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THE EGYPTIAN.

A Play.

IN FIVE ACTS.

BY

JOHN H. WILKINS,

Author of "Civilization," &c. &c. &c.

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THOMAS HAILES LACY,
WELLINGTON STREET, STRAND,
LONDON.

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*First performed at the City of London Theatre,
on Monday, April 18th, 1853.*

Characters.

AURELIAN (<i>Emperor of Rome</i>)	Mr. H. RIGNOLD.
ANTIOCHUS (<i>a Parthian, joint Commander of the Forces of Palmyra</i>)	Mr. N. T. HICKS.
HUJUS (<i>a Merchant and Senator of Palmyra —a Miser</i>)	Mr. W. SEARLE.
ZABDAS (<i>the Egyptian</i>)	Mr. CHARLES PITT.
GRACCHUS (<i>a young Roman Lord, attached to the Court of Zenobia</i>)	Mr. W. TRAVERS.
SPONTANEIOUS (<i>Freedman to Hujus</i>) ...	Mr. W. H. DIBBIN.
MICANOR,	Mr. ROWBOTHAM.
LONGINUS, } (<i>Counsellors of the Queen</i>) {	Mr. W. STEVENS.
OTHO,	Mr. LACY.
CERRONIUS BASSUS (<i>General of the Roman Forces</i>)	Mr. WORRELL.
TETTUS (<i>Head Cook of the Palace</i>)	Mr. A. SAVILLE.
BULBUS (<i>his Nephew</i>)	Mr. HAZLEWOOD.
ALCANDER	Mr. MORELLI.
TENELLUS	Mr. G. HOWARD.
ZENOPIA (<i>Queen of Palmyra</i>)	Mrs. HUGH CAMPBELL.
JULIA (<i>Her Daughter</i>)	Miss JULIA CLAYTON.
JOPPA (<i>a Purveyor's Widow</i>)	Mrs. LOVEDAY.
JILPHA (<i>Her Daughter</i>)	Mrs. B. BARNETT.
PHRYNIA (<i>an Attendant</i>)	Miss MACARTAY.

ACT I.

THE ROMAN EMBASSY.

ACT II.

THE EGYPTIAN AND THE PARTHIAN.

ACT III.

THE BRIDAL.

ACT IV.

THE FALL OF PALMYRA.

ACT V.

THE SACRIFICE.

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THE EGYPTIAN.



ACT I.

SCENE I.—*Exterior of the Royal Palace, with columns, portico, &c. to the L. U. E.; the stage represents a terrace, with massive balustrades supposed to be on the brow of the hill, and looking down upon the temples and city of Palmyra.—Time, sunset, gradually changing to moonlight and its effects.*

Enter, up steps, R. U. E., as if from the city beneath, HUJUS and his freed-man, SPONTANEIUS.

HUJUS. You heard this talked of in the city?

SPON. Yes.

HUJUS. The seeming friendly visit of these lords
From high-brow'd Rome was in reality
A claim of tribute?

SPON. Due from us to Rome:—
Which, if denied, they have the power to take,
And will to use the power. Hearing which,
And answering my forward-driving impulse,
I at once took horse to you!

HUJUS. Impulsive ever:—
And acting, spring-like, on the sudden: this
Will ever be your fault: you should have waited,
And gathered in more information. Well,
Did none of the bystanders venture speech,
Broach an opinion, hazard supposition,
Upon the new event?

SPON. But one, and he
Said that the Queen feared Rome, and in that fear
Would buy it's mercy with her city's wealth,
Nor heed the people's troubles, but obey
The cowardly impulse.

HUJUS. Well, and you—

SPON. Obeyed
My impulse—told him that he lied, and knocked him
A coward's length along.

HUJUS. Hot-headed fool!

Haste's resolutions are but seldom wisdom's

The lightning withers what it meant to kiss :
The rain, more gentle, cherishes ! I'll see
The Queen, herself, and learn the truth.

(SPONTANEIUS goes up and looks down upon the city)

HUJUS. (*to himself*) If Rome
 Demands, and proudly confident Zenobia
 As haughtily denies, war follows. War
 Breeds one great genius—reptile from its swamp
 Of fire and blood, monopoly ! and that
 Makes cunning men grow rich ; men die, and death
 Brings riches more and more to them that play
 The friend beside the couch of dying dotage :—
 That's wealth on wealth : unthrifty heirs will sell
 Their homes for bread, by dissipation beggar'd :—
 Rich men buy cheaply then, for famine pinches,
 And Luxury must eat and pay food's price.
 There's wealth on wealth again ! So War's our friend ;—
 And, at the worst, Wealth pays a good round ransom,
 And goes at large, while Poverty is hang'd,
 Or gaol'd, or set in bonds to linger dead,
 And there's an end to him ! My voice is War !
 I haven't got to fight.

Exit in Palace, L. U. E.

Enter BULBUS from Palace, L. U. E. ; he bows as HUJUS passes, and looks after him.

