

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

*Bel.* Art sure of that?

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

*Bel.* The soldier.

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

*Bel.* Look to the sky!

*Arb.* I look.

*Bel.* What seest thou?

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

*Bel.* And midst them, mark you earliest, and the brightest, which so quivers, as it would quit its place in the blue ether.

*Arb.* Well?

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

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

It shall out-dazzle comets. Let us think of what is to be done to justify thy planets and their portents. When we conquer, they shall have temples—ay, and priests—and thou shalt be the pontiff of—what gods thou wilt; for I observe that they are ever just, and own the bravest for the most devout.

*Bel.* Ay, and the most devout for brave—thou hast not seen me turn back from battle.

*Arb.* No; I own thee as firm in fight as Babylonia's captain, as skilful in Chaldea's worship: now, will it but please thee to forget the priest, and be the warrior?

*Bel.* Why not both?

*Arb.* The better; and yet it almost shames me, we shall have so little to effect. This woman's warfare degrades the very conqueror. To have pluck'd a bold and bloody despot from his throne, and grappled with him, clashing steel with steel, that were heroic or to win or fall; but to upraise my sword against this silkworm, and hear him whine, it may be—

*Bel.* Do not deem it; he has that in him which may make you strife yet; and were he all you think, his guards are hardy, and headed by the cool, stern Salemenes.

*Arb.* They'll not resist.

*Bel.* Why not? they are soldiers.

*Arb.* True, and therefore need a soldier to command them.

*Bel.* That Salemenes is.

*Arb.* But not their king. Besides, he hates the effeminate thing that governs, for the queen's sake, his sister. Mark you not he keeps aloof from all the revels?

*Bel.* But not from the council—there he is ever constant.

*Arb.* And ever thwarted: what would you have more to make a rebel out of? A fool reigning, his blood dishonour'd, and himself disdain'd: why, it is his revenge we work for.

*Bel.* Could he but be brought to think so: this I doubt of.

*Arb.* What, if we sound him?

*Bel.* Yes—if the time served.

*Enter BALEA.*

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

*Bel.* To hear is to obey.

In the pavilion?

*Bal.* No; here in the palace.

*Arb.* How! in the palace? it was not thus order'd.

*Bal.* It is so order'd now.

*Arb.* And why?

*Bal.* I know not.

May I retire?

*Arb.* Stay.

*Bel.* (*to Arb. aside*). Hush! let him go his way. (*Alternately to Bal.*) Yes, Balea, thank the monarch, kiss the hem

Of his imperial robe, and say, his slaves will take the crumbs he deigns to scatter from his royal table at the hour—was't midnight?

*Bal.* It was: the place, the hall of Nimrod. Lords, I humble me before you, and depart. [*Exit BALEA.*]

*Arb.* I like not this same sudden change of place; there is some mystery: wherefore should he change it?

*Bel.* Doth he not change a thousand times a day? Sloth is of all things the most fanciful—And moves more parasangs in its intents than generals in their marches, when they seek to leave their foe at fault.—Why dost thou muse?

*Arb.* He loved that gay pavilion,—it was ever his summer dotage.

*Bel.* And he loved his queen—And thrice a thousand harlotry besides—And he has loved all things by turns, except wisdom and glory.

*Arb.* Still—I like it not. If he has changed—why, so must we: the attack were easy in the isolated bower, beset with drowsy guards and drunken courtiers: but in the hall of Nimrod—

*Bel.* Is it so? Methought the haughty soldier fear'd to mount a throne too easily—does it disappoint thee to find there is a slipperier step or two than what was counted on?

*Arb.* When the hour comes, thou shalt perceive how far I fear or no. Thou hast seen my life at stake—and gaily play'd for;

But here is more upon the die—a kingdom.

*Bel.* I have foretold already—thou wilt win it: then on, and prosper.

*Arb.* Now were I a soothsayer, I would have boded so much to myself. But be the stars obey'd—I cannot quarrel with them, nor their interpreter. Who's here?

*Enter SALEMENES.*

*Sal.* Satraps!

*Bel.* My prince!

*Sal.* Well met—I sought ye both, but elsewhere than the palace.

*Arb.* Wherefore so?

*Sal.* 'Tis not the hour.

*Arb.* The hour!—what hour?

*Sal.* Of midnight.

*Bel.* Midnight, my lord!

*Sal.* What, are you not invited?

*Bel.* Oh! yes—we had forgotten.

*Sal.* Is it usual

thus to forget a sovereign's invitation?

*Arb.* Why—we but now received it.

*Sal.* Then why here?

*Arb.* On duty.

*Sal.* On what duty?

*Bel.* On the state's.

We have the privilege to approach the presence;

but found the monarch absent.<sup>1</sup>

*Sal.* And I too

am upon duty.

*Arb.* May we crave its purport?

*Sal.* To arrest two traitors. Guards! Within there!

*Enter Guards.*

*Sal.* (*continuing*). Satraps, your swords.

*Bel.* (*delivering his*). My lord, behold my scimitar.

*Arb.* (*drawing his sword*). Take mine.

*Sal.* (*advancing*). I will.

*Arb.* But in your heart the blade—

the hilt quits not this hand.<sup>2</sup>

*Sal.* (*drawing*). How! dost thou brave me?

'Tis well—this saves a trial, and false mercy.

Soldiers, hew down the rebel!

*Arb.* Soldiers! Ay—

Alone you dare not.

*Sal.* Alone! foolish slave—

What is there in thee that a prince should shrink from of open force? We dread thy treason, not [venom—Thy strength: thy tooth is nought without its the serpent's, not the lion's. Cut him down.

*Bel.* (*interposing*). Arbaces! are you mad? Have I not render'd [justice.

