

M E D E A.

A Tragedy,

IN THREE ACTS.

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH OF

ERNEST LEGOUVÉ.

BY

MATILDA HERON.

THOMAS HAILES LACY,

89, STRAND,

(Opposite Southampton Street, Covent Garden Market),

LONDON.

913740

MEDEA.

*As performed at the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane
(under the Management of Mr. E. T. SMITH),
on Tuesday, November 5th, 1861.*

Characters.

CREON (<i>King of Corinth</i>)	Mr. H. MELLON.
JASON	Mr. R. F. YOUNG.
ORPHEUS.....	Mr. SEFTON.
LYCAON }..... <i>Medea's Children</i>	{ Miss HAMILTON. MELANTHUS }..... <i>Miss PHILLIPS.</i>
A CORINTHIAN.....	Mr. DIXON.

Citizens.

MEDEA (<i>a Cholchin Princess</i>)	Miss AVONIA JONES.
CREUSA	Miss H. SIMMS.
IANTHE	Mrs. DOWTON.

Priests—Soldiers—Slaves—the Canephoræ, or Holy Virgins.

SCENE—CORINTH.

Grecian Costumes of the Classic Era.

✓ X 6371482

[Performance free.]

M E D E A.

A C T I.

SCENE.—*A view of the sea, c.—a precipitous rocky descent from L. U. E.—a sacred grove of olive trees surrounding a temple of Diana—the vestibule is seen R. 3 E.—a statue of Diana, R. C.*

CREON R., ORPHEUS C., JASON L.—*a crowd of CITIZENS surround ORPHEUS.*

CITIZEN. Orpheus! Orpheus! Hail Orpheus, the divine!
(shouting)

CREON. Proud mortal offspring of Apollo,—favorite of the gods,—I welcome thee, and thank thy sire divine, who once more gives thee to our sight.

ORPH. Venerated Creon! beloved Corinthians! what has Orpheus done to merit favors?

CREON. The coming morn will hail our gentle daughter as a bride; still with the morn comes fear—for omens sad presage the gods are angry. But thou art here! Wilt supplicate for us? to thee alone they listen: only by thy voice will the priests' songs, the people's prayers, ascend Olympus.

JASON. (L.C.) Are all thy honors for the poet, Creon; none for the warrior?

CREON. (R. C.) Jason, we owe thee much, nor shall forget the debt. Thy courage, more than human, of the pirates hast purged our seas, from our forest swept the wolves, slain the dragons in our deserts. We give thee love, but give no less to Orpheus.

JASON. (with irony) Let him have all, if such your will. Let him to-day go forth and quell the savage tribes.

ORPH. In that I might succeed.

JASON. Brave Orpheus! with what weapons wouldest thou fight? Thy lyre?

ORPH. With arms more simple still; some grains of corn.

JASON. I read not riddles.

ORPH. (c.) Oft have I wandered midst the savage tribes, whose only food the captives of the chase, or fruits spontaneous given by Nature's hand. With them my scanty store of bread I've shared, no sooner tasted than they wished for more. Then grains of wheat I've given. "Plant these," I've said, "not deeply—in the teeming soil, and soon the bounteous rain, and life-bestowing sun will cause it yield thee back a thousand-fold more bread than ye have planted grain." "But when?" the untutored mind inquired. "To-morrow?" "No!" I have replied; "to-morrow dig and plough, let labour sweeten life." This have they done, and on that very spot I've smiled to see the waving corn bend wooing to the breeze, and from its pregnant ears shake laughingly the glistening dew-drops back to its mother earth. Their tents then take the form of huts, then temples; cities, religion, industry and art spring from a few ears of corn, at my lyre's charmed sound. Thou seest, Jason, what victories may lie e'en in a grain of corn.

JASON. I do, great poet! Mighty conqueror!

ORPH. Jason, these are civilization's conquests. Thy pardon, Creon; I had forgot the lovely Creusa's bridal. The gods, thou saidst refused to smile. Whom does she wed?

CREON. Jason.

ORPH. Jason? She wed Jason? It cannot be.

JASON. It will be, Orpheus.

ORPH. Thou, *thou*, the spouse of Creusa?

JASON. And wherefore not! (*threatening ORPHEUS*)

CREON. Aye! Wherefore? Orpheus, what troubles thee? Why this paleness on his brow and thine?

ORPH. O, king! Orpheus of himself has no power to speak. To the gods will he submit his fears, consult the auguries, and read in them the motives for their dire prophesies.

CREON. Creon obeys thy voice. Prepare the sacrifice.

Music.—Exeunt, R. U. E., all but ORPHEUS and JASON.

ORPH. Medea! Jason, where is Medea?

JASON. Medea! Her name poisons my sense. She wearied of me and she fled.

ORPH. It was not so!

JASON. (*haughtily*) Orpheus, beware!

ORPH. Jason, for me there is no terror in thine anger. She left thee not. Her great proud heart was filled with love of thee. For thee she plunged in crime, and dared, the *immortal* vengeance. By you she was a mother. In you alone herself and children lived, she had no hope, they had no refuge but in thee. Jason, alive she never left thee. Jason, thou hast abandoned Medea!

JASON. I have, and wonder what cunning devil gave her fierce barbaric beauty power to enthrall me. Thou art surprised! yet thou didst know her?

ORPH. Thou hast abandoned her, and wherefore?

JASON. Beeause she is a homicide accurst, at whose vile name men shudder and grow pale. Absyrtos' shade stalks gloomy through the land, while mangled Pelias from his red shroud shrieks out "Revenge," and fierce the cry re-echoes!—where'er we roved the Furies, in their shadowless hands holding Jove's thunder-bolts, pursued. In each city where we refuge sought, pestilence tracked our presence, and awe-struck citizens would yell "Accurst! accurst!" and drive us forth. I shared the punishment her crimes had merited. Her presence was a curse to me. I could no longer brave the horror, the hatred of the world, and so I rid myself of it and her.

