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Mr. CLARKE in the Character of PROCLES.

*Thou Queen of Souls! Thou Rapture of my Vows!
what means this pensive Mood?*

Mallet, David

BELL'S EDITION.

EURYDICE.

A TRAGEDY.

As written by Mr. MALLET.

DISTINGUISHING ALSO THE

VARIATIONS OF THE THEATRE,

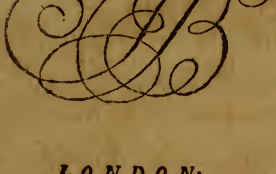
AS PERFORMED AT THE

Theatre-Royal in Drury-Lane.

Regulated from the Prompt-Book,

By PERMISSION of the MANAGERS,

By Mr. HOPKINS, Prompter.



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MDCCLXXVII.

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TO HIS GRACE THE DUKE OF

MONTROSE.

My Lord,

I Beg leave to ſhelter the following tragedy under your patronage; a ſmall, but ſincere return of gratitude for the many obligations I have to your Grace, and in particular, for the generous concern with which you eſpouſed and ſupported the intereſt of this performance: and to which I am greatly indebted for its reputation and ſucceſs.

Permit me to add, in juſtice to your Grace, (and I do it with equal pride and pleaſure) that I received this indulgence without being obliged to pay for it that adulation and baſeneſs of heart, which is ſometimes exacted by the vulgar great; but is more frequently the voluntary, ill-judged offering of mean and venial writers. I am, with the trueſt zeal and attachment,

My Lord,

Your Grace's moſt obliged,

And moſt faithful ſervant,

D. MALLET.

PROLOGUE.

Written by AARON HILL, Esq.

IN youth when modesty and merit meet,
How rare the union, and the force how sweet!
Tho' at small praise our humble author aims,
His friend may give him what his blush disclaims.
Ladies—to you he makes his chief address;
Form'd to be pray'd to, and even born to bless;
He feels your power himself, and makes it felt;
His scenes will teach each stubborn heart to melt;
And each fair eye that now shines softly here,
Anon shall shine still softer thro' a tear.
Let not constraint your gen'rous sighs repress,
Nor veil compassion, nor repel distress.
Your sex's strength is in such weakness found,
And sighs and tears but help your charms to wound.
Of all the wonders taught us by the fair,
'Tis strangest, tragedy should lose their care!
Where Love, soft tyrant, in full glory reigns,
And sovereign beauty holds the world in chains.
Less polish'd, and more bold, the comic muse
Unkings your Cupid, or obstructs his views,
Upholds presuming wit's familiar claim,
And blots out awe from love's diminish'd flame;
Finds or makes faults, and sets them strong in sight,
And dares draw woman false, or vain, or light.
While tragedy, your servant try'd and true,
Still to your fame devoted, and to you,
Enslav'd to love, subdu'd ambition brings,
Firms beauty's power, and crowns it king of kings.
Let wish'd attention grace our scene to-night,
And mourn'd afflictions move refin'd delight.
Each tender light of life we recommend,
Wife, husband, subject, parent, son, and friend;
All your impassion'd int'rests shall engage,
And hopes, and fears, and pity, fire the stage.
Then, when soft sorrow swells the fair-one's breast,
And sad impressions mix with nightly rest,
Pleasing remembrance shall our scene supply,
And the sweet saddening influence never die.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

MEN.

	Drury-Lane.
Procles, Tyrant of *Epidaurus*, in Poſſeſſion of the Crown of *Corinth*.	Mr. Clarke.
Medon, his Favourite, ——	— Mr. Packer.
Leonidas, a Nobleman, ſecretly in the Queen's intereſt, ——	— Mr. Davies.
Periander, King of *Corinth*,	— Mr. Garrick.
Polydore, his Son, ——	— Mr. Holland.
Ariſton, ——	— Mr. Burton.

WOMEN.

Eurydice, Queen of *Corinth*,	— Mrs. Cibber.
Meliſſa, her Confidante, ——	— Miſs Haughton.

Officers, Guards, Attendants.

SCENE, *CORINTH*.

EURYDICE.

*** *The lines distinguished by inverted comas, 'thus,' are omitted in the Representation, and those printed in Italics are the additions of the Theatre.*

ACT I.

Eurydice *and* Melissa.

[*Thunder.*

EURYDICE.

YE heavenly Powers!
What means this dreadful war of sea and sky?
Mel. Dreadful, indeed! It rose not by degrees,
But all at once, a tempest wild and loud.
Eur. Hear, from the wint'ry north how keen it howls
Thro' these lone towers, that rock with every blast,
Each moment threatening ruin on our heads!
But see——stand here, and cast thy eyes below,
O'er the broad ocean to the distant sky,
See what confusion fills the raving deep!
What mountain-waves arise!——'Tis terrible,
And suiting to the horrors of my fate,
The deep despair that desolates my soul.
Mel. Ha! look, behold, due west, where yonder rocks
O'er-hang the beating tides——Oh, sight of woe!
Four goodly ships, abandon'd to the storm,
Drive blindly with the billows, their drench'd sails
Stripp'd off, and whirl'd before the rending wind.
Eur. Assist them, all good Powers! The storm is high,
And the flood perilous.
Look, now they climb a fearful steep, and hang
On the big surge that mixes with the clouds.
Save me! it bursts, and headlong down they reel

Into

Into the yawning gulph. They cannot 'ſcape.
A ſea rowls o'er the foremoſt.
Mel. Ah! ſhe ſtrikes
On yonder wave-worn cliff. The fatal ſhock
Has doubtleſs ſhiver'd her ſtrong ſide. She ſinks
So ſwiftly down, that ſcarce the ſtraining eye
Can trace her talleſt maſt. Where is ſhe now?
Hid in the wild abyſs, with all her crew,
All loſt for ever!
Eur. Turn we from the ſight,
Too diſmal for a woman's eye to bear.
Ill-fated men! whom, knowing not, I mourn;
Whence, or what may they be? Even now, perhaps,
In ſome far diſtant land, a faithful wife,
Or tender parent, offers vows to Heaven
For their return, and fondly numbers up
The ling'ring months of abſence. Fruitleſs love!
They never more ſhall meet!——By my own ills
Severely taught, I pity them: yet think
Their fate, all full of horror as it ſeems,
Is rather to be envy'd. They are now
Beyond the hand of fate, at reſt for ever;
While I, Meliſſa——
Mel. Ah, Eurydice,
My royal miſtreſs, rather think the gods
Would teach you, by this ſight of mournful ruin,
Patience and gentler thought. When others too
Are miſerable, not to know the worſt
Is ſome degree of bliſs.
Eur. Meliſſa, no.
I tell thee, no ill fate, no face of death
Can be ſo dreadful as a life like mine.
Call back to thy remembrance what I've been;
How happy in a huſband, and a ſon
The riſing boaſt of Greece! Behold me now
Caſt down to loweſt infamy; the ſlave,
The ſport of a foul tyrant, who betray'd me,
And would deſtroy my honour. Gracious Heaven!
And ſhall this bold offender, who has broke
All bonds of holy faith, yet bids his ſoul
Rejoice and take her eaſe; ſhall he long triumph
Here in the throne of Corinth, while its lord,

The great, unhappy Periander, roams
An unknown fugitive?

Mel. Theſe tears, my Queen,
Theſe faithful tears, which ſympathiſing ſorrow
Draws from my eyes, ſpeak the ſad ſhare I take
In all your mighty ills.

Eur. Say, now, Meliſſa,
Is there among the daughters of affliction,
One ſo forlorn as poor Eurydice?
A priſoner here, ſubjected to the power
Of impious Procles, daily doom'd to hear,
Oh, deadly inſult! his deteſted love.
What ill can equal this? Why did I truſt
The brutal tyrant?

Mel. See, his minion's here.

Enter Medon.

Med. Hail, beauteous Queen! By me, the royal Procles
With lowly ſervice bends him to your charms;
Bids ſmiling health, and gentle peace of mind
Light up your morn, and make your evening fair.
This, with the tendereſt vows——

Eur. Canſt thou inform me
Of thoſe unhappy men, whom I but now
Saw periſh on this coaſt?

Med. Not who they are;
But what their fate, theſe eyes with dread beheld.
The King too, from the morning's chace return'd,
At this ſad ſight ſpurr'd on with all his train,
To ſave, if poſſible, whom the wild ſea
Caſts forth upon the land. But firſt his love,
That counts each moment's abſence from your eyes
An age of ling'ring torment, bade me fly
With health and greeting to the matchleſs fair,
Who holds his ſoul enſlav'd.

Eur. Then bear him back,
From her whom he has wrong'd, betray'd, and ruin'd,
Horror and loathing, unrelenting ſcorn,
And all a woman's hate, in juſt return
For his deteſted love. The tyrant coward!
To cruſh the fallen and helpleſs, to embitter
The pangs, the miſeries himſelf has caus'd,
With gall of mockery!

Med.

Med. Your pardon, Madam,
If I, the humbleſt of your ſlaves, preſume
To place before your eyes in faithful proſpect,
That mournful period, full of dread and danger,
Which late you ſaw. Behold then your falſe ſubjects,
Wantonly mad, and ſpurning every tie
Of ſworn obedience, mix'd in one bold treaſon,
Threat'ning and univerſal: your loſt huſband
Abſent, involv'd in unſucceſsful war;
His troops averſe and mutinous. From them
Bold faction with contagious ſwiftneſs ſpread
To Corinth too, where the wild herd arous'd
Inſulted you, and drove you to this fortreſs.
Say, where was then your hope, when meagre Famine
Join'd his devouring ravage, and your eyes
Saw daily, hourly periſh, thoſe poor few
Whoſe faith had kept them yours?

Eur. Oh, would to Heaven,
I then had periſh'd too!

Med. Such was your ſtate,
Loſt even to hope, when generous Procles flew
Impatient to your aid, diſpers'd and quell'd
The general treaſon. May I dare to urge
Theſe ſervices! But what are theſe; his throne,
His heart is yours; he lays them at your feet;
He bids you reign in both.

Eur. Thou baſe of heart!
To ſlaves like thee, who flatter and inflame
Their prince's crimes, are owing half the plagues
That curſe mankind. Has not thy cruel maſter,
Whoſe guilt this ſhameful praiſe of thine brings home
On thy own ſoul, ſay, has he not uſurp'd,
With perfidy avow'd, the very crown
He ſwore to ſave? And I too——thy bold inſult
Shews I indeed am wretched. But, away;
'Tis baſe to parle with thee, the ſycophant
Who leads him on from guilt to guilt, and ſwears
He grows a god by ſinning. [*Exit* Medon.

Mel. Ah, my Queen!
My heart forebodes ſome fatal conſequence
Will grow of this.

Eur. Why, let it come, Meliſſa.

I merit all that fortune can inflict,
For trusting this betrayer, this curs'd Procles.
Mel. Alas! what could you do?
Eur. I should have dy'd.
He was the known and mortal foe of Corinth.
Mel. Yet his fair-seeming might have won belief
From doubting age, or wary policy.
By frequent, urgent message, he conjur'd you
To save yourself. With open honour own'd
His ancient enmity; but, by each power,
Celestial and infernal, swore 'twas past:
Nay, more, that as a king and as a man,
Just indignation at your impious subjects,
And pity of your fate, had touch'd his heart.
Eur. But Fame had spoke him faithless, bold, ambitious.
No, 'twas the coward woman in my soul,
Th' inglorious fear of dying, that betray'd
My virtue into the deceiver's power.
For this, my heart, each conscious hour upbraids me,
As faithless to my trust, weak, and unworthy
Even of the base, precarious life I hold.
For this, Oh, crown of misery! I'm doom'd,
Daily to hear the tyrant's impious passion,
His horrid vows and oaths.
Mel. That way indeed
I dread to turn my thoughts. A soul so brutal,
And flown with nightly insolence and wine,
What may he not attempt?
'*Eur.* Oh, curse, to know
'That I am in his power, and yet compell'd
'To suffer hated life!——for can I die
'Unheard, unjustify'd, while yet perhaps
'Th' unhappy Periander thinks too hardly
'Of my late error?——King of gods and men!
'Whose universal eye beholds each thought
'Most secret in the soul, give me to clear
'My faith to him; I ask of Heaven no more
'For my past miseries.
'*Mel.* What shouts are these? [*Looking out.*
'Ah, me! th' inhuman triumph of the croud,
'The hard-soul'd many, who have watch'd the storm,
'For driving wrecks, the spoils of perish'd wretches.