My sword? Then trust like me our sovereign's

*Arb.* No—I will sooner trust the stars thou prat'st

and this slight arm, and die a king at least [of,

Of my own breath and body—so far that

None else shall chain them.

*Sal.* (*to the Guards*). You hear him, and me.

Take him not,—kill.

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

*Sal.* Is it even so; and must

I do the hangman's office? Recreants! see

How you should fell a traitor.

[*SALEMENES attacks ARBACES.*]

*Enter SARDANAPALUS and Train.*

*Sal.* Hold your hands—

Upon your lives, I say. What, deaf or drunken?

My sword! O fool, I wear no sword: here, fellow,

Give me thy weapon. [*To a Guard.*]

[*SARDANAPALUS snatches a sword from one of the soldiers, and rushes between the combatants—they separate.*]

*Sal.* In my very palace!

What hinders me from cleaving you in twain,

Audacious brawlers?

<sup>1</sup> ["But found the monarch claim'd his privacy."—MS.]

*Bel.* Sire, your justice.

*Sal.* Or—

Your weakness.

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

*Sal.* Strike! so the blow's repeated

Upon yon traitor—whom you spare a moment,

I trust, for torture—I'm content.

*Sar.* What—him!

Who dares assail Arbaces?

*Sal.* I!

*Sar.* Indeed!

Prince, you forget yourself. Upon what warrant?

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

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

*Sal.* Yes! and let the king confirm it.

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

*Sal.* You parted with it for your safety—I

employ'd it for the best. Pronounce in person.

Here I am but your slave—a moment past

I was your representative.

*Sar.* Then sheathe

your swords.

[*ARBACES and SALEMENES return their swords to the scabbards.*]

*Sal.* Mine's sheathed: I pray you sheathe not yours:

'Tis the sole sceptre left you now with safety.

*Sar.* A heavy one; the hilt, too, hurts my hand.

(*To a Guard.*) Here, fellow, take thy weapon back.

Well, sirs,

What doth this mean?

*Bel.* The prince must answer that.

*Sal.* Truth upon my part, treason upon theirs.

*Sar.* Treason—Arbaces! treachery and Beleses!

That were an union I will not believe.

*Bel.* Where is the proof?

*Sal.* I'll answer that, if once

The king demands your fellow-traitor's sword.

*Arb.* (*to Sal.*). A sword which hath been drawn

as oft as thine

Against his foes.

*Sal.* And now against his brother,

And in an hour or so against himself.

*Sar.* That is not possible: he dared not; no—

No—I'll not hear of such things. These vain

bickerings

Are spawn'd in courts by base intrigues, and baser

Hirelings, who live by lies on good men's lives.

You must have been deceived, my brother.

*Sal.* First

Let him deliver up his weapon, and

Proclaim himself your subject by that duty,

And I will answer all.

*Sar.* Why, if I thought so—

But no, it cannot be: the Mede Arbaces—

The trusty, rough, true soldier—the best captain

Of all who discipline our nations—No,

I'll not insult him thus, to bid him render

The scimitar to me he never yielded

Unto our enemies. Chief, keep your weapon.

*Sal.* (*delivering back the signet*). Monarch, take

back your signet.

*Sar.* No, retain it;

But use it with more moderation.

*Sal.* Sire,

I used it for your honour, and restore it

<sup>2</sup> [— "not else It quits this living hand."—MS.]

Because I cannot keep it with my own.  
Bestow it on Arbaces.

*Sar.* So I should :  
He never ask'd it.

*Sal.* Doubt not, he will have it,  
Without that hollow semblance of respect.

*Bel.* I know not what hath prejudiced the prince  
So strongly 'gainst two subjects, than whom none  
Have been more zealous for Assyria's weal.

*Sal.* Peace, factious priest and faithless soldier !  
thou

Unit'st in thy own person the worst vices  
Of the most dangerous orders of mankind.  
Keep thy smooth words and juggling homilies  
For those who know thee not. Thy fellow's sin  
Is, at the least, a bold one, and not temper'd  
By the tricks taught thee in Chaldea.

*Bel.* Hear him,  
My liege—the son of Belus ! he blasphemes  
The worship of the land, which bows the knee  
Before your fathers.

*Sar.* Oh ! for that I pray you  
Let him have absolution. I dispense with  
The worship of dead men ; feeling that I  
Am mortal, and believing that the race [ashes.  
From whence I sprung are—what I see them—

*Bel.* King ! do not deem so : they are with the  
And— [stars,

*Sar.* You shall join them there ere they will rise,  
If you preach farther—Why, *this* is rank treason.

*Sal.* My lord !

*Sar.* To school me in the worship of  
Assyria's idols ! Let him be released—  
Give him his sword.

*Sal.* My lord, and king, and brother,  
I pray ye pause.

*Sar.* Yes, and be sermonised,  
And dinn'd, and deafen'd with dead men and Baal,  
And all Chaldea's starry mysteries.

*Bel.* Monarch ! respect them.

*Sar.* Oh ! for that—I love them !  
I love to watch them in the deep blue vault,  
And to compare them with my Myrrha's eyes ;  
I love to see their rays redoubled in  
The tremulous silver of Euphrates' wave,  
As the light breeze of midnight crimps the broad  
And rolling water, sighing through the sedges  
Which fringe his banks : but whether they may be  
Gods, as some say, or the abodes of gods,  
As others hold, or simply lamps of night,  
Worlds, or the lights of worlds, I know nor care not.  
There's something sweet in my uncertainty  
I would not change for your Chaldean lore ;  
Besides, I know of these all clay can know  
Of aught above it, or below it—nothing.  
I see their brilliancy and feel their beauty—<sup>1</sup>  
When they shine on my grave I shall know neither.

*Bel.* For neither, sire, say better.