BULBUS. Oh, happy man ! plenty of money and no victuals to cook !
 no cuffs, no kicks, no platters flung at his head ! He's not driven
 mad with the smell of victuals not to be touched :—his mouth
 doesn't water for wines he daren't drink ! I'll rebel ! I'll rebel !

SPON. (*coming down, L.*) What stirs you thus ?

BULBUS. Dogs are made to bark, turbots are made to swim, ganders,
 peacocks, bears, have each the liberty and right to hiss, to screech,
 to growl, and why not humanity ? I'm a humanity ! and why
 not have I the right to exercise my particular function ? If a
 gander has freedom of choice—why not I ? (*crosses, L.*)

SPON. Certainly ! Why not ?

BULBUS. That uncle of mine, if he's not a salamander, he's a relation
 of the Phoenix, for he seems to live in fire, and to come out from
 it as fresh as a mule from the meadow ! I used to go into the
 city for a walk once or twice a week, now I'm chained down to
 roast and boil : nailed to a stool in the kitchen to overlook the
 spitting and basting—and for what ? Because he's out every
 evening at a certain house in the suburbs ! Because he's in love !

SPON. Well, that's natural.

BULBUS. So am I—I'm a natural, and I'm in love ! I've got legs, and
 they can go courting : I've arms and they can embrace :
 I've eyes, and they can ogle : and I've a heart that beats just
 like my uncle ! Why shouldn't I go love-making as well as
 him ? Why should I stop roasting and boiling here, while I'm
 stewing and baking there ? (*crosses, R.*)

SPON. And with whom is your worthy relative in love ?

BULBUS. You may as well know, for all the boys in the town do: you know the widow Joppa, whose husband, the Royal Purveyor, died last winter.

SPON. What, she with the pretty daughter! the arch, merry-eyed Jilpha?

BULBUS. The very female.

SPON. And he's in love with—

BULBUS. The daughter.

SPON. While your flame is—

BULBUS. The mother.

SPON. Humph! She used to be very ugly.

BULBUS. Well, she isn't altered.

SPON. And she's getting old.

BULBUS. Yes, and she keeps at it.

SPON. And is she in love with you?

BULBUS. Not that I am aware of: but she has advertized by proclamation for a young, active man to carry on her dead husband's business, and take the management of his affairs on his own hands, and that always includes the widow! But look at lord Gracchus and the princess Julia! there's love for you. He dare not own his love for fear of the Queen! the princess don't know what love is, and yet is miserable when Gracchus is away! the Queen's too busy to see it:—and for the Egyptian—

SPON. What, the general! surely he's not in love!

BULBUS. He! if he be, it's with his sword or his horse: there's more love in my staff than his nature. But, yonder comes his fellow in command, the great lord Antiochus! If he only fights as well as he eats, I pity the enemy! *Exit down steps, c.*

SPON. Antiochus! Who has not heard of him!

Antiochus the giant, with an arm
Of iron, and a heart of adamant:—
For there's a story told, how once this man
Pinned with his javelin to the earth, a slave
For mere sport's sake! I hate the man, and hate's
First impulse is to shun the object on't:—
I'll follow it, and wait my lord below! *Exit down steps, c.*

Enter ANTIOCHUS from Palace, L., looking back.

ANTI. It gains on her: it grows:—her heart receives
The passion that it knows not yet by name!
And Gracchus is her world. I love the girl,
And through the union hoped to mount the throne
At the Queen's death, (which art might hurry on)
Rome's friendship might be bought; yet all these hopes,
Bright, glittering as rivers 'neath the moon,
This Gracchus overthrows—

Enter HUJUS from Palace, L. U. E.; he goes down, R.

I must not let
My tongue run riot in these precincts! (*crosses, L.*) Well,
Rogue merchant, what's the price of ship-commodities?

HUJUS. (R.) Unsettled: till 'tis known who leads the troops
 If war breaks out with Rome:—if the Egyptian,
 He'll ask who stands the firmest: if 'tis thou,
 You'll ask who runs the fastest?

ANTI. Tongue without brains,
 As in your case.

HUJUS. Heels without hearts, as yours.

ANTI. Whom hast thou cheated since the dawn?

HUJUS. No man.

ANTI. Hast prayed?

HUJUS. I have.

ANTI. Then hast thou cheated heaven.

HUJUS. It would not list to thee.

ANTI. Not, if perchance
 Thy name crept in my prayer.

HUJUS. Thou! thou a soldier,
 And give thy voice for peace!

ANTI. And thou a merchant,
 To whom the breath of peace brings golden freights,
 And raise thy voice for war! why, thou would'st sell
 For gold thy very body.

HUJUS. And thou thy soul!
 We know each other, Parthian.

ANTI. Thy dark soul
 Can ne'er be bought on earth, being sold to—Psha!
 A devilish black bargain. *Exit HUJUS down steps, c.*

If Zenobia
 Continues obdurate, and repulses Rome,
 As well I know her heart inclines to do,
 And Rome besiege us, our weak troops can ne'er
 Make head against the Emperor! and last night
 The heralds hiss'd, like serpents, in my ear
 Terms which a little shrewdness may—The Princess!

