usurping bondsmen;
If I have not kept your inheritance
As ye bequeathed it, this bright part of it, 429
Your treasure—your abode—your sacred relics
Of arms, and records—monuments, and spoils,

In which *they* would have revelled, I bear with
me

To you in that absorbing element,
Which most personifies the soul as leaving
The least of matter unconsumed before
Its fiery workings:—and the light of this
Most royal of funereal pyres shall be
Not a mere pillar formed of cloud and flame,
A beacon in the horizon for a day,
And then a mount of ashes—but a light 440
To lesson ages, rebel nations, and
Voluptuous princes. Time shall quench full
many

A people's records, and a hero's acts;
Sweep empire after empire, like this first
Of empire's, into nothing; but even then
Shall spare this deed of mine, and hold it up
A problem few dare imitate, and none
Despise—but, it may be, avoid the life
Which led to such a consummation.

MYRRHA *returns with a lighted Torch in one
Hand, and a Cup in the other.*

Myr. Lo!
I've lit the lamp which lights us to the stars.

Sar. And the cup?

Myr. 'Tis my country's custom to 451
Make a libation to the Gods.

Sar. And mine
To make libations amongst men. I've not
Forgot the custom; and although alone,
Will drain one draught in memory of many
A joyous banquet past.

[SARDANAPALUS *takes the cup, and
after drinking and tinkling the
reversed cup, as a drop falls, ex-
claims—*

And this libation
Is for the excellent Beleses.

Myr. Why
Dwells thy mind rather upon that man's
name

Than on his mate's in villany?

Sar. The one 460
Is a mere soldier, a mere tool, a kind
Of human sword in a friend's hand; the other
Is master-mover of his warlike puppet;
But I dismiss them from my mind.—Yet pause,
My Myrrha! dost thou truly follow me,
Freely and fearlessly?

Myr. And dost thou think
A Greek girl dare not do for love, that which
An Indian widow braves for custom?

Sar. Then
We but await the signal.

Myr. It is long
In sounding.

Sar. Now, farewell; one last embrace.

Myr. Embrace, but *not* the last; there is
one more. 470

Sar. True, the commingling fire will mix
our ashes.

Myr. And pure as is my love to thee, shall
they,

Purged from the dross of earth, and earthly
passion,

Mix pale with thine. A single thought yet irks
me.

Sar. Say it.

Myr. It is that no kind hand will gather
The dust of both into one urn.

Sar. The better:
Rather let them be borne abroad upon
The winds of heaven, and scattered into
air,

Than be polluted more by human hands
Of slaves and traitors. In this blazing
palace, 480

And its enormous walls of reeking ruin,
We leave a nobler monument than Egypt
Hath piled in her brick mountains, o'er dead
kings,

Or *kine*—for none know whether those proud
piles

Be for their monarch, or their ox-god Apis:
So much for monuments that have forgotten
Their very record!

Myr. Then farewell, thou earth!
And loveliest spot of earth! farewell, Ionia!
Be thou still free and beautiful, and far
Aloof from desolation! My last prayer 490
Was for thee, my last thoughts, save *one*, were
of thee!

Sar. And that?

Myr. Is yours.

[*The trumpet of PANIA sounds without.*

Sar. Hark!

Myr. Now!

Sar. Adieu, Assyria!
I loved thee well, my own, my father's land,
And better as my country than my kingdom.
I sated thee with peace and joys; and this
Is my reward! and now I owe thee nothing,
Not even a grave. [*He mounts the pile.*

Now, Myrrha!

Myr. Art thou ready!

Sar. As the torch in thy grasp.

[MYRRHA *fires the pile.*

Myr. 'Tis fired! I come.
 [As MYRRHA springs forward to throw
 herself into the flames, the Curtain
 falls.]

Ravenna.

May 27th, 1821.

Mem.—I began the drama on the 13th of January, 1821, and continued the two first acts very slowly and at long intervals. The three last acts were written since the 13th of May, 1821 (this present month, that is to say in a fortnight).