*Sar.* I will wait,  
If it so please you, pontiff, for that knowledge.  
In the mean time receive your sword, and know  
That I prefer your service militant  
Unto your ministry—not loving either.

<sup>1</sup> [“ I know them beautiful, and see them brilliant.”—MS.]  
<sup>2</sup> [The second Act is, we think, a failure. The conspirators have a tedious dialogue, which is interrupted by Salemenes with a guard. Salemenes is followed by the king, who

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

*Sar.* Please you to hear me, Satraps !  
And chiefly thou, my priest, because I doubt thee  
More than the soldier ; and would doubt thee all  
Wert thou not half a warrior : let us part  
In peace—I'll not say pardon—which must be  
Earn'd by the guilty : this I'll not pronounce ye,  
Although upon this breath of mine depends  
Your own ; and, deadlier for ye, on my fears.  
But fear not—for that I am soft, not fearful—  
And so live on. Were I the thing some think me,  
Your heads would now be dripping the last drops  
Of their attained gore from the high gates  
Of this our palace, into the dry dust,  
Their only portion of the coveted kingdom  
They would be crown'd to reign o'er—let that pass.  
As I have said, I will not deem ye guilty,  
Nor doom ye guiltless. Albeit better men  
Than ye or I stand ready to arraign you ;  
And should I leave your fate to sterner judges,  
And proofs of all kinds, I might sacrifice  
Two men, who, whatso'er they now are, were  
Once honest. Ye are free, sirs.

*Arb.* Sire, this clemency—  
*Bel.* (*interrupting him*). Is worthy of yourself ;  
and, although innocent,

We thank—  
*Sar.* Priest ! keep your thanksgivings for Belus ;  
His offspring needs none.

*Bel.* But being innocent—  
*Sar.* Be silent—Guilt is loud. If ye are loyal,  
Ye are injured men, and should be sad, not grateful.

*Bel.* So we should be, were justice always done  
By earthly power omnipotent ; but innocence  
Must oft receive her right as a mere favour.

*Sar.* That's a good sentence for a homily,  
Though not for this occasion. Prithee keep it  
To plead thy sovereign's cause before his people.

*Bel.* I trust there is no cause.

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

Than him who ruleth many and slays none ;  
And, hating not himself, yet loves his fellows  
Enough to spare even those who would not spare him.  
Were they once masters—but that's doubtful. Sa—  
Your swords and persons are at liberty [traps !  
To use them as ye will—but from this hour  
I have no call for either. Salemenes !  
Follow me.<sup>2</sup>

[*Exeunt* SARDANAPALUS, SALEMENES, and the  
Train, &c. leaving ARBACES and BELESSES.]

*Arb.* Beleses !  
*Bel.* Now, what think you ?

*Arb.* That we are lost.

*Bel.* That we have won the kingdom.

reverses all his measures, pardons Arbaces, because he will not believe him guilty, and Beleses, in order to escape from his long speeches about the national religion. This incident only is well managed.—HEBER.]

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

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

*Bel.* Seek not why ;  
But let us profit by the interval.  
The hour is still our own—our power the same—  
The night the same we destined. He hath changed  
Nothing except our ignorance of all  
Suspicion into such a certainty  
As must make madness of delay.

*Arb.* And yet—

*Bel.* What, doubting still ?

*Arb.* He spared our lives, nay, more,  
Saved them from Salemenes.

*Bel.* And how long  
Will he so spare ? till the first drunken minute.

*Arb.* Or sober, rather. Yet he did it nobly ;  
Gave royally what we had forfeited

Basely—  
*Bel.* Say bravely.

*Arb.* Somewhat of both, perhaps.  
But it has touch'd me, and, whate'er betide,  
I will no further on.

*Bel.* And lose the world !

*Arb.* Lose any thing except my own esteem.

*Bel.* I blush that we should owe our lives to such  
A king of distaffs !

*Arb.* But no less we owe them ;  
And I should blush far more to take the grantor's !

*Bel.* Thou may'st endure whate'er thou wilt—the  
Have written otherwise. [stars

*Arb.* Though they came down,  
And marshal'd me the way in all their brightness,  
I would not follow.

*Bel.* This is weakness—worse  
Than a scared beldam's dreaming of the dead,  
And waking in the dark.—Go to—go to.

*Arb.* Methought he look'd like Nimrod as he spoke,  
Even as the proud imperial statue stands  
Looking the monarch of the kings around it,  
And sways, while they but ornament, the temple.

*Bel.* I told you that you had too much despised  
him,

And that there was some royalty within him—  
What then ? he is the nobler foe.

*Arb.* But we  
The meaner :—Would he had not spared us !

*Bel.* So—  
Wouldst thou be sacrificed thus readily ?

*Arb.* No—but it had been better to have died  
Than live ungrateful.

*Bel.* Oh, the souls of some men !  
Thou wouldst digest what some call treason, and  
Fools treachery—and, behold, upon the sudden,  
Because for something or for nothing, this  
Rash reveller steps, ostentatiously,  
'Twixt thee and Salemenes, thou art turn'd  
Into—what shall I say ?—Sardanapalus !  
I know no name more ignominious.

*Arb.* But  
An hour ago, who dared to term me such  
Had held his life but lightly—as it is,  
I must forgive you, even as he forgave us—  
Semiramis herself would not have done it.

*Bel.* No—the queen liked no sharers of the king-  
Not even a husband. [dom,

*Arb.* I must serve him truly—

*Bel.* And humbly ?

*Arb.* No, sir, proudly—being honest.  
I shall be nearer thrones than you to heaven ;  
And if not quite so haughty, yet more lofty.  
You may do your own deeming—you have codes,  
And mysteries, and corollaries of  
Right and wrong, which I lack for my direction,  
And must pursue but what a plain heart teaches.  
And now you know me.

