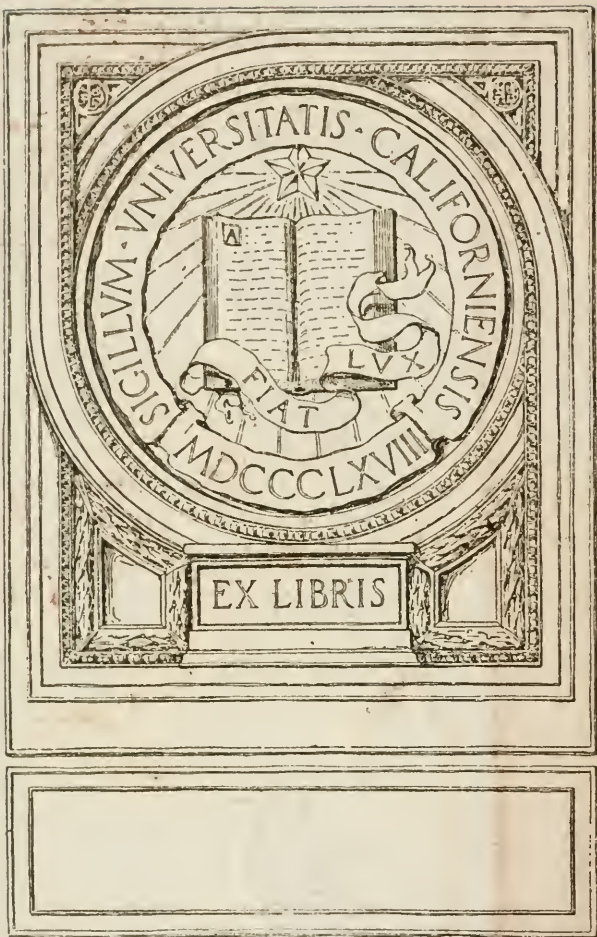


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THE
JEPHTHA AND BAPTIST.

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FOR

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THE
JEPHTHA AND BAPTIST.

BY
GEORGE BUCHANAN.

TRANSLATED BY ALEXANDER GIBB.

EDINBURGH:
J. MOODIE MILLER, LINDSAY PLACE.
1870.

THE
MUSEUM
OF THE
MUSEUM



PREFACE.

THE two sacred dramas of Buchanan—the “Jephtha” and the “Baptist”—are worthy of being better known to the lovers of literature, especially amongst Scotchmen, than they have hitherto been. Their author, as a scholar and man of genius, is an honour to his country; and in the opinion of illustrious critics like Henry Stephens* and the Scaligers,† his poetical merits are of a distinguished order. These tragedies bear the impress of the age in which they were produced, the important era of the Re-

* Henry Stephens styles Buchanan “*Poetarum sui seculi facile princeps.*”

† Joseph Scaliger says, in the *Scaligerana*, “Buchanan is the one man in all Europe who has excelled all others in Latin poesy.”

Montaigne, in his famous essay, “*De l’Institution des Enfants,*” speaks of him as “*Georges Buchanan, ce grand poete Escossois.*”

formation, wherein were laid the foundations of our civil and religious liberties. The "Baptist" is specially connected with the poet's personal history, having been written within two years after his escape from a prison in Scotland in 1539, and while he still dreaded the rancour of Cardinal Beaton, whom some suppose to be depicted under the character of Malchus. Both were composed for the use of the students attending the College of Guienne at Bordeaux, in which Buchanan was a regent.

In rendering these works into English, the translator has attempted to give the thoughts and style of the writer as literally as he was able. In the revision of the text he has been indebted to a friend, whom he regrets he is not at liberty to name, for many suggestions.

Buchanan's dramatic works, together with his life, are now issued to the public, in the hope of making somewhat better known the poems, character, and deeds of one who has been widely and highly admired as a Latin writer; who suffered much for conscience sake, and amidst great privations and severe persecution witnessed steadfastly for what he esteemed the truth.

THE TRANSLATOR.

JEPHTHA; OR, THE VOW.



TO

A NOBLEMAN MOST ILLUSTRIOUS,

CHARLES DE COSSÈ,

MARSHAL OF FRANCE, AND GOVERNOR OF THE PIEDMONTESE
FOR THE KING OF THE FRENCH.



SOME will perhaps think I act absurdly in dedicating this little work to you, who, from an early age, have made the art of war your study, and have always been occupied among arms and trumpets; but this idea will be entertained, for the most part, either by those who do not sufficiently attend to the harmonious nature of these studies, or by those who do not know your natural disposition. For there is no discord, as is commonly but erroneously supposed, between the study of the art of war and of letters; but rather the greatest concord, and a certain secret

natural congruity. For though at some former time the professions were divided, whether that were done through men's indolence or some false notion, yet never could the perverse opinion of the ignorant obtain so great a sway that they could forget the ancient and natural relationship between them. For all great commanders in all ages, who have performed illustrious actions, have either been themselves very learned men, or have cherished with the greatest affection men distinguished for learning. Nor truly is it possible that a great and lofty spirit, who, neglecting the transitory and the perishable, has set before his eyes the remembrance of eternity, should not also love learning, which is the guardian of remembrance and of antiquity. And few there are who hate and despise letters, save those who, on account of a life ignominiously spent in sloth and profligacy, fear the knowledge of posterity : as Claudian has written, it seems to me, with not less truth than elegance—

Gaudet enim Virtus testes sibi jungere Musas ;
Carmen amat quisquis carmine digna gerit.*

* Virtuous excellence is delighted when the Muses bear witness to its worth ;

Whoever performs actions worthy of song, loves song.

But, on the other hand, with how great a joy may we suppose will they be seized, who have made it their whole study to set before themselves an image of perfect virtue for their imitation,

— et quæ natura negavit
Visibus humanis, oculis ea pectoris haurirent,*

if they shall have been able to obtain the living and breathing picture (so to speak) of what they so eagerly pursue? But besides this mutual admiration of their worth and harmony of nature, of which I have spoken, there is to be added even a certain kind of mutual advantage. For as, on the one hand, the doer of illustrious actions, not undeservedly, honours the man, whom he perceives capable of handing down his virtues to posterity, and able by artistic skill to render them illustrious; and as he cherishes him as a parent,—not the parent from whom he has received that brief loan of life which we enjoy, but that other and far longer life which lies in the remembrance of posterity: so he also himself, on the other hand, gladly embraces the harvest and material of his own glory, when so presented to him,

* To drink in with the eyes of the mind what nature has denied to human sight.

— qua se quoque possit
Tollere humo, victorque virum volitare per ora.*

And although in the estimation of men the gain is very unequal, yet each, with equal eagerness, seeks returns from the same farm of glory. But what I have hitherto said is applicable to all, *who* (as Sallust says) *seek the fame of noble deed or liberal act*. But what I am now to say is proper to you alone ; that even from the earliest period of youth you have been so dear to your country, so brave in war, so just and moderate in peace, that you have afforded a pattern of virtue to all who cultivate letters, which they both can and ought to set before posterity for its imitation ; that you, although in a different walk of life, have undertaken the encouragement and protection of letters, when deprived of the patronage of your brother, Philip de Cossè, bishop of Constance ; that you always retain in your company the most learned men, with whom, even amidst the excitement of a most cruel war,

— Musis que Minervam
Temperes, et Geticum modereris Apolline Martem ;†

* Whereby he also may rise from the ground, and fly a victor on the lips of men.

† Mingle Minerva with the Muses, and by Apollo moderate the fury of the Getic Mars.

that you have taken so much pains in the education of your young son, that he might be able not only to preserve the heritage of glory which he has received from his parent, though that be so ample, but even to increase it. You have also encouraged me, when I was at a distance, and only known to you by the recommendation of learning, with so many offices of politeness and liberality, that if there be any fruit of my genius, any birth of my vigils as it were, it ought deservedly to return to you. And this, indeed, my JEPHTHA so eagerly does, that he who formerly feared the public light and concourse of men, now goes forth relying on your patronage, and even cherishes some hope of the public favour. For what may he not hope for under such auspices, when he has already seen under them military discipline reformed to the pattern of ancient strictness, and the former glory of France in war restored,—when he beholds regard for laws and justice combined with soldierly valour; and the greatest moderation, united with the most unlimited authority, in everything; and this, not only on the part of yourself, but on that of all who are under your command? Influenced by these considerations, I was very desirous that my little work should go forth to the world under your name. And

you, I trust (according to your wonted politeness and love of letters), will take it in good part, whether as a token of kindness to me, or of my goodwill towards you. Farewell.

AT PARIS, 28th July 1554.



Argument.

BY THE TRANSLATOR.



AN Angel in the Prologue discourses of God's moral government of His people, and His purpose to humble Jephtha by means of his rash vow.

SCENE I. Storge and Iphis, mother and daughter, come forth in the morning, the former troubled on account of a dream, the latter tries to reassure her.

SCENE II. The Chorus relates God's former salvation of His people, and implores His aid now.

SCENE III. A messenger arrives from the field of battle, and describes the victory.

SCENE IV. The Chorus exults over the victory, and calls on Iphis to go and meet her father.

SCENE V. Jephtha, drawing near home, praises God for giving him the victory, and asks Him graciously to accept his offering.

SCENE VI. Iphis meets her father, who, through grief on account of his rash vow, seems stern to her. She converses with

him respecting his altered manner. Symmachus, a friend of Jephtha, promises to find out the cause of his friend's harshness to his daughter.

SCENE VII. The Chorus wishes Symmachus success in his undertaking, and denounces the malice which creates evil rumours.

SCENE VIII. Symmachus tries to dissuade Jephtha from sacrificing his daughter, but without success.

SCENE IX. The Chorus resolves to tell the mother and daughter all : laments the misery of the father, the unhappy fate of the daughter, and the common lot of men.

SCENE X. A priest attempts to convince Jephtha, that his vow, being contrary to nature and the divine law, is not binding, but in vain.

SCENE XI. The Chorus grieves over the sad change which has come upon the family of Jephtha, and the uncertainty which attends human life.

SCENE XII. Storge, Jephtha's wife, reproaches him for his cruelty, but Iphis, believing that the vow has been the cause of the victory, voluntarily offers to die.

SCENE XIII. The Chorus praises the heroic courage of Iphis, and declares that she will ever be remembered for her self-sacrifice.

SCENE XIV. A messenger relates to Storge the manner of her daughter's death.

Persons.

AN ANGEL. *Prologue.*

STORGE, *the Mother.*

IPHIS, *the Daughter.*

Chorus of Native Damsels.

JEPHTHA, *the Commander.*

SYMMACHUS, *a Friend.*

A Priest.

A Messenger.





The Prologue.



AN ANGEL.

OF the great Thunderer, celestial sire,
A wingèd messenger, from heav'n I'm come
To Isaac's house, unto the land of old
Promised to Isaac's seed, a land ordain'd
To rule the nations, if she had observed
Inviolatè the sacred covenant ;
But which has late cower'd under Ammon's arms,
Beneath the grinding yoke of slavery,
And has endured whate'er of sad, fell, fierce,
An angry victor dares, the vanquish'd dreads.
By this disaster crush'd, the rebel race
Have scarce begun to own their father's God
To know their wicked rites a mock'ry false

Of heaven, when scann'd, and when known to despise ;

And to their father have return'd though late.

But ill the human mind knows to observe

The golden mean—it swells in high success.

The more God's goodness hath bestow'd on men,

The more security obscures their minds,

Which, swoll'n with empty haughtiness, vain pride

Greatly excites. As wanton stubbornness

In a fierce steed against his master raves,

If he perceive the rule the least remiss ;

And scarce at last he, by the bit subdued,

And bloody with the cruel spur, again

Returns to duty, and his lord obeys.

So do this wayward people, stiff of neck,

Prone to the worse, if for a while the lash

Hath lain at rest, adopt once more new gods,

And give themselves to other rites, and follow

A strange religion. So their heav'nly sire

Benign subdues their minds through licence swoll'n,

By war, or famine, or plague-laden air,

And checks their rebel fierceness. But again,

Lest a confiding trust of spirit die,

By linkèd ills continually o'erwhelm'd,

He sends them prophets, warlike leaders sends,

To bring them back anew deliverèd
From the hard bonds of bitter servitude,
And force them to observe their former rites.
As now the arms of Ammon he hath roused
Against them rebels, God's commands forsaking,
Selling themselves to errors impious.
But he, appeasèd, hath to anger bounds
Appointed, and a great deliverer given ;
Not from the number of the potent chiefs,
Weighty with client crowd, or swoll'n with sons ;
But Jephtha exiled from his father's house,
Spurn'd of his brethren, born of mother base ;
Lest the proud race to their own arms assign
What has been done by the right hand of God ;
And that the Ammonite may also learn
He hath not thus far greatly flourishèd
In his own strength ; but only to avenge
Celestial anger. More, lest even Jephtha
Measure himself by issue of this fight,
And in a prosperous state swell insolent,
He'll be forthwith o'erwhelm'd by loss at home,
His haughty, stubborn, spirit break and yield.
For when against the treach'rous enemies
He arms assumed, he promisèd to give,
If prosperous event of war were given,

As victim to the altar, that which first
Came forth to meet him on his safe return.
Ah ! what a weight of ill hangs over thee,
Thou miserable man ! With griefs how great
Wilt thou be overwhelm'd ! How the fond hope
Of nearing joy deceives thee credulous !
Thy daughter, thy sole offspring, who preserves
For thee the house and lineage of thy sires,
Will first present herself to meet her parent,
To greet the prosp'rous issue of his arms.
And with great interest she soon will pay,—
She, wretched, with her life will expiate
Too early joy of longed-for happiness.
And lo ! the mother sad comes from the house,
Whom all the live-long night a horror dread
Of dreams hath terrified ; with whom her daughter
Comes as companion, bearing on them both
Anxiety of soul, in grief of looks,
In gestures, and in silence.



Scene First.



STORGE AND IPHIS.

STORGE.

ALAS ! my heart with recent terror throbs,
My mind is horror-struck, my trembling voice
Cleaves to my very jaws, nor do my lips
Afford a pervious pathway to my words ;
Me wretched thus nocturnal visions scare,
And direful dreams disturb my broken rest,
And burn my anxious breast with heavy cares.
But thou, O highest Ruler of the heav'n
Resplendent, on our enemies direct
The sad funereal omen, gracious be
To me, and to my daughter, who remains
Sole hope, and consolation of her race,
The only joy and pillar of mine age.

IPHIS.

Presage more joyfully, my mother dear,
'Throw off the source of vain anxiety ;
'These mock'ries of the troubled mind despise
Without concern, and when despised, forget.

STORGE.

Oh that I could ! but fear, as if afresh,
As oft as I remember, shakes my breast
With dread, and th' image of that saddest dream
Flits through my mind ; my breast with horror
 shrinks.

When now bland quiet had laid all to rest,
And night had led in silence, mute, and still :
I saw a pack of wolves in full career,
With bloody, foaming, rabid jaws, and fierce
With crookèd claws, with headlong onset rush
On the unwarlike flock, the shepherds gone.
Whereon a dog, with trusty guardianship
Of timid fold, drove off the wolves, and when
Anew return'd to the weak flock, as yet
Half dead with memory of trembling fear,
He from my bosom pluck'd a timid lamb,
And tore with bloody teeth.
O sun, O wandering light of the moon,

And ye stars painted on a silent world,
And thou, night, conscious of my care,
Dreams bringing in with dusky wings,
If aught o'erhangs my wretched child,
If any harm the fates her threaten,
First down to miserable hell
This head thrust, while ambiguous hopes,
With cares alternating, torment
My bosom of her loss uncertain.

IPHIS.

Why dost thou wretchedly torment thy mind,
Mother, and with private grief
Augment the public woe,
And bitter cares renew?
Rather, complaints dismiss'd,
With joyful gratulations, welcome back
My father coming home.
For he will soon be here
(Unless with vainest augury the mind
The breast too credulous deceives),
Renown'd with the spoils of victory,
And bringing to his country and his race
Riches, and praise, and honour without end.

STORGE.

Not such the tenor of the life that fate
Has upon me bestow'd. What time hath e'er
Lack'd tears for me, since from my parent's
womb

I first came forth? At first my youth beheld
The slav'ry of my country, and sad threats
Of hostile armies, herds of cattle reft,
The soil uncultivated barren grown,
Blood, slaughter, devastation, rapine, fire,
Profane and sacred mingled. Ne'er for me
Hath any part of life unanxious flow'd ;
As wave thrusts onward wave, as billow yields
To billow following, as day chases day ;
So always past are press'd by newer ills ;
Grief, grief's companion is, and woe to woe ;
War's rage struck down my father and my brother ;
Worn out with cares my mother wax'd old,
'Mid burials of her kin ; my husband now
Is pressing on a faithless foe with arms,—
Still my soul dreads a worse calamity.

IPHIS.

Immoderate fear an easy credit gives
To omens of disaster.

STORGE.

Oh that I

Might only hear, on happy rumour borne,
The tidings of my husband home return'd,
The army safe, and safe my family.

IPHIS.

My father certainly will safe return ;
For the same God, who first advised the war,
Will bring him back, and with new praises laden.

Scene Second.

—◆—
CHORUS.

JORDAN, that waterest with glassy waves
Green valleys, and divid'st with languid flood
The fertile pasture-lands of Israel,
And thou, fair grove on palm-clad Solyma,
With crown of leaves ne'er shed in winter's frosts,
Lo! shall the bright morn star that leads the
light

E'er bring to me, now sunk in misery,
That happy day, when I, devoid of cares,
Shall, free myself, behold my country free,
Which now the bonds of barb'rous servitude
Hapless endures. Now noble Isaac's blood
Bears the sad yoke of a degenerate lord ;
Whom not the proud king of the Pharian* land

* Pharos, Egypt ; Pharian, Egyptian.

Urging his scythe-arm'd axles could affright,
Nor ruthless cruelty of purple strait
O'erwhelm beneath her reflux tide of waves,
Nor Arab deserts, which no ploughshare know,
Nor men portentous, of Cyclopic size,
Could break : we're now the slaves of timid Ammon.
The ignominy is worse than the ill,
'Neath a base lord to bear the sluggish yoke.
But thou, O Mighty Parent, who allay'st
The troubled deep, who by the cloudy blasts
Of Caurus * rousest up the swelling waves
Of the calm sea,—who by dire tremors shak'st
The firm foundations of the stable earth,—
Who stayest at thy will the headlong flight
Of gliding heaven,—oh, satisfied at length
With our misfortunes, cease thine ire,
Kind and propitious, now send grace
To thine afflicted, wearied race.
If heavy punishment our fault should pay,
If thou entirely cast'st away
The lot once set apart to thee,
If hostile to our vices,
Thou utterly forsak'st
Thy disobedient sons ;

* Caurus, the north-west wind.

If with inexpiable ire
Thou scorn'st the tears and sad complaints
Of thine own people once well loved :
Let not the Syrian, let not Ammon dire,
Nor threatening Pharos' haughty lord
Exact the punishment for thee,
Nor let the heathen's sword
In thy towers ever sway ;
Rather thyself, thy right hand arm'd
With javelins dread of three-fork'd fire,
With torches of avenging flame,
O'erwhelm the cities insolent ;
Or let the yawning earth devour
Her miserable husbandmen,
Or submerged in flooding waves,
Drag them down to sudden graves.
Lest the fierce foe, the people who mute stocks
And stones adore, who with unhallow'd rites
Thy services pollute, in high estate
Swell with vain pride ;
Lest what thine anger hath against us done,
Ammon to his own praise turn, while he seeks
With incense to appease his images
Of rotten wood ;
Lest he with frantic lip deny that thou,

When he assailèd, couldst the people save,
Who through all ages have been bound to thee.
Ah, wretched foe ! how sore a weeping soon
That laughter brief shall bring ;
That short-lived joy thou shalt atone for
With long tears ; hitherward on rapid wing
Flies the light hour ; the time, the time is near
(Unless with empty hope the seer
Appearance false beguiles),
When thou in turn our victor stern
Shalt the ills of slavery learn.
For thou wilt not for ever
Suffer thy saint's blood unavenged to flow
Thus, pour'd out lavish by the ruthless foe,
Nor to unhallow'd rites
Thy holy altars give.
Oh may my life extend,
Till worshipping thee in our father's rites,
With grateful bosoms, mindful, we
Sing a glad song of praise.
But lo ! a messenger with hasty step
Comes hitherward. Unless my mind's deceived,
He from the army comes.
I know the messenger,—'tis so ;
The news he brings I would be glad to know.