Enter GRACCHUS and JULIA from Palace, l.u.e.; ANTIUCHUS retires up Stage, and seems to be looking out upon the city.

JULIA. (R.) Ambition! fie upon't! Can we not live
 Content to be content—to have enough:—
 To float in peace down life's smooth current, not
 To lash our little ocean into storms:
 Which if they wreck us not, must shatter us,
 And if they make us hardy, do they not
 To counterpoise that good, make hard our hearts,
 And close them to the cry of the less fortunate
 That struggle in the breakers! Shun ambition!
 'Tis a self-serving friend, which, while it lifts
 Your humbleness up to its state of pride,
 Its turn once served, will fall away from you,
 And leave you to the sport of poverty!

GRAC. (L.) Who seeing greatness, pines not to be great?

JULIA. Who loving sunlight, pines to sway the sun?
The mad, or sinful? are you one of these?
What say you, kinsman Antiochus?

ANTI. (*who has advanced R.*) In truth
Mine ears were swallowed in my eyes, which see
A fate-cloud in the far horizon.

JULIA. (c.) Fraught
With evil to Palmyra?

ANTI. To us all Rome threatens!

JULIA. Alas! alas! (*retires up c.*)

GRAC. (L.) Let her threaten: we fear not
While we have hearts within our breasts, and arms
To wield the lance and buckler!

ANTI. (*sneering*) Bravely said!
Pity all Rome thinks not as Gracchus thinks:—
So nobly just, and he a Roman too!
But, spite of this, Palmyra is not built
Of Gracchuses, or paved with Gracchuses,
And should our fears fore-herald the event,
'Twill take more Gracchuses than I see now
To garrison Palmyra: truth is truth,
Peril is peril, call it what you will,
And robbers will be robbers though call'd Romans!

GRAC. Robbers!

ANTI. I've said the word: let us call all things
Each by their proper titles:—your Aurelian
Will call invasion glory, but the conquered
And conqueror call it by two different names:—
Men that betray to death do murder! men
That calmly look on their defenders' slaughter
Are traitors! men that fight against their lands
Are renegades!

GRAC. Or heroes!

ANTI. Cowards sometimes:
Who stand by neutral till the fight's half won,
Then choose the winning side to fight upon!

GRAC. Now, by the gods of Rome!—

ANTI. Wolf-suckled Rome!
We see its whelps—in thee!

GRAC. (*clutching his sword*) Audacious!

ANTI. (*seizing his arm as he half-draws the sword*) Boy—
Go grow a man first! (*flinging him violently off to R., and crossing to L. corner; JULIA in alarm advances*)

ZABDAS enters up steps, R. U. E.

ZABDAS. (*at back, R. C.*) Brows and tongues of war,
What stirs this battle spirit in your hearts
So strangely out of turn! the field—the fight—
That's war's domain! here we are better housed,
And, like our weapons, better tempered too

Than draw them on each other, save to show
Each other the brave actions we have done,
In their notched edges witness'd. What's amiss ?

GRAC. Here and now

Let him recall—

ZABDAS. (advancing c.) Your patience: you've lost that, Gracchus. When men act headstrong upon passion, And let the will go reinless on its way, As Phaeton did the horses of the sun, At best, they do destroy themselves—at worst, They leave a world in darkness; as what night So gloomy and impenetrably thick As falls upon a nation when it mourns A hero slain in brawl?

ANTI. I heed him not,
Nor ought that he can do!

ZABDAS. Nor strength alone, Antiochus, comes ever victor off:— O'er confident courage has been overthrown: The vast Goliah—Power, with its strength Laid prostrate by the shepherd's son, Address! There's wisdom in the lesson: learn it. (*retires to JULIA*)

ANTI. Well;
At your desire, there's friendship. (*holds out his hand*—
GRACCUS takes it, aside to him) At the heart
A secret foe: you can be secret too!
Love-glances—whispers—soul-deep sighs—the Princess!

(*GRACCUS starts*) Ha! have I plumb'd you to the depth, my Roman!

(*crosses r. corner*)

Enter Two ATTENDANTS, one from the Palace, the other up steps.

1ST ATTENDANT. (on steps, to GRACCUS) The Queen has asked for you.
GRAC. I wait upon her.

Exit with ATTENDANT to Palace

2ND ATTENDANT. (aside to ANTIOCHUS) The Roman lords have bade
Me seek for you,
And tell you that they wait you on the terrace
Below, that overhangs the city.

ANTI. Good!
I'll join them.

Exit ATTENDANT down steps, c.

Ere I go, I know the errand,
And could I work on the Egyptian here,
To second me, the Future glows as bright
Before my steps as sun-dawn i' the summer!
I'll make the venture, hap what may!

Exit down steps, c.