*Bel.* Have you finish'd ?

*Arb.* Yes—

With you.

*Bel.* And would, perhaps, betray as well  
As quit me ?

*Arb.* That's a sacerdotal thought,  
And not a soldier's.

*Bel.* Be it what you will—  
Truce with these wranglings, and but hear me.

*Arb.* No—

There is more peril in your subtle spirit  
Than in a phalanx.

*Bel.* If it must be so—  
I'll on alone.

*Arb.* Alone !

*Bel.* Thrones hold but one.

*Arb.* But this is fill'd.

*Bel.* With worse than vacancy—  
A despised monarch. Look to it, Arbaces :

I have still aided, cherish'd, loved, and urged you ;  
Was willing even to serve you, in the hope  
To serve and save Assyria. Heaven itself  
Seem'd to consent, and all events were friendly,  
Even to the last, till that your spirit shrunk  
Into a shallow softness ; but now, rather  
Than see my country languish, I will be  
Her saviour or the victim of her tyrant,  
Or one or both, for sometimes both are one ;  
And, if I win, Arbaces is my servant.

*Arb.* Four servant !

*Bel.* Why not ? better than be slave,  
The pardon'd slave of *she* Sardanapalus !

*Enter* PANIA.

*Pan.* My lords, I bear an order from the king.

*Arb.* It is obey'd ere spoken.

*Bel.* Notwithstanding,  
Let's hear it.

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

*Bel.* With our troops ?

*Pan.* My order is unto the satraps and  
Their household train.

*Arb.* But—

*Bel.* It must be obey'd :

Say, we depart.

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

*Bel.* (*aside*). Ay !

Well, sir, we will accompany you hence.

*Pan.* I will retire to marshal forth the guard  
Of honour which befits your rank, and wait  
Your leisure, so that it the hour exceeds not.

[*Exit* PANIA.]

*Bel.* Now then obey !

*Arb.* Doubtless.

*Bel.* Yes, to the gates

S

That grate the palace, which is now our prison—  
No further.

*Arb.* Thou hast harp'd the truth indeed !  
The realm itself, in all its wide extension,  
Yawns dungeons at each step for thee and me.

*Bel.* Graves !

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

*Bel.* It shall have work enough.  
Let me hope better than thou augurst ;  
At present, let us hence as best we may.  
Thou dost agree with me in understanding  
This order as a sentence ?

*Arb.* Why, what other  
Interpretation should it bear ? it is  
The very policy of orient monarchs—  
Pardon and poison—favours and a sword—  
A distant voyage, and an eternal sleep.  
How many satraps in his father's time—  
For he I own is, or at least was, bloodless—

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

*Arb.* I doubt it.

How many satraps have I seen set out  
In his sire's day for mighty vice-royalties,  
Whose tombs are on their path ! I know not how,  
But they all sicken'd by the way, it was  
So long and heavy.

*Bel.* Let us but regain  
The free air of the city, and we'll shorten  
The journey.

*Arb.* 'T will be shorten'd at the gates,  
It may be.

*Bel.* No ; they hardly will risk that.

They mean us to die privately, but not  
Within the palace or the city walls,  
Where we are known, and may have partisans :  
If they had meant to slay us here, we were  
No longer with the living. Let us hence.

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

*Bel.* Fool ! hence—what else should despotism  
alarm'd

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

*Arb.* Towards our provinces ?

*Bel.* No ; towards your kingdom.  
There's time, there's heart, and hope, and power,  
and means,  
Which their half measures leave us in full scope.—  
Away !

*Arb.* And I even yet repenting must  
Relapse to guilt !

*Bel.* Self-defence is a virtue,  
Sole bulwark of all right. Away, I say !

<sup>1</sup> [Arbaces is a mere common-place warrior ; and Beleses, on whom, we suspect, Lord Byron has bestowed more than usual pains, is a very ordinary and uninteresting villain. Sardanapalus, indeed, and Salemenes, are both made to speak of the wily Chaldean as the master-mover of the plot, as a politician in whose hands Arbaces is but a "warlike puppet ;" and Diodorus Siculus has represented him, in fact, as the first instigator of Arbaces to his treason, and as making use of his priestly character, and his supposed power of foretelling future events, to inflame the ambition, to direct the measures, to sustain the hopes, and to reprove the despondency, of his comrade. But of all this nothing appears in the tragedy. Lord Byron has been so anxious to show his own contempt for the priest, that he has not even allowed him that share of cunning and evil influence which was necessary for the part which he had to fill. Instead of being the original, the restless and unceasing prompter to bold and wicked measures, we find him, on his first appearance, hanging back from the enterprise, and chilling the energy of Arbaces by an enumeration of the real or possible difficulties which might yet im-

Let 's leave this place, the air grows thick and choking,  
And the walls have a scent of night-shade—hence !  
Let us not leave them time for further council.

Our quick departure proves our civic zeal ;  
Our quick departure hinders our good escort,  
The worthy Pania, from anticipating  
The orders of some parasangs from hence :  
Nay, there 's no other choice, but—hence, I say.

[Exit with ARBACES, who follows reluctantly.]<sup>1</sup>

Enter SARDANAPALUS and SALEMENES.

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

*Sal.* Yes,

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

*Sar.* Why, what wouldst have me do ?

*Sal.* Undo what you have done.

*Sar.* Revoke my pardon ?

*Sal.* Replace the crown now tottering on your  
temples.

*Sar.* That were tyrannical.

*Sal.* But sure.

*Sar.* We are so.

What danger can they work upon the frontier ?

*Sal.* They are not there yet—never should they  
Were I well listen'd to. [be so,

*Sar.* Nay, I have listen'd

Impartially to thee—why not to them ?