ORPH. The punishment her crimes had merited! Jason, thou art her crimes—thou art her punishment! she sinned for thee,—shouldst thou reproach her? Pure and unsullied thou foundst her in her savage home, and won her fond, confiding heart with false unholy vows, prompted by vile ambition, not by love; but she did love as only woman can. Her father she betrayed for thee; murdered her brother for thee; left her home desolate, and why?—Because, in all this universe, she saw no home but thee. And from her brow of shame, made so by thee, thou

sayst thy heart recoils: and thou shouldst blush to say it. Her family, her country, and her king—aye, all the earth might teem with accusations, but thou—thou shouldst be silent.

JASON. Not she, but I, the victim of our illicit passions. Wily as the serpent she coiled round my senses, she could not touch my heart. But now I love.

ORPH. Whom? Creusa?

JASON. Yes, the gentle Creusa. Orpheus, the same fire that makes us soldiers, makes us lovers; my nature thirsts for conquests, my heart is in its emotions overwhelming as the torrent, remorseless as the thunder, unfathomable as the sea! For Creusa's love, with resistless rain I'd inundate all Greece with blood and tears!

ORPH. Love! oh, holy love! what sins the prostitution of thy name must answer for! Love! thy love is as the vulture's for the festering carcass; as the lion's for the lamb; as the swollen stream for the flowery banks which, in its tumultuous course, defiles their beauty, and destroys their bloom. But the gods will hear me—through me they'll speak.

JASON. What will they say?

ORPH. Bid me, from thy foul grasp, release the innocent Creusa. Bid me reveal unto her father's eyes, the fate, the adulterous fate, thou'dst bring upon his child.

JASON. Nor rage of man; nor wrath of gods I fear. Ere thou canst tell thy paltry tale, with one bold act I'll answer thee. The fierce Antestor, the scourge of Corinth and the people's dread, I've tracked; to-day his legions shall fly before me—thus avenging Ephyre: while he himself I'll captive bring, to kneel and beg for life at Creon's feet. Who then shall dare to slander Jason's name? Thou wilt not dare to speak, or speaking will be shamed to silence. I go to meet Antestor. Of all the deities, Venus alone I seek and sue; this day I dedicate to her and to Creusa.

Exit, L.

ORPH. Go, heart of stone. He who'd be false to love must needs defy the gods. (*music without*) But Creusa comes—hymning praise to Diana, whose chaste altar now she leaves to sacrifice to Juno. Grant, ye gods, her

offering be not accepted. Her father waits my presence at the Temple. May our prayers avert her impending doom!

Exit ORPHEUS, R. 1 E.

Music.—Enter, CREUSA, IANTHE and the CANEPHORÆ,
R. U. E.

CREUSA. Dear nurse, these floral offerings place at feet of Diana's statue, while we enter the temple to pray, and offer the sacrifice of ripened fruits and holy bread.

Music.—Exeunt all but IANTHE, R. 2 E.

IANTHE. (*after wreathing statue*) This pious work achieved, the palace claims my duty.

Enter MEDEA and two CHILDREN, from rocky descent, L. U. E.

Oh ! what strangers have we here ?

MEDEA. Courage, my little ones, courage ! A step or two and we are at the gates.

IANTHE. (L. C.) Her countenance is sad ; her form all majesty and grace.

MEDEA. (C.) Strangers to Epirus, we claim thy hospitality.

IANTHE. Thou hast it.

MEDEA. On entering within the walls, methought I heard reverberate through the grove, the song of the Canephoræ.

IANTHE. Thou didst. It was a prayer to bless the bridal of my honoured charge, great Creon's child ; which, with Juno's blessing, the morn will consummate. But whence thy knowledge of these solemn tones ? Greece did not give thee birth.

MEDEA. True, and yet I know those sounds.

IANTHE. How tremulous her voice !

MEDEA. (*to the children*) There place thy offering, children, this veil, wove by Apollo from his own radiant beams. (*CHILDREN place the veil in a casket at the statue's foot*)

IANTHE. Oh, how beautiful ! No votive gift more precious could childhood offer to our gods, who then are also thine ?

MEDEA. Alas ! 'tis not by gifts so pure as these that ours are won. Their favours must be bought by human blood.

IANTHE. Monstrous! what savage land gave thee thy birth? (MEDEA *looks defiantly, then turns aside*) Your pardon, it was no fault of thine. I will respect thy secret. Here rest awhile; Creusa will soon return, her soul, all pity, will weep with thine—thy sorrows.

Exit IANTHE, R., into temple.

MEDEA. Orpheus! His hymns ascend to heaven. Hy-menial hymns! alas, such strains were never sung for me. Once, I had thought—had hoped—'tis past! Oh, Jason, Jason! where art thou?—art sick? art dead? art false? where art thou?—Oh, where art thou?

MELANTHUS. (*the child*) I'm so tired, mother.

MEDEA. My child, I suffer with thee, nor can I give thee shelter or a home.

LYCAON. (*the other child*) I faint with hunger, mother.

MEDEA. Oh! could I drain my heart for them, and say—"Here, drink"—I'd let the crimson flood from my veins, though life did ooze with every drop. It may not be; the fearful journey is begun, not ended. I still must live for their sakes. Courage, courage, my children, kneel and pray.

LYCAON. To whom?

MEDEA. Join thy prayers to those who in yon holy temple now supplicate the gods.

LYCAON. What shall we say, mother?