Scene Third.

MESSENGER, CHORUS.

MESSENGER.

ALL hail ! ye daughters of old Abraham !
The holy offspring of a parent holy.
Is this the house of Jephtha, our commander ?
Or has blind error led me from the way,
While of it doubtful ?

CHORUS.

This is Jephtha's house,
And more, this is his daughter. But what hope
Bringest thou back ? tell us, if time permit.

MESSENGER.

The very thing that I am sent to tell.
The en'my has been routed, and is fled ;

Victory, wealth, and honour have been won ;
The army's safe. My news amount to this.

CHORUS.

How much hast thou comprisèd in few words !
But say first, bring you what was heard or seen ?

MESSENGER.

Seen, done, truths, certainties, the news I bring,
Not tales of empty rumour gatherèd ;
For of the battle I was part myself.

CHORUS.

Relate it fully to us.

MESSENGER.

Willingly

I shall impart the gladsome news to you.
When first Aurora with her rosy light
Suffused the heavens, impatient of delay,
Ammon had far and wide the plain o'erflow'd
With horse and men, and the much dreaded roar
Of warlike chariots ; now in ranks array'd
The legion of the foot by cohorts stood,
Shining in brass and iron ; on their front

The troops of war-cars, with keen curvèd scythes,
Drove menacing ; on either side, the horse
Had pour'd them on the wings ; but our host held
The lowest hills that end the open plain ;
Not grim with arms, nor warlike equipage,
But having hearts that on Heav'n's faith relied,
And courage to avenge our quarrel just.
There 'twixt the armies our commander sends
A herald, and attempts to end the war,
By right, and just conditions, without blood :
That either people should remain content
Within the limits of their ancient fields,
Abstain from wrong and vi'lence to the other,
Stolen goods restore to owners, and prefer
To warfare, peace ; to doubtful, certain gain.
On th' other hand, the haughty enemy,
Proud in his force of soldiers, confident
In arms, upbraids the herald fierce, and adds,
In bitter threat'nings, baseless calumny :
That by a pure, and pious war he seeks
His ancient fields, from which afore the race
Of Isaac, when they went forth from the bounds
Of the Nilotic land, by force and arms
Had driven the Ammonites. Which if they still
Persist to keep, and to defend the wrong

By arms, and war prefer to rend'ring back
What they by violence injurious seized,
That the avenging gods would not be wanting
To those who seek for justice, and for right ;
But if the Solymæan race prefer
To leave through right, what they by force acquired,
And of their own accord the limits leave,
Which bord'ring Arnon and the Jabbok end,
Whence utmost solitude drives in the fields,
As far as Jordan's gently flowing streams,
That they are ready to make peace on just
Conditions ; and made, righteously to keep
For the advantage of the nations twain.
When this report the herald has brought back,
Jephtha bids him forthwith return and say :
That neither they, nor their progenitors
Had injury e'er done, by force or fraud,
To the Ammonian people ; that the fields,
Which now he seeks, were never in the bounds
Of Ammon, which, for now three hundred years,
The seed of Jacob have unchallenged held ;
Nor e'er meanwhile was any mention made
Of doubtful right, in earnest or in jest ;
Save this, perchance, that they, of right, should yield
To thee what thy god, Chemosh, has possess'd ;

But that the lands which our God has possess'd,
He should desert them. He will not desert them ;
But as he formerly victorious took
Thy en'mies' lands, the same just judge will now
Give favourable issue to this battle,
Ev'n as justice and as right demand.
When this response the herald has return'd,
The clangour of the hoarse brass beats the air,
The shouts of men, the crash of arms resound,
The noise of horses, and the creak of cars ;
Rebellows heaven, and the broken earth
Upon her axis groans ; the mountains double
The repercussèd sound. Each for himself
Contentds what bravery can, what skill can do ;
He strikes, is struck ; he is pursued, pursues ;
The brooks are changed to blood ; with a dense night
A cloud of dust obscures the heavy sky ;
Bold Ammon presses fierce, in numbers great ;
Confiding trust in heaven, and juster cause,
Give to our men an equal dauntless heart.
While neither yields, while either line moves on,
Behold amid the shadows of the dust,
'Mid groans and lamentations of the falling,
And exclamations of encouragement,
The cloud withdraws, and the clear day shines forth,

A thunder peal from heaven fills either host,
An humbling fear dismays the minds of all,
Numb grow the hands that hold the languid swords,
And icy rigour binds the sluggish joints.
Then with a mighty voice, and cheerful look,
Our leader, "Thee, Parent of all, our Guide,
We follow, and thine angel. God, 'tis God
O'erwhelmeth with these flames the hostile ranks ;
And all the sky with fiery squadrons shines."
When this cry had pervaded either host,
The one rush'd madly into panic flight,
The other presses on, with strength renew'd,
Against the timid foe ; nor ceased those
To flee, nor these to follow, till the night,
With cloudy darkness black, has given to them
Safe lurking-places, to our soldiers rest.

CHORUS.

Why brings not then the victor back his force?

MESSENGER.

Stay, you 've not yet the whole course of the war.

CHORUS.

Perchance the foe comes on with strength renew'd ?

MESSENGER.

Yes, if, indeed, the dead resume new strength ;
For all the power of that perfidious race
God gather'd in one battle, to cut down.
Therefore the foes in heaps of corpses hold
The places where they stood, or through the fields,
In lurid carnage spread, the vultures feed.
And lest anew another war should rise,
Our leader has look'd forward many years,
Provident of the future, and has won
Peace even to posterity remote.
The victor quickly has transferr'd his arms
'Gainst every name of Ammon ; twice ten towns
Has overthrown, their walls cast to the ground ;
The houses burn'd, given up the males to death ;
Laid waste the fields ; till only weak old men,
And tender children, and unwarlike women,
Now wander over the deserted soil,
And the misfortunes of their country mourn.

Scene Fourth.



CHORUS.

CHIEF of the golden light, O sun !
Who rulest, in thy rapid course,
The swift returns of day and night ;
Flame-bearer, who with wandering fire
Partest the seasons to the world ;
At last, when lustres four are gone,
A blessed sunbeam thou hast pour'd
On Isaac's sons, at length set free
From the woes of slavery.
Jephtha's potent arm hath broke
The luckless onslaught of the foe,
O'erweening in his pride, hath bruised
Ammon's fierce spirit, wrought dismay—
Now the robber is the prey.
What avail'd, in that dread hour,

From the Scythian string, to shower
The wingèd shafts, or rush amain
Of chariots hurrying o'er the plain,
'Threatening with recurvèd scythes ?
What the might of horses then,
Or phalanx dense of valiant men,
 To shield or save,
When God press'd on the foe, and them
 To slaughter gave ?
Learn, ye faithless, now ; now own,
God is neither wood, nor stone ;
Nor what artist's cunning hand
Sculptures with an iron tool ;
Nor potter's facile fingers may,
When he in the moisten'd clay
Feigns the countenance of man ;
Not so, our God dwells on high,
In fiery bulwarks of the sky,
Author of all and safety he,
Omnipotent in majesty ;
Nor is he easy to be seen,
Nor docile to a mortal hand,
To draw his certain image.
He, the frantic pride of kings
Curbs, and, just, to ill end brings

Their impious vows, and hopes too great,
Of a much exalted state ;
He the just and harmless breast
Succours, when with griefs oppress'd ;
He lifts the poor man from the dust,
Who kept the olid flock before,
He to the golden sceptre brings,
And decks the brows of shepherds with
Precious diadems of kings.
Him, its Lord and God alone,
Let earth's dædalian fabric own,
Beneath whatever day it lie,
Worship, and serve, and love continually :
That, which lying beneath his rays,
The orient sun strikes with new beams,
That, where at the noonday height,
He kindles with his nearer flames ;
He who drinks the Tagus
Noble with tawny flow,
And he who lives in tracts condemn'd
To everlasting snow.
Ho ! ye Hebrew maidens,
Your necks with golden beads adorn,
With ambrosia wet your locks,
Fragrant odours scatt'ring sweet.

Ho ! ye Hebrew maidens,
Deck your brows with Indian gems,
Scatter flowers, far and wide,
Many hued, to greet the happy hours.
Cease the tinkling cymbals,
Cease the lutes and cease the lyres,
New songs to render, meet
For our Lord and victor sire !
Wherefore lies unbreathed and mute
The soft and many-stoppèd flute ?
Who trips the earth with lightsome foot ?
And gay in festal ease,
In our gentle companies
Softens bitter cares ?
The leader of the flock shall, with his blood,
A sacrifice the festal altars stain ;
And clouds of incense smelling sweet,
Perfumes of the Arabian land,
The fire shall breathe out to the air,
And abroad the breezes bear.
But thou, the offspring of our chief,
The blooming hope of a great race,
Thy splendid garments take to thee,
My daughter, and within thy pious arms
Joyful thy sire, return'd, embrace.

Now Iphis, now thy purple robes
Assume, and now restrain
The braided tresses of thy hair ;
For lo ! the sound of men strikes on the ear,
'Tis he, 'tis he, thy father now is near.

Scene Fifth.



JEPHTHA.

SOLE Ruler of the world, the one true God,
The only God, propitious, potent, great,
Severe avenger, and a Father mild,
Severe, and dreadful to thine enemies,
Gentle, and safety bringing to thy friends,
Of anger dreadful, yet to be appeased,
Burning with love, yet to be roused to wrath.
Us the just ills of slav'ry have oppress'd,
We impious, unto impious men have paid
Deservèd punishment, who thee forsook,
Our king, our patron, our defender, God,
Parent of all, fount of perennial good,
And to mute stones have pour'd our foolish prayers,
And to deaf wood have made our empty vows ;

It is a shame to own it ; man possess'd
Of mind eternal, and who reason owns,
Foolish, adores a trunk of mind devoid,
Living, bestows frankincense on the dead,
The workman fears the work of his own hands.
We, therefore, who forsook, have been forsaken ;
Subdued, and crush'd by evils, we have paid
Deservèd punishment ; since Edom now,
Now Palestinian bands, now Ammon dire,
And now the Syrian stern, pollute the lot
And the inheritance thy people won.
But thou, a God benign, and merciful,
Curbest thy righteous fury, and remitt'st
Thine anger just, and mild forgett'st thy hate ;
And in thy mercy, thou restor'st again
The sons disownèd for their guiltiness.
And as if 'twere too little to forgive
Their infamous revolt, thou on them heap'st
New triumphs, praises, honours, victory :
Casting away his arms, the fainting foe
Hath fled, with bow relax'd ; o'er all the plain
The corpses scatter'd stay the war-cars' flight ;
Who haughty, chains prepared for Solyma,
Now feeds the ravens ; havoc taints the fields,
And foreign blood augments the swollen waves.

We, therefore, O Creator of the world,
And mighty arbiter, with grateful hearts,
And mindful, gladly render thanks to thee ;
We have, and at thine altars suppliant,
Will victims offer in our fathers' rites,
Thee praising, God and Father of our fathers,
Who through the swell'd abyss of the Red Sea
To our forefathers gavest passage safe ;
When at thy word the water's sluggish mass
Surceased its tempests, and the mobile flood
Stood still, its course restrain'd, on either side
Hung in a crystal wall the glassy deep,
For them commanded to afford a way.
Be mindful of thy covenant, benign
Receive, and graciously, thy servant's vow.
Though small, yet proffer'd from a grateful heart,
And lately due to thee. Whatever first
Shall run to meet me, safe return'd home,
That shall a grateful victim, with its blood,
Thine altars stain ; though with thy benefits
No victim can be able to compare.
But thou receivest graciously the gifts,
Which from a thankful, mindful heart proceed ;
As faithfully thou pay'st thy promises,
So thou delight'st that vows be faithful paid,

Towards the rebels putting forth thy strength,
Towards the fearful mercy putting forth ;
Nor is there surely any other power,
Which heaven, and earth, and realms of hell obey.

Scene Sixth.



IPHIS, JEPHTHA, SYMMACHUS, CHORUS.

IPHIS.

Now forth I go ; oh with how great a joy
I see the face of my returnèd parent !
O father, to be revered next to God,
Allow me to enjoy thy dear embrace.
Father, why dost thou from me turn away
Thine eyes, so sad and stern ?

JEPHTHA.

Wretch that I am !

IPHIS.

God turn this omen on our enemies !

JEPHTHA.

Oh that he would ! but it recoils on us
With deadliest stroke.

IPHIS.

Alas ! what do I hear ?

JEPHTHA.

The wretched parent of a wretched daughter.

IPHIS.

Woe's me ! I tremble. Is the army safe ?

JEPHTHA.

'Tis safe.

IPHIS.

And thou the conqueror ?

JEPHTHA.

• 'Tis so.

IPHIS.

Thy body bloody with no wound ?

JEPHTHA.

'Tis so

D

IPHIS.

Then wherefore dost thou groan and secret sighs
Draw from the deep recesses of thy breast ?

JEPHTHA.

That for the present time thou need'st not know.

IPHIS.

Woe's me ! In what have I unhappy sinn'd
Against thee, father ?

JEPHTHA.

Thou in nought hast sinn'd ;
Thy father has 'gainst thee unhappy sinn'd.

IPHIS.

'Gainst me indeed, so far as to me known,
There has no wrong been done ; nor though there
 had,
Should that distress thee. Children needs must bear,
With patient mind, parental injuries.

JEPHTHA.

Wisely thou speak'st, my daughter, as becomes
 thee,

And yet so much the wiser thou dost speak,
Thou stabb'st my bosom with the deeper wound.

IPHIS.

Whatever 'tis that preys upon thy mind,
Dismiss it, father ; nor by thy grief spoil
The joys thou'st won for all the citizens ;
And let thine eager friends enjoy thy presence.

JEPHTHA.

This presence absence will beget for us.

IPHIS.

Perchance war's perils call thee forth again ?

JEPHTHA.

A hazard worse than arms impends at home.

IPHIS.

Can there at home be peril worse than war ?

JEPHTHA.

Safety I found in war, at home I've perish'd.

IPHIS.

Truly thou'st saved thy country, and thy house.

JEPHTHA.

Ay, but for that I yet owe thanks to God.

IPHIS.

Oh may'st thou always owe on such account !

JEPHTHA.

Nay, but I fear they will not long be safe.

IPHIS.

Now therefore, father, when prosperity
Is at the height, behoves us both to pray
And render vows ; not, when the fickle breath
Of fortune thwarts, to flatter Heav'n with prayers ;
Then with oblivious negligence desert
His rites, when prosperous. Whoever, safe,
Has sought to win God's favour, when assail'd
By stern adversity, upon the fruit
Of a good conscience stay'd, more boldly dares
Ask Heav'n already of itself propitious ;
With a securer heart he makes his vows,
And waits the future with a surer hope.

JEPHTHA.

That's just the thing I'm pond'ring now to do.

IPHIS.

What hinders thee?

JEPHTHA.

Daughter, to my care leave
Such things as these ; and reckon thou thy care
Is what beseems the years and minds of damsels.

IPHIS.

To me nought alien is, that doth concern
My father.

JEPHTHA.

I confess that that is so.
But meanwhile see that all is well at home ;
And, courteous, gratify thy father.
Hither return after a little while.
For it behoves that thou immediately
Be present at a sacrifice to God.

IPHIS.

It shall be so. I soon return.

Woe's me !

What's changed my father's spirit towards his child ?
Than whom was lately more indulgent none,

Nor any parent loved his children more,
Who now severe, and gloomy, sad and fierce,
Bears yet upon his threat'ning countenance
The tumult of the war. Whate'er it be,
Too much I dread it. Only this one thing
I cannot understand, in that he says
He grieves because of me, and I am conscious
Of no fault in me to offend a parent.
O common crowd of women, by hard lot
Brought forth to vital air ! whom, lacking fault,
Rumour malign corrodes with envious tooth.
For fact is held whatever wrath invents
Of prating slave, whate'er a jealous spouse
Imagines, or an envious neighbourhood.
What 'tis my sire suspects I do not know ;
This I conceive my surest remedy,
That I possess a conscience void of stain.

SYMMACHUS.

Well hast thou spoken, daughter, worthy thou
Of sire victorious, and of mother chaste,
And of thy country worthy. Though the guilt
Of human malice has invented crimes,
God views the secret motives of the mind ;
When he is judge the pure soul overcomes.

From him the guerdons of the acted life
Are to be sought and hoped for, but the wrongs,
Of parent just, or unjust, must be borne
By duteous children. Wherefore home revisit,
Obedient to thy sire. If aught of ill
Fame's spread abroad, I here will hunt it out,
The footsteps of thy father following,
And presently will show thee what it is.

CHORUS.

Kind Symmachus, why haste you not to do it?

SYMMACHUS.

With eagerness I'll do it.

CHORUS.

Do all thou canst,
The trembling damsel from this dread to free ;
This th' ancient right of friendship claims of thee,
Which even from your earliest cradles cherish'd,
Has always in one faithful tenor stood ;
Our native country ev'n claims this of thee,
Which owes to Jephtha her deliverance.

SYMMACHUS.

Well, be thou silent ; leave it to my care.

CHORUS.

But see you set about it skilfully,
And search the darken'd mazes of the mind.

SYMMACHUS.

Fear thou not that ; he neither could nor would
Conceal his meaning ; I the fit time know.

Scene Seventh.



CHORUS.

Go happy thou with lucky foot ;
May he who sees
What's hidden in the bosom's deep recess,
At once a witness, and a righteous judge,
Prosper thine undertaking.
But thee, O wicked malice,
Forward to weave wiles, and by charges feign'd,
To set sweet friends at strife ;
Headlong, by rumours dark, malign, to break
The tie of holy wedlock, who delight'st
Dear fathers 'gainst the pledges of their love,
By the blind venom of the tongue, to arm ;
Thee may he who is at once
Witness and righteous judge of secrets all

Banish, and immure for aye
In black caves of murky hell,
Whence never wand'ring fame of thee,
These seats may e'er revisit.
Oh, how many heavy toils
Would he drag down along with thee !
From how many direful cares
Mortal bosoms thus set free !

Scene Eighth.

SYMMACHUS, JEPHTHA, CHORUS.

SYMMACHUS.

WHAT suddenly, O chief in arms renown'd,
Hath changed the former aspect of thy face?
What cause of sorrow mars our gladsome joys?
Fear hath departed, the perfidious foes
Have retribution borne, and peace and rest
Been for our country won. When thee the
state
Congratulates with pride for victory,
And when the country, wild with festal songs,
Thy name to the stars lifts in her praises,
Shouldst thou, the author of the public joy,
Not also share the public happiness?

JEPHTHA.

Oh sweet security of lowliest lot !
Methinks he's born beneath a happy star,
Who far from turmoil spends his life remote,
Unknown, in silence safe, and free from care.

SYMMACHUS.

But I would rather deem him bless'd, for whom
True virtue has eternal honour won ;
Whom from the darkness which most men enwraps,
Rescued by splendour of renown, and from
The sluggish vulgar sever'd, glory due
To worth, to future ages consecrates.
But he who's sold to slumber and to sloth,
Who passes life inactive like a beast,
It differs not, I trow, whether he's dead,
Or leads a life that's more obscure than death,
Since equal silence each alike engulfs.
Since, therefore, thou hast all on thee bestow'd
That friendly deity can give to man,
Wealth, honours, praises, glory, victory,
Own grateful the benignity of Heav'n,
Nor soil by sordid thoughts thy splendid deeds ;
Since nothing can to God more grateful be,
Than a soul mindful of his benefits.

JEPHTHA.