JULIA. (looking off into the Palace) The Queen;—
See where she comes; let's meet her! *Exit into Palace, l. u. e.*

ZABDAS. (*alone, his calm demeanour changing*) Here I stand,
 And yet my heart goes with thee, follows thee,
 Is ever round about thee like thy shadow,
 That follows, speechless, as I follow thee,
 That runs before thee, as I run before,
 To brush aside the brambles of life's path!
 Ever about thee worshipping—admiring!
 And yet so proud it will not tell its fraught,
 To chance the royal frown, or people's sneer,
 Or glance of jealousy, or worse, the sweet
 Calm look of pity if she loved me not:—
 And what in me is worthy loving, save
 To have a name in war, or to be stern
 In duty's cause, nor tremble, quail, or swerve
 Mid peril and its terrors? I'll love on,
 Unknown, undreamt of—I'll be hero still,
 To wear the outward smile and inward grief,
 To love, to doat, and share with death my secret.

ZENOBLA. (*without*) Let me have air! these news oppress me.
 Calmly, coolly must we discuss this peril!

ZABDAS. The Queen and Councillors! (*grand flourish*)

Enter ZENOBIA, JULIA, GRACCHUS, LONGINUS, OTHO, and NICANOR, L.U.E.

ZENOBIA. (*c., looking over a paper*) Egypt, Mesopotamia, Syria!
 These are loud claims!

NICA. (*L.*) But grant them, lest they take
 More than they claim.

ZENOBIA. (*shewing another paper*) Yet look here,
 Sapor proposes terms of friendship!

OTHO. (*L.*) Sapor?
 And what his terms? for never Persia's king
 Was generous for nothing.

ZENO. Julia's hand,
 And for his son Hormisdas!

GRAC. (*thunderstruck*) Julia's!

JULIA. Mine!

(ZABDAS starts at back)

LONGI. 'Tis worth consideration!

OTHO. At this time
 Such an alliance cannot be o'erprized:—
 Close with it.

NICANOR. Or capitulate with Rome!

LONGI. A noble offer!

GRAC. Past comparing base:—

What, sell the Princess like a market ware!
 Make barter of her, as for kine or corn!
 Tell Persia that its aid of men and spears,
 Back'd by the eastern world, is overbought,
 O'erpaid, and far outvalued by the tear
 That Julia sheds!

ZENOBIA. Nay, Gracchus—Julia, child!—

(JULIA crosses c., weeping to her)

Strange—strange—well, well, another time. My lords,
Our Roman guests will call our courtesy
In question, if we shun them thus :—the feast
Already glitters on the board : go in !
I'll follow on the instant. Gracchus, lead
The princess to her waiting woman's care,
And rejoin me. (*crosses to R.*)

(*all go off*, L. U. E., except ZENOBLA, who stands in front, and ZABDAS, who has remained at back during this dialogue)

These tears : the Persian offer :
The warmth of Gracchus !—strange ! My husband dead—
The royal Odenatus—peril round me,
Growing with every day more giant-like,
Behoves us to be watchful—and yet Julia—
To save Palmyra by this marriage knot—

ZABDAS. (*up L. C.*) Oh, baser than to compromise a crime
For money !

ZENOBLA. You a listener ?

ZABDAS. Look there !

ZENOBLA. I see my daughter.

ZABDAS. Look beneath her face,
And see a soul there, yea, a human soul !
Will you make that your coin ? buy empire with it,
Load her with greatness for a servile end,
And break the heart within :—we want no Persian :—
We need not weld our broken weapons yet
With Persia's steel, and tho' the Romans came
In multitudes like ants, and throng'd our walls
More numerous than sand-grains in the desert,
We have one life to sell them, only one,
And let them buy it—each one shall cost them two !

(*the moon now begins to appear*)

ZENOBLA. The strongest walls will sink without support,
And arms and hearts are mortal.

ZABDAS. And are they
Less mortal than ourselves ? and if they are,
Let's fit them for their homes ! let's prove to them
The race of men yet live that conquered him
Who vanquished them within their very stronghold !
That we smote Sapor who had smote Valerian !
Our hearts are firm as then : our limbs as strong :
Our spears as sharp : our skill as great :—what's left
To count is courage : let's show we lack not that !

ZENOBLA. Zabdus, this marriage must be. With the aid
Of Persia's power added to our own,
Our threatening invaders shall crawl back
In dudgeon to their homes. We'll speak again
Yet further on the subject ; but believe not
That kings and queens are the high things they seem,
But their own subjects' slaves, for their sakes ready

To make great sacrifices as a duty,
 And murmur not, though the heart ache within,
 And swell to bursting : parents, not rulers, Zabdus,
 And ready for their sakes to die as martyrs die!

Exit into Palace, L. U. E.

ZABDUS. Isis, I thank thee now : yea, trebly thank thee,
 That thou hast made me a true jailor here, (*his heart*)
 To keep my captive from the light so firm.
 Suspicion breaks his lance but harmlessly
 Upon my mail of proof within ! Who dares
 Despise Egyptian Zabdus but himself ?—
 The secret is his own !

Enter JULIA hurriedly from Palace, L. U. E.

JULIA. Zabdus, be my friend ;
 Brave, noble Zabdus, be my only friend !

ZABDUS. The Princess !

JULIA. While Zenobia dons her robes
 For the gay banquet, I have hastened to thee,
 As children to the friend storms cannot shake,
 For aid and counsel ! oh, this hated marriage !
 Oppose it—push it down, or crush it out—
 For your voice to Zenobia is a fiat,
 And brush away these brambles that shut out
 The sunlight from my path !