MEDEA. Nothing. Thy dumb despair will plead more loudly than thy words. I will leave you, little ones; your mute anguish, your lone helplessness may from Olympus draw down pity, and move the gods to smile upon your path. Ugh! I cannot pray! *Exit MEDEA, L.*

Re-enter CREUSA from the temple, with a basket on her arm, in it bread and a bunch of grapes.

CREUSA. Of all these pure gifts, I'll consecrate the half. (*sees CHILDREN*) Who are these so beautiful, so young, so innocent and yet so early supplicants? their habit speak them strangers—travel-worn they seem and pale. Alas! perchance with hunger; and I've so much. This white bread and these delicious fruits, I'll share with them. (*as she goes towards them the CHILDREN rise*) Stay, be not afraid.

See! here! (*gives fruit*) You are not of this land—how came you here? (*brings CHILDREN down*)

LYCAON. In a great ship.

CREUSA. Alone?

LYCAON. No.

CREUSA. With your father?

LYCAON. No; we have no father.

CREUSA. Nor mother! If not, poor orphans, I will be your mother.

LYCAON. We have a mother who loves us very much.

CREUSA. Oh, heart! which vibrates to but one sound alone, beats but at one name, worships but one idol! how is it, that in the voice of this sweet child, methinks I hear his tone—in that dear face, see his very lineaments. Oh! Jason, how is it with me when every object beautiful and pure reflects thy form, thy goodness, and thy virtue. (*kisses the boy*)

LYCAON. You love me then?

CREUSA. Who would not love thee, child?

LYCAON. That's what mother says.

CREUSA. Thy mother!

LYCAON. Yes; she is there.

CREUSA. What! leave you here alone!

LYCAON. She said the gods would pity us the more if she would go away, and then she wept.

CREUSA. Go, call her hither. (*crosses, L.*)

Enter MEDEA, l. u. e., crosses behind to c.

LYCAON. See mother! bread and fruit.

MEDEA. Maiden, may the gods be merciful to thee, since to the unfortunate thou hast been kind.

CREUSA. How stately are her accents!—her brow how royal! She seems an exile, yet she stands a queen.

MEDEA. (*turning to CREUSA*) How shall we thank thee, maiden?

CREUSA. Tell of your woes, and let me soothe them

MEDEA. My woes come from the gods.

CREUSA. What deity?

MEDEA. The God of Love!

CREUSA. I too do suffer from him. Alas! our hearts must beat in union.

MEDEA. No, no; for thee love is the crowned God whose diadem is gemmed with ever-blooming youth and rosy hope, a smile eternal beaming o'er his face. To me he is the messenger of dark Eumenides, and round his brow a crown of livid serpents coil.

CREUSA. Not all smiles is love to me—tears will come.

MEDEA. Tears? so young, so innocent! wherefore tears? Is not he the gods have given thee, some loved companion of thy infancy?

CREUSA. No; he is a stranger.

MEDEA. Like me! (*to herself*)

CREUSA. Pity for his misfortunes first prompted love.

MEDEA. Like me!

CREUSA. His beauty then inspired it.

MEDEA. Like me!

CREUSA. Confirmed it was by his heroic valour.

MEDEA. Alas, like me! Unhappy maiden, the woes that pierce thy heart, find fearful echo in mine own.

CREUSA. And through the mist of sorrow that enwraps thee, I feel a chain of fearful sympathy which binds my soul to thine. Speak then thy griefs—trust me, I will be thy sister.

MEDEA. How shall I speak? In the deep recesses of a savage home I grew to womanhood. My parents loved me, Heaven smiled, and I was happy. One day, a strange warrior landed on our shores, in search of glory, danger, fame. He entered our abode, my father welcomed him; I was entranced;—my heart was pulseless;—motionless I stood, awe-struck. He spoke; and at his voice, a torrent of delight coursed through my veins. I could not raise my eyes; still, still I listened. A blush, lit up with smiles, spread o'er my face; he spoke again—to me—to me! It seemed as if some god had maddened me with joy! I raised my eyes to his—I looked—I loved!

CREUSA. Unhappy woman!

MEDEA. From that moment I had one thought alone, *his glory!* To arm his valour I must despoil my father—I did so; betray my country—I did so; defy the gods—I did so! *he was my god!* Victory his handmaid, gave him all he asked. What were my feelings when each

succeeding triumph brought him to my feet with tears of gratitude and love, whispering between each kiss, "I owe my glory all to thee!"

CREUSA. Then both did love; and ye were wed?

MEDEA. Both loved—but dared not wed. It was forbidden. One day he said he must depart—urged me to fly!

CREUSA. Ah! you went?

MEDEA. What could I do? my heart was his. Shadowed by night, I left the home where seventeen years had smiled upon my life. I clung to objects linked with memory of innocence and youth—knelt beside my little bed—bathed it with my tears; with noiseless tread of piety and fear, I crossed our palace halls and sought my mother's chamber—she was sleeping—kissed her cheek, and thought how often by her side my infancy had slumbered: then placing on her breast some tresses of my hair, invoked the gods to temper her affliction on the morrow! Mother, father, country, friends—look on me now and you will pardon me!

CREUSA. (*points to the children*) Pardon is from above, but here is consolation.

MEDEA. My children! here, let me fold ye to my heart.

(MEDEA leads children to the altar)

CREUSA. Thou hast much comfort in thy children?

MEDEA. More than I merit. Celestial anger finds, in their innocence, the instrument to crush me.

CREUSA. Celestial anger!

MEDEA. Yes! I braved it—and it menaces me.

CREUSA. Great heaven!