THE TWO FOSCARI.¹ AN HISTORICAL TRAGEDY.²

"The *father* softens, but the *governor's*
 resolved."—*Critic.*

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

MEN.

FRANCIS FOSCARI, *Doge of Venice.*

JACOPO FOSCARI, *Son of the Doge.*

JAMES LOREDANO, *a Patrician.*

MARCO MEMMO, *a Chief of the Forty.*

BARBARIGO, *a Senator.*

*Other Senators, The Council of Ten, Guards,
 Attendants, etc. etc.*

WOMAN.

MARINA, *Wife of young FOSCARI.*

SCENE—The Ducal Palace, Venice.

¹ [The *Two Foscari* was begun June 12, finished July 9, and published December 19, 1821.]

² [Francesco, son of Nicolo Foscari, was born in 1373. He was nominated a member of the Council of Ten in 1399, and, elected Doge in 1423. His dukedom, the longest on record, lasted till 1457. He was married, in 1395, to Maria, daughter of Andrea Priuli, and, *en secondes nocés*, to Maria, or Marina, daughter of Bartolommeo Nani. By his two wives he was the father of ten children—five sons and five daughters. Of the five sons, four died of the plague, and the fifth, Jacopo, lived to be the cause, if not the hero, of a tragedy.]

The younger of the "Two Foscari" was a man of some cultivation, a child and lover of Venice, but indifferent to her ideals and regardless of her prejudices and restrictions. He seems to have begun life in a blaze of popularity, the admired of all admirers. His wedding with Lucrezia Contarini

[*The Two Foscari* was produced at Drury Lane Theatre April 7, and again on April 18 and April 25, 1838. Macready played "Francis Foscari," Mr. Anderson "Jacopo Foscari," and Miss Helen Faucit "Marina."

According to the *Times*, April 9, 1838, "Miss Faucit's Marina, the most energetic part of the whole, was clever, and showed a careful attention to the points which might be made."

Macready notes in his diary, April 7, 1838 (*Reminiscences*, 1875, ii. 106): "Acted Foscari very well. Was very warmly received . . . was called for at the end of the tragedy, and received by the whole house standing up and waving handkerchiefs with great enthusiasm. Dickens, Forster, Proctor, Browning, Talfourd, all came into my room."]

(January 1441) was celebrated with a novel and peculiar splendour.

Four years after his marriage (February 17, 1445) an accusation was laid before the Ten that, contrary to the law embodied in the Ducal *Promissione*, he had accepted gifts of jewels and money, not only from his fellow-citizens, but from his country's bitterest enemy, Filippo Visconti, Duke of Milan. Jacopo fled to Trieste, and in his absence the Ten, supported by a giunta of ten, on their own authority and independently of the Doge, sentenced him to perpetual banishment at Nauplia, in Roumania. It is to be noted that this sentence was never carried into effect. At the end of four months, thanks to the intervention of five members of the Ten, he was removed from Trieste to Treviso, and, two years later (September 13, 1447), out of consideration to the Doge, who pleaded that the exile of his only son prevented him from giving his whole heart and soul to the Republic, permitted to return to Venice.

Three years went by, and once again, January 1451, a charge was preferred against Jacopo Foscari, and on this occasion he was arrested and brought before the Ten. He was accused of being implicated in the murder of Ermolao Donato, who was assassinated November 5, 1450, on leaving the Ducal Palace, where he had been attending the Council of the Pregadi. The charge may be said to have been non-proven, but innocent or guilty, he was sentenced to perpetual banishment to the city of Candia, on the north coast of the island of Crete; and, guilty or innocent, Jacopo was not the man to make the best of what remained to him and submit to fate. Intrigue he must, and, five years later (June, 1456), a report reached Venice that papers had been found in his possession, some relating to the Duke of Milan, calculated to excite "nuovi scandali e disordini," and others in cipher, which the Ten could not read.