Right noble words are honour, victory,
Renown, and triumph, glory won in war ;
But that which on the forefront seemeth sweet,
Look nigher on it, and thou wilt perceive
'Tis season'd with the bitterness of gall.
On no one hath so prosp'rous fortune shone,
'That adverse, may not poise with equal beam ;
The stern vicissitude of fortune tempers
The sad with prosp'rous, prosperous with sad.
Thou deem'st me blessèd, meas'ring blessedness
By empty glitter and the mob's applause,
Me whom the surest misery o'erwhelms.

SYMMACHUS.

Well, then, imagine fortune favourable
Had promisèd thee all things at a wish ;
What is there yet remains thou canst desire ?
Spurn'd, exile, from thy home and country driven,
Thrust out into the deepest solitude,
The lord of a poor cottage, suddenly
As in a dream thou 'rt rich ; yet, judge unjust,
Complainest of thine own felicity.
A lofty fortune if thou canst not bear,
Thou 'rt pusillanimous ; but if thou canst

Not own the great benignity of Heaven,
Thou art most worthy of the state thou 'st left,
And of thy former hovel. Mortal men
Seek for the sovereign power with fire and sword,
To thee the leadership has come unsought.
And most men purchase victory with blood,
The slaughter of their friends, and public loss,
Which thou hast now brought back from bloodless
war,

The army safe, and thou thyself unharm'd,
The author of the safety of thy land,
The terror of the foes, from needy lot
Made opulent, a freeman from a slave ;
But late ignoble, now distinguishèd
In glory, with thy head thou strik'st high heaven ;
But late one of the common populace,
Thou holdest now chief place among the people.
Nought, in a word, in any way thou lack'st
For absolute and pure beatitude,
But a mind fit to bear so great a gift,
And equal to so high prosperity.

JEPHTHA.

I see, my friend, the common error holds you ;
But if, with the mind's eyes, you clearly saw

How greatness is obnoxious to great ills,
That state of mine which now so much you praise,
You would declare to be most miserable.

SYMMACHUS.

Comes it not mostly through our own default,
And the inconstancy of restless mind,
That we bear neither lot in stable state ?
The rich man praises the tranquillity
Of the poor cottage, and its silence deep
By warlike trump unbroke, the slumber free
From dreams, the vigils free from vexing cares ;
The poor extol with praises without end
The gold, the purple, clients, vassals, slaves,
The royal equipage, the houses wide,
And think that only rich men can be bless'd.
But balance either in its proper scale,
And neither lot is free from ev'ry trouble :
Want vexes poor men, fear the opulent ;
The rich have pleasure, and the poor few cares.
Fortune in either mingles sad with sweet ;
But that should surely be esteem'd the best
Which mingles many joys with sorrows few,
Such as Heaven's favour has bestow'd on thee,
And heap'd with honours, praise, wealth, victory ;

Which to refuse were acting like a fool,
Like a perfidious ingrate, not to own ;
And not to know how moderately to bear,
I scarce think like a man,

JEPHTHA.

Vainly thou triest
To heal my wound with vulgar medicines ;
This stroke's incurable, for it has settled
Upon the inmost vitals, and has pierced
Into the living heart ; and so much is
My grief more bitter, for 'tis my own fault ;
And hence my fault—aye aggravates my loss,
My misery my error aggravates.

SYMMACHUS.

But tell it to a friend whate'er it is,
And do not doubt you trust to faithful ears.

JEPHTHA.

What recollection hast thou of my vow ?

SYMMACHUS.

Which late you promised if the host were safe ?

JEPHTHA.

Thou speak'st the very matter—oh that I
Had been more prudent, had more cautious been
In uttering that vow !

SYMMACHUS.

What error, then,
Could be in that, I cannot understand.

JEPHTHA.

That error will destroy me and my house.

SYMMACHUS.

Can offering one victim all destroy ?

JEPHTHA.

The last hope of my race, it is my daughter.

SYMMACHUS.

Her wilt thou sacrifice ? What need demands ?

JEPHTHA.

Because she met us first on our return.

SYMMACHUS.

What crime, pray, did your daughter do in that ?

JEPHTHA.

A promised vow demands unswerving faith.

SYMMACHUS.

And doth this scruple press your mind forsooth ?

JEPHTHA.

It doth, nor can be from my bosom pluck'd,
Till bloody with a victim horrible,
I, wretched, lost, my wretched daughter lose,
And pay just punishment for her and me.
But thou, O king, who wield'st the glittering bolt,
Before whom tremble earth, and heaven, and hell,
If ever prompt obeying thy commands,
What pleasèd thee I've either said or done,
Hear when I pray, propitious aid my vows ;
I ask not now for haughty victories,
Or festal plaudits ; war restore again ;
Let cruel Ammon victor on me rush,
And end my noxious life with thousand blows.

CHORUS.

Ah ! change of sudden fortune,
How never in unbroken series
Aught joyful's left to mortal men !

JEPHTHA.

Or cleaving heaven with thy three-forkèd fire,
Hurl thou thy dart driven by the flaming storm
On me an impious wicked parricide ;
Me, even now injurious, and if more
Of life remains, to be yet more and more
From day to day injurious, thrust thou down
Alive into the deepest Tartarus.*

SYMMACHUS.

So grave a thing should not be rash resolved,
While raves in tumult blind, the troubled soul ;
Compose thyself ; when passion's rush is still'd,
And the free soul will healthful counsels hear,
Thou with thy friends wilt freely all determine.

JEPHTHA.

Counsel brings remedy in doubtful things ;
Who counsel seeks where there's no place for aid,
Spontaneously adds folly to his woe.

SYMMACHUS.

There's remedy aye whilst the deed's to do.

JEPHTHA.

When the degree of ill admits of cure.

* Hell.

SYMMACHUS.

If this at first perchance seem arduous,
You should not therefore presently despond,
The more I think you should for counsel seek.
What oft to one has seem'd inexplicable,
Another disentangles easily;
If ill advice turn out well in the end,
Glory will follow you ; if it fall ill,
You still are free from blame ; to be a fool
On great advice is almost to be wise.
But if on every hand all outgate 's shut,
By force unconquer'd, fate inevitable ;
Nor wisest counsels can effect their end ;
Whate'er the issue be, those will approve
Whose counsel you have follow'd. If instead,
Without the privity of other men,
Thou dost thyself perform a novel deed,
He who if ask'd would have approved of it,
Will be the first the issue to condemn ;
Though for the ill he knows no remedy,
He wishes it to be believed he knew.

CHORUS.

Spurn not thy good adviser, for full oft
Repentance follows on the rash done deed.

Scene Ninth.

CHORUS.

THOUGH tidings sad and undesired I bear,
Though adding unto sorrows, sorrows new,
I am resolved to tell
The mother and her wretched daughter all,
Perchance by counsel or by prayers
Sad fate we may avert.
Meantime occurs to me to mourn
The common lot of men ;
Whom first deplore ? the wretched sire ?
Whom at his wits' end error holds,
Bound in so strong a chain,
That he believes his piety
Can only by impiety savèd be.
Or shall I weep the wretched damsel's fate ?

Whom blooming in first flower of tender age,
Brought up to highest hopes, no hostile war
Drags captive from a captive land afar ;
Nor will she by a pestilence from heaven
Sent down be carried off ; but she will stain
The altar dire, a sacrifice,
And by her father's bloody hand be slain,
And in a brute beast's stead ;
From her throat shall out-gush the warm wave of
 blood,
Her tender joints maim'd by the sword will be,
Which had been sparèd by the enemy,
Nor had the fierceness of a mountain bear
With his harsh tooth dared rend.
Her father conquer'd, yet she sad must bear—
What if the foe had conquer'd, she 'd not borne.
Ye hostile corses scatter'd o'er the plain,
If any sense your lifeless limbs again
Revisit, now rejoice, the victor see
Wring from himself the bitt'rest penalty.
Surely this lot unto our life belongs
That sorrow must succeed to joy in turn,
As darkness does the sun,
As winter rough the gently-breathing spring ;
Never so pure a pleasure is at all

That sorrow may not spoil with bitter gall.
The treach'rous levity of fortune's mood
With cruel change commingles human good.
As when with placid waves the still sea lies
Beneath the soft, serene, and silent skies,
The gathering storm rolls on the tempest black,
And heaps the swollen billows from afar :
Here the wild currents of the tided main,
There wanton Caurus' blasts
The trembling bark drag through the foaming
straits ;
That is the very image of our life
Which we, 'mong slaughters, tumults, thefts,
And fears of death more terrible than death,
Spend ; but if aught of joyful chance has shone,
Swift on the speedy breath away 'tis flown,
Like evanescent light of fleeting flame,
Which 'mong dry stubble plays ;
Then in a chain unbroken, link'd, and slow,
Follow long trains of sorrows and of woe.

Scene Tenth.



JEPHTHA, A PRIEST.

JEPHTHA.

O SUN, thou author of diurnal light,
O fathers, O whoever of mankind
Art free from crime, afar your looks avert
From this accursèd rite ; or open, earth,
About to drink the guiltless virgin blood,
And me engulf deep in thy yawning caves,
In bosom vast ; while uninjurious I
Can perish overwhelm me anywhere.
To hell itself refuse I not to go,
If I no parricide may live in hell.
What say I, hell ? Hell is at home to me.
With what lip will my sorrowing wife demand
Of me with tears profuse ? With what a look
My daughter look upon me, soon to die ?

What prayers will she with lamentable voice
To me direct, and clasp me round the neck ?

PRIEST.

Such grief as this is wonted to arise,
As the companion of the utmost ills,
When the sore wound denies the healer's hand,
Or remedy the crime accomplish'd flees.
But whether thou be miserable or no
Is in thine own hands placed, and not another's ;
Thou art at liberty to sacrifice
Thy daughter or to save her ; or to speak
More truly thou art not at liberty ;
Save any can spontaneously desire
To be made miserable. How art thou
At liberty to perpetrate a deed,
Which Nature, sacred parent, has forbidden ?
Which piety resists, which God abhors ?
First Nature hath in our affections set
To love our children ; nor our breasts alone
That holy passion moves ; whatever glides
Swift swimming through the pathways of the seas,
Whatever cleaves the sky with wings ; whate'er
Earth, parent of all things, hath in her womb
Created, that most sacred passion feels.

For the eternal providence of God,
Celestial parent, hath the minds of men
Enduèd with this force beneficent,
For the upbringing of their progeny,
To keep the public concord of the world,
And aye renew fresh offspring to the race.
And that the name might deeper strike our minds,
He father wishèd to be call'd, and be ;
Nor only by his own example he,
But that of savage beasts, of birds, and fishes,
Approves the bonds of fatherly affection.
But we (to whom humanity should be
Peculiar, since we own the human name)
Are far excell'd by gentleness of beasts.
Nor to pollute our own right-hands with blood
Suffices us ; our wicked actions we
Joy to ascribe to Heav'n ; pretend that God
Delights in bloody victims, cruel rites ;
Which Egypt does not though she knows not God,
Nor does Assyria, though entirely sold
To idols vain, and superstitions false.
And how much rather ought not we to keep
Hands pure from slaughter, we the progeny
Of parents pure, commanded to present
To God pure sacrifices, chastely given.

For our God seeks not to be worshippèd
With bloody victims, nor with blood of bulls ;
But hearts unspotted by contagion dire,
A soul refined by simple truthfulness,
And conscience chaste, are to be offer'd him.

JEPHTHA.

Why do the sacred laws command us then
To offer victims ?

PRIEST.

Not that God delights
In death of sheep, or hunger satisfies
With flesh of slaughter'd steer. He so commands
That we may learn obedience to his words.

JEPHTHA.

Behoves it not to pay a promised vow ?

PRIEST.

But only what is right the law bids vow.

JEPHTHA.

It might have better been at the beginning
To promise what our fathers' rites approve ;

Now, when the deed is done, what's once been
vow'd

To God, the heaven-sent law bids us fulfil.

PRIEST.

What law bids parents sacrifice their sons?

JEPHTHA.

The law that bids them pay a promised vow.

PRIEST.

[Is't right to vow what it is wrong to pay?

JEPHTHA.

The greatest wrong is not to pay a vow.

PRIEST.

What if you vow'd to burn our fathers' laws?

JEPHTHA.

None in his senses such a vow would make.

PRIEST.

And why so? Is't not because repugnant
Unto the laws themselves?

JEPHTHA.

'Tis so indeed.

PRIEST.

What, then, of him who slays an only child ?

JEPHTHA.

Less matters what you do, than why you do it.

PRIEST.

Deem'st thou it fitting God's commands to do ?

JEPHTHA.

God order'd Abraham to slay his son.

PRIEST.

Who bade him slay, the same forbade the deed.

JEPHTHA.

Why did he bid him ?

PRIEST.

To commend his faith

To future ages.

JEPHTHA.

Why did he forbid him ?

PRIEST.

Perchance he wish'd to show thereby that he
Obedience better loves than victims slain.

JEPHTHA.

Surely we should obey commands of God?

PRIEST.

We surely should.

JEPHTHA.

Does God command to vow?

PRIEST.

He does.

JEPHTHA.

And claims that vows be faithful paid?

PRIEST.

'Tis as thou say'st.

JEPHTHA.

Upbraids the lingering?
And from faithless men due punishment exacts?

PRIEST.

Nought hast thou there
To shield thy wicked act ; for he who vows
To perpetrate a deed of shocking crime,
His foolish passions and his idle dreams
Spontaneously obeys. Wherefore desist,
Whate'er thy vow may be, thus to ascribe
Thy ruthlessness of spirit unto God ;
Nor deem that he who wicked men abhors,
And curses in his laws unhallow'd rites,
Can be appeasèd by the crime he hates.
The voice divine is one, the simple truth,
Consistent with itself. What he hath once
Commaned, fix'd, and ratified, remains
In path immutable, nor in the least
Can to the right hand, or the left hand bend.
That mark alone to look on is the truth,
To take life's counsels from the law alone ;
Since God has bid it be as 'twere a torch,
To guide the feeble and the tott'ring steps
Through paths uncertain made by error blind.
But from this lamp how far thou'st rashly stray'd,
Thou may'st perceive ; but now, ere error lead
You farther off, return into the way.
If thou believest that thy foolish vows

Can be atoned for by accursèd rites,
Thou art deceived ; that inhumanity
Will more increase, not take away thy guilt.
Nor be deceivèd by appearance false :
As God delights in off'rings rightly given,
So he rejects abominable vows ;
Nor did the priest depart unpunishèd
Who fire unholy on the altar laid,
Though urged by pious zeal to do the deed.
Despise not, then, my friendly admonition,
But while thou wishest God to please, forbear
To rouse his wrath ; for he has no delight
In being worshipp'd in thy ceremonies,
But in the laws, rites, ways himself approves.

JEPHTHA.

Those oft who seem to be exceeding wise,
Who boast themselves above the people rude,
I've for the most part found to hold the least
Of the true wisdom ; none more negligent
Observe the ancient rites, or hold at less
The sacred mysteries ; the people rude
And inexperienced hold the vow should bind,
Nor know deceit—think what has once been vow'd
To God remains unalterably fix'd.

Now, trow I, to be wise is nothing else
But to know how o'er faults to draw a veil,
And put a colour on the vilest deeds.
But how much better were it then to try
How to be free from fault, than to seem so,
Or with the cloak of caution fraudulent
To veil the craft of an abandon'd mind.
Whoever, then, shall wish his children thought
On godliness intent, let him not seek
More earnestly than it is right to form
Their tender minds by learning ; for the more
With letter'd knowledge any one's acquaint,
In sacred things he's the more negligent.

PRIEST.

But hear me yet again, most noble man,
If time permit, how blinded ignorance
Deceives thee credulous. He who defends
Himself by error of the common crowd
Sins not, I trow, the more excusably.
Nor ever can that mightiest sire of all
Such sovereign sway yield up to morals bad,
That the agreement of the impious people
Could turn the right to wrong, of good make ill ;
No, nor though flatt'ry, tyrants blandishing,

May praise the worse, and change the rightful
names,

Can it so far prevail that that which seems
Honourable unto the multitude
Forthwith becomes an honourable thing.
One is the simple form of righteous honour,
Which neither violence of tyrants stern,
Nor the authority of potent chiefs,
Is able to adult'rate, or corrupt.

Now mostly he who's from the people sprung,
The more unlearn'd, more arrogantly he
Assumes as his, authority to judge
In things obscurest ; and with stubborn mind
(As mostly is the way of ignorance),
Defends a dogma he has once received ;
Nor meanwhile in an equal balance weighs,
If what he, stubborn, holds be right or wrong.
But while by far the dimmest-eyed of all,
He, blind, accuses those who see of blindness.
As he, whose bowels burn with fever hot,
Thinks everything is bitter, and believes
That he alone tastes right, when he alone
Tastes wrong the most of all ; so you, your breast
Clouded with darkness black, seek to command
Whom it were reasonable to obey ;

Whose judgment you should follow, you compel
To be companions, and spontaneous urge
The firm-built bark to strike against the rocks.
This true religion, this true piety, is,
To worship God, not in the manner which
Thou hast thyself devisèd ; nor to give
In sacrifice the victims which thee please ;
But those which the decrees of heav'n-sent laws
Demand, and customs of our sires approve.

JEPHTHA.

Whatever's done with mind sincere to God
Is grateful ; always he in good part takes
Whatever gifts proceed from simple heart.
Heaven, not the gold, but giver's mind, approves.

PRIEST.

Although a bad mind can corrupt the right,
A foolish soul makes not the crookèd straight.
For what thou callest simple, right, and good,
Are full of the insanest vanity ;
Unless, perchance, something could vainer be,
Than shutting eyes against the light of truth.
Then fallen into blindness voluntary,
With honest titles thou seek'st praise in crime,

Removing clear distinction from all things,
While thou determinest to make the just,
The unjust, shameful, honourable, depend
On the opinion of the fickle crowd.
But if in fools' thoughts lie so great a power,
That they forthwith can make the right, the
wrong ;
Sacred, profane ; and justice, injury ;
Why may we not imagine they can too
Change fire to water, water into fire,
Turn stones to wood, recall life to the dead,
Arrest the rapid motions of the seasons,
And quite transpose the eternal course of things ?
But if thou deem'st these things 'bove mortal
strength,
And subject only to creative power ;
Think that the laws which God hath once ordain'd,
Are as eterne, and ratified, or more so ;
Nor over them have mortals any sway.
Nor shall the final day, that threatens the world,
His edicts break : heav'n, earth, and sea, and
air
Shall in the flame of the last fire dissolve ;
But from the law, which was divinely given,
No length of time one jot shall snatch away.

JEPHTHA.

These precepts follow, if you like, for me,
Who joy to be accounted prudent priests ;
I rather wish the simple foolish truth,
Than splendid wisdom, impious with guile.

Scene Eleventh.



CHORUS.

O MATRON, 'mong the dames of Israel,
Example rare of friendly destiny,
How suddenly has fortune's ruthless rage
O'erwhelmèd thee in ruin, and brought low
Thy pride, that almost reach'd the stars in height,
And in the manner of a tempest black
Changèd thy joys to bitter misery.
Alas ! enough to man is never known,
What ev'ry hour to seek, what ev'ry hour to shun.
Who lately did not envy thee,
O bravest chief, whom all things prosp'rous bless'd,
Almost above thy wishes?—
The splendour of a noble line,
And nuptials chaste,

A daughter worthy of her parent,
And glory by thy right hand won ;
Who now art overwhelm'd and sunk
In wreck of sudden ruin ;
And to be pitied even by the foe,
And brooding o'er thy fatal vow,
Thou fillest the stars of heaven with sad complaints.
Oh, surely, clouds of error,
And ignorance hedged round with darkness deep,
Hath thus the human mind entomb'd.
Nor any with the clear eyes of the soul
Can see the pure rays of the simple truth,
Or the straight path of naked virtue keep.
As when beneath the niggard light,
In secret mazes of a forest deep,
Slippery error oft beguiles
The wayfarer,
By dubious meeting of a thousand ways ;
Among the many winding paths he sees,
None please him, none displease.
So hither, thither, and with doubtful mind,
We men uncertain wander ;
One scorning sluggish ease, while he desires
To win the laurel bought by death,
By hard arms purchases, and with another's grief,

The murmurs of vain fame.