MEDEA. You shudder.—What, did I tell you all? What, did I reveal the horrors ever present to my anguished sight, ever crushing on my brain? Listen:—as I neared the gates, a viewless minister of darkness whispered in mine ear: "Tremble, guilty one, tremble! for within these walls the anger of the implacable Eumenides awaiteth thee!" It seemed as if the very air were pregnant with his vengeance,—tainted with blood!

CREUSA. Banish such thoughts! shadows of the mind! offsprings of your grief.

MEDEA. No, no; not grief, but fear.

CREUSA. Fear! fear of what?

MEDEA. Wert thou ever JEALOUS?

CREUSA. Jealous! yes, alas! yes.

MEDEA. In thy breast, then, my secret may descend. Here—here at times suspicion steals into my heart, and hisses through his grated teeth: “What, if his absence were abandonment? what, if, while starving, exiled, friendless, in weariness and tears, I trace his steps through Greece—he should be kneeling at another’s feet—what, had he loved her—*married her?*”

CREUSA. That would be infamous!

MEDEA. Would it not? Since that doubt hath penetrated here, one purpose fills my soul—to traverse the earth, from land to land, wander to its end, but I will find them.

CREUSA. You—you frighten me; what would you do?

MEDEA. Do? What does the leopard when, with a terrible and bloody joy, it bounds, like the thunder-bolt, upon its prey?

CREUSA. (*horrified*) Oh, cease!

MEDEA. Aha! and say’st thou *now* that *thou* art jealous?

CREUSA. Pardon me, if such wild words are fruits of jealousy, then was I never jealous. You terrify me, still my sympathies are thine. I also fear a rival.

MEDEA. Thou?

CREUSA. Yes, I: Fled she is across the seas, and yet her image is before me.

MEDEA. Does he love her still?

CREUSA. No, no, I have his vow.

MEDEA. Then what hast thou to fear?

CREUSA. I know not, still I fear. Suppose, despite the seas and deserts that divide us, she suddenly appears, and by enchanted arts tear me living from the arms I love!

MEDEA. These are childish fears.

CREUSA. Oh! didst thou but know him, thou wouldst not wonder how I love him.

MEDEA. Thou dost forget I am a stranger here, and know not even thee, yet speak—his name, for I would know who ’tis that owns so fair a treasure.

CREUSA. Then come with me in our palace, there be sharer of our hospitality; thou art weary, faint and worn.

Enter ORPHEUS, R. 2 E.

ORPH. Come, Creusa. (*sees MEDEA*) Ah!

MEDEA. Orpheus! thou here—speak—does *he* live?

ORPH. Listen, Medea.

MEDEA. What should I listen to? *Does he live?*

ORPH. He does.

MEDEA. The gods be praised! he lives! he lives!

CREUSA. Who?

MEDEA. Their father.

CREUSA. Who is their father?

MEDEA. Who should he be? The pride, the honour, the glory of all Greece!

CREUSA. Oh, heaven!

MEDEA. The hero of a race of heroes—the victor of the Golden Fleece!

CREUSA. 'Tis Jason! and thou, thou art Medea!

MEDEA. And thou—who, then, art thou?

ORPHEUS. Spare her, Medea.

MEDEA. At my glance, why sink thine eyes? at my name, why art thou silent? at my touch, why tremble at my feet?—I see here preparations for a bridal;—it is yours, and the bridegroom, where is he? I would see him him come! call him, I say! tell him that Medea, his wife, his children's mother—with magic charms drawn from the cauldron of the direst fate—with malediction hath infested Epirus. Oh, malediction on ye all! Vengeance! vengeance!

(*Tableau, and*

END OF THE FIRST ACT.

ACT II.

SCENE.—*Throne Room in the Palace of Creon—a curtain at the back, veiling a gigantic statue of Saturn.*

CREON and CREUSA, L., ORPHEUS, R., discovered.

CREUSA. His wife! she is his wife!

CREON. Child, restrain thy tears. Let pride drink up thy sorrow, soon Jason will return—will meet Medea. Till then, go—and drive this woman forth.

ORPH. Drive forth Medea?

CREON. Aye—Medea! her foul presence—quick breathing forth pestiferous vitality—again will bring to life the dread Colchide.

ORPH. Thy will is mine, O king, yet would I wait return of warlike Jason.

CREUSA. Alas! will he return? Spare him, ye gods! If not for me—thy will be done—spare him though you give him to another. Perchance e'en now he combats the fierce Antestor, and dies in the dread conflict.

(*shouts without, R. 3 E.*)

A crowd of CITIZENS throng in at back, R. 3 E., waving caps, and cheering enthusiastically, JASON enters proudly through them, and addresses them.

CREUSA. He lives! thank heaven!

JASON. Citizens of Epirus, ye are free! Your foes are scattered. The brave amongst them found us yet more brave, and we have given their bodies to the vultures; the cowards have fled to die of hunger in the deserts. To your fields return, your labours and your homes. The fierce Antestor shall no more affright ye; hand to hand he dared dispute with me—Jason. He will dispute no more.

The crowd shout, and exeunt, R. 3 E.
For thee I fought, O King! and I am come—Hah! Creusa in tears, Orpheus downcast, and Creon silent—what may this mean?

ORPH. Medea is here.

JASON. Medea!

ORPH. And thy two sons.

JASON. Medea!

ORPH. Furious with love she comes, appealing to great Jove for aid to find the father of her children; she calls on thee, her husband.

JASON. And let her call! she is no wife of mine. By me she is a mother; for her offspring's sake she shall have protection and support: these duties done, Justice demands our union should be broken. Respect and confidence Medea has forfeited; lacking these no love can be, and here before the gods I do repudiate her.

CREON. Thy children, Jason?

JASON. Great Jove has sent them and I thank him. Celestial clemency has given them back. Now may I expiate the crime of their abandonment. Creusa, henceforth will thou be mother to my boys?