*Sal.* You may know that hereafter ; as it is,

I take my leave, to order forth the guard.

*Sar.* And you will join us at the banquet ?

*Sal.* Sire,

Dispense with me—I am no wassailer :

Command me in all service save the Bacchant's.

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

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

Too oft. Am I permitted to depart ? [revel

*Sar.* Yes—Stay a moment, my good Salemenes,

My brother, my best subject, better prince

Than I am king. You should have been the monarch,

And I—I know not what, and care not ; but

Think not I am insensible to all

Thine honest wisdom, and thy rough yet kind,

Though oft-reproving, sufferance of my follies.

If I have spared these men against thy counsel,

That is, their lives—it is not that I doubt

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

Cavil about their lives—so let them mend them.

Their banishment will leave me still sound sleep,

Which their death had not left me.

pede its execution. Instead of exercising that power over the mind of his comrade which a religious impostor may well possess over better and more magnanimous souls than his own, Beleses is made to pour his predictions into incredulous ears ; and Arbaces is as mere an epicurean in his creed as Sardanapalus. When we might have expected to find him gazing with hope and reverence on the star which the Chaldean points out as his natal planet, the Median warrior speaks, in the language of Mezentius, of the sword on which his confidence depends, and instead of being a tool in the hand of the pontiff, he says almost every thing which is likely to affront him. Though Beleses is introduced to us as engaged in devotion, and as a fervent worshipper of the Sun, he is nowhere made either to feel or to counterfeit that professional zeal against Sardanapalus which his open contempt of the gods would naturally call for ; and no reason appears, throughout the play, why Arbaces should follow, against his own conscience and opinion, the counsels of a man of whom he speaks with dislike and disgust, and whose pretences to inspiration and sanctity he treats with unmingled ridicule.—BISHOP HEBER.]

*Sal.* Thus you run  
The risk to sleep for ever, to save traitors—  
A moment's pang now changed for years of crime.  
Still let them be made quiet.

*Sar.* Tempt me not :

My word is past.

*Sal.* But it may be recall'd.

*Sar.* 'T is royal.

*Sal.* And should therefore be decisive.

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

*Sar.* And who persuaded me  
After I had repeal'd them, or at least  
Only dismiss'd them from our presence, who  
Urged me to send them to their satrapies ?

*Sal.* True ; that I had forgotten ; that is, sire,  
If they e'er reach'd their satrapies—why, then,  
Reprove me more for my advice ?

*Sar.* And if  
They do not reach them—look to it !—in safety,  
In safety, mark me—and security—  
Look to thine own.

*Sal.* Permit me to depart ;

Thy safety shall be cared for.

*Sar.* Get thee hence, then ;

And, prithee, think more gently of thy brother.

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

[Exit SALEMENES.

*Sar.* (solus). That man is of a temper too se-  
vere ;

Hard but as lofty as the rock, and free  
From all the taints of common earth—while I  
Am softer clay, impregnated with flowers :

But as our mould is, must the produce be.

If I have err'd this time, 'tis on the side

Where error sits most lightly on that sense,

I know not what to call it ; but it reckons

With me ofttimes for pain, and sometimes pleasure ;

A spirit which seems placed about my heart

To count its throbs, not quicken them, and ask

Questions which mortal never dared to ask me,

Nor Baal, though an oracular deity—<sup>1</sup>

Albeit his marble face majestic

Frowns as the shadows of the evening dim

His brows to changed expression, till at times

I think the statue looks in act to speak.

Away with these vain thoughts, I will be joyous—

And here comes Joy's true herald.

Enter MYRRHA.

*Myr.* King ! the sky

Is overcast, and musters muttering thunder,

In clouds that seem approaching fast, and show

In forked flashes a commanding tempest.<sup>2</sup>

Will you then quit the palace ?

*Sar.* Tempest, say'st thou ?

*Myr.* Ay, my good lord.

*Sar.* For my own part, I should be

Not ill content to vary the smooth scene,

And watch the warring elements ; but this

Would little suit the silken garments and

Smooth faces of our festive friends. Say, Myrrha,

Art thou of those who dread the roar of clouds ?

<sup>1</sup> ["Nor silent Baal, our imaged deity,  
Although his marble face looks frowningly  
As the dull shadows," &c.—MS.]

*Myr.* In my own country we respect their voices  
As auguries of Jove.<sup>3</sup>

*Sar.* Jove !—ay, your Baal—

Ours also has a property in thunder,

And ever and anon some falling bolt

Proves his divinity,—and yet sometimes

Strikes his own altars.

*Myr.* That were a dread omen.

*Sar.* Yes—for the priests. Well, we will not go

forth

Beyond the palace walls to-night, but make

Our feast within.

*Myr.* Now, Jove be praised ! that he

Hath heard the prayer thou wouldst not hear. The

gods

Are kinder to thee than thou to thyself,

And flash this storm between thee and thy foes,

To shield thee from them.

*Sar.* Child, if there be peril,

Methinks it is the same within these walls

As on the river's brink.

*Myr.* Not so ; these walls

Are high, and strong, and guarded. Treason has

To penetrate through many a winding way,

And massy portal ; but in the pavilion

There is no bulwark.

*Sar.* No, nor in the palace,

Nor in the fortress, nor upon the top

Of cloud-fenced Caucasus, where the eagle sits

Nested in pathless clefts, if treachery be :

Even as the arrow finds the airy king,

The steel will reach the earthly. But be calm :

The men, or innocent or guilty, are

Banish'd, and far upon their way.

*Myr.* They live, then ?

*Sar.* So sanguinary ? Thou !