Eur.

' *Eur.* Unfeeling beasts of prey!—Methinks the storm
' Is almost overblown. The waves subside,
' And fall their fiercer roarings. But, alas,
' Of all the four, not one remaining sail
' Is to be seen around.'
Mel. Either my eyes
Deceive me, or the good Leonidas
Bends hitherward his steps, and on his brow
Sits some afflicting thought.
Eur. Ha! whence is this;
What mean these secret shiverings, this dark horror
Of some approaching ill?
Enter Leonidas.
Leon. Forgive me, Madam,
That I appear before you to impart
A mournful message; but by Procles' order——
Eur. Whate'er proceeds from him, Leonidas,
Must needs be fatal to me. But say on.
No form of ruin is so dreadful now,
As being in his power.
Leon. Unhappy Queen!
Your fate might melt the hardest breast, and teach
Even Cruelty's remorseless eye to weep.
How shall I speak the rest?
Eur. Leonidas,
What is this fatal tale, too sad for utterance?
Alas! why dost thou weep, why turn thy eyes
Severe on heaven?
Leon. This ruinous storm,
Whose sudden outrage——
Eur. Ha! what ships were these,
Say, speak, that sunk but now before our eyes,
In sight of shore?
Leon. The very fleet design'd
To rescue you; to free repenting Corinth
From this betrayer, this detested Procles.
The King was there embark'd.
Eur. Then all is lost!
Mel. Ah, Heaven! she faints.
Leon. Behold, ye gods! this sight,
Remember the curs'd author of this ruin.——
My eyes, my soul's in tears to see her thus.

Eur.

Eur. Oh, Periander, my much-injur'd Lord,
Would I had dy'd for thee!——Ah, gentle maid!
Was it then he, my husband, whom these eyes
Saw perish in the storm; whose fate I wept,
Nor knew that all the cruel wreck was mine?
Mel. Unhappy day!
' *Eur.* Undone Eurydice!
' But I will die——I should have dy'd before,
' When my mean cowardice, my dread of death,
' Betray'd me to false Procles. I had then
' Dy'd innocent; I had not then deserv'd
' A ruin'd husband's curse. Oh, thought of horror!
' Perhaps his latest breath, even in the hour
' Of dreadful fate, charg'd me with all his wrongs,
' His life and honour lost, perhaps expir'd
' In imprecations on me.
' *Mel.* Oh, for pity,
' Forbear these fatal thoughts! they but inflame
' The rage of real ills, and wound you deeper.'
Leon. Would tears, my gracious mistress, aught avail us,
Methinks these aged eyes could number drops
With falling clouds, or the perpetual stream.
But while we mourn our enemy rejoices,
And sounds his cruel triumph loud to heaven.
If I have bow'd me to his impious will,
Tho' with that strong abhorrence nature feels
At what she holds most mortal; 'twas to turn
Against the traitor his own treacherous arts,
And ruin him more surely. This may be.
Sad Corinth looks with horror on the hand
That scourges her each hour with whips of scorpions.
She waits but some fair chance, at once to rise
And drive him from her throne. [*A Flourish.*
Mel. These trumpets speak
His near approach.
Eur. Father of human kind,
Eternal Justice, hear these guilty sounds,
Behold this tyrant's revel, while a king,
Thy great resemblance, floats a cold pale corse,
Or on the naked beach cast vilely out,
Unknown, unhonour'd lies!——Leonidas,
By all my griefs, I beg thee, search these shores,

Each cliff and cavern where the wild wave beats,
For my lov'd Lord, and to these widow'd arms
Give back his dear remains. ' But Procles comes.'
[*Exeunt* Eur. *and* Mel.

Enter Procles, Medon, *and Attendants.*

Proc. Hail, glorious Day! auspicious Fortune, hail!
From this triumphant hour my future life
Runs fair and smiling on. The bold attempt,
Laid dark and deep by my most dreaded foe,
Is perish'd with its author. From on high
Heaven arm'd his winds and seas to fight for me;
And victory is mine without my care,
Almost without my knowledge. Yes, the gods,
The gods themselves, espouse my happy cause!
For this, let flowery garlands wreath their shrines;
Let hecatombs before their altars bleed,
And triumph reign thro' Corinth. [*Attendants withdraw.*
Is the Queen
Inform'd of all, Leonidas?

Leon. She is.

Proc. And she receiv'd the news——

Leon. With sad surprise,
And many tears, my Lord.

Proc. Just the fond sex.
Such their vain grief; a moment's passing storm,
Then all is calm. Be it thy farther care,
As the receding flood forsakes the shore,
To make strict search thro' all this coast around
For Periander's corpse. I would, methinks,
A while indulge my eyes, a while peruse
The features of a rival once so fam'd,
So terrible in arms; whose partial fortune
Soar'd high above, and ever thwarted mine
In all the dearer aims that swell my thought,
Love and ambition.

Leon. Mark this, righteous Heaven! [*Aside. Exit.*

Med. At length, Sir, all the gods declare for you,
And fortune is your own. Your native realm,
Fair Epidaurus, peaceful and resign'd,
Acknowledges her Lord. Your rival's fate
Confirms his kingdom yours.

Proc. Yet I am still

Unbless'd

Unbleſs'd amid this flow of proſp'rous fortune.
Not all the charms ambition's ſhoreleſs wiſh.
Empire and kneeling homage, can beſtow
The better joy I long for.

Med. Ah, my Prince!
Forget, or ſcorn that proud, ill-natur'd fair-one!

Proc. Impoſſible. By Heaven, my ſoul can form
No wiſh, no thought but her. I tell thee, Medon,
With bluſhes tell thee, this proud charmer reigns
Unbounded o'er my reaſon. I have try'd
Each ſhape, each art of varied love, to win her;
'Alternate prayers and threats, the ſoothing ſkill
'Of paſſionate ſincerity, the fire
'Of rapturous vows; but all theſe arts were vain:
'Her rooted hate is not to be remov'd.'
And 'twas my ſoul's firſt aim, the towering point
Of all my wiſhes, to prevail in this,
To triumph o'er my rival too in love.
That had been great revenge! but baffled here,
I'm diſappointed ſtill.

Med. Believe me, Sir,
When once the fit of wilfulneſs is o'er,
The burſt of tears diſcharg'd, ſhe'll quickly ſoften,
Stoop to your wiſhes, and forget a huſband
Who is no more.

Proc. Perdition on his name!
I dread his memory as my rival ſtill.
But if I have not won her to be mine,
At leaſt, the hated huſband reap'd no joy
From her fantaſtic honour. Stung to madneſs,
For ill-requited love, I darkly ſpread
Surmiſes of her truth. He thought her falſe;
And, as he doated on her, the dire tale
Was poiſon to his quiet. Jealouſy,
In all its horrors, muſt have ſeiz'd his ſoul.
I triumph'd there!

Med. 'Twas exquiſite revenge.
I too, my Lord, who live but for your pleaſure,
Your ever-faithful ſlave, I too combin'd
To aid your vengeance. You can ſtill remember,
When in a dungeon's depth Ariſton lay,
Ariſton, Periander's factious friend.

With looks of seeming pity, I oft mourn'd
His hard imprisonment, complain'd of you,
Nay, curs'd your cruelty, 'till I had brought
His unsuspecting honesty to credit
My fiction of the Queen. I told him then,
With well-dissembled hatred of her crime,
Embittering every circumstance, that she,
Forgetful of her better fame, had heard
Your secret passion, and with equal ardor
Return'd its warmth. Nay, that she often urg'd you
To wreak your rage on him, the hated friend
Of Periander. Having thus alarm'd him,
After a long pause, I let him 'scape at last,
To find his master out.

Proc. I thank thee, Medon.
But this avails not much. My soul burns in me,
With furious longings to subdue that woman;
To bend her pride of virtue to my passion.
I fancy, in her arms transcendent joys,
A heaven of higher bliss, not to be found
In unresisting beauty, woo'd and won
At idle leisure. Yet once more I mean
To try the fortune of my wishes with her;
And if I am repuls'd, away, at once,
All little arts of love.

Med. Mean while, the banquet,
Which pleasure's curious hand hath furnish'd out
With splendid choice, awaits you, and invites
To laughing thought and triumph. There the god,
Th' inspiring god of wine, with rose-buds crown'd,
Mirth in his look, and at his side the band
Of little playful loves, fills high the bowl,
And bids it flow unbounded. Music too
Joins her enchanting voice, and wooes the soul
With all her powerful skill of moving strains,
Till the gay hour is quite dissolv'd in bliss,
In ecstacy of revel, all unknown
To lean-look'd Temperance, and his peevish train.

Proc. Come on then, Medon. Life is vainly short,
A very dream of being: and when death
Has quench'd this finer flame that moves the heart,
Beyond is all oblivion, and waste night,

That

That knows no following dawn; where we shall be
As we had never been. The present then
Is only ours: and shall we let it pass,
Untasted, unenjoy'd? No, let us on.
Hail we the rising shade! and now, while night
Leads on the secret hour of free delight,
With wanton gaiety, in naked state,
Let music, mirth and love around us wait.

[*Exeunt.*

END of the FIRST ACT.

ACT II.

SCENE, *a rocky Coast, terminated by a view of the Ocean.*

Enter Periander.

PERIANDER.

'BY the pale glimmering of the falling moon,
'Amid the broken windings of these rocks
'I wander on forlorn, and find no place
'To trust my head, or rest my weary steps.
'Horror pursues me close. In each low blast,
'And murmur of the main, methinks I hear
'The murderous spies of Procles at my heels.
'Thou mournful Queen of heaven! and you, dread gods,
'Who rule the fearful secresy of night,
'Behold me here, the sport of human chance,
'A nameless wretch, a ruin hardly sav'd
'From the devouring deep. There my last hopes,
'My great revenge, lies buried. Is there more?
'Away, away! a traitor fills my throne,
'Triumphant in his crimes; and I, the while,
'Roam here a midnight fugitive. Yet this,
'All this I could have borne. He was my foe,
'The jealous rival of my power——But thou,
'In whom my soul had treasur'd up her heaven,
'Friendship, and faith, and love, Eurydice!
'Thou to betray me!

'[*Letting himself fall against the Rock.*

'Ha! by the moon's sad beam, I can descry
'The towers that hold this author of my shame.

'Nay, Procles too, perhaps——and may not he,
'Even now——confusion! death! he may, he does
'Invade my bed!——Oh, hell! she smiles to hear
'The story of my fate!——And now they give
'A loose to impious joys. All-seeing Powers!
'And does your vengeance slumber? Are your bolts
'Reserv'd for me alone?——Ha!——yet 'tis just.
'Conscience, that in the day of fortune's favour
'Securely slept, now rouzes into strong
'And dread conviction of her crime. I broke
'The sacred oath sworn to a dying father,
'To free my country from her chains. My soul
'Shakes as I roll this thought. Oh, Providence,
'Awfully just, tho' guilt may shut her eye,
'Thine ever wakes to mark, to trace, to punish!'

Enter Leonidas.

Leon. This way a distant sound alarm'd my ear;
Broken it seem'd to be; the voice of mourning
And deep distress. Methought it rose just here,
From these deaf-sounding cliffs. But all is still,
Save the hoarse deep yet working from the storm.
Some Power direct my steps where I may find,
By this faint moon-light, my lov'd master's corpse,
To save his sacred reliques from the rage
Of brutish tyranny——Ha! what art thou?
A man, or fear-form'd shadow of the night?

Per. Leonidas!

Leon. The same. But speak again.

Per. Leonidas!

Leon. Ha! can it be, ye Powers,
My royal Lord?

Per. [*Coming forward.*] A wretch that has no name.

Leon. Oh, all ye gods! may I believe my senses?
'Tis he! my Prince!——Just Heaven, to thee I kneel,
And thus adore thy gracious providence:
'Tis most amazing!'

Per. Rise, Leonidas.
I am beneath thy care. Thou seest me here
The last of men, cast off by all good Powers;
Sav'd from the deep to be more lost on shore.