CREUSA. I!—speak, father, King! I may not answer him but through thy voice.

ORPH. Then be for ever silent, ere thy royal word give sanction to these nuptials—

JASON. Peace—wretched minstrel! (*threatens him*)

ORPH. Strike, oh Jason!—while life is mine, the truth I'll speak.

CREON. Jason—respect Olympus' oracle; in him Apollo breathes, him Jupiter protects. Speak, Orpheus, 'tis I command it.

ORPH. Creon!—wouldst thou dare to brave the curses of a most injured wife? a mother's vengeance,—her children's anguished cries?

JASON. Orpheus—beware!

ORPH. Beware!—do *thou* beware! Thy baseness is not hidden; are the gods blind? The wailings of Medea ascend to heaven; are the gods deaf?

JASON. Or blind, or deaf? Think not that Jason trembles.

ORPH. Woe to thee! scoffer, woe! (*to CREON*) Ah! woe to thy house, O King, if thou art merciless.

CREON. What terrible prophecy is shrouded in thy words?

ORPH. The vengeance of a people. The judgment of the gods! (*goes to L.*)

CREON. Orpheus, thou hast my word. These nuptials are forbidden.

JASON. Hear me, O King!

CREON. I have spoken, Jason.

CREUSA. Here at thy feet, father, hear me; in mercy hear me—I love this man.

CREON. So does Medea.

JASON. King, thou shalt hear me. Thy child is mine, to me by you has she been given. I love her, dost understand me, King? I, Jason, love her! no power—nor king—nor prophet shall wrest her from me. Like chaff, thine enemies I've scattered—thy daughter's mine by right of conquest. Cannot I hold my conquests? My name is Jason!

Enter IANTHE, r. 3 e., down, r.

IANTHE. A stranger begs audience of the king.

CREON. The name?

IANTHE. Medea. Resistless as a lioness, in wrath she forced an entrance through your guards, and menacing and pale stands muttering, "I would see Jason."

ORPH. Hearst thou that? the gods have sent her—she alone can mitigate their wrath. By her consent alone can your marriage e'er be lawful. Go, Jason, go—ask her to renounce her children, accept her widowhood!

JASON. That will I do.

CREUSA. Thou wouldest dare—?

JASON. Dare! Jason dares anything. Dread prophet, mighty king, dear Creusa, I would be alone.

Exeunt ORPHEUS, KING, and CREUSA, l. 1 e.

Admit the woman.

Exit IANTHE, r.

Enter MEDEA, r.

MEDEA. (*after a long pause*) Jason!—thou here—all is forgotten—(*JASON turns from her*) How's this? Is Jason turned to stone? or has my sleepless misery, my long despair, sad weary travel spent in search of him so changed my features, he no longer knows me?—Jason, I am Medea.

JASON. Medea, hear me—

MEDEA. Thou dost know me, then?

JASON. Hear me.

MEDEA. Speak, I listen.

JASON. I have a duty to perform.

MEDEA. Thou hast. Go on. *Do thy duty.*

JASON. Love for my dear children, my interest in thee—

MEDEA. Then thou hast thought of us, Jason?

JASON. I could but think of thee; misery, hardships, days spent in wandering, nights of terror have been your fate. How! not think of you, and I the cause?

MEDEA. But why recall these miseries, since in thy presence they are ended. *Thou art here!*

JASON. Would they were ended, but destiny has spoken,

and wills it otherwise. Sharer of thy crimes, I have provoked its wrath.

MEDEA. (*aside*) My crimes for him.

JASON. I suffer with thee, I am wise too late.

MEDEA. Whence comes thy wisdom?

JASON. (*lifting his hands to heaven*) Whence all wisdom comes.

MEDEA. Aha!

JASON. Medea, thou lov'st thy children?

MEDEA. I love my children!

JASON. Prove it.

MEDEA. How?

JASON. End their disgrace.

MEDEA. How?

JASON. By immolating for their good, thyself.

MEDEA. But how?

JASON. Break the chains which bind them to adversity.

MEDEA. What chain?

JASON. Our union.

MEDEA. Ah! repudiate myself?

JASON. It were well the ties between us should be broken.

MEDEA. Pardon me if I am dull, and cannot see the good that would ensue.

JASON. You would be once more free.

MEDEA. I should be free?

JASON. Could form a new alliance.

MEDEA. I seek it not. Yet, if I errnot, thou too were free.

JASON. I must be so, to marry Creusa.

MEDEA. Thou wouldest marry Creusa?

JASON. I would; and by that marriage, my children would find their home—within the palace of a king.

MEDEA. And I, their mother?

JASON. To-morrow's dawn, at voice of Creon, shall see a ship laden with the rarest treasures of Epirus, speeding her sails for some far distant land, in which thy days can pass in glorious exile, and luxurious ease.

MEDEA. Thy plan hath one rare merit—clearness. In what blessed country shall I pass my days in glorious exile and luxurious ease? In my native land? for thee I robbed it of its sacred treasures. In Thrace? its sea is

crimsoned with my brother's blood. Before we speak of banishment, I pray thee, Jason, find the land whereto to banish me. Sever our union! thou hast forgot the ties by which that union is cemented, not love alone, but *crime*.

JASON. Wouldst thou save thy children?

MEDEA. Silence! their names o'erwhelm me with thy baseness.

JASON. (*angrily and quickly*) Woman!