*Myr.* I would not shrink

From just infliction of due punishment

On those who seek your life : wer't otherwise,

I should not merit mine. Besides, you heard

The princely Salemenes.

*Sar.* This is strange ;

The gentle and the austere are both against me,

And urge me to revenge.

*Myr.* 'T is a Greek virtue.

*Sar.* But not a kingly one—I'll none on't ; or

If ever I indulge in't, it shall be

With kings—my equals.

*Myr.* These men sought to be so.

*Sar.* Myrrha, this is too feminine, and springs

From fear—

*Myr.* For you.

*Sar.* No matter, still 'tis fear.

I have observed your sex, once roused to wrath,

Are timidly vindictive to a pitch

Of perseverance, which I would not copy.

I thought you were exempt from this, as from

The childish helplessness of Asian women.<sup>4</sup>

*Myr.* My lord, I am no boaster of my love,

Nor of my attributes ; I have shared your splendour,

And will partake your fortunes. You may live

To find one slave more true than subject myriads :

But this the gods avert ! I am content

To be beloved on trust for what I feel,

<sup>2</sup> ["In distant flashes { a wide-spreading } tempest."—MS.]

<sup>3</sup> ["As from the gods to augur."—MS.]

<sup>4</sup> ["The weaker merit of our Asian women."—MS.]

Rather than prove it to you in your griefs,<sup>1</sup>  
Which might not yield to any cares of mine.

*Sar.* Grief cannot come where perfect love exists,  
Except to heighten it, and vanish from  
That which it could not scare away. Let 's in —  
The hour approaches, and we must prepare  
To meet the invited guests, who grace our feast.

[*Exeunt.*<sup>2</sup>

## ACT III.

## SCENE I.

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

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

*Zam.* Nor elsewhere — where the king is, pleasure  
sparkles.

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

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

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

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

*Sar.* Art sure of that? I have heard otherwise:  
Some say that there be traitors.

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

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

*Alt.* Guests, to my pledge!  
Down on your knees, and drink a measure to  
The safety of the king — the monarch, say I?  
The god Sardanapalus!

[*ZAMES and the Guests kneel, and exclaim —  
Mightier than*

His father Baal, the god Sardanapalus!

[*It thunders as they kneel; some start up in  
confusion.*

*Zam.* Why do you rise, my friends? in that strong  
peal

His father gods consented.

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

*Sar.* Impiety! — nay, if the sires who reign'd  
Before me can be gods, I'll not disgrace  
Their lineage. But arise, my pious friends;

<sup>1</sup> ["Rather than prove that love to you in griefs." — MS.]

<sup>2</sup> [The second Act, which contains the details of the conspiracy of Arbaces, its detection by the vigilance of Salemenes, and the too rash and hasty forgiveness of the rebels by the king, is, on the whole, heavy and uninteresting. — JEFFREY.]

Hoard your devotion for the thunderer there:  
I seek but to be loved, not worshipp'd.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

*Sar.* True, they love not censure  
Better than mortals. Friends, a thought has struck  
me:

Were there no temples, would there, think ye, be  
Air worshippers? that is, when it is angry,  
And pelting as even now.

*Myr.* The Persian prays  
Upon his mountain.

*Sar.* Yes, when the sun shines.

*Myr.* And I would ask, if this your palace were  
Unroof'd and desolate, how many flatterers  
Would lick the dust in which the king lay low?

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

*Sar.* Nay, pardon, guests,  
The fair Greek's readiness of speech.

*Alt.* Pardon! sire:  
We honour her of all things next to thee.

Hark! what was that?

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

*Alt.* It sounded like the clash of — Hark again!

*Zam.* The big rain pattering on the roof.

*Sar.* No more.

Myrrha, my love, hast thou thy shell in order?

Sing me a song of Sappho, her, thou know'st,

Who in thy country threw —

*Enter PANIA, with his sword and garments bloody,  
and disordered. The Guests rise in confusion.*<sup>3</sup>

*Pan.* (to the Guards). Look to the portals;  
And with your best speed to the walls without.

Your arms! To arms! The king's in danger. Mon-  
arch!

Excuse this haste, — 'tis faith.

*Sar.* Speak on.

*Pan.* It is

As Salemenes fear'd; the faithless satraps —

*Sar.* You are wounded — give some wine. Take  
breath, good Pania.

*Pan.* 'Tis nothing — a mere flesh wound. I am worn  
More with my speed to warn my sovereign,  
Than hurt in his defence.

<sup>3</sup> [Early in the third Act, the royal banquet is disturbed by sudden tidings of treason and revolt; and then the reveller blazes out into the hero, and the Greek blood of Myrrha mounts to its proper office! — JEFFREY.]

*Myr.* Well, sir, the rebels?

*Pan.* Soon as Arbaces and Beleses reach'd  
Their stations in the city, they refused  
To march; and on my attempt to use the power  
Which I was delegated with, they call'd  
Upon their troops, who rose in fierce defiance.

*Myr.* All?

*Pan.* Too many.

*Sar.* Spare not of thy free speech  
To spare mine ears the truth.

*Pan.* My own slight guard  
Were faithful — and what's left of it is still so.

*Myr.* And are these all the force still faithful? —  
*Pan.* No —

The Bactrians, now led on by Salemenes,  
Who even then was on his way, still urged  
By strong suspicion of the Median chiefs,  
Are numerous, and make strong head against  
The rebels, fighting inch by inch, and forming  
An orb around the palace, where they mean  
To centre all their force, and save the king.  
(*He hesitates.*) I am charged to —

*Myr.* 'Tis no time for hesitation.

*Pan.* Prince Salemenes doth implore the king  
To arm himself, although but for a moment,  
And show himself unto the soldiers: his  
Sole presence in this instant might do more  
Than hosts can do in his behalf.

*Sar.* What, ho!