One, those who hunt for rich men's legacies,
Hunts in his turn ; and bed that barren proves
Of the sweet pledge of love

Compensates with a num'rous crowd of clients ;
And joys in turn with studied wile
The gaping ravens to beguile.

One would not change the cradle's murmurs bland,
And prattled plainings of the tender lip,
For Cræsus' wealth, nor for the yellow sand
Which lucid Hermus rolls along,
Underneath his wealthy wave.

But none can plan the manner of his life
So wisely, that he 'll not perchance condemn
His course ten times within an hour.

And lo ! the daughter haggard grown with grief
Comes forth, her mother sad along with her.
Alas for sorrow ! how unlike

Those who late shone conspicuous to all,
In the new praise of triumph glad ;
Late with their heads they nigh Olympus * reach'd,
Late blessèd even to envy,
Now example singular
Of fortune's instability.

* Heaven.

God whirls affairs of men, as dust is driven
By the light whirlwind of the mobile air;
Or in the manner of a wintry storm,
Which by the blasts of Caurus wild,
Buries the lofty hills in hail;
Presently, where the pure torch of clear day,
Since rosy morn with pleasant light had shone,
Now wide dispersèd o'er the whitening fields,
The sun scarce seen, it melts and dies away.

Scene Twelfth.



STORGE, JEPHTHA, IPHIS.

STORGE.

O EMPTY hopes ! the nuptial festival
I was preparing, daughter ; I desired
And long'd to see that happy day when I
Should thee behold enrich'd with children dear,
And blessèd in an honourable spouse ;
Of thee in vain I augur'd lying dreams,
Me, now, the furious cruelty of fortune,
Raging with an unwonted mockery,
Hath from the top supreme of happiness
Thrown down, and by one blow o'erwhelmèd
all.

Oh three times blessèd, whom the hostile sword
Hath robb'd of children, or the pestilence

Of air, or famine ; for your tears lack crime,
Ye can impute your miseries to others ;
Here in a single deed of wickedness,
Fortune hath mix'd six hundred wicked deeds :
A parent doomsman of an only child,
Unhallow'd worship, and the altars stain'd
By foreign rite with victim horrible.
If thou believest deity approves
Only of holy worship purely given,
Abstain the barb'rous custom ; but if God
Can be appeased by horrid cruelty,
Slay me a victim with my daughter too.

JEPHTHA.

Too much of bitterness our lot contains
Within itself without an added ill.
Wherefore forbear to kindle both to wrath
By railing words that do not help our grief,
Though this a cruel evil is to all,
Most cruel truly is my lot in it.
For innocence is joinèd with your ills,
Your hapless mis'ry wants the stain of guilt.
I cannot wicked be, and not be wretched,
Nor live calamitous, and free from crime ;
Alone I'm forced to do the deed, and suffer.

STORGE.

Without constraint you gladly force yourself.

JEPHTHA.

Oh that the vow at my disposal lay,
Nor wicked 'twere a promise to deny.

STORGE.

No wicked vow to God is ever pleasing.

JEPHTHA.

That this was pleasing vict'ry witnesses.

STORGE.

What ! can you promise what is not your own?

JEPTHHA.

Is not my daughter mine?

STORGE.

She is ; but just
As she is mine. And since the common pledge
Of mutual love, why to the sire alone
Is it allow'd to lose her life, while I
Am not allow'd to save? If 'twere allow'd

At will of either parent to dispose
Of children, and by impious divorce
To wrench asunder the sweet bonds of love,
More should of right fall to the mother's share,
The mother's, who would save her only child,
Who would withdraw her from her father now,
Of his own will desiring to destroy her.
What ! if the nuptial torches were prepared,
And for his child the father chose a spouse,
Would not the parents, by the will of each,
Equal, in common, influence the child ?
But this were truly partnership unjust,
And cruel fellowship in wedded bonds,
Not to allow the mother's love to save,
But to allow the father's rage to lose ;—
If any can indeed be said to lose
Her whom he butchers, standing at whose grave
He glories in his course of cruelty.
He who, while he the barriers of life
Flings back, and with his bloody knife unlocks
The side, and from the inmost vital depths
Drags forth the ling'ring soul, seeks to be seen,
Wants not his consolation in the deed :
He hunts for praise through blood of only child,
Crime compensates with breath of sanctimony,

And boasts himself in praise of parricide.
But thou, if thou by raving madness struck,
Hast lost a parent's feelings to his child,
Permit at least a mother's gentleness
To love, what not to love's the height of guilt ;
To save, what not to save's the height of crime ;
What to betray spontaneously is worse
Than any parricide ; what to destroy
With one's own ruthless hand more cruel is,
Than is the truculence of savage beasts.
Oh, harder than hard rock ! who 'st either sprung
From the harsh oak, or from the savage crag,
Among the dens of beasts, nor of our race
Possessing slightest vestige, nor our blood !
Why don't you fall down at your father's feet,
Daughter, if aught you can, by speech or tears,
Bend his hard heart and break his iron will ?

IPHIS.

Have pity, father, I beseech of thee
By this right hand, made potent through the vow,
Winner of victory. If ever I
Have well deserved of thee in anything,
If ever I with my small arms embracing,
Have hung a burden sweet upon thy neck,

If thou hast ever pleasure had in me,
Put now away thy cruel thoughts against
Thine only child, this direfulness forget.
But if on my part I in aught have sinn'd,
Tell me ; I'll lighter bear whate'er's to come,
If conscious that I'm justly punishèd.

JEPHTHA.

Nothing, my daughter, has by thee been done ;
Mine is the guilt ; the crime is mine alone ;
Thou undeserving pay'st the penalty
Of my unwisdom ; by unhallow'd vows
I've wretchedly destroy'd myself and thee,
My wretched daughter ; but oh, had I been
More prudent in my words, or in the war
Less fortunate,—had I been stricken down
By hostile hand amid the thronging ranks
Of valiant men so many, I had reach'd
The sooner by an honourable death
The haven of my miseries and woes.
Unwelcome life now makes me thy survivor,
That newer sorrows I may ever see.
I swear to thee by that accursèd vow
Which I have vow'd against the will of God,
By the o'erflowing measure of my ill,

And the sad mem'ry of thy early fall,
If death vicarious could from death redeem,
I'd gladly, daughter, pay my life for thine.
In what do I more blessèd seem than you?

IPHIS.

As wretched thou'rt as we, or even worse.

STORGE.

Since this is all the slight authority
A parent has, I, thy true wedded wife,
Ask thee, my wedded husband, one request,
And that the last ; command me too to die.
Thou canst impute unto myself my death
If thou dost love me, but if thou dost hate,
Unto thyself ; deliver me by death
From sorrows, and thyself from future cares.

JEPHTHA.

Too much of crime in one death's perpetrated.

STORGE.

O sanctity ! O right, and innocence !
The sacrificer of his daughter fears
To sin.

IPHIS.

Forbear thy tears, my dearest mother,
Complaints, and railing, and reproach, forbear.
And thou, my father, cast away the cares
That wring thy anxious breast, nor in thy
words

Waver and change, because I suffer death.
That stern necessity compels thee thus
Unwillingly, I know through many things :
Thy present sorrow, former gentleness,
And my own mind unconscious of a fault,
That from a parent I should death deserve.
Wherefore whate'er necessity compels,
I willingly do not refuse to suffer ;
But cheerfully and gladly render back
The life I owe my country and my sire.
This last request I ask of thee, O mother,
Who ne'er hereafter will ask aught of thee,
Be not for my sake 'gainst my father wroth,
Nor vex his soul ; if any sense retain
The buried dead of what the living do,
Believe, whatever else, that this will be
Most grateful to my shade to know that you
Are bless'd, and pass your life in happiness ;
Nor to my parents unto whom I owe

To render mutual offices of life,
And to repay the price of my up-bringing,
Sustaining the infirmities of age,
From me should woe and bitterness redound.

STORGE.

O'er us again may Ammon tyrannize
(If such a prayer may piously be made) ;
Again Judea bear her former yoke ;
Although a slave, thou wouldest surely live,
Or wouldest not die by such a horrid death ;
Lighter on us had raged the cruelty
Of the fierce foe than thy sire's victory.
Now by a new but a most wretched turn
Of fortune, 'tis our wish that we were slaves,
'Tis our calamity that we have conquer'd.
O fortune, ever fierce and harsh to us
Even in thy favour, with how many tears
Of bitter sorrow wilt thou interest
Exact for this brief loan of happiness !

IPHIS.

Nay, may they rather pay just punishment ;
And we, if need be, undeserving stain
The altars with our blood ; and gladly weigh,

And grateful, with a single victim's death,
The slaughter of so many of our foes.

JEPHTHA.

Alas ! my daughter, now I wretched know
How foul, atrocious, and how dire the deed
I had design'd, who rashly would have robb'd
Myself of such a daughter. But myself
Shall from myself exact the punishment.
It were unjust that thou, a guiltless maid,
Shouldst pay the penalty my madness claims,
Whilst I, the author of the grief, survived.
Nor envious neighbourhood shall me reproach,
That I, when nigh the latest stage of life,
Sparèd myself, while I my daughter slew,
And by the slighted blood of only child
The breath of ignominious glory bought.
But live, thou blessèd in the fond regard
Alike of parent, and of native land,
Thou, who in age art worthier to survive.
And oh may he who only has the power
Repay thee what thy parent cannot give,
Of benefit, and favour, and what shall
Be equal to thy nobleness of mind.

IPHIS.

Father, forbear to weave these fond delays,
And break my courage with thy gentle words ;
For it indeed were neither right nor just
That thou shouldst take the part to me assign'd—
'Tis me the vow demands : without regret
This life I therefore render back to thee,
My father ; it I to my country render.
Ne'er shall day come that shall prove me unworthy
Of Jephtha's house and of his ancient race.
Come, take me hence, bid me be led away ;
Now I, to God a victim consecrated,
To death devoted, have quite from me cast
Love of the light of life ; now all delay
To me is very irksome : farewell now,
O dearest mother, and thou paternal home !
Wherein I've spent so many gladsome days,
Brought gently up unto the highest hopes,
And destined unto nuptials honourable.
O fates, O fates, and fathers pass'd away,
Gently receive my spirit consecrated,
For the salvation of my native land.
And thou, O sweetest light of my last day,
The last my eyes shall ever drink, farewell.

Scene Thirteenth.



CHORUS.

O PRAISE and fame of womanhood,
And glory of a noble race,
Virgin, too hero-hearted ! though from thee
The fates with cruel injury
Thy years more useful have cut off,
Though Parca's* fierceness and fell rage
Have from thee pluck'd the flower of tender age,
Yet what of life from thee
Stern fortune may have snatch'd away,
Posthumous fame in praises will repay.
Where Phœbus first on farthest Ind
Lifts up the light of ruddy flame,
Of thee a late posterity shall tell.

* Fate.

Thee, he who drinks the floods of the first Nile,
And who dreads not to dare
To cross the Ister * in Sarmatic car,
Shall celebrate hereafter,
And sing thy dauntless faith,
That thou shook'st not with sluggish fear of death ;
But for thy country gav'st up free
The years that kindly Nature gave to thee.
Long thou, heroic virgin, shalt remain
The grief and glory of our virgin train ;
Through the returning years they will repeat
Thy name and fame in dirges sad and sweet.
But ye, oh, the dishonour of your age,
Life for your country grudging to forego,
You shall a long oblivion keep,
Buried in shades of darkness deep ;
Shame of your kind, a useless load on earth,
Whom this age scorns, and justly so,
And whom no other age shall ever know.

* The Danube.

Scene Fourteenth.



STORGE, A MESSENGER.

STORGE.

AH, miserable me ! hath every hope
Of safety perish'd ? Speak.

MESSENGER.

It was indeed
An adverse thing, but not entirely ill.

STORGE.

If there has anything of good befallen,
That is the cruelty of flatt'ring fortune.
With honey sweet she tempers horrid poisons.
Wherefore tell out the evils you conceal.
Practice in grief, and long experience

Have made my spirit callous ; nor has fortune
Reservèd aught that she can harm me more ;
That sure but sad security is mine.

MESSENGER.

Take then, in few words, how the deed was done :
When now before the mournful altars stood
The virgin, destined victim, maiden shame
Suffused her visage pale with crimson blush,
Unwont to look on crowds of men ; as one
May stain the Indian ivory with purple,
Or roses among snowy lilies mix.
But with the shame conjoin'd, upon her face
Conspicuous shone the power of certain faith.
Alone among the weeping crowds she stood
Without a tear, firm, and with cheerful looks,
Indifferent to her fate, nor struck with fear.
The virgin nigh to death her tears restrain'd ;
The people them restrain not : one is moved
By the late benefit her father won,
The yoke of slavery from the country torn,
And desolation of a noble house ;
Another mourns the bitter turns of fortune,
And the brief joy by lengthen'd sorrow bought,
And trust in joyful things but rarely sure.

Another weeps her flower of youth, her eyes
Like to the stars, her hair that rivals gold,
And constancy of heart above her sex.
And then, perchance, had Nature on her breathed
A beauty sweeter to behold than wont,
As if desirous, by a gift supreme,
To dignify the noble heroine's death.
As the receding splendour Phœbus pours,
Now rushing down to the Tartessian sea,
Is wont to be more grateful ; as the hue
And breath of roses in the end of spring
Are wont to hold our greedy eyes the more ;
So standing on the utmost verge of fate,
Prepared to die, nor softly recusant,
Nor sluggish with base fear of parting breath,
The virgin all had moved, and on her drawn
The looks of all the sorrowing multitude,
Astonish'd to behold the wondrous sight,
And brought a solemn silence upon all.

STORGE.

Go on, tell how the wicked deed was done,
Nor spare a mother's ears : thou'st brought nought sad
But what my mind more sad shows to itself ;
Already I have all anticipated.

MESSENGER.

The hero-hearted virgin, lifting then
Her eyes to the clear stars, conceives a prayer ;
Speaks with chaste lip, with voice by ills unbroke :
Eternal sire of all, parent of men,
At length propitiated be, forgive
Thy people's error ; mild, this victim take.
But if thine anger expiation claims,
Whatever punishment our stubborn pride
In leaving thee, our parent, hath deserved,
Oh may it now be wash'd out in this blood !
And oh that oftener I could shed my blood ;
Yea, if therein my parent's safety lay,
And the salvation of my native land,
Could oftener turn on me by thousand deaths
The onset of thy fury and thine ire.
But thou, O priest, what fear'st thou ? (for he shook
With icy fear). Come hither, take this life
From light ; unloose the body's hind'ring bars ;
My people, sire, and me free from the vow.
When thus she spoke, her sire who seem'd but
now
Fierce, bloodier than a tigress, with his robe
Cover'd his eyes, suffused with flowing tears ;
Him cursing and the rashness of his vow.

Scarce could the priest o'erwhelm'd with weeping
loose

The passages of life ; and silent long,
And sad, the voiceless multitude stood still.
When pervious pathway to the voice was found,
It was not groans, nor as is wont to be,
The sound of sorrow, and of lamentation,
But murmuring of a confusèd crowd,
Congratulating thee, and saying thou,
Among the adverse wounds of bitter fortune,
And joyful gifts of flattering, wert alone
Woman most blessèd and most miserable.
For though this wound has sunk into thy heart,
In thy great grief thou hast great consolation.

STORGE.

The consolation that exasperates
An ancient ill by soothing, and renews
Ever the memory of bitter sorrow,
And forces open the nigh closèd wound,
More mournful is than is the ill itself.
The braver that my daughter bore her part,
The sadder grief torments my aching heart.

THE BAPTIST; OR, CALUMNY.



GEORGE BUCHANAN

TO

JAMES SIXTH, KING OF THE SCOTS.



GREETING,—

As all my little works, since the time of my appointment to instruct you, familiarly approach, salute, and converse with you, and repose under the shadow of your protection; so this work, my BAPTIST, seems with greater reason more confidently to claim the patronage of your name; for, though abortive, it is my first offspring, and it calls young men from the vulgar strains of dramatic poetry to the imitation of antiquity, and endeavours, as far as it can, to excite in their minds a regard for piety, which was then almost everywhere persecuted. But this work seems peculiarly to have a reference to

you, because it clearly sets forth the torments and miseries of tyrants, even when they seem to be most flourishing; and this I deem not only beneficial for you to know now, but even indispensable, in order that you may early begin to hate what you should always avoid. I also wish this little work to be a witness for me to posterity, that if ever, whether impelled by evil counsellors, or letting the licence of royalty overmaster a good education, you act otherwise, the blame should not be laid on your preceptors, but on yourself, from not following their salutary admonitions. The Lord give a happier issue, and as it is in your Sallust, *turn your well-doing by custom into nature*. This indeed I, along with many others, both hope and wish.

AT STIRLING, 1st Nov. 1578.



Argument.

BY THE TRANSLATOR.



IN the Prologue the poet points out the unreasonableness of many critics.

SCENE I. Malchus and Gamaliel, Pharisees, converse respecting the character of John the Baptist. The latter tries to persuade the former from persecuting the prophet.

SCENE II. The Chorus moralises on the malignant passions in the heart.

SCENE III. Herodias incites Herod to slay John, because he had reproved them for their incestuous marriage.

SCENE IV. Herod reasons with John, and desires him to cease from disturbing the public tranquillity. John vindicates his preaching.

SCENE V. The Chorus reminds God of what He had done for His people, and calls on Him to look on their present evil condition, and rescue them from their misery.

SCENE VI. Malchus is enraged at the severe denunciations of John, and threatens him with death.

SCENE VII. The Chorus shows how hypocrites veil their wickedness, and how conscience will sting them; also, the happy state of the pure in soul.

SCENE VIII. The Queen and Malchus, after a conference, resolve to destroy John.

SCENE IX. The Chorus contrasts the innocence of John with the wickedness of his enemies, and states how truth arms us against all ills.

SCENE X. The Chorus desires John to abate his fearless manner of speech and avoid death; but he declares he is ready to die, and that he hopes for an immortal life of blessedness.

SCENE XI. The Queen expresses her willingness to bear the odium arising from the death of John.

SCENE XII. The daughter of Herodias requests the head of John from the King. He tries to get her to ask something else; but she, assisted by her mother, persists, and Herod yields.

SCENE XIII. The Chorus moralises on the wickedness of Jerusalem in slaying the prophets, and anticipates the judgments of God.

SCENE XIV. A messenger announces the death of John.

Persons.

The Prologue.

MALCHUS, *a Pharisee.*

GAMALIEL, *a Pharisee.*

JOHN THE BAPTIST.

Chorus of Jews.

HEROD, *the King.*

HERODIAS, *the Queen.*

Queen's Daughter.

A Messenger.



The Prologue.

THE ancient Poets fable there was once
A certain Proteus, who had the power
To turn himself to every shape at will,
Nor could by any fetters be retain'd ;
While now he flows into the liquid waves,
Now crackles flame, now a fierce lion roars,
A tree grows green, or roams a shaggy bear,
A serpent hisses, suddenly transform'd,
And passing through all miracles of things.
But, sooth to say, I've found that ancient fable
Far truer than the Sibyll's * oracles.
For I, however many men I see,
Believe I see so many Protëi,
Who at their pleasure can new looks assume,
And into any shape themselves convert ;

* Sibyll, a heathen prophetess.