Leon. My king and master, tho' my heart bleeds in me,
With all your mighty ills, I must again

Bleſs that good Heaven whoſe providence has ſav'd you.
'Tis great! 'tis wond'rous all! But how, Oh, how
Have you eſcap'd the tyrant's jealous ſearch?
His guards with ſtrict ſurvey rang'd every cliff
And hollow of theſe rocks.

Per. I'll tell thee then.
We were in ſight of Corinth, when at once
Broad darkneſs hid the ſky; at once the winds
Roar'd with mad bluſter o'er us, and the ſeas
In rowling mountains roſe. A ſtorm ſo fierce,
So big with ruin, baffled our beſt ſkill.
Deſpair ſtruck every heart. The ſhip ran round
In giddy whirls, and bulg'd on ſome hid rock.
Oh, diſmal moment! ſtill methinks I hear
The general, dying ſcream of multitudes,
Juſt drowning in th' abyſs. How poor a thing
Is a king then, Leonidas!——I graſp'd
A floating wreck, the big ſea roaring round me,
And burſting o'er my head: 'but bury'd deep
'Beneath the whelming tide,' at once I loſt
The light of heaven and life. A wave, it ſeems,
Lodg'd me within a cavern's ſecret depth,
Near yon tall mountain.

Leon. Miracle of fate!
Sure God's immediate hand conducted it,
Severely merciful——How ſhall I tell
What pangs, what agonies of ſoul I felt
At ſight of your ſad wreck?——But, Sir, the Prince,
What of his fate?

Per. I know not what to think:
But to be mine, it ſeems, is to be wretched.
Half of my fleet, yet riding in the port,
I left to his command, but with ſtrict charge
To ſail a few hours after. 'Twere in vain
'To tell thee now the reaſon of my order.'
This ſtorm, I fear, may have ſurpris'd him too,
Unhappy boy!

Leon. Your own eſcape, my Lord,
So full of wonder, and beyond all hope,
Inclines me to ſtrong faith, that Heaven is ſtill
Concern'd for your affairs. But to behold 'you,
'So late the firſt and happieſt of mankind,

'Alone

'Alone and wandering here at the dead hour;'
No roof but heaven's high cope to ſhelter you;
No couch but this unhoſpitable earth,
To reſt your brine-drench'd limbs—it kills my heart.
Curſe on the tyrant!

Per. Pr'ythee, think me not
So poorly ſoul'd to ſtoop beneath the preſſure
Of Fortune's hand. That were to merit it.
But there is ſtill behind——Oh, death to honour!
One cruſhing blow, that lays me low indeed!
That ſinks me in the duſt!

Leon. What do I hear?
Your words amaze me!

Per. How, Leonidas!
Surely thou art no ſtranger to my thought.
Procles—Eurydice—Wilt thou not ſpeak,
To ſave my ſhame? Say, tell me what thou know'ſt
Of that bad woman.

Leon. With ſuch watchful care
The tyrant's truſted ſpies obſerve her ſteps,
That, till this fatal evening, when, by order
Of Procles, I inform'd her of your death,
I have not ſeen her once.

Per. Juſt what I fear'd.
That guilty ſecrecy was well contriv'd
To cover crimes too foul for honeſt eyes,
And heaven's fair light to ſee. None, none but Procles
Could gain admittance; and to him my gates,
My fortreſs, nay, my bed itſelf was open!

Leon. Oh, wrong her not, my Lord! Had you but ſeen
With what convulſive pangs of heart-felt anguiſh,
What bleeding agonies, ſhe heard the tale
Of your imagin'd death, your ſoul would melt,
In pity of her woes. This Procles too,
Call'd down each power of heaven to witneſs for him,
He meant her fair. Hers was the common cauſe
Of kings, he ſaid, whoſe place and honour bound them
To ſcourge rebellion, in whatever ſhape,
Wherever found. And then what was her ſtate?
Death, in his ghaſtlieſt form, devouring famine,
Hung inſtant o'er her head. Oh, think of this,
And add not to her wrongs!

Per.

Per. Ha! wrong her, say'ſt thou?
Anſwer me: has ſhe not entail'd diſgrace,
And vileneſs on my name? Has ſhe not made me
The laughter of my foe, the ſcoff of Procles?
Oh, curſe! is there in all the wrath of heaven
A plague, a ruin, like that infamy!
'Wrong her—I am too well inform'd of all;
'Too certain of the bluſhful ſtain that cleaves
'To me and mine for ever!'
Leon. Ah, my Lord,
By all good powers, by your eternal quiet,
I beg you hear me——
Per. I have heard too much,
Too much, juſt gods! to hope for quiet more.
Thoſe fates inexorable, that purſue
My life with utmoſt rigor, would not ſpare me
The knowledge of my ſhame. From my beſt friend
Bluſhing I learnt it—But haſt thou e'er felt
That heart of anguiſh ſtabb'd by murderous fears,
And ſhuddering with ten thouſand mortal thoughts!
That tempeſt of the ſoul that knows no calm;
Toſſing from love to hate, from doubt to rage,
To raving agony!
Leon. Alas! my Lord,
Truſt me, I weep to hear ſo ſad a tale.
Per. I'll tell thee all! for, Oh! my ſoul is full,
And muſt have vent. 'My aking memory,
'Still fruitful to my torture, brings again
'Thoſe days, thoſe months of horror I have known.
'Abandon'd to diſtraction, I renounc'd
'The commerce of mankind. I ſought to vent
'My ravings in the wildneſs of the woods;
'To hide my ſhame in their profoundeſt night.
'The morn ſtill brought it back: the midnight-ſhade
'Could not conceal it. Her lone echoes groan'd
'Unceaſing with my pangs; and her ſad ghoſts,
'Forbid to reſt even in the grave, in me
'Beheld a ſoul more loſt, more curſt, than they.'
'*Leon.* Oh, Sir, no more——
'*Per.*' When I call'd back paſt time,
Life's vernal ſeaſon, the ſoft hours of peace
And unſuſpecting love; our growing joys

In

In rearing one lov'd ſon; that heaven of bliſs
Which princes ſeldom find, and was all ours,
My ſoul dy'd in me. 'Solitary, wild,
'I wept, I groan'd, in bitterneſs of heart.
'But when curſt Procles flaſh'd on my remembrance,
'My known, my deadly foe—that he of all,
'That he had made her vile! 'twas then, 'tis now
'Rage, fury, madneſs.'—You at laſt arrous'd it
To thoughts of vengeance. With all ſpeed I ſail'd,
Feeding my frenzy with the gloomy joy
Of ſtabbing the betrayer in her arms;
Of plunging both to hell—but this curſt ſtorm!
Theſe treacherous waves!

Leon. Ye gods, what have I heard!
Alas, alas! all waves, all ſtorms, are calms
To jealouſy. Oh, my lov'd Lord, beware
Of that deſtroyer, that ſelf-torturing fiend,
Who loves his pain, and feeds the cruel cares
That prey upon his life; whoſe frantic eye
Is ever open, ever prying round
For what he dreads to find. 'By all moſt dear
'And inward to my ſoul, I think the Queen
'As pure as Truth herſelf.' This is, by heaven,
Some dark-laid treachery, the crime of Procles.

Per. Of Procles, ſay'ſt thou?

Leon. Oh, you know him not.
Luſt and ambition are not all his guilt.
But now's no time, my Lord,
For farther talk. I tremble for your life.
This place is hoſtile ground; and danger here
May find us out, though ſhrouded round with night.
Hence let us fly, where I may lodge you ſafe
In ſome obſcure retreat; till pitying heaven
Unravel this perplexity of ills,
And point us what to do.

Per. Thou good old man!
By heaven, thy matchleſs honeſty and truth
Half reconcile me to diſgrace and ruin.
Yet bluſhing let me tell thee all my folly——
Might I but ſee Eurydice.—Nay, ſtart not:
I know 'tis baſe. I know ſhe is beneath
My cooleſt ſcorn. I hate and curſe this weakneſs.

Yet

Yet let me see her—If she still has kept
Her faith inviolate; fallen as I am,
My ruin will be light. If otherwise,
To know the worst will be soft soothing ease
To this hot hell of doubt.

Leon. I wish you, Sir,
To weigh the certain peril that attends
This rash adventure. Should, which Heav'n avert,
Should Procles' guards discover you, Oh, think
What must ensue! Think, in your fate, the Queen
And Prince both ruin'd!

Per. But my genius prompts.
Fate calls; and I must on. No face of danger
Can be so dreadful as the vultur-thoughts
That gnaw my heart-strings. But we both are safe.
The moon withdraws her light: and who will dream
Of finding Periander in this russet?
This, when the storm grew big, I threw around me;
In hopes my vulgar fate, if then I perish'd,
Might ever rest unknown; and Procles still
Sit trembling on his throne—But hark, what sounds?

Leon. The tyrant thus dishonours fortune's favour
By this mean pomp and triumph—Yet 'tis well.
Now riot rules the hour, and watchful order
Resigns his post to dissolute security.
We now may pass unquestion'd. Come, my Lord,
This way our path lies. May some friendly god
Walk with us, and throw tenfold darkness round. [*Exe.*

Enter Eurydice *alone.*

Eur. Oh, night of ruin, horror, and despair!
Walks there beneath thy universal shade
A wretch like me undone? All-ruling gods!
Why have I liv'd to this? Why was my crime
Visited on the guiltless head? on him
For whom my soul would have met death with joy?
Where shall I turn my eyes? What hope remains
To misery like mine? Oh! I am lost
Beyond the hand of Heav'n to save me now.
Leonidas returns not——

Enter Melissa.

Mel. Gracious gods,
Defend my royal mistress! As I watch'd
Without for good Leonidas, this moment

I saw

I saw the tyrant cross the lower court,
Preceded by his minion: as new risen
From the mad midnight's feast; his wanton robe
Loose-flowing from behind, and on his head
A festal wreath of roses—Ah! he's here.

Enter Procles *and* Medon.

Proc. Hail, young ey'd god of wine! parent of joys!
Frolic, and full of thee (while the cold sons
Of temperance, the fools of thought and care,
Lie stretch'd in sober slumbers) we, the few
Of purer flame, exalt each living hour
With pleasures ever new.——Eurydice!
Thou queen of souls! thou rapture of my vows!
What means this pensive mood? Oh, quench not thus
In fruitless tears those eyes, that wont to smile
With all love's sweetness, all his dewy beams,
Diffusing life around thee.

Eur. Hence, thou tyrant,
And leave me to my sorrows. Ills like mine
Would draw remorse and reverence from the savage,
Who howls with midnight wolves amid the desart
In quest of horrid prey. What then art thou?
Whose brutal rage adds bitterness to woe,
And anguish to the breaking heart?

'*Proc.* 'Tis well.
'Yet have a care: my temper but ill brooks
'Upbraiding now. Be wise, and timely seize
'The minute of good fortune, that by me
'Invites thee to be blest.

'*Eur.* Talk'st thou of bliss?
'Thou bane of all my happiness! Cast back,
'Cast back thy guilty eyes, and view the crimes
'Thy soul stands charg'd with: view my bleeding wrongs,
'Insult, imprisonment, dishonour, ruin!
'All, all this guilt is thine—but Heaven will find thee.
'Those gods whom thou hast proudly set at nought,
'Will call thee to a dreadful reckoning.

'*Proc.* No.
'The gods and I are friends: they crown my cause
'With their best favour. Come, be thou too mine,
'And imitate the great example set thee.