My armour there.

*Myr.* And wilt thou?

*Sar.* Will I not?

Ho, there! — But seek not for the buckler; 'tis  
Too heavy: — a light cuirass and my sword.  
Where are the rebels?

*Pan.* Scarce a furlong's length  
From the outward wall, the fiercest conflict rages.

*Sar.* Then I may charge on horseback. Sfero, ho!  
Order my horse out. — There is space enough  
Even in our courts, and by the outer gate,  
To marshal half the horsemen of Arabia.

[*Exit SFERO for the armour.*

*Myr.* How I do love thee!

*Sar.* I ne'er doubted it.

*Myr.* But now I know thee.

*Sar.* (to his Attendant). Bring down my spear, too —  
Where's Salemenes?

*Pan.* Where a soldier should be,  
In the thick of the fight.

*Sar.* Then hasten to him — Is  
The path still open, and communication  
Left 'twixt the palace and the phalanx?

*Pan.* 'T was

When I late left him, and I have no fear:

Our troops were steady, and the phalanx form'd.

*Sar.* Tell him to spare his person for the present,  
And that I will not spare my own — and say,  
I come.

*Pan.* There's victory in the very word.

[*Exit PANIA.*

<sup>1</sup> ["In the third Act, where Sardanapalus calls for a mirror to look at himself in his armour, recollect to quote the Latin passage from Juvenal upon Otho (a similar character, who did the same thing). Gifford will help you to it. The trait is, perhaps, too familiar, but it is historical (of Otho, at least), and natural in an effeminate character." — *Lord B. to Mr. M.*]

<sup>2</sup> ["Ille tenet speculum pathici gestamen Othonis, Actoris Arunci spoliium, quo se ille videbat"]

*Sar.* Altada — Zames — forth, and arm ye! There  
Is all in readiness in the armoury.

See that the women are bestow'd in safety  
In the remote apartments: let a guard  
Be set before them, with strict charge to quit  
The post but with their lives — command it, Zames.  
Altada, arm yourself, and return here;  
Your post is near our person.

[*Exeunt ZAMES, ALTADA, and all save MYRRHA.*

*Enter SFERO and others with the King's Arms, &c.*

*Sfe.* King! your armour.

*Sar.* (arming himself). Give me the cuirass — so:  
my baldric; now

My sword: I had forgot the helm — where is it?  
That's well — no, 'tis too heavy: you mistake, too —  
It was not this I meant, but that which bears  
A diadem around it.

*Sfe.* Sire, I deem'd  
That too conspicuous from the precious stones  
To risk your sacred brow beneath — and, trust me,  
This is of better metal, though less rich.

*Sar.* You deem'd! Are you too turn'd a rebel?  
Fellow!

Your part is to obey: return, and — no —

It is too late — I will go forth without it.

*Sfe.* At least, wear this.

*Sar.* Wear Caucasus! why, 'tis  
A mountain on my temples.

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

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

[*In going stops short, and turns to SFERO.*

Sfero — I had forgotten — bring the mirror.<sup>1</sup>

*Sfe.* The mirror, sire?

*Sar.* Yes, sir, of polish'd brass,  
Brought from the spoils of India — but be speedy.<sup>2</sup>

[*Exit SFERO.*

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

*Myr.* Because my place is here.

*Sar.* And when I am gone —

*Myr.* I follow.

*Sar.* You! to battle?

*Myr.* If it were so,  
'T were not the first Greek girl had trod the  
path.

I will await here your return.

*Sar.* The place

Is spacious, and the first to be sought out,

If they prevail; and, if it be so,

And I return not —

*Myr.* Still, we meet again,

*Sar.* How?

*Myr.* In the spot where all must meet at last —  
In Hades! if there be, as I believe,

Armatum, cum jam tolli vexilla juberet.  
Res memoranda novis annalibus, atque recenti  
Historia, speculum civilis farcina belli." — *Juv. Sat. ii.*

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

A shore beyond the Styx: and if there be not,  
In ashes.

*Sar.* Darest thou so much?

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

*Re-enter SFERO with the mirror.*

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

*Sfe.* Waiting, sire,  
Without: he has your shield in readiness.

*Sar.* True; I forgot he is my shield-bearer  
By right of blood, derived from age to age.  
Myrrha, embrace me;—yet once more—once  
more—

Love me, whate'er betide. My chiefest glory  
Shall be to make me worthier of your love.

*Myr.* Go forth, and conquer!

[*Exeunt SARDANAPALUS and SFERO.*<sup>1</sup>  
Now, I am alone.

All are gone forth, and of that all how few  
Perhaps return. Let him but vanquish, and  
Me perish! If he vanquish not, I perish;  
For I will not outlive him. He has wound  
About my heart, I know not how nor why.  
Not for that he is king; for now his kingdom  
Rocks underneath his throne, and the earth yawns  
To yield him no more of it than a grave;  
And yet I love him more. Oh, mighty Jove!  
Forgive this monstrous love for a barbarian,  
Who knows not of Olympus! yes, I love him  
Now, now, far more than—Hark—to the war  
shout!

Methinks it nears me. If it should be so,

[*She draws forth a small vial.*

This cunning Colchian poison, which my father  
Learn'd to compound on Euxine shores, and taught  
me

How to preserve, shall free me! It had freed me  
Long ere this hour, but that I loved, until  
I half forgot I was a slave:—where all  
Are slaves save one, and proud of servitude,  
So they are served in turn by something lower  
In the degree of bondage, we forget  
That shackles worn like ornaments no less  
Are chains. Again that shout! and now the clash  
Of arms—and now—and now—

*Enter ALTADA.*

*Alt.* Ho, Sfero, ho!

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

*Alt.* Dubiously and fiercely.