Specially subject to whose calumnies
The fortune of a drama ever is.
For should some one bring out an ancient story,
Ill-pleased they make a noise, they cough, they 're
sick,
But if he bring a new one, then forthwith
Old things they seek, approve, and laud, and love.
They with illiberal scorn reject the new,
And hiss it off ere they can understand it ;
Whate'er 's well said they vitiate with ill
Interpretations ; 'all things to the worse
Wresting. Themselves given up to sloth and
sleep,
And void of toil, are envious of the toils
Of other men, and make it all their care
To apprehend what they can reprehend ;
If any error be on that they seize
Beforehand with the keen sight of a Lynx,
And eager brand it with censorious mark ;
But what 's well said o'er deaf ears flies unheard.
I reckon not a whit their brows severe,
Nor the grim arrogance of their crabb'd looks.
But if there 's present here a candid judge
Well wishing, who by kindly favour aids
Me in the work of furth'ring purer letters,

Who pardons trivial errors (since the mind
Of man produces nothing altogether
Perfect), for him we bring this story new,
Or rather ancient history restored ;
How formerly by royal lust oppress'd,
And cunning calumnies of envious men,
The holy Baptist innocent and just
Endured a shameful, undeservèd death.
But truly each one as he lists for me
May call this story either old or new.
If that be old which many an age ago
Befell, this will be reckon'd 'mong the old ;
But if we think it new which flourishes
Still fresh in mind, then it is wholly new.
For always while the race of men exists,
New frauds will be, and novel calumnies ;
And wicked envy will the good oppress,
Might conquer right, and cunning, innocence.



Scene First.



MALCHUS, GAMALIEL, CHORUS.

MALCHUS.

MISERABLE old age, approaching goal
Of my last breath, and ye unhappy fates,
Have ye bestow'd on me a longer life
Only to this intent, that I, while lies
My native land enslavèd by her foes,
Should see the temples heinously defiled,
Profane and sacred mingled? I beheld
The secret places of the hallow'd fane
With vi'lence broken, and the sacred gold
Torn from the posts ; whate'er the greedy lust
Of stern Gabinius* could seize by force,
Or luxury of Antony could draw,
Hath perish'd ; and (oh, shameful !) we have been

* Proconsul of Syria, 57 B.C.

The sport of Cleopatra's appetite.
And lest dishonour fail'd on any hand,
Our king, who is great-grandson in descent
From a half Arab, from Antipater,
The bloody Herod wields his cruel sceptre ;
Judea is to Idumea slave,
And Sion is slave to the Arabarch,*
And Solyma is subject to a heathen,
God's people now obey an impious king.
Yet 'mid so many wounds of cruel chance,
In servitude, howe'er severe, remain'd
Some spark as yet of pristine dignity ;
A certain sample of our native rites,
Which even our very foes might reverence :
The victor fierce, and not the smallest part
Of the empurpled Court began to keep
The Jewish laws with honour. By this hope
Somewhat refreshèd, scarce had we begun,
Wearied with miseries, to lift our heads,
When suddenly a crime has sprung, whence fear
Of no ill threaten'd : lo ! the Baptist new,
Not sprung from heathen or ungodly parents,
Nor yet amidst a foreign worship bred,
But ours in race, a Levite in descent,

* The ruler of Arabia.

To God devoted from his earliest cradle,
A chief priest's son, a chief priest soon to be
Himself, had he not chos'n the bitter fruits
Of glory coveted to snatch, unbid,
Rather than in its season due to reap
The harvest ripe of honour. Wherefore he,
Lonely, inhabiting the lone retreats
Of the sequester'd country, hath beguiled,
With show of rigid sanctity, the rude
And untaught populace. With shaggy hair,
His body clad with skins, and wild beast's food,
And tricks of that sort, he hath on him turn'd
The eyes of all. The multitude believe him
A new seer giv'n suddenly to the world.
Already he hath to his side seduced
A host of the sequacious populace ;
Already, cities leaving, him alone
The people honour, him the nobles court,
Him monarchs dread. He, haughty through the
madness
Of the dull multitude, as if he were
A second Moses, dares new laws ordain ;
He crimes and sins with water expiates,
And ancient laws with novel rites corrupts.
And that he may more readily enjoy

The fury of the vulgar,* he assails
And rends the fathers with reproaches dire,
Gaining the people's favourable ears.
Wherefore if none come forward to oppose
The fierce attempts of this injurious robber
Raging with insolent audacity,
That sanctity renown'd throughout the world
Will perish soon, nay, is now perishing,
Nay, hath already perish'd.

GAMALIEL.

It becomes
Our calling nothing rashly to determine ;
Mild clemency becomes the fathers meek ;
The rashness of a youth may be forgiven,
But no excuse can veil our guiltiness ;
A very little space thy wrath restrain,
Let its rush settle, let thy grief subside.

MALCHUS.

Even you, Gamaliel, it appears, approve
The things this sacrilegious robber does.

* That is, the advantages arising to himself from rousing the multitude.

GAMALIEL.

O Malchus, Malchus, I do not approve,
Neither do I condemn, until I know
Both what the crime, and what its quality ;
But so far as regards this seer, the man,
So far as I have heard, is not so bad,
Nor should be thus put down by public hate.

MALCHUS.

O stars, O heav'ns, O earth, even this man lacks
not
A patron, who denies that he is bad.

GAMALIEL.

Who roots out vices, who good morals teaches,
Who walks first in the way he shows to others,
Wouldst thou persuade me that this man is bad ?

MALCHUS.

Who spurns the laws, who teaches novel sects,
And novel rites, with every reproach
Attacks the rulers, rails against the priests,
Wouldst thou persuade me that this man is
good ?

GAMALIEL.

If we were judges as severe and stern
Against ourselves, as often we are harsh
To other men, our profligacy less
Would lie exposed to public censure. Though
Ourselves we flatter often, and are preach'd
Blessèd, and of the common people thought
Inhabitants of heaven, sound, pious, chaste ;
Yet none of us the greatest vices lacks.

MALCHUS.

Though that be true, Gamaliel, is it right
For ev'ry fellow from the common ranks
To rail against the appointed magistrate ?
The people ought to hear, and to obey,
Be sober, nor refuse the curbs imposed ;
The ruler, if in aught the people stray,
Should bring them back again into the path ;
Let him a law be to himself ; but if
In anything he err, there is a God
Who sees and punishes the wicked man.

GAMALIEL.

Seems that a just law ?

MALCHUS.

Very much.

GAMALIEL.

Why so ?

MALCHUS.

For proper and peculiar to the people
Are rashness, error, blindness, ignorance.

GAMALIEL.

You'll oft find one rise from the people's ranks
Who yields not in his wisdom to the chiefs.

MALCHUS.

Why yield we not our seats to shepherds then ?

GAMALIEL.

A shepherd, Moses, David was a shepherd.

MALCHUS.

In all things by God's Spirit they were taught.

GAMALIEL.

And by the same Sp'rit he too can be taught.

MALCHUS.

Will God teach him, think'st thou, forsaking us?

GAMALIEL.

God nor regards the sceptre, nor the stem
Of parents, grace of form, nor royal wealth ;
But hearts not tainted by contagion foul,
Of cruelty, or fraud, or lies, or lust ;
In such a temple dwells that Holy Spirit.

MALCHUS.

Indeed, Gamaliel, to confess the truth,
You lately seem to me in sentiment
To approve this wicked sacrilegious sect.
No longer can I silently conceal it,
When you do deeds unworthy of your sires.
Thou who in truth shouldst most of all defend
Our power and privilege, dost most resist ;
And that in favour of a raving youth.
By God, I charge thee tell us what's the hope
On this course leads thee ; what gain get you
hence ?
Honours perchance or wealth to thee he'll give
Who overthrows our Order's dignity
To the foundation, and calls us to want.

GAMALIEL.

O Malchus, far you miss the proper mark,
If you suppose our Order's dignity
Can be defended by force, pow'r, or pride ;
Not that the way by which our fathers rose.

MALCHUS.

Old ways the old, and our ways us become ;
Let each one live the manners of his age.

GAMALIEL.

Nay, all good men all good ways aye become.

MALCHUS.

If we had any of our fathers' spirit. . . .

GAMALIEL.

And in the manners of our fathers lived. . . .

MALCHUS.

This knave had suffer'd death, not empty threats.

GAMALIEL.

Cruelty to our Order alien is.

MALCHUS.

What's done for God is holy, pious is.

GAMALIEL.

An impious piety to give to death
The innocent.

MALCHUS.

Call'st this man innocent
Who everything subverts?

GAMALIEL.

Well, if he sin,
Why dost thou not confute him publicly?
Why dost thou not display thy genius there?
Experienc'd, attack him who's but rude,
Learn'd, the unlearn'd; who art old, the
youth;
Perchance thou wilt recall him to the way,
And thereby win thyself glory of all.

MALCHUS.

This wound will not be cured by gentle means,
But by the rope, and by the sword, and fire;
Or if thou know'st of anything more cruel,
Than is the rope, than is the sword, or fire.

GAMALIEL.

Well, be he what thou say'st, or even worse,
If so thou wilt, there's one thing yet becomes thee,
First gently, as a friend, to warn the man ;
Lest any one imagine thou wouldst rather
Dash him down headlong, doubtful of salvation,
Than thou wouldst stretch a hand to hold him back,
Now rushing down to ruin. Much behoves
Thy fame, that all, ev'n enemies, should know
That thou wouldst all men save, wouldst none
destroy,
Save who with stubborn soul on ruin rushes.
One thing at least I beg thee ere thy wrath
Drag thee yet farther on out of the way,
Consider what it is thou canst effect
By such a resolution obstinate.

MALCHUS.

Why this, that I put down the enemy,
Console the good, the wavering confirm,
The shameless terrify, and by this blood
Sanction and stablish our forefathers' laws.

GAMALIEL.

Nay, rather this is what thou wilt effect,

That thou wilt be believèd by all men
To have advanced by power of tyranny,
Until thou couldest crush the holy man
Whom thou couldst not refute by argument.

MALCHUS.

As holy he, as rev'rend as you like,
Yet him the Sp'rit divine does not direct,
Since he neglects our fathers' ancient rites
And since in you I no protection find
'Gainst ruin, I'll seek succour from the king.

CHORUS.

Gamaliel well advises, as I judge ;
And do thou to his admonitions yield.
But wrath, the enemy of good advice,
Clouds the acuteness of the mind, and shuts
The ears to the most salutary warnings.

GAMALIEL.

He's gone, incensed with wrath, and swoll'n with
pride.
I earnestly, as far as e'er I could,
Have warn'd the raving man, endeavourèd

To soothe his savage spirit with soft words,
And faithful counsel giv'n him ; but, ingrate,
So far is he from thinking that a favour,
That he'll ev'n hate me for my good desert.
Such now indeed 's the common way o' the world,
And 'tis the greatest vice, ev'n in our Order,
Which cheats the crowd with show of sanctity,
That you may safe condemn the laws of God ;
If you dare aught against our institutes,
We strive by gold to raise up enemies,
To take you off by poison, to suppress
By witnesses suborn'd ; with rumours false
We fill the royal ears ; by rumour false
Avenge whatever has our minds displeased,
And kindle up his turbid soul to rage ;
By feignèd charges, and by calumnies
We arm the onset of his cruel wrath.
Now he forgetful of all modesty
Goes to the court ; will feign that new sects rise,
And that the fathers' worship is forsaken,
The king's authority exposed to scorn,
In fine, whatever suits his circumstance,
Masking his crimes with honourable names.
If he perceive by these the king not moved,
He'll forge a bloodier weapon, loud exclaim

That bands are sworn against the royal head,
That secret conferences are being held ;
A horrid deed preparing ; plots afoot ;
And that assemblies meet in dead of night ;
That private wealth by impious factions grows.
These he will feign or bloodier, for he is
Of an ungovernable spirit, and
Contriver aye of barbarous cruelty.
These poisons of his own imagining
He will distil into the royal ears.
And it is almost always such a fault,
And almost always common to all kings,
To tell-tales easily to lend themselves ;
A tale so much the bloodier 'tis it wins
The easier credit ; empty fears they feign
And conjure to themselves ; and the light breath
Of fickle fame pursue ; who faithful warns,
Is reckon'd timid, languid, torpid, dull.
We splendid in no virtue now invert
The very names of virtue giv'n of old ;
But haughty in our splendid titles we
Beguile the inexperienced multitude.
But so far as regards this holy seer,
Oh that our Order would with caution act
And moderation. If he's hither sent

By counsel and design of God, no power
Of man will then be able to resist;
But if he weaves a fraud-concealèd crime,
With his own sword he soon will stab himself.
Let every man judge of it as he will,
If any here would follow my advice,
Let him from guiltless blood his hands keep pure,
Nor rashly lavish be of holy blood;
Lest the examples which we cruelly
On other men determine, afterwards
Should on our own heads in our turn recoil.
Has Herod not enough of cruelty,
Unless the fury of a raving mind,
A torch applying to his rage, augment it?

Scene Second.



CHORUS.

How deep a night with lurking places dark
Covers our mortal minds !
In how great darkness we the seasons spend
Of brief life gliding with swift lapse away !
False modesty conceals the impudent,
The shade of piety the impious hides,
The troubled in their looks feign peace and calm,
The false oft feign the truth.
Who on his looks bore sombre gravity,
A model singular of simple life,
Now rages wild with fury ; passion drags
Him on, he ruthless kindles into rage.
As vapour from Etnæan chimneys whirls
Rocks and stones round in revolution swift,
As into glowing ashes' furious flame
The vast Vesuvius burns ;

Such this dark deadly fury of revenge,
That drives him on to slay the guiltless seer,
That by the crime atrocious he may wreck
The simple naked truth.
O thou desire of glory, swollen with vain pride,
Mother of numerous ills ;
And praise in specious guise of honour feign'd,
Most splendidly array'd ;
When once thou hold'st the kingdom of the mind,
Thou fascinat'st the soul with poisons sweet,
And binding reason, thou perturbest all
The high court of the breast.
Thee truthfulness and shame, and piety flee,
Thee faith and hope, the guest of better times,
Who last forsook the earth,
Through vices shameful grown.
Oh could some artist upon us bestow
Pow'r to behold, clouds from the brow removed,
The naked cares within the hidden breast,
And utterly reveal the dark recess
Of the most secret soul, thou wouldst behold,
Stabled in that small cavern, monsters dread,
Shaped into wondrous forms ; more than in lands
Remote, or Nilus, or the Ganges bears,
Or Libya in savage prodigies

A fertile soil, or snowy Caucasus
Horrid with darksome dens.
Nor there the bloody tigress' rage would fail,
Nor fierceness of the tawny lionness,
Nor the dire thirst of cruel wolves for blood,
Which by no carnage can be satisfied,
Nor baleful basilisk with pois'nous breath,
Nor asp that brings the long and final sleep,
The scorpion dreaded for his forky tail,
And sounding through seaweeds the crocodile
With feignèd tears, nor craft of fox, nor treach'rous
 play
Of Pharian hyæna.
Feign'd piety oft cruel tyrants hides,
Impious morals the fringèd stole conceals ;
In homely weeds hath naked virtue sought
To hide, 'neath shadow of a rustic cot,
Nor she for splendid titles sells herself ;
At the mad tumults of the forum laughs,
And breath of popular applause ; nor sits
Assiduous at a mighty patron's door ;
Far in the secret country she remote
The silent years spends of a blessèd life,
To none known but herself.

Scene Third.



THE QUEEN, HEROD.

QUEEN.

ART thou so dull thou dost not yet perceive
Royal authority totters? Seest thou
Not yet, O blind, the plots so foul prepared
Against thy head? For if this demagogue
Another year should live, thou 'lt threaten him
In vain with bonds, with prison, and with cross:
Already haughty he surveys his power,
Already with his herd of followers
Outshines the minions of the regal court.

HEROD.

What danger fear'st thou from a crowd unarm'd?

QUEEN.

Secret conventicles if you allow,
You well may think that nothing should be fear'd.

HEROD.

But this man doth instruct the multitude
Who rush to hear him of their own accord.

QUEEN.

A wide-spread faction should the more be fear'd.

HEROD.

The holiness of the man forbids that crime.

QUEEN.

Full oft that cloak the wicked purpose hides.

HEROD.

Force should be fear'd from satraps purple clad.

QUEEN.

Guile should be fear'd from hypocrites austere.

HEROD.

He's poor, unarm'd, the wave his thirst supplies,
The woods give food, the earth a grassy bed,
What plot could he devise against the sceptre?

QUEEN.

Thou seest his garb ; his food, his drink thou seest ;
But what lies hidden in his heart thou seest not.

HEROD.

Wretched the lot of kings, to fear the wretched !

QUEEN.

Most wretched, if the prey of what they fear'd not.

HEROD.

What then remains that shall be safe for kings ?

QUEEN.

If they remove what strikes their peace, all things.

HEROD.

A good king and a tyrant differ thus ;
That saves his foes, this is himself the foe
Of his own citizens.

QUEEN.

Either is hard,
To perish or destroy ; if choice must be,
'Tis better to destroy an enemy.

HEROD.

If neither needs be, miserable either.

QUEEN.

Must nought be roughly done in such a tumult,
When fury rages in the changeful crowd ;
When laws, religion, the authority
Of princes are the laughter of the mob ?
Beware, the semblance false of clemency
Will sway thy mind from justice ; what appears
To thee to be a gracious gentleness,
To one who scans it with a closer look
It is the very height of cruelty ;
For while thou sparest one seditious wretch,
Lost to all good, thou goest about to lose
All, whom he toils to arm against thy head.
Fancy that come, which needs must come at length,
The fickle populace aroused to arms,
All everywhere ablaze with woeful war,
Waste farms relinquish'd, and the cities burnt,
And virgins ravishèd by brutal force,
And armies join'd in doubtful victory ;
When licence shall have burst the curb of laws,
Too late thou then wilt curse thy clemency.
And lo ! here is the pest, the head o' the ill,

Here comes the Censor. Ask himself; you'll hear
More from himself than fame has spread abroad,
Or I'm deceived. Nor do I wonder now
That there are some your sceptre who despise,
When you incite the bad by clemency.

HEROD.

When much you can, it is a good king's part
To set bounds to the sceptre.

QUEEN.

Is it so?
And shall this fellow set the sceptre bounds?
Say, shall the kingdom at his will be held?
If in thee were the spirit of a king. . . .

HEROD.

Why don't you go? Leave these things to my care.

QUEEN.

Why don't I go, lest I anew should bear
His insults to my face as formerly.
And when a queen must unavenged give place
To the most base, what hope of justice then
To other men shall give encouragement?

Scene Fourth.



HEROD, JOHN, CHORUS.

HEROD.

Is she now gone? She's gone. Let's then to this.
'Tis not to move thee, nor that thou shouldst deem
It is a new thing, if a woman wrong'd,
Rich, noble, powerful, in a word a queen,
Is more than justly angry and displeased.
Even you, yourself, can the best witness be
How much I've always favourèd your weal.
For all the people's hatred strikes at thee,
And asks that thou be tried and punishèd ;
The nobles murmur, and the priests complain,
And what so much inflames the public plaint,
I'll briefly tell. You openly assail
All ranks of men in slanderous harangues :
Deceive the crowd in ancient laws unlearn'd,
Spreading the deadly venom of new dogma ;
And with seditious cries thou undermin'st

The state, and public quiet of the realm ;
Forbiddest soldiers to obey their chiefs,
The people Cæsar to obey, whilst thou
Dost promise to the vulgar kingdoms new ;
That they will be freed from the foreign yoke
Thou tellest them, and rousest with vain hope ;
Nor lett'st the rebel race remain at rest.
As if we 'd borne too few calamities,
Madly anew provok'st the Roman arms.
Nor do I doubt what thou wouldst absent dare,
When openly thou hast reproach'd myself
With shameless nuptials ; and endeavourèd
To kindle against me the people's hate ;
And hast attempted, what was in thy power,
To set my brother and myself at war.
And, as if thou 'dst accomplish'd too few crimes,
And darèd'st all against the weal of all,
Thou now preparest war against the heavens ;
Attempting to destroy the sacred rites,
Wherein this kingdom heretofore hath stood.
At this the universal people chafe ;
Complaining that too slow I vindicate
Our fathers' laws ; but hitherto by me
Has nothing too severe 'gainst thee been done ;
And now whate'er the favour can confer

Of a benevolent and friendly judge,
Shall bounteously be giv'n by me to thee.
For no Assyrian nor Egyptian sire
'Got me a tyrant greedy of your blood ;
The same land is the country, parent, nurse,
Alike of thee and me ; as oft as one
Even of the lowest vulgar perishes,
Methinks a member's from my body torn ;
'Tis my blood then that seems to be let out :
A just and easy judge thou'lt have in Herod.
If thou canst meet what's else laid to thy charge,
Whate'er thou formerly hast rashly said
'Gainst me and mine, I freely pardon thee.
For thou shalt know, the people witnessing,
That I neglect a private injury,
Avenge a public wrong. And oh that thou
May'st so rebut the other charges too,
That thine approvèd innocence may leave
No just occasion of severity.