ZABDUS. (*aside*) She comes to me !
 To me of all the world to stand her friend.
 What makes this loathedness to Persia's son ?
 He's noble, or—love you another, Julia ?

JULIA. I'm too young to love. (*looking downward*) As for Hormisdas
 I feel a hate—

ZABDUS. (*quickly*) Nay, Julia, love
 And hate are twins : if you're too young to love,
 You are too young to hate :—or holds Palmyra
 One dearer far to Julia ?

JULIA. Dearer ! yes—
 My mother and yourself.

ZABDUS. None other ?

JULIA. (*casts her eyes down*) No.

ZABDUS. None dearer than another ?

JULIA. (*slight pause*) Is't then to love
 To feel each quick intuitive sense increased,
 Thought, memory, turned about one object ever,
 And tiring never ? Sleeping, to dream of it—
 Waking, to find its name upon the lips,
 Trembling like echoes of the dulcimer ?
 To see him 'mid a myriad : hear his voice,
 His footstep from among a multitude :—
 To feel, with all the frame in a wild thrill,
 The magic of his touch ? For his sake grow
 Patient 'neath grief—'gainst disappointment strong :

Forgiving, gentle, lifted as on wings
 Above the grovelling passions of mankind,
 And fill'd with angel's pity: living for him,
 And for his sake ready to lay down life
 As we bid friends farewell? is't this to love?

ZABDAS. So true a coin, 'twill pass for current, Julia!
 And you love thus? your secret is at large:
 The man is noble? brave?

JULIA. Nay ask not!

Till now I scarcely knew my secret: now
 Engines shall never drag it from my lips.
 It is a bitter-sweet, this love, for now
 In telling it my heart chokes up my throat,
 And finds a vent in tears! (*weeping, crosses, R.*)

TETTUS. (*without, down steps*) Get you along, eaves-dropper!

ZABDAS. We are disturbed;

Retire you under shadow of this arch:
 Let them not see you with these runnel eyes,
 For these are natures that break in on sorrow,
 With frivolous questions, albeit meaning well,
 Yet sting as deep as purposed insult go:—
 Then we'll go in together!

Exit JULIA R. 2 E.

"Is this love?"

Ah, who could tell—ah, none so well as I,
 How truly it was love! (*goes up L. to Palace steps*)

Enter TETTUS, driving in BULBUS, U. E. R., up steps.

TETTUS. In with you, slinker, eaves-dropper, listener!

BULBUS. But you won't hear me speak!

TETTUS. Of course I won't. What right have boys to speak! What's the good of being a man, if boys are allowed the same privileges? Did I not send you on an errand to the widow Joppa, and didn't I catch you listening to the conversation of the great Antiochus? Do you know what listeners do?

BULBUS. Yes: hear what's being talked about.

TETTUS. Run a risk of being nailed by the ears to the gate post; and a blessing for thee it was Antiochus did not spy thee out, for he's as full of eyes as a hedgehog's full of prickles.

BULBUS. What does his greatness want to sell Palmyra for?

TETTUS. Sell Palmyra!

BULBUS. The Roman lords have offered him terms for the town, and if they're agreed to, don't be astonished if they take the goods away with them, and you and I no bit the wiser!

TETTUS. What Queen, and city, and all?

BULBUS. They'll clear the premises. He talked of the Princess too, whom the Queen was going to marry to Persia! What's the poor Princess to marry the whole empire for? Can't she be satisfied with a home-made article? If outline's her object, here she has it! (*crossing to R., conceitedly*)

TETTUS. Or a fine chest, here she has it. (*crossing to L.*)

BULBUS. Or a well-turned leg, look here!

TETTUS. Or if she leans towards a calf, let her look at me.

BULBUS. Truly, uncle, on the score of calves I withdraw my claim.

TETTUS. As I'm alive, the General's overheard us! Trudge, trudge, you scapegrace, or we may swing by the heels for talking of state matters in so loud a breath!

Exeunt, l. 2 e.

ZABDAS. (*on steps*) Antiochus and treachery in a breath!

Antiochus is noble! Psha! these churls
Know not their own opinions. Julia loves!
Should it yet come to pass, (and history's page
Is rich in such like marvels!) that she loves
The man whose iron heart obeys the magnet
Of her sweet influence! (*advances*, l. c.) Bright hope, thou art
Unnumber'd 'mong the deities of heaven:
Yet are thy attributes all heavenly,
Like summer and the stars! (*standing r., and looking off*)

*Enter up steps, c., ANTIOCHUS, and two Roman LORDS—they cross
conversing, into house, l. u. e., pointing to ZABDAS; ANTIOCHUS
remains)*

ANTI. (*aside at back*)

He is alone:

And now to sound his mettle to the business
Hinted at darkly by the embassy. (*advances, l. c.*)
(aloud) Zabdas, the banquet waits within: the wine
Cools in the beakers, and the tables wait.

ZABDAS. (*r.*) Let them.