*Myr.* And the king?

*Alt.* Like a king. I must find Sfero,  
And bring him a new spear and his own helmet.  
He fights till now bareheaded, and by far  
Too much exposed. The soldiers knew his face,

<sup>1</sup> [In the third Act, the king and his courtiers are disturbed at their banquet by the breaking out of the conspiracy. The battle which follows, if we overlook the absurdity, which occurs during one part of it, of hostile armies drawn up against

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

*Myr.* Ye gods,  
Who fulminate o'er my father's land, protect him!  
Were you sent by the king?

*Alt.* By Salemenes,  
Who sent me privily upon this charge,  
Without the knowledge of the careless sovereign.  
The king! the king fights as he revels! ho!  
What, Sfero! I will seek the armoury—  
He must be there. [*Exit ALTADA.*

*Myr.* 'T is no dishonour—no—  
'T is no dishonour to have loved this man.

I almost wish now, what I never wish'd  
Before, that he were Grecian. If Alcides  
Were shamed in wearing Lydian Omphale's  
She-garb, and wielding her vile distaff, surely  
He, who springs up a Hercules at once,  
Nursed in effeminate arts from youth to manhood,  
And rushes from the banquet to the battle,  
As though it were a bed of love, deserves  
That a Greek girl should be his paramour,  
And a Greek bard his minstrel, a Greek tomb  
His monument. How goes the strife, sir?

*Enter an Officer.*

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

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

[*Exit Officer.*

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

What need have I to know more? In those words,  
Those little words, a kingdom and a king,  
A line of thirteen ages, and the lives  
Of thousands, and the fortune of all left  
With life, are merged; and I, too, with the great,  
Like a small bubble breaking with the wave  
Which bore it, shall be nothing. At the least,  
My fate is in my keeping: no proud victor  
Shall count me with his spoils.

*Enter PANIA.*

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

*Myr.* The king?

*Pan.* Sent me here to conduct you hence, beyond  
The river, by a secret passage.

*Myr.* Then

He lives—

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

*Myr.* Will he then give way?

*Pan.* Not till the last. Still, still he does whate'er  
Despair can do; and step by step disputes  
The very palace.

*Myr.* They are here, then:—ay,

each other in a dining-room, is extremely well told; and Sardanapalus displays the precise mixture of effeminacy and courage, levity and talent, which belongs to his character.—HEBER.]

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

*Pan.* Away with me—away!

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

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

*Sar.* Since it is thus,  
We'll die where we were born—in our own halls.  
Serry your ranks—stand firm. I have despatch'd  
A trusty satrap for the guard of Zames,  
All fresh and faithful; they'll be here anon.  
All is not over.—Pania, look to Myrrha.

[*PANIA returns towards MYRRHA.*

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

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

*Sal.* Hark! they come—they come.

*Enter BELESES and ARBACES with the Rebels.*

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

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

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

*Bel.* Ho! tyrant—I will end this war.

*Sar.* Even so,  
My warlike priest, and precious prophet, and  
Grateful and trusty subject:—yield, I pray thee.  
I would reserve thee for a fitter doom,  
Rather than dip my hands in holy blood.

*Bel.* Thine hour is come.

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

*Bel.* But not by thee,  
[*They fight; BELESES is wounded and disarmed.*

*Sar.* (raising his sword to despatch him, exclaims)—  
Now call upon thy planets, will they shoot  
From the sky to preserve their seer and credit?

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

The villain was a prophet after all.

Upon them—ho! there—victory is ours.

[*Exit in pursuit.*

<sup>1</sup> [The king, by his daring valour, restores the fortune of the fight, and returns, with all his train, to the palace. The

*Myr.* (to *Pan.*). Pursue! Why stand'st thou here,  
and leav'st the ranks

Of fellow-soldiers conquering without thee?

*Pan.* The king's command was not to quit thee.  
*Myr.* Me!

Think not of me—a single soldier's arm  
Must not be wanting now. I ask no guard,  
I need no guard: what, with a world at stake,  
Keep watch upon a woman? Hence, I say,  
Or thou art shamed! Nay, then, I will go forth,  
A feeble female, 'midst their desperate strife,  
And bid thee guard me there—where thou shouldst  
shield

Thy sovereign. [*Exit MYRRHA.*  
*Pan.* Yet stay, damsel!—She is gone.

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

*Enter ALTADA and SFERO by an opposite door.*

*Alt.* Myrrha!  
What, gone? yet she was here when the fight raged,  
And Pania also. Can aught have befallen them?

*Sfe.* I saw both safe, when late the rebels fled:  
They probably are but retired to make  
Their way back to the harem.

*Alt.* If the king

Prove victor, as it seems even now he must,  
And miss his own Ionian, we are doom'd  
To worse than captive rebels.

*Sfe.* Let us trace them;  
She cannot be fled far; and, found, she makes  
A richer prize to our soft sovereign  
Than his recover'd kingdom.

*Alt.* Baal himself  
Ne'er fought more fiercely to win empire, than  
His silken son to save it: he defies

All augury of foes or friends; and like  
The close and sultry summer's day, which bodes  
A twilight tempest, bursts forth in such thunder  
As sweeps the air and deluges the earth.  
The man's inscrutable.

*Sfe.* Not more than others.

All are the sons of circumstance: away—  
Let's seek the slave out, or prepare to be  
Tortured for his infatuation, and  
Condemn'd without a crime. [*Exeunt.*

*Enter SALEMENES and Soldiers, &c.*

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

*Enter SARDANAPALUS, cum suis, &c. and MYRRHA.*

*Sar.* Here, brother.<sup>1</sup>

*Sal.* Unhurt, I hope.

scene that ensues is very masterly and characteristic.—JEF-FREY.]