'*Eur.*

' *Eur.* Thou vain and blind in ſoul! The righteous
' Oft, in their anger, cloath the worſt of men [gods,
' With all the pride of fond proſperity,
' To make his fall more terrible.'
Proc. ' Confuſion!'
Still wayward and perverſe!—Off then this tameneſs,
Theſe ſupple, fawning arts. By all th' impatience
That goads my ſoul, I will not flatter more.
Know thou art in my power, and———
Eur. Tyrant, no.
I ſcorn thy baſe, unmanly threats—Ah, Heaven!
Doſt thou look calmly on?—But be it ſo.
This friendly dagger ſets me free.
[*Attempting to ſtab herſelf.*
Proc. Ha! what,
What means thy frantic paſſion? This is wildneſs,
Th' extravagance of female wilfulneſs;
It muſt not be; you ſhall be gently forc'd
To live, and to be happy.
Enter an Officer.
Offi. Sir, forgive
This rude intruſion. What I bring imports
Your preſent ear. As now I walk'd the round
Of this wide fort, where the ſteep-winding path
Ends at the northern gate, I ſpy'd a ſtranger,
Who ſought to lie conceal'd. Forthwith I rous'd
The neareſt watch; and, ere he was aware,
Surrounded him at once. His ſullen ſilence,
And hands oft rais'd to heaven with earneſt action,
Convince me he is of no common note.
Eur. My ſoul! what doſt thou hear? [*Aſide.*
Proc. 'Tis well. I thank thee.
Haſte, ſee him brought before us.
Enter Periander *guarded.*
Eur. Oh, ye powers! [*Aſide.*
Per. Ha! poiſon to my eyes! [*Aſide.*
Proc. I know him not.
His dreſs is poor, and ſpeaks him of the vulgar.
He ſeems to labour with ſome ſtormy thought,
That deeply ſhakes his frame. What art thou? ſay,
Why at this hour of ſilence ling'ring here?

Ha! speak, resolve me; or the rack shall tear
Confession from thy pangs.
Per. Fate, thou hast caught me!
But all is equal now. [*Aside.*
[*To him.*] Then see before thee
The man on earth whom thou hast injur'd most.
If guilt can know remorse, what must thou feel
At sight of Periander?
Proc. Periander!
Eur. Now, now, we both are ruin'd.
Proc. Heaven, I thank thee.
I form'd but one supreme, one crowning wish,
And thou hast heard it! This is more than triumph!
Eur. Oh, my lov'd Lord——
Per. Thou canst no more betray me.
For thee, my soul still unsubdu'd and free,
Disdains to parle with thine.
Proc. Yet thou art fallen
Beneath my wrath, the vassal of my nod,
To be chastis'd for mirth—Guards, drag him hence,
And plunge him in the dungeon's depth.
Eur. *Oh, heav'n!*
Per. Away,
Unkingly boaster. Can prosperity
Debase thee to the cowardice of insult?
Thy brutal manners well revenge me on thee:
They shew thee as thou art—'My nobler part,
'Th' immortal mind, thy madness cannot reach:
'Thy whips and racks can there impress no wound.'
As for this weary carcass in thy power,
It is beneath my care. Lead to my dungeon.
Chains, scourges, torture, all that nature feels,
Or fears abhorrent, cannot shock my thought
Like thy loath'd sight, and that vile woman's. On.
[*Exit guarded.*
Eur. My Lord, my husband, stay—Oh, hear me!
hear me——
Shame! rage! distraction!——Cruel tyrant, off.
I'll follow him to death.
Proc. No. By the joys
That swell my soaring thought, you shall not 'scape me,

Revenge and love combine to crown this night
With matchleſs bliſs.
Eur. Inhuman! haſt thou eyes?
Haſt thou a heart? and cannot all this wreck
Of ruin'd majeſty, ruin'd by thee,
Move one relenting thought, and wake thy pity?
He feels not what I ſay: repeated crimes
Have ſavag'd his remorſeleſs ſoul.—Hear then,
Almighty Jove! behold, and judge the cauſe
Of Periander! number all his wrongs
In plagues, in horrors——
Proc. Ha! by hell, this raving
But wings his fate. Since thy fond folly weds thee
To ruin with this rival, know he dies;
This very night he dies. Through him I mean
To wound thy heart indeed. Thou ſhalt behold him
When the rack ſtretches ſtrong his rending joints,
Burſts all his veins, and hunts the flying ſoul
Through every limb. Then, when convulſive agony
Grins hideous in his face, mangled and bleeding,
In the laſt throes of death, thou ſhalt behold him.
Eur. It is not to be borne! My life dies in me
At the deſtroying thought—Ah, ſtay thee, Procles——
Aſſiſt me, pitying Heaven!—See then, behold me
Thus proſtrate at thy feet. If yet thou haſt not
Renounc'd all manhood, feeling, and remorſe,
'Spare me his life; ſave only that: all elſe,
'His crown, his throne be thine.
'*Proc.* Off! let me go:
'Thy words are loſt in air.
'*Eur.* Nay, hear me, Procles.
'As is thy hope in Heaven's forgiving goodneſs,
'Shut not thy heart againſt the cry of miſery.'
Baniſh us any whither; drive us out
To ſhame, want, beggary, to every woe
That moſt embitters life—I yet will bleſs thee,
Forget my crying wrongs, and own thee merciful.
Procles *aſide, and pauſing.*
This woman fools my rage—but to reſolve.
No—yes; it ſhall be ſo. Riſe then, and learn
Thy triumph o'er my ſoul. Yes, he ſhall live,
This Periander whom I deadly hate.

Nay more, he ſhall be free. Leonidas,
With ſuch ſafe conduct as thyſelf ſhalt name,
Attends him to our kingdom's fartheſt limit.
This, in the ſight of Jove the ſupreme lord,
I ſwear to do; ſo thou at laſt conſent
To meet my love—Ha! what! and doſt thou frown?
Weigh well what I propoſe; for on my ſoul,
His life or death awaits thy next reſolve.
[*Exeunt* Procles *and* Medon.

Eur. Then kill me firſt—He's gone! and now, ye gods,
Is there among the wretched one ſo loſt,
So curſt as I? Oh, ſcene of matchleſs woes!
Oh, Periander! wert thou ſav'd for this?
Ye holy powers in heaven, to whom belongs
The fate of virtue, and redreſs of wrongs,
Aſſiſt, inſpire me how to ſave his life;
Or to th' unhappy huſband join the wife. [*Exeunt.*

End of the Second Act.

ACT III.

Eurydice *and* Meliſſa.

Melissa.

THIS chearleſs morning riſes ſlow and ſad.
The frowning heavens are black with ſtormy clouds;
And, o'er the deep, a hovering night of fogs
Lies dark and motionleſs.

Eur. That mournful face
Of Nature is leſs gloomy than my ſoul:
All there is darkneſs and diſmay. Ah, me!
Was ever night, Meliſſa, like the laſt?
A night of many terrors, many deaths!
How has my ſoul out-liv'd it? But, great gods!
Can mortal ſtrength, can human virtue bear
What Periander feels? In one day's courſe,
Wreck'd, made a captive, ſunk into a dungeon,
To die or live as his curſt foe decrees!
Diſtraction's in the thought. And what can I
To ſave his ſacred life?
Ha! is it Heaven [*After a pauſe.*
That darts this ſudden light into my ſoul?

This

This glimpſe of dawning hope?—It ſhall be try'd.
Yes, yes, ye powers! my life and fame ſhall both
Be offer'd up to ſave his dearer life.
Mel. Alas, what mean you, Madam?
Eur. Mean, Meliſſa!
To do a noble juſtice on myſelf;
A deed for which, in nations yet unborn,
Chaſte wives and matrons ſhall renown my name.
I've wrong'd my huſband greatly, and I mean
Ample atonement of my guilty weakneſs.
Go then, Meliſſa——
Mel. Whither muſt I go?
I tremble at your words.
Eur. Yet it ſticks here,
This fatal purpoſe. Can I leave behind me
A doubtful name, inſulted, wounded, torn
By cruel calumny? I can; I dare
'Throw off the woman, and be deaf to all
'Thoſe nicer female fears that call ſo loud,
'Importunate, and urging me to live
'Till I may clear my truth from all furmiſe.'
Go then, and in my name—'Tis worſe than death
To utter it—but go, inform the tyrant,
So Periander lives, and is ſet free,
I yield me to his wiſh.
Mel. Forbid it, Heaven!
Eur. Thou faithful, virtuous maid! Know then, my laſt,
My fix'd reſolve. By this I mean to amuſe
His brutal hopes, and ſave me from his violence,
Till Periander is beyond his reach.
Then, if he ſtill dare urge his impious purpoſe,
A dagger ſets me free. This arm at laſt
Shall do me right on him, myſelf, or both.
Enter Leonidas.
Eur. Leonidas!
Leon. Ah, Madam!
Eur. Dare I aſk
Where Periander is——Ah, where indeed?
Chain'd in a dungeon's airleſs depth, amid
Foul damps, and loneſome darkneſs! Oh, that thought
Draws blood from my torn heart.
Leon. Juſtice divine!

In thy great day of viſitation, mark
This man of blood. Oh, let him feel the hand
He dares to diſbelieve. To all his counſels
Send forth, in thy juſt wrath, that fatal ſpirit
Of error and illuſion, that foreruns
The fall of guilty kings.
Ere morning dawn,
Soft to the diſmal dungeon's mouth I ſtole,
Where, by the glimmerings of a dying lamp,
I ſaw my great unhappy maſter laid
On the cold earth along——
Eur. Oh, hide the ſad,
The fatal image from me. 'The dire thought
'Will run me into madneſs.
'*Leon.* Yet even there,
'Where pale diſmay, the priſoner's drear aſſociate,
'Sits ever ſad and ſleepleſs, he could reſt.
'Superior to the cruel fate that cruſh'd him,
'He ſlept as deep as indolence on down.
'Theſe eyes beheld it; and I would not break
'His wiſh'd repoſe, but fix'd in ſilent wonder,
'Stood weeping o'er the ſight.'
'*Eur.*' Ah, me! my life
Flows out at every word——What's to be done?
Leon. Madam, I ſet my all at ſtake for him.
Old as I am, and broken with the load
Of threeſcore years, what is a life like mine,
But as it may be uſeful to my maſter?
Already the ſad people know his fate:
And I, by faithful hands, will try to rouze
Their pity firſt, and next their rage. No hour,
No moment ſhall be loſt.
Eur. Thou good old man!
What words can ſpeak thy worth? Fair loyalty
And faith inviolate, which ſeem'd quite loſt
Among mankind, live in thy virtuous boſom.
Leon. No more of this, my Queen. Might I but ſee
This haughty tyrant, in ſome guilty hour
Of inſolence and riot, when his pride
Plumes all her vaineſt wiſhes, hurl'd at once
To ruin unforeſeen; my labours then,
My ſervices, were greatly over-paid.

Eur.

Eur. Heaven hear thy pious wish. I too the while,
To save my husband's life, have been contriving——
Leon. Madam, the tyrant—I will find another
More favourable moment. [*Exeunt* Eur. *and* Mel.
Enter Procles *and* Medon.
Proc. Hold thyself
Prepar'd, Leonidas: I must employ thee
In an affair of weight. [Leonidas *withdraws.*
Methinks I droop
With more than wonted heaviness of heart.
But I will shake it off, and to the winds
Give every thought of care. 'Tis only fondness,
And fancy sick with hope. Eurydice
Bends to my wishes: and, in her, I hope
That heaven imagin'd that sole bliss, which yet
My search could never meet.
Med. It moves my wonder
To see your love thus wedded to one bosom:
While all around bright crouds of rival beauties
Practise each art of charming, look, and talk,
And live for you alone.
Proc. Alas, my friend!
Poor is the triumph over hearts like these:
This hour they please us, and the next they pall.
But to subdue the pride that scorns to yield;
To fill th' unwilling breast with sighs and longings,
With all the soft distraction of fond love,
Even while it strives against th' invading victor,
And wonders at the change; that, that is conquest!
The plume of pleasure! and from her alone
A glory to be won.
Med. Well, may you find
In this proud fair-one that enchants you thus,
Whate'er imagination's fondest eye
Beholds in rapturous vision, or young love
In all his wantonness of power can give.
But yet, forgive your servant's forward zeal,
Mean you to keep the promise you have made her?
Pro. I do.
Med. How, Sir! what set her husband free?
Proc. I mean no less.
Med. Your pardon, Sir; 'tis well.

But have you calmly weigh'd, in reason's scale,
The certain consequence? Set free your rival!
A soul made furious with his mighty wrongs;
Boiling with hate, rage, jealousy, revenge;
With the full-gather'd storm of deadly passions!
The gods forbid it, Sir——And all to dry
A froward woman's tears!

Proc. No, no, my friend;
Nor liberty nor life shall long be his:
I never meant him either; but my faith
Is pass'd to set him free. By that alone
The haughty Queen was overcome; and I
Will keep th' illusive promise to her ear,
But break it to her hope.