ANTI. (*l.*) Egyptian, we
Can ne'er make head against the Roman force.
Aurelian, on his embassy's return,
Will come into the field against us. We
Shall fall like corn.

ZABDAS. Well, there's an end of us!

ANTI. True, that's the very view the brave should take—
That you and I take—of our true position:
But I think of the people.

ZABDAS. You are grown
Most strangely anxious for the people's good:
It never was your wont.

ANTI. There you misjudge:
I always loved the people. Is't not hard now
That War should sap and plunder their scant wage—
Their hard-earned chattels—when a little tact—
Negotiation—artifice—or skill—
Might bring all happily round?

ZABDAS. I'd learn the means.

ANTI. I have been feasting with the Roman lords,
And wine has cunningly unpegg'd their tongues;
And from them it appears, their liege, Aurelian,
Doth but aspire to hold the realm Palmyra,
A fief of Rome's imperial sway—

ZABDAS. (*violently*) A fief
Of Rome ! (*masters himself—then calmly*) Well, to be sure,
Why not ? Go on !

ANTI. Why so say I, why not ? Now if some one
In power here—say you or I—as who
So well as you or I?—by artifice
Betrayed Zenobia to the power of Rome,
Wedded the Princess——

ZABDAS. Princess Julia !

ANTI. Yes.

ZABDAS. That's very good—go on !

ANTI. Paid tribute down
Unto Aurelian ?

ZABDAS. Better and better still !

ANTI. Did homage for the kingdom ?

ZABDAS. Better than all !

ANTI. I'd hold Palmyra in the name of Rome,
And we'd share power between us. Now, what say you ?

ZABDAS. That you, Aurelian, and the Roman lords,
May be all seized as low as Tartarus,
And burn in the hottest fires of hell. (*crosses to L.*)

ANTI. Egyptian !

ZABDAS. Do you dare
Make infamous proffer, and to me ?

ANTI. Not I.
I merely proffer what the Roman lords
Proffer'd to me—nay, hinted only.

ZABDAS. Hadst thou not
A fist to dash into their traitor faces ?
Fingers to strangle with ? I'd have done it !
Oh, I'd have done it ! (*crosses to R. C.*)

ANTI. We're not all born like Zabdus !

ZABDAS. Nor like thee,
Thank heaven ! Harkye, my lord Antiochus,
Let you and I look into each other's eyes,
And read each other's hearts. Zenobia loves you
Because you were her royal husband's friend,
As many a widow loves her dead lord's dog :
She trusts you—I would not, though with so much
As care of the stables !

ANTI. This is insult, Zabdus.

(ZABDAS goes up to terrace balustrades, and with ANTIOCHUS looks down, R.)

ZABDAS. Cast down your eyes, my lord—you seldom do—
The moon is bright—look down the mountain's side,
Down to the marble pavement stretched below,
And tell me what you see.

ANTI. The height's too great.
Nought but the fragment of a tatter'd robe
That clings to a jutting bush.

ZABDAS.

Remember that.

Two years ago a power, like Rome, essayed
 To win me to its aid. The messenger
 Stood here, as we stand now ; proffer'd, as you
 Did now, rewards for actions which, being done,
 Had raised me up so great, that men would bow
 Before me as a god, and else so mean
 The dust and he were fit companions for me.
 How answer'd I the herald ?

ANTI.

Thank'd his pains :

And gently tendered him denial.

ZABDAS.

Very gently !

I dash'd the villain o'er this parapet !
 The vultures and hyenas did their duty ;
 And there flies all that's left of him !

(crosses to L.)

ANTI.

Remember,

I'm the Queen's friend !

ZABDAS.

Rome hinted : so do I.

A breath too loud : a meaning glance : an arm
 Raised up too high, as 'twere a signal—mark,—
 I say, be warn'd : it may save me a labour,
 And you a broken neck.

(crosses to R.)

(music within Palace; trumpet music only, but kept very
 piano until close of the Act; the lights gleaming out from
 within, throwing the rest of the scene into gloom and
 obscurity)

Enter a SERVANT from the Palace.

SERVANT.

My lords, the Queen

Bade me seek both of you.

ANTI.

Tell her we come.

Exit SERVANT.

I must be wary of this Egyptian : in him
 I have a foe to dread.

Exit into Palace, L.U.E.

ZABDAS.

Rome panders with him !

The boy o'erheard the bargain haggled for :
 Julia the price ! O Isis ! price of treachery !
 And yet what angel but might turn a devil
 To win so exquisite a meed for sin ?
 If he wrong her—if he betray Palmyra—
 If he should bleach the roses from her cheek,
 Or set the current of her tears abroach,
 May thunder rive me, if I will not fall
 Upon him like an iron avalanche,
 And dash him to a dust ! (with great energy)

JULIA. (entering quickly) I heard but now

Your voice in tones of anger !

ZABDAS. (calmly and gently) 'Twas a wasp,
 An idle wasp, that stung me.

(they go into Palace slowly as the drop falls)

END OF ACT I.

ACT II.

SCENE I.—*A Street in Palmyra, D. in F. L.*

Enter BULBUS, 1 E. R., running, as if to avoid some one.