CHORUS.

Go on thus to be gracious ; thou shalt live
Illustrious to remote posterity ;
Nor think that gold or crowds of armèd men
Can make a realm as safe as when it is

By love defended, and by loyalty,
That springs from justice.

JOHN.

He to whom God committed hath to hold
The people's reins, behoveth much to hear ;
To credit all can noways needful be :
Fear, envy, favour, interest, and grief
Often suppress the truth. If any one
Or of the people, or the fathers think
That I have anything too harshly said
Against him, he must needs his life condemn
Before he blame my speech. This is my way,
Has always been, in public, public faults
To reprehend ; in secret, nought I do,
And nothing teach. Nor secret lurking-place
Hunt after ; neither men but vices blame.
When soldiers came and ask'd me in what way
They equally could serve the king, and God,
I them forbade to beat, to rob, to steal,
Use violence, the simple circumvent,
And bound their wishes by the wage allow'd.
Nor preach I hope of a new state of things,
Save that which ye believe as well as I,
By ancient prophets told ; nor yet meanwhile

Can one be found out of so many thousands,
Who at my instigation has condemn'd
His lawful prince. These charges, whether fame
Reports, or blind wrath raging wild invents,
With headlong wish to harm, the naked truth
Alone with ease refutes. How piously
I keep the rites, and ancient institutes,
No surer proof could be, in my opinion,
Than this, that he who, honourable man,
Becomes informer, and my crimes proclaims,
Does not come forward in the light of day ;
In secret murmurs, where to feign is easy.
That I denied that thou couldst rightly have
Thy brother's wife, consider with thyself,
Whether 'tis better to please thee, or God.
And oh that all who dedicate themselves
To monarchs' friendship had this mind in them,
Rather to speak the salutary truth,
Than pleasing flatt'ries bringing future harm,
How many ills and cares were then shut out !
If I have anything too freely said
Aforetime, and too truly, thou, as right
In one who right defends, who art thyself
Both good and just, in good and just part take ;
And set those limits to thy sovereign power,

The limits of the laws to thee prescribe.
Whatever right thou here hast over others,
God over thee and over other kings,
The King of all, obtains. Whatever then
Thou now determinest upon my head,
Think God determines that upon thine own.

HEROD.

Talk of the heavens, when thou'st come to the
stars ;
Suffer earth's laws, while on the earth you live.

JOHN.

The kingdoms of the earth I reverence,
And I their kings obey ; the eternal realms
I think my country, and its King I serve.

HEROD.

The thing is clamant, how you kings obey ;
You'd have the kings obedient to your laws.

JOHN.

If I might make the laws, thus would I say,
The peoples should obey their kings, kings God.

HEROD.

Enough disputed : lead him hence again ;
It is a tangled matter ; till the whole
More certainly lie open and discover'd,
I am determined to determine nought.

CHORUS.

Whoe'er believes that in a tyrant's speech
He views the secret meanings of the mind,
Should know he trusts in a deceptive glass.
Oh may the sire celestial prosper all !
But what it fears the mind dreads to forebode.

HEROD.

How wretched and how anxious is the lot
Of kings, nor speech by speaking can express,
Nor keenness of the mind by thinking know.
The vulgar think that we alone are free,
That we alone are blessèd, we whom want
Besieges, whom fear crucifies, and whom
A miserable slavery dooms to pain.
Whate'er the people love, desire, or fear,
They freely dare confess ; they far from dread
Enjoy their mod'rate competence ; but we
Must out of doors put on a mask of honour ;

We are compell'd to promise courteously
With looks benign ; in public to speak fair ;
With feigning bosom to defer our bile ;
And our just anger to fit time suppress ;
To threaten most, when most our anxious breast
Causes of fear oppress. The populace
Despise a gentle prince, a stern prince hate.
The fickle multitude must be obey'd,
And be commanded ; I can nothing do
At my own will. If I destroy this prophet,
I shall offend the people ; if I save him,
I ill consult the interests of my sway.
What then is to be done ? Or is there doubt ?
Needs must I to my empire have regard ?
I'm nearest to myself, and first of kin.
The people must be servèd for the sceptre ;
What could be then more foolish than to lose
The kingdom, while I try to please the people ?
The people rashly joy and wrath assume,
And rashly throw away. Now I'm resolved
To stablish my authority with blood ;
The vulgar will be easily appeased.
If wider I allow the present ill
To spread abroad, 'twill baffle remedy ;
For instance, has he not already dared

To cast my shameless marriage in my teeth?
If I unpunish'd suffer that from him,
His impudence will not, I trow, rest there.
Now to his laws he'll wish the sceptre bent;
Now he will chains upon his captives bind;
Now he will wish, not to be ruled, but rule;
To kings he will give laws; he high and low
Will equally confound; a spreading ill
Should presently be cured; a recent flame
Be quench'd before it spread; injuries old
When meekly borne provoke new calumnies.
If with the favour of the people I
Can punishment exact, I'll not neglect
The favouring people's favour; but if not,
I'm fix'd; all must give place to sovereignty.
For what that Malchus babbles of the laws,
And curious questions agitates, entangled
In vainest disputations, I believe
'Tis no concern of mine, if only this
One law the people know is to be held,
Whatever I can do beyond the laws,
They're to consider that legitimate.

Scene Fifth.



CHORUS.

O FOUNDER of the spacious world, and sire,
At whose nod tremble all things far and wide,
Heaven furnishèd with many a shining fire,
The earth with varied flowers adorn'd and clad,
And the seas swelling with the refluent tide ;
Hath not fame brought unto our ears
(Fame that knows all of former time)
The splendid deeds which thou hast done ?
When thou by strength of thy strong hand,
The kingdoms haughty in their gold and wealth,
Extinguish'd quite, pluck'd from the root,
To plant our kindred in the land,
A land not gainèd by our sword and spear,
Or counsel, or resource in war.
But Heaven's all-powerful grace instead
Us safely through their fierce hosts led.

Oh, art not thou that King of Isaac's seed?
Oh, art not thou that God of Heber's race?
Who led us when we trampled down
Their treacherous towers, and fierce foes slew;
Oft we have to our country brought
Victorious palms, not confident
In our own strength, but thee our guide,
And thy protection. Wherefore then
Forsak'st us utterly, our sire,
The people whom thou loved'st before?
Why leavest us the byword of our foes?
Low lies religion; piety is sport;
Empurpled fraud reigns in the royal court;
Thy holy people give their pious necks
As victims to the bloody axe;
The prophets perish by the tyrant's sword;
Our sorrows laughter to our foes afford;
Under the specious guise of piety,
They rule the realm who punishment deserve;
They who the realm deserve in prison pent
Suffer an undeservèd punishment.
Arise, O God, and bring thy people aid;
Arise, O blessed parent, let the foe
Behold thee, such as erst our sires
Beheld submerging in the deep Red Sea

The Pharian chariots. Such as thee
The youth of the fate-telling seer,
When open'd were his eyes, beheld
Urging the fiery chariots,
And scattering flames o'er all the plain.
When error's darkness has been chased away,
Which in a murky cloud
Obscures the light of human mind,
Thee, shall the earth which warms in earliest sun,
Thee, shall the earth which last beholds the light
Of ruddy flame submergèd in the deep,
Acknowledge thee, alone omnipotent.

Scene Sixth.



MALCHUS, JOHN.

MALCHUS.

SUCH is the state of mortal men's affairs,
That if God profferèd to thee thy choice,
Thou might'st uncertain wander, what to seek,
Or what to shun not knowing. Wishest thou
For thee and thine wealth, honour, opulence?
These oft the gainers of their wish destroy.
Or imprecatest on thine enemy
Bonds, prison, flight? These oft prepare for him
The greatest glory, injury to thee.
Which I at my own risk have found so true,
That I need not afar examples seek.
For when abiding upon mountain heights
Remote, this Baptist new the populace
Bewitch'd, and with him drew a num'rous herd
Of the too credulous people, I alone

Came forward, others holding, fearful, back,
The Pharisean rank to vindicate ;
Nor have I ceasèd every means to try,
Until hard bonds have press'd his guilty hands ;
The public prison check'd the foe's career ;
And all the court I've fillèd with his crimes.
But nought avail, so far as I can see,
Bonds, prison, crimes ; the direful influence
Of this bad pestilence hath occupied
The impious people's minds, and all men's breasts
So drank the deadly poison, that his fall
They honour, and his dangers they bewail.
But me where'er I go they execrate,
And at me, scornful, with the finger point,
And look on me with eyes of light malign.
They favour him, the sacrilegious wretch,
Who has confounded every difference
Of nature and of ranks ; for him they wait,
For him they watch before the closèd prison.
I ween that nothing is more miserable,
Than we are who, neglecting other things,
Have giv'n ourselves up to the people's good ;
Whoever sells himself a slave to them,
Should know well that he's placed his favour ill ;
For they are always wont with turn malign

To favour bad men, nobles to despise.
Whither betake me now? What first complain of?
With whom be most in wrath, and whom first aid?
The impious people love the prophet false;
The Rabbins fear to speak, the king connives,
The nobles slight; sole on these shoulders I,
I, on these shoulders sole, support and prop
Our fathers' falling rites, no hand to help;
Alone I sorrow for the public weal;
What then? Shall I desert my duty now?
Betray the laws and our most sacred rites?
Our honour and our Order's dignity?
And let myself become the scorn of foes?
I'll let me truly? What else can I now?
Shall I alone bear that which all refuse?
And sacrifice myself while warding off
The ruin of the state? Let God defend
His own cause; since 'tis now the way o' th' world,
That every man looks to himself alone,
I'm nearest to myself and first of kin.
If ill I carry on the commonwealth,
On my head ruin verges; those who now
Favour me most, when standing, will the first
Make at me with their heels when I am down.
But if I well, I've placed my favour ill,

I'll nothing bring upon myself but envy.
Gamaliel's counsel pleases now too late,
Unless perchance none can be wise too late.
I wish they rather here sought constancy
Than punish'd rashness when the action's done.
Let each man think what seems unto him good :
I'll extricate myself from molestations,
And patch up favour with this mighty prophet ;
Nor, trow I, will the simple man refuse.
But if he show himself of sterner stuff,
I'll move all means to make the people think
That he has not by my arts perishèd ;
If I regain the people's favour thus,
The thing has not entirely ended ill.
And here he is, I trow ; 'tis he indeed ;
Lo, what a crowd surrounding follows him,
The sacrilegious wretch, while we meanwhile
In the mid city sit 'mong empty seats ;
But let me hear first what this master says.

JOHN.

O mighty ruler, author, Lord of all ;
Thee, what the air in her loose bosom holds,
Whate'er the earth brings forth, whate'er the seas
Beneath their waters nourish, own as God,

Know thee their parent, and the laws once given
Willing obey in path immutable ;
At thy command spring paints the fields with
 flowers,
The summer gives her fruits, the autumn wine,
And winter clothes the hills with whit'ning frosts ;
The winding rivers roll into the main
Their heaps of water, the sea ebbs and flows,
The night Diana,* Phœbus fires the day,
And lights the world with never-resting lamp.
There's nothing, in a word, in heaven or earth,
That does not willingly obey its king,
Its parent love, and in its proper sphere
Its seal and service to its maker show.
But man alone, who far before the rest
Ought to rejoice, and follow God's commands,
He sole is chief contemner of them all ;
His precepts spurns, rejects the curb of laws ;
Runs headlong to all wickedness, and metes
Justice by pleasure, weighs the right with might.

MALCHUS.

Thus far thy principles are just and right.

* The moon ; Phœbus, the sun.

JOHN.

Nor at the nations wonder I so much
Who through the world in error wander wide,
As at the people who loud boast themselves
The heritage of God, and with reproach
Others assail and call them impious ;
When not a nation which the sun surveys,
Wherever in his course he views the earth,
In the whole world doth more unbridled live.

MALCHUS.

Thus far thou 'st certainly said nought but truth.

JOHN.

Nor this the fickle vulgar's fault alone ;
O Levite shining far in snowy robe,
And scribe puff'd up in knowledge of the law,
And you, ye reverend men of age mature,
Error oblique drags in its devious folds ;
The widow's cause in your hands is betray'd,
The orphan's too ; the rich óppress the poor ;
And right and wrong alike are bought and sold.

MALCHUS.

I burst with rage ; can I this silent hear ?

JOHN.

But you, O Rabbins, who pretend to excel
In sanctity and knowledge other men,
And you, the sacred dignity of priests,
And thou, the chief priest of the sacred college,
Ye tithe each pot-herb brought forth by the earth ;
Not you can anise, garlic, mint, nor rue,
Not you can nettle, nor green hay escape ;
But if it be forsooth, to read or teach
The answers of the prophets, and to show
The path of holier living, mute at length
Is your authority ; ye bark not then,
Dumb dogs, nor drive away the hungry wolves,
Raging around the sheep-fold ; said I wolves ?
Ye are yourselves the wolves ; ye flay the flock.
Their wool affords you covering, their milk
Your thirst allays, their flesh your hunger sates ;
Ye do not feed the flock, ye feed yourselves.

MALCHUS.

Hence concord to the mischief ; longer shall I
Those contumelies suffer to be cast
Upon mine Order ? Nay, should God from heaven
Send me a charge that these things should be heard,
I sooner would desert his plain commands,

'Than I would hear them spoken to our shame.
I cannot longer hear it ; hark, good man,
Sole master of the crowd, is that your doctrine ?
Dost thou instruct the silly people so ?

JOHN.

If thou art good, my words concern thee not.

MALCHUS.

Concerns it you to rail against the priests ?

JOHN.

I think it well when vile men are reviled.

MALCHUS.

'Tis seemly that a youth obey his elders.

JOHN.

'Tis seemlier that all men God obey.

MALCHUS.

God bade thee utter then these words forsooth !

JOHN.

The truth bids always all men speak the truth.

MALCHUS.

It often profits to conceal the truth.

JOHN.

When gain is joined with sin I wish it not.

MALCHUS.

Thou deem'st it sin unless thou 'rt speaking sin.

JOHN.

I deem it sin to witness thousands perish,
When I could them into the way recall.

MALCHUS.

Recall? Are we not shepherds of the sheep?

JOHN.

Yes, if 'tis all the same to feed and flay.

MALCHUS.

Mind your own business, and let ours alone.

JOHN.

A neighbour's business here is also mine.

MALCHUS.

Who art thou, pray, with such authority
Endow'd? Art thou Christ promised to our sires?

JOHN.

I am not.

MALCHUS.

Art thou the Prophet?

JOHN.

I am not.

MALCHUS.

Art thou Elias?

JOHN.

I am not Elias.

MALCHUS.

If thou art none of these, nor Christ our hope,
The Prophet, nor Elias, how durst thou
Originate a new baptismal rite?
Whom shall we finally report thee? tell.

JOHN.

The Voice am I on mountain heights remote
Crying, Prepare the way, the paths make straight

For the Lord's advent ; at whose coming glad
The hollow valleys shall unfold themselves
Into the even plains, the lofty hills
Their stony summits level with the ground.
In his name I the people wash with water,
For whom I were unworthy as a slave
To loose his shoes ; whom none acknowledges,
Although he walks and lives among you now.

MALCHUS.

What riddles this man weaves and plays with words
Evasive ! By what miracle art thou
Prepared thy authority to prove ?

JOHN.

And I might in my turn of thee demand
With justice, by what miracle art thou
Prepared thy authority to prove ?

MALCHUS.

How insolent he is ! though thou conceal'st,
Yet all men know what drags thee into fury.
You wish in sooth to grow by hate of us,
To compass wealth and glory by our loss,
And by your wicked arts to rise to power ;

Us you deceive not, you deceive yourself,
Neither art thou the first who in this way
Hast gone on to deceive ; oh that thou wert
The last to suffer punishment deserved ;
Or rather by my admonition change
Into a better mind, and as thou wert
A guide to lead the erring from the path,
Changed, be the better guide to lead them
back

Into the fold. I've seen who on them bore
In garb and look severest sanctity,
The readier to obtain a great repute
For simple, modest minds ; when by these arts
To honours and to wealth they had attain'd,
Lay bare their hidden nature by degrees ;
Scorn openly the probity well-feign'd,
And to their real feelings give the reins.
But if the heights of honour thus thou seek'st,
Thy inexperience of the world deceives thee ;
Not that the path men to high glory climb,
Unless experience, not the worst of teachers,
And age, the parent of experience,
Beguile me, thou wouldst better far consult
The int'rests of thy fortune and thy fame,
By seeking for the safe than for the grand.

JOHN.

If what I speak be true, and do be right,
Why should then any one bid me be mute ?
If false, thou, learnèd, show my ignorance.

MALCHUS.

This you'll repent when punishèd by death.

JOHN.

Go, threaten that to those who fear their fate.

MALCHUS.

If long I live I'll see to't you shall not
Have reason to rejoice in insolence.
You'll know yet what it is to scorn the old,
To lacerate the Scribes with foul reproach,
'The Rabbins to provoke with saucy words ;
And since you scorn to have us as your friends,
You'll learn what hatred of old men can do.

Scene Seventh.



CHORUS.

WHOE'ER prepares himself to steal,
Avoids the shining lamps of night ;
Th' assassin hates a flaming torch,
As if it of his fury knew ;
A boy refuses medicine
When it 's with bitter wormwood mix'd ;
From salutary plaster shrinks
The open wound. Whose secret breast
Hid evils of the mind aye gnaw,
To him the truth distasteful is ;
For truth the turbid heart reveals.
But, O ye hypocrites severe !
Who, close and stern, with gloomy brow,
In execrable gain delight ;
However slyly ye conceal,
Through error of the credulous crowd,

Secret base crimes, and cover o'er
The foul sink of the impious mind,
Yet you your secret conscience gnaws,
Chiding you ever ; in your breast
A hidden executioner
Is closed, and scourges with stern whip.
Oh, three times bless'd is he, and more,
Who pure of mind is not accused
At the domestic judges' bar ;
Nor by the torturer within
The breast enclosed is always lash'd.

Scene Eighth.



MALCHUS, CHORUS, THE QUEEN.

MALCHUS.

No sure hope 's in the king ; he has betray'd,
By his depraved ambition miserably,
His own cause, and the public cause alike ;
While he is studying to please the people,
While chasing the light breath of vulgar fame,
He with a show of lenity has striven
Me to the people's hatred to subject,
And vindicate his wrongs at my expense.
For instance, if he sees the people take
The Baptist's slaughter ill, at once he 's ready
With my head to appease the populace ;
But if the common people lightly bear
The taking off of the new faction's chief,
He wishes it to be believed that he
Has with great glory thus himself avenged ;
Cunningly, thus alternate spectacles

Of the despisèd blood of citizens,
Kings to themselves exhibit ; thus they play
With mutual slaughter. Whatsoe'er the crowd
Approves, they claim ; preach it was done by them ;
And arrogate our toils to their own praise.
But if the breath of popular favour turn
In other channels than they thought and aim'd,
Upon their servants they the blame transfer ;
And in our guiltless blood and cheap held life,
Avert the charges of accusing fame.
Remains the sole partaker of our grief
The queen, as furious as a tigress robb'd
Of whelps, because the Baptist, speaking late,
In presence of the king, did not approve
The breaking of her former marriage vow ;
But openly, as by the law forbid,
Condemn'd his nuptials with his brother's wife.
While burns the recent flame of surging wrath,
I'll set a torch to her distracted mind,
And fan with proper speeches. And behold
Now at the very time she shows herself.

CHORUS.

Now flame to flame, now poison poison nears ;
The last and greatest danger is at hand.

MALCHUS.

Hail, queen ! O splendid honour of thy race,
And solely fit for such exalted state.

QUEEN.

And thou, too, Rabbi Malchus ; but why sad ?

MALCHUS.