Med. As how, my Lord?

Proc. Such inbred enmity my soul bears his
As Nature does to ruin, to the grave,
Where the whole man descends to rise no more.
Hear then what I intend. Thou know'st the fortress,
That guards our frontier on the Theban side.
That way our foe must pass; but thou shalt first
Post thither on the spur with wary speed:
And with a chosen band, drawn from the fort,
Way-lay him on the farther hill, close couch'd
In the deep covert of those pendant woods,
That shade the path below.

Med. Conclude it done.
Sleep shall not know my eyes, till his are clos'd
In everlasting night. As to his prison
I waited him, he call'd me minion, slave,
A traitor's parasite, the base-foul'd minister
Of his loose pleasures; and I will repay him,
For each opprobrious name, a mortal stab.
Yes, he shall feel his fate. Insult and taunt,
Embittering every blow, shall mock his pangs,
And give him sevenfold death.

Proc. So, now to try
This Periander thoroughly. Go, Medon,
Command him hither. [*Exit* Medon.
No, I cannot bear
His last night's haughty look and untam'd spirit.
It baffles my revenge, and I still miss

My

My nobleſt triumph; for I meant to bend him
To baſe dejection, and to feaſt my ſcorn
With his pale cheek and ſupplicating eye.
But I will hunt this pride through each receſs,
Each cloſer folding of the ſoul, till I
Have ſunk him to my wiſh.—Thou, jealouſy!
Almighty tyrant of the human mind,
Who canſt at will unſettle the calm brain,
O'erturn the ſeated heart, and ſhake the man
Through all his frame with tempeſt and diſtraction;
Riſe to my preſent aid; call up thy powers,
Thy furious fears, thy blaſts of dreadful paſſion,
Thy whips, ſnakes, mortal ſtings, thy hoſt of horrors;
Rouſe thy whole war againſt him, and complete
My purpos'd vengeance.—But he comes to prove it.

Enter Periander, Medon, *and Guards.*

[*Advancing.*] I have to talk with thee. Thy life, thou [know'ſt,
Depends upon my will——

Per. And therefore I
Am weary of the load. But let the gods,
Who thus diſpenſe our fates, account for them,
And vindicate their juſtice.

Proc. Be more calm.
The noble mind meets every chance of fortune,
Unruffled and ſerene. I, though thy foe,
Perhaps may mean thee good.

Per. Such good the tiger,
Hungry for death and ſlaughter, means his prey.
But know, my ſoul receives with equal ſcorn
Thy hate and hollow love. I am not fallen
By thy ſuperior ſword, or nobler deed;
It was the guilt of fate!

Proc. Call we it ſo.
At leaſt 'tis well thou muſt of force acknowledge
Thy crown, thy liberty, thy life and death,
Hang on my nod. I can diſpoſe of all
As likes me beſt.

Per. Ha! doſt thou boaſt of that?
But thou wilt never know how poor a purchaſe
Is power and empire gain'd for virtue loſt.

Proc. And yet, methinks, I read the difference plain
In thee and me. Thy virtue and theſe bonds

I weigh

I weigh in equal ſcale againſt the crown
And ſceptre of fair Corinth: and while theſe,
The glorious aim of each great heart that dares
Beyond the narrow ſphere of earth-born ſpirits;
While theſe are mine, I envy not thy tribe,
A ſound, an empty name.

Per. It joys my ſoul
To find the man, who bears me mortal hate,
At war too with the gods. 'Tis great revenge!
Had not vain fortune made thee blind, the thought
Would change thy purple to the mourner's ſack-cloth.
What are thy glorious acts?—Thou haſt undone
A woman, weak and worthleſs.—Yes, ye powers!
This hero, this fair warrior, well deſerv'd
To fill my vacant ſeat: he won it nobly!
Diſſembling, perjury, the coward's arms——
With theſe he fought his virtuous way to empire.
Thou ſeeſt I know thee.

'*Proc.* Doſt thou preach to me
'The pedant maxims of thoſe ſons of earth,
'Whom the groſs vulgar fondly title wiſe?
'Slaves, who to ſhades and ſolitude condemn'd,
'Pine there with all-ſhunn'd penury and ſcorn.
'A monarch is above them, and takes counſel
'Of his unbounded will, and high ambition,
'That counts the world his own. I ever held thee
'My foe, my deadly bane; and againſt ſuch,
'Force, fraud, all arts, are lawful. I have won
'And mean to wear thy crown. Thou may'ſt the while
'Seek ſome vile cell out, and grow poorly old
'Amid the talking tribe of moraliſts.

'*Per.* Through this falſe face of arrogance, I read
'Thy heart of real terror and diſmay.
'Hence all theſe coward-boaſts. The truly brave,
'Invincible to pride and fortune's flattery,
'Know neither fear nor inſult.—But I would not,
'As thou ſurmiſeſt, dream out uſeleſs life
'In ſloth's unactive couch. Nay, I could tell thee,
'That though I ſhun thy ſhameful ways of conqueſt;
'Still heaven-born glory, won by virtuous deeds,
'Has been my fair purſuit: ſtill would I ſeek her

'In

'In toils of war, and in the nobler field
'Of juſtice, peace, and mercy.'
Proc. My ſoul longs
To prove thy higheſt daring, and to meet thee
Amid the din and peril of the battle.
Thy life is in thy hand: thou art no longer
Our priſoner. This moment ſets thee free.
Per. How!—but thou dar'ſt not—Could I find thee
In open day, and honourable arms, [there,
Oppoſing war to war, as monarchs ſhould,
I would forgive thee all, my crown uſurp'd,
Theſe ſlave-like bonds—But that fair hope is vain.
The fears that haunt thy ſoul——
Proc. Strike off his fetters. [*To* Medon.
Haſte, find Leonidas. Bid him prepare
To guard the priſoner to our kingdom's frontier.
There he ſhall leave him free to chuſe what courſe
His fancy moſt affects.
Per. What means all this?
Dares guilt then be ſo brave? and doſt thou free
The man whom act of thine ſhall never win
To owe thee aught but deep and deadly hate?
Proc. Go, ſee my orders inſtantly perform'd.
[Medon *and Guards retire.*
'*Per.* And is it ſo—I ſhudder with my fears. [*Aſide.*
'Say, tell me firſt to what is Periander
'Indebted for this freedom?'
Proc. Well it may
Surprize thy hope: 'twas what I never meant thee.
But that fond woman who enſlaves my ſoul
To all her wiſhes, and ſtill pitys thee,
With idle blandiſhments extorted from me
A ſolemn vow to ſet thee free.
Per. Confuſion!
Proc. Thus I, againſt my better mind, releaſe
My mortal enemy. But let it ſpeak
The greatneſs of my love; and what dull huſband,
Through all recorded time, e'er gave ſuch proof
Of matchleſs fondneſs?
Per. Plagues! perdition! hell!
Damn'd, damn'd adultreſs!---Villain, ſlave, 'tis falſe:
Thou ly'ſt——What thee! Oh, curſe——
Proc. At laſt 'tis done. [*Exit.*

Per.

Per. Have I then liv'd to this? to this confusion?
My foe, the man on earth my soul most loaths,
Rejoices over me; and she---even she
Hath join'd his triumph!---Off, away, begone,
Love, manhood, reason——Come, ye sister-furies,
Daughters of hate and hell! arise, inflame
My murderous purpose; pour into my veins
Your gall, your scorpion-fellness, your keen horrors
That sting to madness; till my burning vengeance
Hath her full draught of blood——
[*Walking with a disturbed motion.*
But how! where am I?
Oh, this poor brain! ten thousand shapes of fury
Are whirling there, and reason is no more.
Him! him! a caitif black with every vice!
Debase herself to him!—the thought is hell!
Well, well——and I, how have I doated on her
Whole years of fondness! cherish'd, pleas'd, adorn'd her
With all that love can give——Yet she has done this!
Confusion on my folly——Ha! she comes.
Down, down, tempestuous soul: let me be dumb,
And hide this shameful conflict that unmans me.

Enter Eurydice.

Eur. He must not know my secret fatal purpose,
That I am fix'd to die; lest his great soul
Refuse a life so dearly sav'd——And now,
All powers that pity human kind, assist me
In this important hour! [*Aside.*
Oh, Periander—— [*To him.*
And is it thus we meet again!

Per. Ha! see,
She comes prepar'd. By hell, she weeps a lie.
My rage will leap all bounds. [*Aside.*

Eur. My Lord, my love,
I know you look on me as on the cause,
The fatal cause of all your ills; too true:
That guilt is mine—Oh, would to heaven, this head
Had been laid low in earth ere that sad hour!
Why did I shrink at ruin? Why not bear
All pangs, all horrors of besieging famine?
Alas! my love—But your false faithless subjects,
To what have they reduc'd us?

Per.

Per. No; not they:
Betrayer! thou alone hast made me wretched.
Oh, death to a king's honour! thou hast sunk me
Into a proverb of reproach; a word
For low contempt, for ribbald scorn to mock at.
' *Eur.* Just gods! what means my Lord?
' *Per.* Mean!—dost thou ask?
' *Eur.* Heaven! has the traitor then———
' *Per.* Ha! does that gaul thee?
' Perdition!—Woman! Woman!—Yes, thy minion,
' The vile one, has repaid thy broken oath
' With well-match'd perjury: has loudly boasted
' To heaven, and earth, and me, that thou art—Hell!
' The hated word would choak me!'
Eur. Oh, dire error! [*Aside.*
My Lord, my only love, by holy faith [*To him.*
I never was disloyal. Rags and penury,
Disease and death, shock not my apprehension
Like that detested crime——I dare no more.
Oh, fly, my love; haste from this fatal place,
And leave me to my fate. Oh, save your life,
While yet 'tis in your power.
Per. My life! Away.
And hast thou vilely barter'd for that life
Thy truth, and my fair fame? By yon blest heaven,
I could have borne all woes that wretchedness
Groans under; age, affliction, pining anguish:
And borne them like a man. I could have smil'd
At fortune's keenest rancor——But to know
Myself deceiv'd in thee! there, there I sink!
There manhood, reason die.
Eur. Oh, ye just powers!
Were ever woes like mine? What are the whips,
Rack, engines, all that murderous cruelty
Hath yet contriv'd—What are they all to this?
This infamy that kills the soul itself?
Yet I will bear even this.
Then here, by weeping, bleeding love I beg you,
With streaming eyes, haste from this fatal place.
The tyrant may recall his word; and then——
I cannot utter more.
Per. And thou canst weep!

Thou crocodile! Theſe falſe, theſe lying tears
Are daggers here. I go—but doſt thou hope
Thy mean diſſimulation hides thee from me?
Thou haſt diſhonour'd, ruin'd me; and now
My ſight is hateful to thee.
But ſay, tell me, [*Returning.*
How have I merited theſe wrongs of thee?
What was my crime? Can all-beſtowing love
Do more than mine for thee?—When I call back
The days that are no more—Thou wert my all
Of happineſs; my ſoul ne'er knew a joy
That was not thine; my doating fondneſs lull'd
Its hopes, its fears, its wiſhes, in thy boſom.
O heaven and earth!—and yet—Eurydice—
Thou could'ſt forſake me! [*Weeps.*

Eur. Oh, this is too much!
Heaven knows, I would have dy'd to ſave thy life:
But we will periſh both, both die together.
Thy tears diſtract me. I will tell thee all.

Per. Curſe on this weakneſs! I could tear theſe eyes
From forth their orbs——Thou exquiſite deceiver!
Hence, leſt this arm ſhould do a deed of ſhame,
And ſtain me with thy blood.

Eur. Oh, but one moment!
For mercy's ſake, allow me one ſhort moment.

Per. No; in the ſight of all-beholding Jove,
Here I renounce thee. What a ſlave to folly,
To thy curs'd arts has Periander liv'd!

Eur. Oh, cruel, cruel! haſt thou caſt me out
For ever from thy heart? By all our loves,
By the dear pledge of our unſpotted flames,
Grant me one moment. [*Kneels.*
Here will I hang, grow to thy knees—Yes, ſpurn me,
Drag this bare bleeding boſom on the ground;
Yes, uſe me as the vileſt ſlave—but hear me.