MEDEA. Who slew my brother, and for what? avenging a loved sister's dishonour! Hast thou forgotten how, in his dying gasp, he gathered up the blood still flowing from his wound, and dashed it, reeking with his life, into our guilty faces, crying—"Be accursed for ever, fratricides!" Think'st thou that *law* can break an union such as this? a marriage solemnized in blood? or that our guilty hearts can seek for love elsewhere than in themselves? Yet thou hast done so, and call'st upon the gods to bless thy union. And this is love! and thou art Jason, and I Medea, who calmly listens now, and hears thee say—"Go, woman, go! I've had enough of thee—I love another."

JASON. 'Tis even so.

MEDEA. I see it—see it all; and if in thy ardent hate I am not driven from thee like a slave—if thou'dst have me free thee from thy vows through argument—'tis not because piety or gratitude could from thy icy heart extort an act so near resembling justice. Some secret power compels thee to this mockery of human feeling. It is thy king hath told thee to appease the gods by my consent to break our union. Aha! why dost thou change thy colour, Jason? Thou'rt pale—I'm sorry—but I cannot set thee free.

JASON. (*with anger*) Thy deeds upon thy head. Tomorrow's dawn shall see thee driven with scorn and contumely back to thy base, barbarous home. Before the gods, the morn shall make her mine, and the soft winds that steal across her brow, sighing their leave of her young maidenhood shall follow thy lone ship, filling her sails with echoes of our bridal revelry. (*crosses, L.*)

MEDEA. Peace!

JASON. It rests with thee to make thy peace. Yield thou to destiny, or brave the immortal's vengeance, to misery sink thy children—or raise them to a throne—choose thou thy part, I'll speak no more.

Exit JASON, l. 1 e.

MEDEA. Blood! blood! To drown him in it! To break, to torture his inhuman heart.

Enter the two CHILDREN, r. 2 e.

LYCAON. Mother!

MEDEA. Why art thou here?

LYCAON. We are your children, mother.

MEDEA. You are Jason's children. Away, accursed things—I hate ye—go!—I hate the human race—but you the most—because *he* is your father.

LYCAON. What have we done?

MEDEA. You look like him. His eyes, his brow. Go, go, go! Stay!—Oh, Jason, Jason, must I know thee false, and love thee still,—or loathing thee, must I abhor these little ones. Pardon, my children. Forgive thy mother. Ye are all she hath, yet is so rich in such possession, that were the gods all Jasons, and she their only love, she would not barter this one sad, fond caress, to dwell for ever in their hearts, or be partaker of immortal joys! Mine! mine! close to my heart—ye are no longer his—*she* fills his breast, he hath no room for thee. *She, she*—be still my heart; through her I'll torture *him*. She comes. (*putting back the children*) The gods have sent her, fresh from his arms, his kisses on her lips—away with weakness, it is the hour to strike—to slay!

Enter CREUSA, l. 1 e., hurriedly.

What brings thee hither?

CREUSA. Thou.

MEDEA. Welcome, Creusa!

CREUSA. Fly! fly! With me, with me!

MEDEA. I, fly with thee?

CREUSA. The city is alive with cries for vengeance on thee. (*tumult without*)

MEDEA. Vengeance—well? (*louder noise without*)

CREUSA. Hear'st thou that tumult, it is raised for thee.
Remain within these walls and thou art lost. Fly, fly
with me!

MEDEA. Wherefore?

(*tumult again*)

CREUSA. That I may save thee.

MEDEA. Thou'dst save me? Before I'd fly, I'd learn if
thy apparent pity be offspring of a generous soul, or the
base child of false regret and foul hypocrisy.

CREUSA. Woman, I—

MEDEA. Peace! no words, but deeds. Save me, for
what? my life is hate or love. Say then, when thou hast
saved me, what wilt thou do else? Wilt render back my
Jason? renounce thy love, or, wedding him, condemn
Medea to infamy and shame? Wilt kill me, Creusa, after
having saved me? Witness my despair—behold me at
thy feet, oh, spare me! Anger, fury, hate, all gone—I
weep and pray; yes, pray to thee, oh give him back! Thou
know'st the blight that he hath cast upon my heart, yet
doth it warm to him! The gods have given thee all,
father, country, friends, and innocence. I have none of
these—have nothing without him! Oh, give him to me
—give him back!

CREUSA. (*affected*) Alas!

MEDEA. Thou art silent—thine eyes are turned away—
weep they for me? In pity answer me.

CREUSA. I weep for thee—yet *cannot* do thy will.

MEDEA. Leave me.

CREUSA. Wilt not come with me?

MEDEA. Leave me.

CREUSA. If I save thee—

MEDEA. Woman! seest not 'tis thyself whom thou
shouldst save. Art mad? Has memory forsaken thee?
Did I not warn thee, should fate disclose my rival, like
the angry tigress fighting for its cubs, I'd tear my victim
limb from limb?

(*cries without*)

*Enter CREON, JASON, and the CHILDREN, followed by the
populace, r. and l. CREUSA seeks refuge with her father.
Also, enter IANTHE and ORPHEUS.*

CREUSA. Ah, father! save me from this woman! save me!

CREON. Fear not, my child. This day is dedicated to Jason's honour—she has slandered him. Medea, from this hour, we banish thee our kingdom, and forfeit life of him who shelters thee.

MEDEA. Banished! say not so, oh, Creon, King, grant me one day—to seek for sustenance—for refuge for my children.

JASON. Thy children! Dar'st thou pollute their name with mockery? Dost think I'd see the blood of Jason disgraced by thy protection? Hence! away! The children rest with me. (*to GUARDS*) Dost hear thy king's decree? Advance and seize them! (*GUARDS advance, R.*)

MEDEA. I am their mother—who dares seize them? Are ye fathers? Let him amongst ye who loves not his own child approach, and tear these children from my arms. (*the GUARDS withdraw*) Ah! ye are men, not monsters. Fear not, my little ones, my arms encircle ye, they shall not harm you. (*Tableau, and*

END OF THE SECOND ACT.