What pricks my mind, I reckon, vexes thine.

QUEEN.

Perchance ; but tell more clearly what it is.

MALCHUS.

Why dost thou suffer with a tranquil soul
The royal dignity to be despised ?
The dread authority of regal name,
Sacred through all the world, to be made vile ?
The sceptre subject to the rabble's scorn ?

QUEEN.

What can I do ? Teach what the remedy.

MALCHUS.

Wrath worthy of thy spirit and thy birth,
And marriage bed at length in heart conceive.

QUEEN.

'Tis all already done : I burst with wrath ;
I weep, I rail, I clamour ; wrath nor tears,
Nothing avail ; my words go with the wind.

MALCHUS.

If thou wert of so great authority
As wife should be with husband, would he thus
Have unavengèd borne thine injuries,
His own, to speak more truly ?

QUEEN.

Thou dost see,
Malchus, thyself, the wishes of the people.
Perchance the king believed this punishment
Would blunt his spirit keen, and mitigate
His stern audacity.

MALCHUS.

If you suppose
This robber's savage and vindictive spirit
Has been by fetters or by prison check'd,
Thou art deceivèd. Keener raves the fury
Of the wild beasts which the burst cage pours forth,
Than which the lofty woods on trackless hills

Have always nourishèd. What will he not,
When freed, whose fetters now the people honour?
Wrath when provoked, is kindled, is not soothed ;
By contumelies borne, the haughty soul
Is urged to fury.

QUEEN.

Nay, he rather will
Be soften'd by this benefit, when he
Who through his pertinacity had perish'd,
Has been set free by royal clemency.

MALCHUS.

What thou a benefit, he deems a wrong ;
He oft' will remember thou hast bound,
Than that thou 'st loosed.

QUEEN.

Thou tell'st of a stern spirit.

MALCHUS.

That planted is in almost every breast ;
For what thou 'st well done, favour soon decays ;
What thou hast ill done, no one e'er forgets ;
And almost all men hate the benefits

Conjoin'd in mind with their own evil deeds.
Consider that as often as the Baptist
Recalls to mind thy benefits to him,
He must as oft remember his own crimes ;
He'll not believe that he is freed from guilt,
But that while guilty in thine estimation,
He has, by bad ambition, been set free ;
His punishment deferrèd for a season,
Thy righteous anger to its time suppress'd.

QUEEN.

Benignity the savage spirit soothes.

MALCHUS.

What by long use has harden'd to the worse,
Thou much more easily wilt break than bend.

QUEEN.

Why don't you then advise me in my doubts ?

MALCHUS.

If you will trust me, I'll soon make it plain.

QUEEN.

Advise thou ; no delay shall be through me.

MALCHUS.

By action, and by foresight, and request,
Great deeds are done, and not by sluggish ease.

QUEEN.

By action, and by foresight, and request ?
If nothing thou advance, is it not best
To let it rest, than spend thy toil in vain,
And be to others laughter ?

MALCHUS.

Oft what force
Could not accomplish, labour overcomes.
Nor falls the lofty stricken oak at once ;
Nor at the first assault the warlike ram
O'erthrows the walls ; what often thou hast thought
Could not be done, time bringeth it about ;
What reason cannot, importunity
Storms for the most part. Therefore thou solicit ;
Mix prayers with tears, and anger with advice,
And with reproaches flattering blandishments ;
Canvass thy husband, sedulous every way,
And all occasions ev'rywhere embrace.
If openly it can't be done, lay snares.
And as for me, this I 'm resolved upon,
That I 'll ne'er rest until the deed is done.

Scene Ninth.



CHORUS.

ENVY at length, and bitter grief inflamed
By th' impious furies, hasten to exert
Against the holy seer
The whole strength of their cruel rage.
On that side direful calumny,
With power tyrannic in foul league conjoin'd,
Through wicked wiles the battle fights ;
Upon this side the harmless truth,
On whom no follower waits, nor potent guard,
Dauntless despises their terrific threats.
As many hostile weapons as are aim'd
Against a single head ;
Against a single youth
As many wicked plots are laid.
He like a hardy oak
Shorn by the raving Northern blast

Or like a rock whereon the sea
With surging billow beats,
Is stricken by no fear.
O deity to all men venerable, candid truth,
Whom neither warlike force by fear,
Nor fraud by treachery and plots,
Can from thy even step prevail to drive ;
Alone thou dost not dread
The heaviest vicissitudes
Of fortune varying oft.
Thou makest human bosoms proof
Against all ill,
For thou alone canst arm the mind
With power insup'able ;
And thou forbidd'st the right hand of the Fates,
Mistress alike of life and death,
To be to us a terror.
But I desist to go to meet the seer ;
How can I with my wretched tidings fill
The ears of all men ?
And lo ! he stands before the prison door.
O holier offspring of a holy parent,
And the sole hope of pristine innocence,
Look to thy safety while the time permits :
The Rabbi Malchus plots his treacheries ;

The queen at her wits' end in secret raves ;
The courtiers flatter ; and the king his thoughts
Dissembles ; others fear to speak the truth :
Now comes the time of hazard uttermost.

Scene Tenth.

JOHN, CHORUS.

JOHN.

WHAT danger is it?

CHORUS.

Death's bourn is at hand.

JOHN.

Is that the greatest ill that threatens me?

CHORUS.

No greater evil can descend on man.

JOHN.

Although the tyrant's force and treachery
Should cease, mere length of time itself brings death,
An evil to be fear'd by wicked men,
But to the innocent desirable.

CHORUS.

Though for thy safety thou hast no concern,
Yet let regard for us have power to move thee ;
Somewhat abate that dauntlessness of soul ;
By supplications bend the royal mind ;
Through friends I hope he's not inexorable.

JOHN.

And do I not assiduously so ?

CHORUS.

Oh would that God may put that mind in thee !

JOHN.

No need to pray ; that mind has long been mine.
With my blood the king hastes to sate his wrath ;
Nor I refuse ; how more appease the king
Than when we wish, and do not wish the same ?

CHORUS.

Fine words !

JOHN.

What then is your advice to me ?
There are two kings who opposites command :

The one celestial, clement, kind, and good ;
The other earthly, cruel, fierce, and bad ;
One threatens death, the other death to fear
Forbids me, largely promises reward,
If violence I fear not ; one can kill
The body, but the other can torment
Body and soul together in the flame
Inevitable. Say, when these contend,
Whom would your counsel urge me to obey ?

CHORUS.

Herod you never can appease hereafter,
If now you let the proffer'd chance escape :
The wrath of God is always placable.

JOHN.

The slower that the wrath divine is roused,
The heavier punishment it claims when moved.

CHORUS.

Death spurn you so, which God desired to be
A dread to mortals ? Lest rash offer'd cause
Should wrench in twain the holy partnership
Of soul and body, he with mutual bond
Of love has knit the body and the soul.

JOHN.

I spurn not death ; by momentary death
I flee eternal ; that brief loan of life
Which God to me has given, at his demand,
I willingly restore.

CHORUS.

Dost thou, who art
A parent, leave thy children orphans so ?

JOHN.

He ne'er will be an orphan who believes
That God his father is.

CHORUS.

Art movèd nought
By kindred, nought by tears of weeping friends,
Whom to the cruel tyrant thou forsakest ?

JOHN.

Them I forsake not, rather I by them
Forsaken am. For I run on to death
I' the way appointed from the world's beginning ;
Truly we're all to this condition born,
Whoe'er enjoy the gift of the sweet light,

One lot pertains to all, we tend to death ;
And day by day conducts us thitherward.
Death God has wish'd to be a punishment
To wicked men, a haven to the good,
The termination of a lengthen'd life,
The gate-way that conducts to longer life,
That sends us rather born again than dead
To the bright home of everlasting light ;
This is man's outgate from a prison drear,
The transit to a life that knows not death ;
By this the whole assembly of our sires
Have gone before, and by it all shall follow.
What runner, when he's left the starting post,
But in his spirit bounds towards the goal ?
What voyager, on dark and stormy sea,
Denies the shelter of a quiet haven ?
What exile, wand'ring o'er the barren wastes
Of foreign soil, laments a quick return
To his own land ? I therefore gladly think
I now stand at the goal, the race now run.
Now, from the sea of nearly finish'd life
Scaped, view the land ; now from a foreign soil
I home return ; about to see the best,
The first great Parent ; parent he, who bound
The earth with waves, and clothed it with the skies ;

Who rules the sure return of changeful heaven ;
Preserver, author, only Lord of all ;
For whom all live alike, the live and dead.
As flames spontaneous roll their circles upwards,
As waves rush downwards with perpetual fall,
As all things strive to reach their proper food ;
Already e'en the heaven-begotten soul
Breathes after God, the Sire of all, who dwells
In light eternal, whom to see is life,
And whom not to behold is endless death.
Though horrid Caucasus with frosts oppose,
Or air with storms, the waves with tempests toss'd,
And tracts impassable with burning heat,
Shall I not thitherward attempt to go ?
Not, to behold so many leaders, kings,
Prophets, and pious judges, break a way,
Although a thousand deaths obstruct my path ?
Therefore from closèd prison of the body
Thither the spirit free desires to fly,
Where all the world shall soon or later go.
Nor, trow I, is a lengthen'd life aught else,
But a slow slavery in a prison hard.
O death, the sole release from heavy toil !
O death, the haven of grief, the rest from ill !
Advantage known to few of mortal men !

The wicked's terror, and the good man's wish !
This shipwreck'd frame into thy bosom take,
Lead to the home of everlasting rest,
Where force, guile, calumny shall never come.

CHORUS.

O blessèd thou in constancy of soul !
O wretched we, whom sluggish fear of mind
Deprives of fellowship in happiness !
And since thou holdest that the deed must be,
We bid thee farewell, and farewell for ever.

What different passions turn the minds of men
On diverse paths ! He does not fear to die
Who nought deserves it ; who deserves to die,
If death vain threatening lightly shake his dart,
He bloodless trembles with degenerate fear.
As eager as the wicked flee from death,
By flames, by waters, and by pathless rocks,
So eagerly do good men dash to death
Their noble souls through all things hard and dire.
Death surely has a good unknown to the bad :
A life more blessèd goes along with death.
Nor do we wholly die : our better part
Disdains the greedy funeral pyre, and climbs
Its native heavens sublime, and sure remains

A habitation for the harmless souls
Amongst the bright inhabitants of heaven ;
But conscious guilty Shades, th' Eumenides,*
A joyless train, whose hair are dusky snakes,
Ceaseless torment in the sulphureous lake ;
And hungry throat of greedy Cerberus,†
Plenty of Tantalus, ‡ ne'er satisfied.
Hence fear of bad men, good hope of the good,
And bosoms prodigal of brittle life,
While hastening to secure un-brittle life.
O Syren, powerful in thy magic lures,
Life loving the treach'rous, fleeing real good !
Thou shutt'st 'gainst us by tender blandishments
The nigh escape from evil, and obstruct'st
The lovesome haven of perpetual peace ;
Where never loud resounds alarm of Mars,
Nor warlike trumpets sound with murmur hoarse,
Nor rieving pirate terrifies the main,
Nor bloody thief lies hid in silent grove,
Nor robber, with a wretched lust of sway,
Madly creates the ruin of a people ;

* The Furies.

† Three-headed hound at the portals of hell.

‡ Was punished by raging thirst, while water fled from his lips.

Norwhelms the poor with slaughter, that alone
He torpid may grow bless'd in placid ease ;
Nor he who barter for a title vain
The cheap lives of the miserable crowd.
But tranquil rest, and beauteous comeliness,
And simple probity do all possess,
And days that know not to descend to night,
And life that knows not of another death,
And joys that nothing know of plaining grief.
O thou corporeal home ! a lodging sweet,
And the too lovely prison of the soul,
At length undo from out thy magic knots
The heaven-begotten soul, which has forgot
Her native country, in thy bosom clasp'd,
Drunk with the poison slow of slumb'rous Lethe,*
In yoke of a degenerate marriage glad.
O faithless covering of the clayey robe
Vanish, into thy ashes back return ;
That the mind render'd to its native heaven
May fill itself with rays of purest light ;
Free thee by death from pestilential toils,
And free the mind from troubles and from cares.

* Water of oblivion.

Scene Eleventh.



THE QUEEN.

My hopes the Pharisee has then deceived ;
The king with equal vanity alike
Himself and me has wretchedly betray'd,
While he the prating vulgar's gossip dreads.
I, wretched, fear for what my daughter does,
Whom at a crowded banquet late, the king
Had promisèd, as guerdon for a dance,
Whatever she from him should choose to ask ;
And she has sworn to ask the Baptist's head,
Within a vessel, ay, and she will have it ;
She 'll surely have it ; if I know at all
The spirit of the king. For he, I trow,
Freed from the odium of the Baptist's death,
Will gladly turn on me the people's hate.
And I, the deed being done, will gladly bear 't ;
I 'll weigh the hatred with joy of revenge,

The blot weigh with the gain. 'Tis a base thing
To be a bloody woman ! Base, unless
'Twere baser that kings should be unrevenged.
But from the house I see the king and maid
Their steps direct ; the nearer comes my hope,
The keener burns my fear ; God prosper all !

Scene Twelfth.



HEROD, THE DAMSEL, THE QUEEN.

HEROD.

SEEMS it to thee that thou hast now enough
Deliberated upon what to ask ?

DAMSEL.

'Tis so, enough ; if promises of kings
Be sure enough, and royal.

HEROD.

Fear not that,
For it is firm, and ratified by oath,
By many witnessèd. Ask half my realm,
Or if thou hold'st aught dearer than the realm,
Thou shalt obtain it. When I will the thing
There is no pow'r can hinder.

DAMSEL.

Soon we 'll see
What is the worth of that.

HEROD.

Ask now ; 'tis certain.

DAMSEL.

The realm I need not ; for while thou art king,
I deem it as much mine as if I held it :
I ask an easy and a righteous thing.

HEROD.

It is not I, but thou thyself dost not
Receive the boon, thine the delay.

DAMSEL.

Give me
Within this dish the Baptist's head cut off.

HEROD.

What word has rashly from thy lips escaped,
Virgin ?

DAMSEL.

The word has not been rashly said.

HEROD.

Thou seek'st a gift doth not become a virgin.

DAMSEL.

'Tis no uncomely deed to slay a foe.

HEROD.

Is he a foe worthy of royal ire ?

DAMSEL.

Worthy of ire is he whose crime deserves it.

HEROD.

What remedy shall I find now against
The common people's hate ?

DAMSEL.

The people's part
Is to obey, a king's part to command.

HEROD.

It is a king's part to command what's right.

DAMSEL.

The thing that formerly was wrong, the king
By his commanding it can make it right.

HEROD.

But law sets limits to a king's command.

DAMSEL.

If right be what is pleasing to a prince,
It is not law that limits sets to kings,
But it is kings who limits set to laws.

HEROD.

Rumour will style me tyrant and not king.

DAMSEL.

It fears the sceptre.

HEROD.

Fears, but still it prates.

DAMSEL.

Still 't with the sword.

HEROD.

Fear ill preserves a realm.

DAMSEL.

Impunity to crime destroys a realm.

HEROD.

He 's safe whom faith of citizens defends.

DAMSEL.

Kings must be fear'd, but loved they need not be.

HEROD.

Hate dogs the cruel, and at length subverts.

DAMSEL.

Gentleness in a prince the people scorn.

QUEEN.

All this discourse in my opinion shows
Your promise vain will vanish. Seems to me
Thou know'st not yet the duties of a king.
If thou supposest that is honourable
And base to kings, which to the multitude
Is honourable and base, thou art deceived :
Father-in-law, friends, kinsmen, son-in-law,
Brother and sister, citizen and foe,
Are chains for poor men ; empty words to kings.
Whoe'er puts on his head a diadem,
Should fling aside all grades of common duty.
Think nothing base that 's useful to a king ;

Nor deem that any deed becomes him not,
Which he for sake of his own welfare does.
The people's welfare on the king depends ;
Whoever then 's devoted to the king,
He best consults the welfare of the people.
And shall this fellow's base blood rate so high,
That careworn day nor night thou canst not
rest ?

Oh take from us this terror, take away
Shame from the sceptre, wasting from the cities,
Rapine from arms, and civil war from all.
Behoves thee by a great example new,
To settle that authority of kings
Must doubly sacred be to mortal men.
Crime he has perpetrated, let him go
To ruin for his crime ; if nought he 's done,
Yet let him perish for thine own wife's sake.
Give up her en'my to thy wife ; but if
Thou dost despise thy wife, yet king, and sire,
I charge thee, keep thy promise to my daughter.

HEROD.

With certain faith the promise shall be kept ;
But if she lists to follow my advice,
She 'll wiser choose.

QUEEN.

But if she follow mine,
She will not change her purpose.

HEROD.

Is it so ?

Behoved I to have sworn so rash an oath ?
Thus to commit into a woman's hands
Safety, the kingdom, wealth, and life and death ?

QUEEN.

Let sure truth royal promises confirm.

HEROD.

Since 'tis not lawful to deny the boon,
Which, sooth, were yet the only lawful thing ;
Again I warn and beg you, not to let
Your anger urge you on to do a deed
That little doth beseem thy sex, thy blood,
Thy birth, and height of royal dignity.

QUEEN.

Grant this ; leave all the rest to our concern.

HEROD.

If you have aught too harsh determinèd
Against the prophet, as the fault is yours,
So yours will be the danger.

QUEEN.

Now at length
Royal authority is vindicated,
Never henceforward liable to scorn ;
Now I'll see to it that the stubborn people
Speak modestly of kings, or to their loss ;
And whether kings command the right or wrong,
Learn to endure it with a tranquil soul.

Scene Thirteenth.

CHORUS.

O REALM of David, towers of Solyma,
And citadel of wealthy Solomon,
Whence such a direful fury 'gainst the seers?
Whence such a cruel thirst for righteous blood?
She who should be the rule of piety,
Is the one mirror of a wicked life.
Thefts, violence, blood, rapine, treachery,
These are the exercises of thy schools.
His piety does not persuade the priest
To keep hands pure from execrable guile.
The people, idol-worshipping, have left
The Lord and Parent of the universe;
And wood and stone are worshippèd for God:
To them the altars smoke with lambs and calves;
The artificer adores the images
Which his own right hand form'd; he, lawless, seeks
Life from a stock; the dumb for eloquence

Beseeches ; rich, he supplicates the poor ;
The lord, the slave ; perish the ancient rites.
Thee doth the blood of guiltless prophets drag
To the tribunal of the mighty Judge ;
The poor cry out against thee, widows fill
Heaven with complaints.
Thee, therefore, no deceptive punishment
Of vengeance just awaits (unless deceived
I augur false), for the great Arbiter
Of heaven, and earth, and sea, who overwhelms
Arrogant pride, beholdeth from on high
His people's tears, and sad prayers calls to mind,
And with avenging hand will soon exact
Near punishment for great iniquity ;
The lofty towers wherein thou boast'st thyself,
The victor insolent shall overthrow ;
A foreign soldier shall thy farms possess ;
The keeper of thy vines to foreign lord
Shall yield thy fruits ; where lofty rises now
To heav'n the temple of proud Solomon,
The foreign husbandman shall harvests reap.
Whilst therefore favour of the Deity
Allows thee space of penitence, forsake
The vices of a life in baseness spent ;
Thrust out the images of foreign rite ;

Restrain thy greedy thirst for brethren's blood,
And thine unhallow'd hungering after gold.
But thou wilt not repent thee of a life
In baseness spent, nor from the sacred pile
Thrust out the images of foreign rite ;
Nor flee the greedy thirst for brethren's blood,
Nor thine unhallow'd hungering after gold.
Thee, therefore, shall the wasting plague consume,
Thee famine, war, want, leanness shall oppress,
Until thou pay deservèd punishment
In thine own blood.

Scene Fourteenth.



A MESSENGER, CHORUS.

MESSENGER.

WHO will point out to me where I shall find
The prophet's followers, sad news to tell?

CHORUS.

Unless perchance in haste, a short space stay ;
Speak briefly, for we would be glad to know
The tidings that you bear.