BULBUS. Either my uncle's nose originally belonged to a fox, or his eyes to a lynx, or else he'd never smell or sight me out as he does, go where I will. Oh, the delightful plump little widow! If we were only married, and—Furies and fireballs! Here he is! (*hides behind R. wing, a pillar*)

Enter TETTUS, R., looking about.

TETTUS. I could have sworn I saw the rascal, that nephew of mine, hopping along the streets like a grasshopper, as if in defiance of me. What right has the unprincipled rogue to fall in love at his years, with one old enough to be his mother? Let him take advice from me, and love the kitchen as I did; let him make the oven his wife, or marry the boiler! Roast, baked, and boiled should be his mistresses, for women are devils!

JILPHA appears, L. D. F.

JILPHA. (*whispering*) Tettus!

TETTUS. My angel! Where's your sainted progenitor?

JILPHA. Trying to overhear what our master and the strange gentleman are talking about, so for a minute or two we are safe. (*advances*) I'm so glad you've come to-day.

TETTUS. Confession sweet as ambrosia! Speak on: my feelings growing backward every instant. I'm two years younger already.

JILPHA. You say you love me!

TETTUS. Say it! Look at me! Do I look like your thin aerial fall-away lovers, the fire of whose passion melts them away, till they could hide behind their own shadow? No! I weigh twelve stone five; and the love of a man that weight is something at once noble and solid.

JILPHA. And I love you for it, Tettus! It's something to have a lover of bulk and valour, ready to fight and die for one as you would.

TETTUS. As I will.

JILPHA. That's what I wanted to see you for to-day—to fight and die for me.

TETTUS. (*starting back*) What?

JILPHA. I told the young man the danger he ran in falling in love with me so suddenly: and he said that he always acted on impulse, that he had loved me nearly ten minutes, that he'd kill you to-night, and marry me to-morrow.

TETTUS. And what did you say?

JILPHA. I said I liked the arrangement: only I was afraid you mightn't be ready to fill your part of the killing business up at once, and that might delay the marrying.

TETTUS. Crocodiles and cockatrices!

JILPHA. But that's not the worst.

TETTUS. The devil ! What's worse ?

JILPHA. Mother's in love with him, too !

BULBUS. (*rushing down, c.*) What's his d——d name ?

JILPHA. } Bulbus !

TETTUS. }
BULBUS. Give him to me, tied hand and foot, that I may put him under a large stone, and sit upon it till he's dead ! Show him to me as he walks along the streets, that I may rush to the top of the house, and drop something heavy upon his head ! Tell me what they call him, that I may chalk the hated name upon the wall, and throw mud and dirty water at it !

TETTUS. Off home with you, sirrah ! Are you mad or drunk ?

BULBUS. Both ! I'm bitten with the 'phobia of revenge, and drunk with the liquor of disappointment. I won't go home ! I'll stop out all night—I'll—I'll——

Enter the Widow JOPPA, from door, L. F.

Widow ! widow ! look at me. (*in an extravagant attitude*)

JOPPA. (*striking him on the breast*) Get out of the way ! (*crosses to Jilpha*) So, jade, here you are, making love in this disgraceful manner. Good Tettus, (*crossing to him*) I honour and respect you very much, but if you come here courting my daughter any more, I'll have you ducked.

TETTUS. Ducked ! A king's cook ! Hear me speak.

JILPHA. No, hear me.

BULBUS. No, hear me.

JOPPA. I won't hear nobody speak but myself.

JILPHA. Nobody ever does.

TETTUS. I love your daughter; and till this day or two you smiled upon it !

JOPPA. I've changed my mind.

BULBUS. And till yesterday you said you doated upon the ground I walked on.

JOPPA. So I do, as soon as you've walked off.

But now I've another object.

BULBUS. You can't have a greater object than me ! but I'll yet revenge myself on the object, only show me a chance !

JILPHA. A fight ! delightful !

Enter SPONTANEIUS, door L. F.

JOPPA. And here he is !

BULBUS. (*runs to him*) Are you prepared to die ?

TETTUS. (*runs to him*) Or resign Jilpha ?

SPON. (c.) I've two impulses : one to knock you down, and the other to laugh at the pair of you.

BULBUS. (r.) Try the second !

SPON. Widow, our master calls you : hasten to him, I beg, and let his harsh temper sleep.

JOPPA. What a sweet-spoken youth it is. *Exit into house, L.*

SPON. Get you within, Jilpha ! I've something important to say to you within. (*kisses her, she goes in, L.*) And now a word with you.

TETTUS. Give me back my Jilpha.

BULBUS. Hand over my outraged feelings.

SPO. Take this: (*gives TETTUS a packet*) at another time I can better answer you, and will. See this delivered to the Queen's own hand: the nature of its contents will excuse the abruptness of its presentation. Away! Palmyra depends upon it.

Exit, L. F.