ACT III.

SCENE.—*Same as Act Second.*

Enter ORPHEUS, R. 3 E., meeting JASON, who enters, L. 1 E.

JASON. With joy I hail thy presence, Orpheus. To-day we sacrifice to Hymen, asking him to bless our nuptials with the gentle Creusa, and await thy voice to tune our song to harmony.

ORPH. Medea has then consented?

JASON. She has. Her proud spirit hath yielded to a sterner voice than mine—the voice of misery.

ORPH. And her children?

JASON. She has sent them here to Creusa.—Thou art amazed, and yet 'tis so; women have strange fancies—she would be present at our bridal, and wills her children

should be there. We have possession now, and never again those children shall she see—this hour, by stratagem or force, she quits this land.

ORPH. And you would rob a mother of her children?

JASON. Hers! hers! always hers! are they not also mine?

ORPH. And you can cast away without a pang, the love to which thou owest, not them alone—but thy vast fame, thy glory.

JASON. The past is past. No more of it; all but Creusa, I forget. Of Medea, no more—her name invokes dread thoughts from which my soul recoils with horror; blest be this day which frees me from her; once wed to Creusa, I am a man again—a husband, father, friend.

ORPH. Unhappy man! a single day oft changes joy into despair. The love that leads to heights celestial, is that which never changes; love lives but once. Jason, you never loved Medea, or never could desert her.

Enter CREUSA, with the CHILDREN, r.; she has a garland of flowers in her hand.

CREUSA. See, Jason! these flowers, how beautiful, how graceful; with such as these I'd deck my warrior's brow.

JASON. Thy lover's, Creusa—the warrior is dead, will fight no more, except for thee.

CREUSA. Never then, Jason, shalt thou fight again; with these sweet sprays, I'll deck my bridal veil.

JASON. Your bridal veil!

CREUSA. Yes, Jason; an offering from Medea; the pledge of consent to our union—absolving thee from her unholy ties. But yesterday, she bade her children offer it; I'd not accept it then, but now, to-day—this happy day, she sends it me by them—and sends them with it, full of hope that I will be to them a second mother; let her not fear, my Jason's children will I guard with care, their shield shall be my love for him—yes, little ones, each succeeding morn shall vie with yesterday in all that can promote thy good, thy joy, thy honor.

JASON. (*to CREUSA*) Dearest! (*to CHILDREN*) Come with me. Thus in my love be one for ever.

MEDEA has been seen behind drapery. JASON kisses the CHILDREN, then embraces CREUSA, and exeunt, L.

ORPH. Poor Medea!

Exit, l. 2 E.

MEDEA. He loves them. No, no, 'tis she, 'tis she! Gods, what a picture of light and love! nothing is wanting—not even the shadow in the back ground, dark and terrible. Ah, fearful contrast! Beware! The shadows thicken—the lights may disappear! Beware Medea! lest her pale, spectral form disturb its placid harmony. Now, by my life, I wonder at myself. Out, out upon this mockery of hate! To work, to work, to flatter, lie, deceive—all things but forgive. Ere this she hath the veil. Aha! Great Jason, wonder not if, from the love thou'st trampled on, a viper leap to sting thee into madness. Viper? Aye, that's the word—low, crawling, silent, cunning viper be it then: and now, beware!

Enter ORPHEUS, l. 2 E.

ORPH. Medea!

MEDEA. Ah, Orpheus, of what new sorrow is thy soul possessed?

ORPH. I—I bear ill news.

MEDEA. That is no news, Orpheus, the times are ill. Yet speak, for I would know what 'tis that thou call'st ill.

ORPH. An order from the king.

MEDEA. What order?

ORPH. That thou depart to-day.

MEDEA. No, not to-day; to-morrow.

ORPH. To-day. Thy children go not with thee.

MEDEA. How?

ORPH. He did believe that sending them, you had resolved to give them up.

MEDEA. Give them up! you mock me. Why, they are ever dearer to me than my hate, my hate for him. It is his bridal day, I would be witness of his joy, and hence my fond desire to be his guest for these brief hours. My children, too, are here, with my consent—ah, fatal hour for him when their young innocence

appeared upon his threshold ; I sent them here the heralds of my vengeance ? Go thou to Creon, and with prophetic voice, tell him a chastisement, supreme and terrible, threatens his house, suspended o'er his head—let him be wise. Ha !

Enter CREON, JASON, CREUSA and CHILDREN, L.

CREON. Medea, we summoned thee to hear us speak, and we entreat thy patience.

MEDEA. Speak, king, I am thy slave.

CREON. Jason's parental love forbids him see thy children share thy exile.

MEDEA. Kind Jason !

CREON. Our laws are strict, and I their minister must strictly execute them. Jason claims his children. They are his right, he must retain them ; their welfare only, does he seek : heirs to our throne we name them, and bring them here that thou may'st take thy leave.

MEDEA. Oh, king, have pity on my anguish ! with mercy temper my affliction ! (*to ORPHEUS*) Speak thou for me. I have no words to plead for woes like mine.

ORPH. (*crossing to CREON*) Dread sovereign, hear me plead for this sad woman ! Her wrongs are mighty. Thou art a father. Be merciful.

MEDEA. (*pointing to CREUSA*) Speak to her !

ORPH. (*to CREUSA*) Pity her, Creusa, thou too may'st be a mother—pity her !

CREUSA. Jason, I—

JASON. Peace, Creusa, peace ! Thy prayer is heard ere spoken. Here are thy children.

MEDEA. Blessed be thy name ! There, take thou her. I am a queen again ; I have found my diadem ; I have my children's love !

JASON. One of them remains with me, choose thou.