MESSENGER.

But you will not
Be glad, when you've known what you wish to know.

CHORUS.

Howe'er that be, grudge not a brief delay.

MESSENGER.

Know'st what the damsel askèd from the king?

CHORUS.

The prophet's head, when cut off, in a vessel.

MESSENGER.

The prophet's head, when cut off, in a vessel,
She has received, and with her borne away.

CHORUS.

Oh, ruthless, bloody deed ! that heavenly bloom,
And grace of look, hath wither'd in sad death !
And lips but now fill'd with the Spirit divine,
Dire violence hath seal'd in endless silence !

MESSENGER.

Why do you weep ? Cease pouring vain complaints.

CHORUS.

Forbidd'st thou weeping when I see and hear
What should be wept for ?

MESSENGER.

If death should be wept for,
Let those weep for the dead whose every hope
Lies with the body buried ; who trust not
That after briefest term of slumber past,

Their members will return to life again,
Another and a better life remains.
Let miserable men weep for the dead,
And only for the miserable dead ;
Fortune can render no man miserable ;
For though like termination of the life
Awaits the guiltless and the guilty soul,
Yet none shall badly die who well has lived.
If by the manner of their parting hence,
You judge of men that they are miserable,
Then miserable you perforce must think
So many holy fathers, whom the cross,
The sword, the wave, the flame, hath reft of life ;
For him who dies a follower of truth,
And for religion and the Father's laws,
We ought to follow with congratulations,
And seek a like departing at our death.

CHORUS.

All thou hast eloquently said is true,
But we whom errors and opinions drag,
While fate we flee, on fate in folly rush.
The wave submerges whom the fire has spared ;
The violence of pestilential air
Carries him off who's rescued from the sea ;

The war's survivor wastes by slow disease.
God lets defer, but lets not shun our fate ;
And day by day we interest pay for death's
Delay, in perils, griefs, diseases, cares.
Nor is a long life aught else but a chain
Of lengthen'd evil, even to the term
Of death, in a perennial series link'd.
Nor do we think that we are wretched slaves,
Bound in that chain ; the outgate to be free
We rather shrink from than the slavery.

APPENDIX.

APPENDIX.



TRANSLATION

OF THE

LIFE OF GEORGE BUCHANAN.

(WRITTEN BY HIMSELF TWO YEARS BEFORE HIS DEATH.)

GEORGE BUCHANAN was born of a family rather 1506.
ancient than opulent, in a farm-house * on the water
of Blane, in the Lennox, a province of Scotland,
about the first of February, in the year of the Chris-
tian salvation, one thousand five hundred and six.
His father was cut off by the stone in the flower of
youth ; and his grandfather, who was still alive, having
become bankrupt, the family, straitened before, were
reduced to almost utter want. Yet by the industry
of their mother, Agnes Heriot, her children, five boys
and three girls, grew up to mature age. Of these,

* The Moss, or Moss-Leowen, parish of Killearn.

1520. his uncle, James Heriot, sent George to Paris, having conceived good hopes of his genius whilst attending the schools of his native land. Whilst he was attending to the study of letters there, especially to the writing of poems, partly from natural impulse, partly from necessity (for that was the only kind of study prescribed to young men), within two years his uncle died, and he himself being seized with sore illness, and surrounded on all hands by want, was compelled to return to his friends.
- 1522.

- When in his native country he had spent nearly a year in recruiting his health, he, along with the French auxiliaries, who had then landed in Scotland, proceeded to the camp for the purpose of obtaining a knowledge of the military art. But when in that almost futile expedition,* in a very severe winter, the army was led back through very deep snow, he again fell into bad health, which kept him all that winter confined to bed.
- 1523.

1524. In the beginning of spring, he was sent to St Andrews, to attend John Major,† who, then in ex-

* Under the Duke of Albany ; Wark Castle was unsuccessfully besieged.

† John Mair, a doctor of the Sorbonne, author of "De Gestis Scotorum."

treme old age, taught Dialectics, or rather Sophistry. Next summer, having followed Major to France, he came under the influence of the Lutheran sect, already widely spreading; and after having struggled for nearly two years with the iniquity of fortune, he was at 1526. length invited to the college of St Barbe, and for nearly three years presided over the grammar class. In the meantime, Gilbert, Earl of Cassillis, a young 1529. nobleman, who was residing in that neighbourhood, was so delighted with his manners and conversation, that he kept him with him for five years, and took him back with him to Scotland.

When he was thinking of returning to France to 1534. his former pursuits, he was retained by the king, and appointed to instruct his illegitimate son, James.* Meanwhile, there comes into the hands of the Franciscans an elegiac poem,† written by him at his leisure, in which he writes that in a dream he was solicited by St Francis to join his order. As there were one or two things in it which touched rather freely on them, though they were men making a profession of mildness,

* James Stewart, son of the king, by Elizabeth Shaw of Sauchie, died in 1548.

† “Somnium; or, the Dream,” a free version of Dunbar’s poem, “How Dunbar was desired to be a Friar.”

they took it somewhat more hotly than, for a fault so trifling, it seemed becoming in fathers so pious in the estimation of the multitude; and as they could find no sufficient justification of their immoderate rage, they resort to the usual charge respecting religion, which they brought against all towards whom they bore a grudge; and whilst indulging their own outrageous passions, inflame him more keenly against them, naturally hostile as he was to the licence of the priests, and render him less adverse to the Lutheran cause.

1537. In the meantime, the king arrives from France, with his wife Madeleine, not without fear on the part of the priestlings, who dreaded that the royal maiden, educated under the care of her aunt, the Queen of Navarre, might make some change in religion. But that fear disappeared on her decease, which followed soon after. After this, there arose suspicions at Court against some of the nobility,* who were said to have conspired against the king. As the king was persuaded that in that affair the Franciscans had not conducted themselves with sufficient sincerity, he sends for Buchanan, who then happened to be about the Court, and without knowing of the quarrel he had with the Franciscans,

* John Forbes executed for treason, July 13, 1537.

commands him to write a poem against them. He, fearing to offend either, did indeed write a poem, but it was short, and capable of a double meaning. But this did not satisfy the king, who demanded something sharp and pointed ; and to the friars it seemed a capital crime that any one should dare to speak of them except with the greatest respect. So he wrote, on the king's command, more sharply against them that poem which is now published under the title of "The Franciscan," and which, in an unfinished state, he presented to the king. But in a short time his friends at Court informed him he was aimed at, and 1539. that Cardinal Beaton was buying his life from the king with a sum of money ; so he, having eluded his keepers,* set out for England. But affairs there were in so unsettled a condition, that on the same day, and in the same fire, men of either faction were burned ; Henry VIII., now verging on old age, being more intent on his own security, than on promoting the purity of religion. This uncertainty of affairs in England, and his former familiarity with the French, and the very high civilisation of that nation, drew Buchanan to that country. When he arrived at Paris, he found

* Buchanan mentions in his history that he was imprisoned during the persecution of 1539.

Cardinal Beaton acting as ambassador, and animated with the greatest hostility against him ; so to withdraw himself from his fury, he proceeded, on the invitation
1539. of Andrew Govea,* to Bordeaux.

There he taught for three years in the college which was then being erected at the public expense, during which time he wrote four tragedies, which were afterwards published as occasion offered. But the one first written (entitled "The Baptist") was published last, and after it he wrote "The Medea of Euripides." He wrote them in compliance with a custom of the college, which required a tragedy every year ; and to the end that, by their representation, he might recall the young men, as far as he was able, from the allegories, in which France at that time took excessive delight, to the imitation of the ancients. When he had succeeded in this almost beyond his hopes, he elaborated rather more carefully "Jephtha" and the "Alcestis," intending to publish them. But not even then was he entirely free from apprehension, arising from the threats of the Cardinal and the Franciscans.

* A very learned and excellent man, a native of Bega, a doctor of the Sorbonne, Principal of St Barbe's College, at this time Principal of the College of Guienne, at Bordeaux ; he died at Coimbra, June 9, 1548, at about fifty years of age.

The Cardinal even sent letters for his seizure to the Archbishop of Bordeaux, but these, fortunately, fell into the hands of great lovers of Buchanan.* But from 1542. this fear he was released by the death of the King of the Scots, and the pestilence that raged with great severity throughout Aquitania.

Meanwhile there came to hand letters from the 1546. King of Portugal, commanding Govea to bring along with him men learned in Greek and Latin literature, who should interpret the humane letters, and the rudiments of Aristotle's philosophy in the college, which he was then erecting with great care, and at great expense. On being consulted respecting this proposal, Buchanan readily assented. For while he saw the whole of Europe, either already blazing, or about to blaze forth in wars, domestic or foreign, he perceived that that one corner would be free from tumult, and he conceived that in the company of those who had undertaken that expedition, he would not so much be going to a foreign country, as dwelling amongst kinsmen and familiar friends. For most of them had

* Buchanan has omitted to mention here that he taught in the college of Cardinal Moine, in Paris (1544), and in that of Boncour. He was at Bordeaux before the 1st of December 1539 ; and was in the college of Cardinal Le Moine in 1544.

been connected with him for many years in the closest friendship, such as Nicolaus Gruchius,* William Guerente,† James Tevius,‡ and Elias Venetus,§ who have distinguished themselves throughout the world
 1547. by their works. On this account, he not only willingly accompanied them himself, but also persuaded his brother Patrick to join so distinguished a society. And at first, indeed, it succeeded very notably, till
 1548. Andrew Govea was snatched away, as it were, in the middle of his career by a death, not indeed premature in itself, but bitter to his associates. For all their enemies and rivals, at first by secret wiles, and at length openly, rushed upon them with a manifestly gladiatorial spirit; and when they had first handled the matter secretly among their greatest enemies, they seized on three of them, whom, after long confinement
 1549. in a squalid prison, they brought to trial; and

* A native of Rouen, a writer on Roman antiquities, died at Rochelle 1572.

† Guerente, commentator on Aristotle, writer of a Latin tragedy for the college, which seems to have perished.

‡ Tevius, a native of Braga, author of a "History of Portuguese Affairs in India, during the year 1546," dedicated to King John in 1548, for which Buchanan wrote a poetical address to the king; author also of "Latin Poems and Orations."

§ Elias Venetus, a native of Saintonge, Principal of the College of Guienne in 1536. He edited an edition of "Pomponius Mela and Ausonius;" died in 1587.

after having harassed them for some time with many reproaches, they again imprisoned them. But not even then did they name their accusers.

Against Buchanan certainly they inveighed with the ^{1550.} greatest bitterness, as one who was a foreigner, and had very few there who would either rejoice in his safety, or attempt to revenge his wrongs. It was objected to him, that he had written a poem against the Franciscans, which he himself, before leaving France, had taken care to excuse to the King of Portugal. Nor did his accusers know its nature, for he had given away only one copy to the King of Scots, at whose instigation he had written it. It was charged against him as a crime, that he had eaten flesh in Lent, from which no one in the whole of Spain abstains. He was also accused of some things spoken slightly against the monks, which could appear criminal to none but a monk. It was also taken very ill, that in a familiar conversation with some young Portuguese, when mention was made of the Eucharist, he had said that Augustine seemed to him to be most inclined to the party condemned by the Roman Church. Two witnesses, John Talpin,*

* Talpin, doctor of theology at Perigueux in 1570; author of various French works.

a Norman, and John Ferrerius,* of Subalpine Liguria (as he discovered after many years), said in evidence, that they had heard from several persons worthy of credit, that Buchanan was ill affected to the Roman religion. But to return. After the inquisitors had for nearly a year and a half fatigued both themselves and him, lest they should be supposed to have harassed a man, not unknown, to no purpose, they shut him
1551. up for several months in a monastery, to be more exactly instructed by the monks—men indeed not otherwise either inhumane or wicked, but ignorant of all religion. It was at this time chiefly that he reduced to various kinds of verse most of the Psalms of David.
1552. When he was at last restored to liberty, he asked permission of the king to return to France, but was asked by him to remain in Portugal, and, in the meantime, received a very small sum of money for his daily expenses till he should be furnished with some honourable employment. But as he grew weary of waiting, with neither certain hope nor for a known time, having found a ship of Candia in the harbour of Lisbon, he set sail in her for England. Nor did he stay there, though solicited by very honour-

* Author of various works, at one time resided in the monastery of Kinloss.

able proposals. For there, all things were yet in an unsettled state, under a youthful king, the chief men at variance amongst themselves, and the minds of the people still excited by the recent civil commotions. So he crossed over into France, almost on the same 1553. day on which the siege of Metz was raised. There he was induced by his friends to write a poem on that siege, which he was the more averse to do, because he was unwilling to come into rivalry with many others of his friends, and especially with Melin St Gelais,* whose learned and elegant poem on that subject was then in circulation.

Thence he was called into Italy by Charles de 1554. Cossè,† of Brissac, who then managed affairs in Liguria, and the French possessions on the Po, with a good reputation, and remained with him and his son Timoleon, sometimes in Italy, sometimes in France, for the space of five years, till the year one thousand five hundred and sixty. This time he chiefly devoted 1560. to the study of sacred learning, to enable him more exactly to decide on the controversies which then

* Melin St Gelais, at that time a favourite poet at the French Court.

† For some further account of Buchanan's connection with De Brissac, see the Dedication prefixed to Jephtha.

occupied the greater part of mankind, and which were nearly settled at home on the liberation of the Scots from the Guisian tyranny. On his return thither, he
 1563. joined the Church of the Scots. Of the writings he composed in former times, some collected again as it were from shipwreck, he has published. The rest, which yet wander amongst his friends, he commits to the will of fortune. At present, in the seventy-fourth
 1597. year of his age, residing with James the Sixth, King of the Scots, to superintend whose education he was appointed in the year one thousand five hundred and sixty-five, broken with evils, he eagerly makes for the haven of his old age.

He died at Edinburgh, the 25th of September, in the year of grace 1582.

In other editions—Thus far Buchanan of himself, at the request of his friends. He died at Edinburgh, a little after five o'clock in the morning, on Friday, the 28th of September, the year 1582.

The dates in the margin are those of the first edition, 1608. For the suggestion that seems to have led to the writing of his life, see Randolph's Letter.

SIR THOMAS RANDOLPH'S LETTER.

IN WHICH HE SUGGESTS THAT BUCHANAN'S LIFE SHOULD
BE WRITTEN. SPELLING MODERNISED.

*To the right Worshipful, my very loving Friend, Master
Peter Young, Schoolmaster unto the King's Majesty
of Scotland.*

AFTER my very hearty commendations. Being lately moved with the remembrance of my master, Mr G. Buchanan, by the sight of a book of his, "De Jure Regni apud Scotos," and calling to mind the notable acts of his life, his study, his travel, his danger, his wisdom, his learning, and to be short, as much as could be wished in a man ; I thought the king your master more happy that had Buchanan to his master, than Alexander the Great, that had Aristotle his instructor. I thought you very lucky that had his daily company, joined in office of like service, and thanked God not a little for myself, that ever I was acquainted with him. For one that hath so great acquaintance as he hath with many learned men and companions of his life, and that hath so well deserved of the world, I marvel that no man hath written of it : being a thing so common unto all famous persons, and most peculiar to the best learned. Herein I might chiefly blame you my good friend Master Young, so near unto

him, so dear unto him, that nothing can be hid of that which you desire to know. If you say that time yet serveth, and that he yet liveth whose life I wish to be set forth, surely yet I say unto you, that if it be done after his death, many things may be omitted that were worthy of famous memory, by him to be better known than after his death. The cause of the writing against the Grey Friars is known to many, but afterwards how they prevailed against him, that he was fain to leave his country, how he escaped with great hazard of life at God's hand, the thieves on the borders, the plague in the North of England, what relief he found here at a famous knight's hands, Sir John Rainsford, the only man that maintained him against the fury of the Papists; none doth know so well as himself, or can give better notes of his life than himself can. As he liveth virtuously, so I doubt not but he will die Christianly, and may be added, when the former is perfectly known. This is desired by many, especially looked for at your hands, that can best do, and are fittest to travel in so worthy a work. As I crave this at your hands, so shall you command what is in my power. And thus wishing unto you, my good friend, heartily well, I take my leave. *London, the 5th of March, 1579.*

Your very loving Friend,

THO. RANDOLPH.

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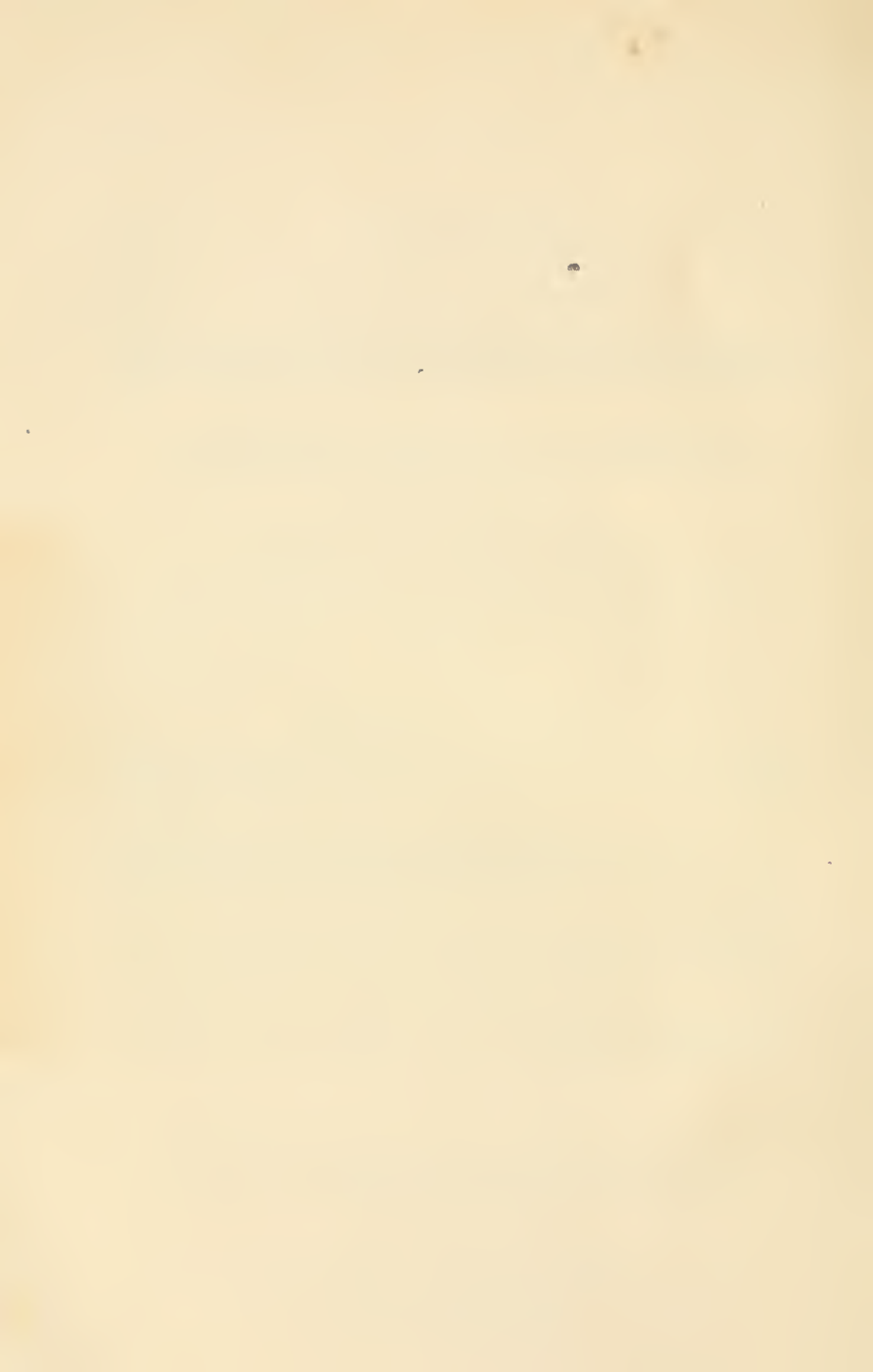
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