Per. Away, away.

Eur. Then ſtrike me dead at once.
Look here, my love; I ſhrink not from the blow.

Per. That were poor vengeance. No, I meditate
A nobler ſacrifice—— [*Alarm of Trumpets.*
Ha! what's this? [*Alarm again.*
Th' alarm

Th' alarm is urgent, big with war and dread.
I am the ſport of fortune.

Enter Meliſſa.

Mel. Oh, my Lord,
Some wonderous birth of fate is ſure diſcloſing!
Procles calls out to arms; his guards ſwarm round him,
Haſte in each ſtep, and fear in every eye.
This way too Medon ſpeeds, and in his train
A gloomy band of ſoldiers.

Per. Let him come.
Death has no terrors, when to live is ſhame.

Enter Medon *at the head of one party, who hurry the Queen off the Stage*; Leonidas *at the head of another, who remove the King.*

Med. Be quick, ſecure the Queen.

Eur. What mean'ſt thou, ruffian?
Muſt we then part?—Farewel, my Lord, for ever.

Per. Thou too, Leonidas!——Nay, then——

[*Exeunt all but* Leonidas.

Leon. O, Jove!
Eternal and ſupreme, whoſe nod controuls
The fate of empires, whoſe almighty hand
Suſtains the weak, and raiſes virtue fallen,
Now to this royal ſufferer deal thy mercy;
Aid his juſt arms, and teach mankind to know,
Thy ſovereign juſtice ſways the world below. [*Exit.*

END of the THIRD ACT.

ACT IV.

Enter Eurydice *and* Meliſſa.

EURYDICE.

WHat may this mean? The gloomy band of ruffians,
That bore me hence, vaniſh'd I know not how.
And hark! no ſound, no breath of human voice;
But all around the depth of ſolitude!
A dumb and death-like ſtillneſs! My ſoul trembles;
And apprehenſion peoples the lone void,
With fears of horrid form——But what can fate?

What can the wrath of all the gods inflict,
Beyond what I have known?

Mel. My gracious mistress,
This awful moment is perhaps the crisis
Of all your future life. Your guards fled sudden,
And late the neighbouring courts were loud with tumult,
Which dy'd away in slow and sullen murmurs.
Some turn of fate is near. Leonidas
In haste bore hence the King, doubtless to save him
From his dire foe; or at the people's head
Once more to place their sovereign, and restore
You to your former state.

Eur. All otherwise
My thoughts forebode. There is one deadly ill,
Which, Oh, too sure, no time, no chance can heal!
And at the dawn of day, just as these lids
Reluctant clos'd to rest, Arpasia's shade,
My much-lov'd mother, stood confess'd before me,
Pale as the shroud that wound her clay-cold limbs;
Her eyes fix'd on me, still and motionless,
Streaming unreal tears. She groan'd, and thrice,
In low sad murmurs, bade me to her tomb,
To meet her there—And there, in death alone,
In the dark grave, can poor Eurydice
Expect repose.

Mel. Oh, no! just Heaven, I hope,
That sees your innocence, has yet in store
Much bliss, and many days of peace for you.

Eur. I know his heart is quite estrang'd, and shut,
For ever shut against the voice of love.
And can my heart survive it? Shall I live
With public infamy? A theme of scorn
To all licentious tongues? Oh, in that thought,
Death's keenest dart has stabb'd my soul already!
And what comes after is not worth my fear.

Mel. Ha! Madam, this way cast your eyes, and see
What swarms of men; these flying, those pursuing.

Eur. Now, Lord of battles! join thy powerful arm;
Assert the cause of righteousness —— But hark!
The thunder of their shouts grows near and loud.
This way the combat turns. By all my hopes,

The

The tyrant's party flies! Look, look, Meliſſa,
Their broken numbers to the fortreſs bend.
Mel. And now with eager ſpeed they climb th' aſcent
That leads to us.
Eur. But who is he, Meliſſa,
That, like the God of War, flames foremoſt yonder?
See his ſword lighten, and the foe fly ſcattering
From his tempeſtuous arm!—Ha!—yes—Oh, Heaven!
'Tis he, 'tis he himſelf, 'tis Periander!
Oh, miracle!———He looks again a monarch,
Dreadfully glorious. Throw, all ye Powers, your ſhield
Of providence before him; think on all
His cauſeleſs wrongs, and do him juſtice now.
Mel. Ah! Procles comes.

Enter Procles, *followed by a party of his Guards.*

Proc. Confuſion! all is loſt.
That traitor has undone me; and thoſe ſlaves,
The falſe Corinthians, in a moment's flight,
Threw all their gates wide open to the foe.
Of hope abandon'd, and the gods againſt me,
What now remains?—The Queen! By Heaven, 'tis well!
Their boaſted triumph is not yet compleat———
She's mine, ſhe's mine, and I am conqueror ſtill!——
You, bear this woman thro' the poſtern gate,
[*To one party.*
Down to the ſouthern ſhore. I fail this moment
For Epidaurus—You, the while, make head [*To another.*
Againſt the near purſuit, 'and bar its progreſs,
'Till ſhe's ſecur'd. This is my laſt great ſtake;
'Of dearer price than victory.' Away.
Eur. No, tyrant; I will die firſt. Off, baſe ſlaves.
Dare ye, dare earth-born peaſants violate,
With your rude touch, the majeſty of kings?
Ah, Heaven———
Proc. Be quick; nor liſten to her raving.

Enter Medon.

Med. Undone, undone! the poſtern gate is ſeiz'd.
That curs'd Leonidas———
Proc. Ha! ſay'ſt thou, Medon?
Med. By hell, our foes ſurround us on each hand:
We're taken in the toil.
Proc. Unequal Powers!

And have you then deceiv'd me? Rais'd me high
With traiterous kindness, but to plunge me deeper
In howling desperation? 'Does the man,
'Whom late my foot could spurn, behold my fall?
'And fall I thus; my great ambition dash'd;
'My love unsatisfy'd? Shall he yet revel
'In her fond arms, and hear her curse my name?
'No; spite of Heaven, my ruin shall be glorious,
'A pomp of horrors. I will make this day
'For ever mournful to his aking heart.
'Yes, he shall weep in blood amid the shouts
'Of victory.' One blow destroys his triumph,
And levels him at once to my destruction.

[*He draws a dagger.*

Eur. Strike, tyrant, and complete thy monstrous crimes.
See, thou pale coward; see, a woman braves
Thy guilty dagger.

Proc. 'Ha! what's this I feel?
'A shivering dew of horror sweats all o'er me!'
Some Power invisible arrests my arm!
'It is Heaven's secret hand.'—But shall I lose
This only moment? No; be strong, my heart;
Be shut against all human thoughts, and scorn
These warnings of thy hostile gods—'Tis done.

Enter Polydore, Leonidas, *and Soldiers*; Polydore *pushes* Procles *back with his Lance.*

Pol. No, traitor! murderer! no: Heaven is more just,
Than to permit a life so much its care
To fall by thy vile hand. Secure the tyrant.

[*To his Soldiers.*

My mother!

Eur. Oh, my son!

Pol. Transporting joy!

Eur. Oh, ecstacy! And do I see thy face?
And do I hold thee in my trembling arms?—
Thou darling of my love! thou early hero!
Oh, thou hast sav'd us all!

Pol. This, this is triumph!
And I can ask of bounteous Heaven no more.
Was ever joy so full? This feeble arm,

Oh,

Oh, pride to think! has ſav'd the ſacred lives
From whom I drew my own.
Eur. And is this poſſible?
What ſhall I ſay?—But language all is poor
To ſpeak the tender yearnings of my ſoul.
O Polydore! did ever parents know
Such tranſports as do thine? Did ever ſon
Deſerve ſo well of parents?—Good Leonidas,
I ſaw thee not before; indeed I could not,
My eyes, my ſoul were ſo cloſe fix'd on him.
But ſay, redouble this day's bliſs, and ſay,
Whence this amazing change?
Leon. My royal miſtreſs,
The gods have done this. One half of the fleet,
As led by their peculiar hand, eſcap'd
Yeſterday's ruinous ſtorm, and with the dawn
Enter'd the port unſeen; their ſecret landing
Befriended by the morn's wide-hovering miſts.
Inſtant, inform'd of his great father's fate,
Your Polydore, this gallant, royal youth,
Pour'd forth his eager troops, and at their head,
Swift as heaven's darted fire, flew towards Corinth,
Which open'd wide her arms to take him in.
His fortune ſpeaks the reſt.
Eur. O ſovereign goodneſs,
Be thine the praiſe; this is thy wond'rous work.
The King, how was he ſav'd?
Leon. Struck with his danger,
The tyrant had to preſent death devoted
His ſacred head. I counſell'd, and prevail'd
(Procles ſtill thought me his) in bonds to hold him,
As our ſure pledge of ſafety, ſhould ſucceſs
Deſert our arms. The following moment ſaw him
Free from his chains, and foremoſt in the fight——
And hark! theſe joyous ſtrains proclaim his triumph.
Eur. Retire, my ſon; I would not meet him here.
[*Exeunt* Eurydice, Polydore, *and* Meliſſa.
Enter Periander, Ariſton, *and Attendants.*
Per. [*Aſide.*] She flies—Thou coward, Guilt!—But hence that thought— [*Advances towards* Proc.
At length the meaſure of thy crimes is full:
Thy high-plum'd pride lies humbled in the duſt;

And

And awful Juſtice comes, array'd in terrors,
To make enquiry for the guilt that ſwells
Thy black account. But I will check my heart,
Nor learn of thee to triumph o'er the fallen.
Bear him to priſon.

Proc. Yet, I will be free,
And ſoon beyond thy power. Knowing the worſt,
I laugh at all to come.

Per. [*To* Med.] For thee, thou vile one,
Thou pandar to thy maſter's luſts, thou ſycophant,
(The moſt pernicious preſent angry Heaven
Can make to princes whom it means to blind,
And ruin beyond mercy) thy juſt doom
Is inſtant. Spurn this ſlave into the ſtreets.
The furious people, whom his earth-born pride
Has trampled on, and numerous rapines beggar'd,
Will find th' oppreſſor out, and as they tear
His guilty limbs, think all their wrongs o'erpaid.
[*Exeunt* Procles *and* Medon *guarded.*
Leonidas, my father and preſerver,
Riſe to my arms. By heaven, 'the joy that ſmiles
'Upon thy brow, adds brightneſs to the morn!'
This wonderous revolution of my fate,
This change, that gives me back my crown and name,
Rejoices me yet leſs, than that I owe
The gift to thee.

Leon. Oh, ſacred Sir, forbear!
The tranſport to behold you thus again,
Is great reward. Now your old man can ſay
He has not liv'd in vain. Ye bounteous Powers,
Diſmiſs me now in peace; for I have ſeen
My maſter bleſs'd!

Per. No recompence can equal
Such matchleſs goodneſs. But I will repay thee
A way more pleaſing to a ſoul like thine,
By running ſtill in debt to all thy virtues.
Thou know'ſt th' unhappy, envy'd ſtate of kings;
How perilous the height ſo near to heaven:
All round is precipice; and on each hand,
Foremoſt in place and truſt, their deadlieſt foes,
Power, paſſion, pleaſure, wait to puſh them headlong.
Thy life has roll'd thro' all the various round

Of

Of human chance; and years of hoary thought,
Cool and unpaſſionate, have taught thee wiſdom.
Be ſtill my guide, and ſave me from the ſnares
That thus beſet me; ſave me from myſelf.

Leon. My heart can only anſwer to this goodneſs
By ſilent gratitude and joy – But, Sir,
Forgive me, if I ſay, another care
Demands your preſent thought.

Per. [*Aſide.*] Fatal remembrance!
At once inflam'd my ſmother'd rage burns up
With fiercer blaze. He muſt not know the purpoſe
With which my boſom labours——Yes, my friend,
Of that we'll talk anon; but now I wiſh
An hour of privacy.——Ariſton, ſtay. [*Exit* Leon.
Thus far have I repreſs'd the ſtorm within me,
Held down its furious heavings; but they now
Shall have full flow. I am once more a king.
My foe is in my hand, and breathes this air
But till I doom him dead; yet is not he
So curs'd, ſo ruin'd as his conqueror!