MEDEA. Choose ? choose which ? The youngest ? the same love gave them birth. The most delicate ?—I tremble equally for both. The best ?—They are both so good. Is it Melanthus, who, in my nights of anguish and of fears for thee would steal beside my couch, and calm me till I

slept. Is it Lycaon?—One morn when seeking thee, the snow fell heavily on our path—he took his mantle from his shivering frame, and wrapped it round his brother.—Which then can I spare? O, Jason, father, friend, be generous as thou art brave, and yield them both to me!

JASON. It cannot be.

MEDEA. For their sakes, let my tears prevail.

JASON. Thy tears! I'm weary of thy tears.

MEDEA. For *her* sake, then.

JASON. Away! Her pure, unerring soul can have no sympathy with thine! the fate that menaces her peace is thy unholy presence; choose, and depart. (*goes up, r.*)

MEDEA. Oh, King, speak thou!

CREON. (*r. c.*) When the father speaks, the King should be silent.

MEDEA. Oh, break my heart, and ye, oh gods, be witness of my wrongs! Hear these great men defy thy wrath, insult thy attributes! (*to children*) These generous men, your father and his King, permit that one of you belong to me; and I must choose between ye which I most love:— Speak you, and in this dark, embittered hour, let him who pities most his mother's misery, approach and go with her.

ORPHEUS. (*l., after a pause, aside*) Will they not go with her?

MEDEA. What wait ye for? why cast on me these looks of fear? Come, my children, come.

JASON. (*l. c.*) You see they will not go.

MEDEA. Thou liest, man! It is impossible! Lycaon, thou my pride, my son, come to thy mother, to the breast that nourished thee, the heart that gave thee life!—I will never more be angered, but be calm and gentle—what thou wilt; I'll sing thee songs, and tell thee tales; and dearly love thee ever, ever! Ah, be my son! Come, come! (*LYCAON goes to CREUSA, slowly, and weeping hides his face in her bosom—MEDEA observes the boy's hesitation, and with a tone of vehement suffering exclaims to CREUSA*) Ah, monster! thou hast robbed me of the hearts of my children!

CREUSA. No, hear me, ye gods!—I do deny the charge.

MEDEA. In vain thou call'st on the gods. Could not my husband's love appease thy adulterous heart, but thou must steal my children's too?

CREUSA. Here, take thy children.

MEDEA. No : keep them ; their hearts are yours ; why should I enslave their forms. Go teach them curse Medea's name. I am no more a mother, no more myself, my very blood is changed, and circulates in streams of fire ! Away ! Go ! Leave me all !—I would be alone ! Take them, take all, I have no child, no husband—home ; I am homeless—hopeless! hopeless! Lycaon ! Melanthus, lost ! lost ! (*falls sobbing at the feet of Saturn*)

CREUSA. Alas ! poor woman !

(*CREUSA and the CHILDREN are about to succour*

MEDEA. JASON stays them. Exeunt CREUSA,
JASON, and CHILDREN, r. 2 E.)

ORPHEUL. Poor childless mother ! leave her, yes, leave her to loneliness ; 'tis all we can bequeathe her.

Exeunt ORPHEUS and CREON, r.

MEDEA. Alone, alone, in this wide world alone. Parents, country, children—lost, all lost for him, for Jason ! Where now's the voice that lured me from the gods ? Breathing low whispers in another's ear. Where now the vows for which I bartered all ? Broken, broken, and he triumphs, thanks to me. I gave him to another ; and whilst from his threshold I am proscribed and driven, he, happy father, bridegroom, prince, proud of his offspring, and their new-found mother ; laden with glory, honour, love ! Gods of darkness to my aid ! Create within my heart a vengeance yet unknown ! Shut out the sun, envelope me with night ! let eye not see, or tongue disclose the terror of my purpose. Pale deities of Hell instruct my hand, unbar my heart, unchain its hate, dry up the fountains of remorse. Impregnate me with thirst of blood—of human blood ! Saturn ! whose worship doth delight in infant's slaughter ! to thee I call—thy altar is deserted, a sacrifice is near ! be thou accomplice of my hate, that sacrifice is thine ; invest this Jason with immortal love for her ! augment his hopes ! inflate his soul, make him drunk with bliss ! let him be father, husband, prince, be all, till that dark hour when my keen vengeance smite his peace, and he be left childless as Medea, widowed as her heart, and live and die unloved, accurst as she !

Enter IANTHE, with CHILDREN, R. 2 E.

They're here ! Saturn hath sent them.

IANTHE. Thy children here, Medea, would say adieu to thee.

MEDEA. True, true, it is the hour of adieus ; leave them with me.

IANTHE. It may not be ; they must not linger here ; Jason requires their presence.

MEDEA. At the altar ? By her side ? He burns to let them see their new-made mother ! *They shall never see her !* Go tell him so ! away ! Medea speaks, beware of her, there's blood in every glance !!

(MEDEA seizes CHILDREN—shouts without of “Death to Medea!”—IANTHE stands alarmed.—Picture. A CROWD rushes in, yelling, R.—ORPHEUS follows them—the CROWD pause, seeing her determined attitude, and her dagger drawn.)

Speak, Orpheus, what means this tumult ?

ORPHEUS. Creusa is dead.

MEDEA. Aha ! the veil ! the veil, it was empoisoned ! The gods are just, let one blow strike all !

(she stabs the CHILDREN—the crowd, with yells, are about to rush on her—are driven back by JASON, who rushes on)

JASON. Back ! back ! I say ; by my hand shall she perish. What is't I see ? my children dead ! who hath killed them ?

MEDEA. Thou ! thou ! hast murdered them !—and me ! (slow music—dies)

Curtain.