Ariſt. What do I hear, my Lord?

Per. Ah, good Ariſton,
The horrors of thy tale were true! She has,
She has betray'd me.

Ariſt. Since the Queen is fallen,
There is no truſt in woman——

Per. Nor no hope
For wretched Periander. Not the grave
Can hide me now from ſcorn; not length of days
Will wear out this. Oh, never-dying ſhame!
Worlds yet unfound will hear it; and where'er
The guilty tale is told, my fate will raiſe
Baſe mirth, or baſer pity.

Ariſt. Could the Queen
Stoop to a thought of Procles? Falſe, fond ſex!
Unfix'd by reaſon, ever wandering wild,
As fancy whirls, from folly on to folly,
From vanity to vice. My gracious Lord,
She is beneath your anger. Caſt her out
From all your ſoul, and be yourſelf again.
Reſume that reaſon, Sir——

Per. Away! Can reaſon

Arreſt the whirlwind's wing, or quench the foreſt,
Struck by the hand of Jove, when all its woods
In one broad conflagration blaze to heaven?
'Tis reaſon makes me wretched; for it tells me
How ſhameful this mad conflict of my paſſions:
But does that ſtill their uproar? Here, Ariſton,
Works the wild ſtorm that reaſon cannot calm.
I muſt, I will have eaſe.

Ariſt. You may; but, Oh,
The remedy is dreadful, and will give you
Swoonings and mortal agonies! I tremble
To mention it; but ſuch your ſoul's deep malady,
No gentler cure can bring the health you want.
Her death, my Lord——

Per. Ha! death—My ſoul ſhrinks back
From the dread image. How! for ever loſe her!
My queen, my wife!—Behold thoſe eyes no more,
That were the light of mine! no longer hear
That voice, whoſe every ſound was harmony!
Of power to ſooth tumultuous rage, and heal
The wounded heart of anguiſh—Can it be!
Oh, miſery! Why, why is this!

Ariſt. Alas,
You love her ſtill, my Lord, and know it not!

Per. Ye gods, why am I thus driven to and fro
By every blaſt that blows?—It is too true.
A traiterous ſoftneſs ſteals o'er my juſt rage,
And melts me to the dotage of low pity.
Oh, thou mean heart! Is ſhe not falſe? And I,
Shall I ſit down with tame diſhonour? Take
Pollution to my arms? Grow vilely old,
A tale for drunkards in their wine? The mirth
Of midnight libertines, when they recount
Their triumphs o'er baſe women? No! ſhe dies:
I tear her from my breaſt, tho' the life-ſtream
Should iſſue with her. Hear me, then, Ariſton,
Do thou prepare a ſecret draught of death,
Of power moſt ſwift and baneful, and be ready
Upon my fatal ſummons.

Ariſt. Spare me, Sir;
I like not this employ.

Per. It muſt be thine.

I have

I have no friend in whom to truſt but thee;
And ſhe ſhall die—But think'ſt thou, good Ariſton,
I ſhould not hear her firſt?
' *Ariſt.* Hear her, my Lord!
' Would you then have her live?
' *Per.* No; were my fate
' Involv'd in hers, ſhe ſhould not live. But ſtill,'
Something within me cries that I ſhould hear her.
It is not, can't be love. 'Tis my revenge,
All direful now, that would enjoy her tears,
Her lying oaths of innocence, her new
And added perjuries; then ſink her down
To the dark world, with all her crimes upon her.
' *Ariſt.* You ſee not, Sir, the danger of that meeting.
' Is your heart proof againſt the powerful charm
' Of beauty ſoften'd into ſighs, and melting
' With the mild languor of imploring eyes,
' More winning now, and ſhedding gentler beams
' Thro' ſhowers of ſorrow. Think you here behold her,
' The kneeling charmer, lovely in her tears,
' Pleading for pity, ſinking at your feet,
' And dying by your frown.
' *Per.* Art thou my friend?
' Oh, mercileſs! why doſt thou raiſe before me
' This dangerous image? 'Tis not to be borne.
' My brain turns round with madneſs. Oh, ye Powers!
' Why am I not at quiet? Why is life
' Forc'd on the wretch who ſtrongly begs to die,
' In bitterneſs of ſoul? Who aſks no more
' But the grave's ſhade and ſilence, there at laſt
' To ſleep for ever, nameleſs and forgotten?'
Ariſt. ' Alas, for pity!'—I will talk no more
On this diſtreſsful theme.
Per. Ariſton, ſtay.
Spite of theſe tears, ſpite of this fond diſtraction,
It ſhall be done. A king may live unhappy,
But not with loſs of honour unreveng'd.
' 'Twas mad to think of this. I will not truſt
' My eyes againſt the witchcraft of her charms.'
Then ſummon all thy firmneſs, Oh, my ſoul!
And dare to be accurs'd, ſince thy ſad choice
Is ſhame or miſery. I am reſolv'd.

Ye gods who watch o'er the chaſte marriage-bed,
Thou Stygian Jove, and all ye powers infernal!
Behold, I kneel, as in your awful preſence:
By that inviſible, that dreaded lake,
Th' irrevocable oath that binds even you,
Here I pronounce, and ſeal her doom of death.

Enter Eurydice; *ſhe kneels to* Periander, *who, after looking at her ſome time with emotion, ſtings away without ſpeaking.*

Eur. Not hear me! not vouchſafe me one poor word!
'Tis hard indeed—The wretch of many crimes, [*Riſing.*
Whom mercy dares not ſave, is gentlier us'd.
His rigid judge is leſs ſevere than mine.
Ye Powers, have I deſerved this! Did my heart
Ere harbour one looſe wiſh? Yourſelves can tell,
The morning's orient beam is not more pure,
More ſtainleſs than my truth. Was ever fate,
Were ever woes like mine? Even in the hour
Of general joy to all, while pleaſing hope
Sprung faſt within my heart, I find myſelf
Undone for ever; ſunk to riſe no more.
Not hear me!—then I know my doom is fix'd.
And ſhall I ſtay to hear the foul ſurmiſes,
The ſcurril taunts, the falſe upbraiding pity,
The keen revilings, that muſt uſher in
My public ſentence? Can there be in death
Such pangs, ſuch piercing agonies? Impoſſible!
Death is repoſe and calm, is ſoft Elyſium
To thoughts like theſe. I will prevent their triumph,
And ſave myſelf this ſhame. 'Tis but to loſe
A few unhappy moments; 'tis to reſt
The ſooner from my cares; to feel no more
The bitterneſs of miſery and inſult
That bait my weary ſoul. Then it is fix'd.
Spite of the woman, no fond tear ſhall flow,
No ſigh ariſe, the coward ſex to ſhew.
When life is ſhame, and glorious freedom nigh,
A Grecian and a queen muſt dare to die.

[*Exit.*

End of the Fourth Act.

ACT

ACT V.

Periander *walking disordered*, Leonidas *following*.

LEONIDAS.

O My lov'd master! have I liv'd to see
This sight of woe? Alas! is this to conquer?
Are these the fruits of victory?

Per. Away!
Why nam'st thou victory to me, a slave
Subdu'd and tyranniz'd by his worst foes,
His unrelenting passions? Talk of ruin,
And I will hear thee; talk of hopeless misery;
No other strain befits thy master's triumph.

Leon. This is the language of supreme distress,
Impatient of itself. My gracious Lord,
Forgive an old man's talk, who would this moment,
Might his poor life bring back your peace of mind,
With joy resign it.

Per. That were to bring back
The darted sun-beam, 'or recall the flight
'Of unreturning time.' Oh, no! my soul
Has bid the last farewel to happiness,
To hope itself. And yet I thank thy love,
Indeed I do—But leave me for a while.
I would be private.

Leon. Sir, I dare not leave you——
Forgive these tears——I dare not leave you thus
At variance with yourself. I read too plain
The fatal thought that wakens in your bosom.

Per. And wouldst thou have me live this abject thing?
This slave of folly? For I tell thee, blushing
With shame and strong abhorrence of myself,
I cannot tear that woman from my soul,
False, faithless as she is—Then I will die:
That just revenge is still within my power.

Leon. O Jealousy, thou merciless destroyer,
'More cruel than the grave! what ravages
'Does thy wild war make in the noblest bosoms!'
Too long, my Lord, you listen to the whispers
Of that domestic foe, that bosom traitor.
For mercy's sake, throw not away so rashly

The jewel of your soul. Some unseen error
Misleads you from the truth, and ruins her.
Grant her a moment's audience.
Per. I have sworn
That she shall die.
Leon. Is then her sacred life
Of so small price, to cast her thus away
With blind precipitance? Your Queen, my Lord,
The fairest form, the most exalted mind,
Once so ador'd and lov'd, to whom your soul
Still cleaves with fondness! Can you give her up,
The mother of your darling, Polydore,
Unheard, untry'd, to death and infamy?
Can you do this?
'*Per.* Oh, thou, whose eye beholds
'And pities the frail heart of erring man!
'Ruler of heaven and earth! or still these passions,
'That rage in tempest here, or strike in mercy,
'And free me from my pain——What can I do?
'My solemn vow is gone up to high heaven,
'And wouldst thou have me break it?
'*Leon.* That rash oath
'Nor does, nor ought to bind. The gods refuse it.
'Should you, too late, discover she is wrong'd——
'Think on it well——Oh, what a life of horrors
'Remains for you! I tremble but to name them.
'The sad and silent meltings of vain sorrow;
'The thorn of keen remorse; the sting of love,
'Inflam'd by fond reflection, hourly sighing
'For what he never, never hopes to find;
'With these, late-coming, but no more to leave you,
'Despair accurs'd. Dreadful society!
'Yet such will share your day and night, and haunt
'Your court, your throne, your solitude, your couch.
'Alas, my Lord!'
Per. Oh, by my soul's strong anguish,
I would most gladly blot out from my thoughts
All memory of past time! I yet would question
The waking evidence of every sense,
To give her back that virtue, those fair beams
That shone on our first loves. Then was I bless'd
Beyond the race of men, belov'd and loving,

Honour'd and happy; and my name as odour
Pour'd forth, and breathing freſhneſs all around.
Oh, days of dear delight! That I could fix
For ever there, and think no farther on!
I will, if poſſible.

Leon. Oh, happy change!
Confirm this gentle purpoſe, favouring Heaven!
I fly to bring her hither.

Per. Stay thee yet.
I would reſolve, but cannot. Love and rage
By turns aſſail me; melt me now to mercy,
Now rouze me to diſtraction——Oh, my heart!

Leon. Then puniſh the ſole cauſe of all your pangs:
On the great criminal, on Procles' head
Diſcharge the fulneſs of a righteous vengeance,
And juſtify the gods. Let the rack tear
The traitor's limbs; and as he howls with anguiſh,
Extort confeſſion from him of the lies,
The dark aſperſions, that have well nigh ruin'd
Your injur'd, virtuous Queen, and tortur'd you.

Per. What haſt thou done? Oh, that deteſted name!
Thou know'ſt not half my madneſs—that curs'd name
Has ſet my brain on blaze, and call'd up there
Ten thouſand furies. Hell! haſt thou not heard
What ſhame and ſcorn, what vileneſs and confuſion
He heap'd upon my head—and ſhe the cauſe?

Leon. Oh, Heaven! and is this retribution thine?
Muſt virtue know what vice alone ſhould feel?

Per. Forbear, fond man. That Heaven thou dar'ſt accuſe,
Juſt, tho' myſterious, leads us on unerring,
Thro' ways unmark'd, from guilt to puniſhment.
I vow'd, alas! and with ſtrong adjurations
Bound that juſt vow, to ſet my country free.
This, to my father, on his bed of death,
Solemn I ſwore—But, Oh, blind luſt of greatneſs!
Thro' wantonneſs of will I lightly weigh'd it,
Nor fear'd the hour of terrible account.
That hour is come: and what avails it now
That I with equal hand and gentle rule
Have ſway'd my people? I am puniſh'd moſt,
Where I had bid my ſoul be moſt ſecure
Of happineſs for years——Ha! Polydore!

Enter Polydore.

I said I would be private.

Pol. Oh, my father!
Here let me kneel for ever, weep these eyes
To blindness, and ne'er know a thought of comfort.

Per. What would my Polydore?

Pol. Alas! what means
This common face of woe that meets my sight
Where'er I turn? Even now, while happy Corinth
Blazes with triumph; while the neighbouring shores
Resound to heaven her voice of general joy,
The palace is in tears. Her silent courts
Are dark with mourning, as if Death and Ruin,
Not Victory, had fix'd their mansion here.

Per. There is a cause, my son, a dreadful one.
But leave me to myself.

Pol. Am I then grown
A horror to your eyes? What is my crime,
That thus, with alienated look, you turn
As from some baleful object? Yet, my father,
Oft have you sworn, that in this face you saw,
And lov'd your darling Queen.

Per. Away, thy looks,
Thy words distract me.

Pol. Whither shall I fly?
Where hide this hated head? My mother too,
As now I left her, pressing full her eyes
With fix'd and earnest mournfulness on mine,
Stream'd into tears; then clasp'd me to her bosom
With such sad passion, such transported tremblings,
As parting lovers that must meet no more.
I begg'd to know the cause: again she press'd me
With fonder eagerness, and sighing cry'd,
Say to the King, my heart has never err'd.

Per. By Heaven, my soul melts at the piteous tale.
O Polydore——

Enter an Officer.

Off. My Lord, the prisoner, Medon,
Attends, and prays admittance to your presence.

Per. Ha! Medon! Dost thou dream? Medon alive!
Did I not charge thee strict to cast him forth

That

That moment to the fury of the people?
How haſt thou dar'd to diſobey?

Off. Dread Sir,
As to his fate I led him, pale and trembling,
At ſight of the tumultuous crowd around,
With utmoſt inſtance he requeſted of me
To ſave him yet a moment; for he had
Secrets of prime concernment that requir'd
The King's immediate ear. We hardly 'ſcap'd
Into the ſouthern tower; th' unnumber'd rabble,
With cries and threats, demanded forth their foe.
At hazard of my life I ventur'd down,
Sooth'd, flatter'd, promis'd them they ſhould have juſtice.
They are but now diſpers'd.

Per. Leonidas,
My heart miſgives me at that miſcreant's name.
But let him enter.

Enter Medon.

Med. O King, renown'd for gentleneſs and mercy!
The nobleſt praiſe! ſee proſtrate at your feet
A criminal, who comes to merit pardon,
By fair diſcovery of ſome weighty truths,
That much import your ſoul's repoſe and health.

Per. Say on; and if thy heart has form'd a hope
Of one hour's after-life, take heed thy tale
Be ſtrictly juſt to truth.

Med. Thus groveling here.
With ſhame and ſharp remorſe I own my crime.
Miſled by that uſurper, who, with me,
Now ſhares the due reward of guilt like ours,
To pleaſure him, unhappy that I was!
I told, I know not what of your good Queen.
Would I had periſh'd firſt! for all was falſe,
And ſhe moſt innocent.

Per. Perdition on thee!
What do I hear?

Med. I fill'd Ariſton's ears
With monſtrous tales, which his plain honeſty,
Alas! too raſhly credited——

Per. Ye gods!
And could your thunder ſleep? Pernicious ſlave!
Hadſt thou as many lives as crimes, not one

Should 'scape my justice——'Ah, Leonidas!
'Was ever such black treachery?'—Forgive thee!
'Thy doom shall be of signal dread and warning
'To all succeeding minions.' Drag him hence,
[*To the Guards.*
And guard him at the peril of your heads.
[*Exit* Medon *guarded.*

Leon. Amazing villainy!

Per. Oh, fly, my son!
Find the poor mourner out, and in my name
Say all that weeping penitence can plead,
Or love returning promise. My full heart
Will more than make it good. And may the power
Of soft persuasion wait upon thy lips. [*Exit* Polydore.
As from enchantment freed, the mists dispersе
By which my eyes were held——That injur'd fair!
How shall I meet her soft forgiving look,
Whom I so much have wrong'd!

Leon. Thrice happy turn
Of unexpected fate!

Per. But let me fly
Into her gentle arms; there lose the horrors
That have distracted me; there lose myself
In love's ecstatic joys.

Enter Ariston.

In happy time
Thou com'st, Ariston. We were both deceiv'd,
And I revoke my order. But curs'd Procles
Shall pay me dear for all.

Arist. He has, my Lord,
And the sad tale is terrible. I shrink
But to recount it. Slumbering conscience rouz'd,
And flashing in his face the startling prospect
Of his past life, furious he dash'd his head
Against his prison walls. I found him fallen;
A piteous spectacle; rolling in blood,
Deform'd with pain: for agonizing death
Sat hideous on his brow. Faintly he drew
His parting breath; yet all that breath went forth
In blasphemies, assaulting Heaven with curses,
The ravings of despair, for frustrating
His impious purpose on the Queen.

Per.

Per. How dreadful
'This period to a life like his!' The hand
Of Heaven is greatly juſt——But, Oh, my friends,
Theſe ſtrange events have well nigh overturn'd
This tottering brain. I feel I know not what
Of joy and terror, high amaze and tranſport,
All blended here, and working in wild tumult.
'*Leon.* 'Tis but the motion of a troubled ſea,
'After ſore tempeſt ſinking to a calm.
'All will be well, my Lord. Repoſe and health
'Await you in her arms. What bliſs is yours!
'A ſecond union of your meeting ſouls!
'A better nuptial morn, with love new-riſing,
'To ſhine for ever!'

Enter Meliſſa.

Per. *Meliſſa!—Ha! ſpeak——*
Mel. Oh, my royal miſtreſs!
The dews of death are cold upon her brow.
Per. What mean thy fatal words?
Mel. Falſely accus'd
Of what her ſoul moſt loaths, and to deſpair
By your unkindneſs urg'd, the Queen, alas!
Has drunk a deadly draught.
Per. Oh, heaven and earth!
Are theſe at laſt my hopes? 'Tis I—Oh, horror!
'Tis I have murder'd her——

SCENE *opening, diſcovers* Eurydice *ſitting,* Polydore *kneeling by her.*

Ye righteous gods!
Oh, give her back to life, and to your juſtice
I bow this guilty head?——What's to be done?
Leonidas, Ariſton, fly, my friends,
'Call, gather all our ſages; bid them try
'Their ſovereign ſkill.' My crown to him that ſaves her.
Eur. It cannot be. Already death invades
My ſhivering boſom. Yet a little moment,
And I ſhall be with thoſe that reſt for ever.
But here, in this laſt awful hour, I ſwear,
By that dread world, whither my ſoul is parting,
I never knew pollution. I am ſtill
Your true and loyal wife.

Per.

Per. I know thou art,
Thou dying innocence. My fatal blindneſs,
Deſtruction on my head! has ruin'd thee.
My life! my ſoul's beſt joy! and muſt I loſe thee?
Loſe thee for ever?—Wretch! raſh fool!—Oh, yet
Forgive my madneſs!

Eur. Thus, in thy lov'd arms
Each unkind thought is loſt. Now I die pleas'd:
Now all is well—Death! thou art here— [*Dies.*

Mel. Ah, ſhe expires! The laſt dim miſt ſwims o'er
Her cloſing eyes!

Per. One moment, thou fair ſpirit,
One moment tarry for me—Thus we join,
To part no more— [*He draws his ſword to ſtab himſelf.*

Ariſt. Ah! Sir——

Leon. My Lord, what means
This fatal fury?

Per. Cruel men, away.
And would you then detain me longer here
On this loath'd ſpot, to linger out old age
With darkneſs and deſpair? To curſe the hour
That gave a murderer birth? Would you, my friends,
Have me live thus?

Ariſt. Ye gods, aſſuage his grief!

Per. Theſe righteous gods have caſt me off for ever.
My broken vow—Oh, terrible! it hangs,
A burſting thunder, o'er my head. 'I ſee,
'And tremble at the ſight, th' enquiring judge,
'Beyond theſe heavens, high on his throne of terrors,
'His fix'd and dread regard turn'd full upon me!
'And look, behold, the miniſter of vengeance
'But waits his nod to ſtrike me thro' the centre!'

Pol. Alas, my father!——

Per. O my ſon, my ſon!
I have undone thee too. How dare I look
On that dear face, where thy loſt mother's ſweetneſs
Smiles ſtrong reproach, and charms me into madneſs?
Then farewel, reaſon; farewel, human converſe;
Sun, day, and time, farewel!—All hail, deſpair!
Eternal darkneſs, hail!—Say'ſt thou I've loſt her?
No, no; we will not part. Thus let me preſs
Her clay-cold lips, thus weep my ſoul away.

On

On her chaſte boſom here. Oh, yet, my love!
My better life! Oh, yet lift up thy eyes!
Oh, ſpeak to me!
Leon. Alas, ſhe hears you not!
The ſoul is fled for ever.
Per. O my Queen!
[*He throws himſelf by the body; the reſt ſtand weeping and ſilent.*
Ariſt. *Gently raiſe him.*
Per. [*Raiſing himſelf up.*] Ha! there—ſave me! 'tis he! the King of terrors!
Lo, how the ghaſtly viſion glares upon me
With his fix'd beamleſs eyes!—What path is this,
Dreary and deep, thro' which he drags me on?
'Bleſs me!—look there—what ſhivering forms are theſe,
'Thin as the paſſing air, that ſkim around me?
'And now th' infernal world hath ſhut me in.'——
But ſee the Furies arm'd! ſee their fell ſerpents,
That rouze themſelves to ſting me! Is there none,
No power, to ſcreen them from me?
Leon. Gracious Sir,
Where is that patience——
Per. Soft—I ſee her plain.
Yonder on high ſhe ſits amid the gods,
Who wonder at her charms—And doſt thou ſmile
Upon thy murderer?—Thus let me kneel,
And, weeping, worſhip thee—Ha! ſeeſt thou there
Yon flaming pool? And what damn'd ſoul is that,
Riſing from the mid deeps, that beckons me?
He wafts me ſtill—By hell, 'tis hated Procles,
The cauſe of all my ruin!—Traitor, yes,
I come, I fly, to plunge thee deeper ſtill
In this red ſea of tortures——Oh!——
Ariſt. He dies!
Pol. Oh, matchleſs horror!
Leon. Bear him gently hence.
Was ever ſight like this?—O Jealouſy,
This is thy dreadful work. May future times
Learn here thy power, and mark, with heedful eyes,
From thy blind rage what mighty miſchiefs riſe.

End of the Fifth Act.

EPI-

EPILOGUE.

Written by AARON HILL, Esq.

Spoken by a Girl in Boy's cloaths, tripping in hastily.

OH, gentlemen!—I'm come, but was not sent ye:
A voluntier—Pray, does my size content ye?
Man, I am yours; sex, bless'd as Heaven can make ye;
And from this time, weak woman, I forsake ye.
Who'd be a wife, when each new play can teach us,
To what fine ends these lords of ours beseech us?
At first, whate'er they do, they do—so charming!
But mark what follows; frightful, and alarming!
They feed too fast on love, then sick'ning tell us,
They can't, forsooth, be kind—because they're jealous.
Who would be woman, then, to sigh and suffer,
And wish, and wait—for the slow-coming proffer?
Not I—farewel to petticoats and stitching,
And welcome dear, dear breeches, more bewitching.
Henceforth, new-moulded, I'll rove, love, and wander,
And fight, and storm, and charm—like Periander.
Born for this dapper age, pert, short, and clever;
If e'er I grow a man, 'tis NOW, or never.
Well, but what conduct suits this transformation?
I'll copy some smart soul of conversation.
Should there be war, I'd talk of fields and trenches;
Should there be peace, I'd toast ten favourite wenches.
Should I be lov'd—Gadso! how then? No matter;
I'll bow, as you do, and look foolish at her.
And so, who knows, that never means to prove ye,
But I'm as good a man as any of ye?
Well, 'tis a charming frolic, and I'll do't:
Sirs, have I your consent? What say ye to't?
Yet hold—Perhaps they'll dread a rival beau;
I may be what I seem, for aught they know.
Ladies, farewel—I should be loth to leave ye,
Could an increase of pretty fellows grieve ye:
Each, like myself, devoted ne'er to harm ye,
And full as fit, no doubt, to serve and charm ye.

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