TETTUS. Fudge! I'm not to be cheated out of my redress this way! I shan't give it to the Queen. She'd wring my ears off, or hang me over the walls, heels upward, for the besieging Romans to practise their archery on. Besides, I'll not disgrace myself by being his messenger. (*pockets it*)

BULBUS. Keep it till the battles are all over, and then it won't do any good to anybody! If I could only push him in the river when his back was turned to me!

TETTUS. Contemptible! a treacherous act to kill a man behind his back: my plan's far nobler.

BULBUS. Which is—

TETTUS. To invite him to supper, and poison his victuals; there's no treachery there!

Exeunt, R. 1 E.

Enter, from house, HUJUS and ANTIOCHUS.

HUJUS. An excellent scheme, Antiochus, and promising
A golden harvest, like a standing field
Of corn; but yet—

ANTL. But yet—you hesitate—

HUJUS. My honour!

ANTL. You mouth the loud word honour!—take your choice,
And act with what you cunning men call wisdom.
This is not haggling for a coin or two,
But realms and hundreds! Queen's the bargain'd goods:
An Emperor the purchaser! consider!

HUJUS. I do—how that Zenobia hath a heart
And arm that act in concert with revenge,
And know not mercy! Should we be betrayed—
Her retribution would be terrible,
And instant as the lightning!

ANTL. Throw away this fear.
Had fear held back the man who first essayed
To stem the river's current, he had ne'er
Learn'd how to swim, which, in an after wreck,
Preserved his life. Palmyra is besieged:
The Emperor hath lash'd us from the plains
Of Syria, like curs before the whip.

HUJUS. But had not done so, had not Zabdas trusted
To one that played the traitor.

ANTL. Let us two
Close with the offers of Aurelian,
Give up the Queen, and live. Be obstinate,
And still oppose him, all our lives are straws,
And all your gold will feed the ravenous maws
Of plundering soldiery!

HUJUS. It shall not. No—
It's safely buried ! aha ! snugly buried !
They'll ne'er enjoy it—ha, ha, ha !

ANTI. No, nor you.

HUJUS. (*suddenly serious*) That's true.

But Zabdus will not trust you with command
To be again deceived ! I marvel much,
Remembering how you once strove to make him
A traitor, that he trusted you so far.

ANTL. Psha ! He was blinded easily : I told him

I did but try his loyalty and honor,
For Queen Zenobia's sake, and he was dumb'd.

I play my game too well. (*a distant trumpet and shouts, L.*)

The show is over,

The Queen has just reviewed her soldiery,

By her soul-stirring eloquence uproused

The valour that will strike in her defence

To the last gasp. Think it over, Hujus ;

A bloody grave, or life and endless wealth !

Exit, L.

HUJUS. Wealth ! wealth ! I hear the echo everywhere !

I see it dazzle me with golden beams

Turn where I will : by day, my thought : at night

A dream that lifts me to a mortal heaven !

But then the price is treachery : that's bad—

Yet should I not consent others will,

And my honorable obstinacy will avail me

Nothing at all, but rob me of life and wealth,

Besides the profit of the deed ! I hear

Its whisper like a distant song ! I feel

Its influence tingling up and down my veins,

And mixing with my blood till all my life

Seems gold, and all around me blazing out

In characters of fire the word is written,

And leads me like a slave ! Honor or wealth—ha ! ha !

Let honor kick the beam,—let wealth be mine,—

Let the world scorn ! What is the world to me ?

Ha ! ha ! ha ! gold—gold !

Exit, R. 1 E.

SCENE II.—*Interior of the Palace.*

ZENOBLIA enters from terrace without, R. U. E., GRACCHUS and a SLAVE following.

ZENOBLIA. (*to Slave*) Tell the lords

Sent by Aurelian to propose surrender,
That we will give him battle to the last,
And that Palmyra yet is wide enough
To be our grave, our tomb, and epitaph ;
As relics of brave deeds are the last epitaphs
Of heroes that achieved them : tell them so.

GRAC. Then dawn renews the siege ?

*BIRMINGHAM
FREE
LIBRARIES*

ZENOBIA. And e'er night falls
The baffled legions of presumptuous Rome
Shall crawl defeated back.

GRAC. And should all fail—

ZENOBIA. We die!

GRAC. And do not thoughts remain behind
For those we leave? Julia—

ZENOBIA. Well?

GRAC. Shall she endure the bleak world's bitterness?
The parasitic world, that crowns with rays
The fortunate, but turns it's back, and sneers,
And mocks at worthy greatness fallen? Shall
A world like this mock Julia?

ZENOBIA. True; but fall
The worst upon our hopes, Zabdus is noble,
And will be her protector and her friend.

GRAC. Zabdus will not outlive Palmyra.

ZENOBIA. No:
I do believe it. She is Persia's bride,
By promise given: they will shelter her
Against the storm.

GRAC. Should Persia fail to come,
Give to some heart that loves her like a star
A husband's right to champion her.

ZENOBIA. Well counsell'd:
Antiochus but yesterday avow'd
He loved her, 'spite that she rejected him.

GRAC. Antiochus!
I'd sooner mate her with a satyr.

ZENOBIA. If in the coming conflict I should fall,
And Zabdus or Antiochus remain,
Let the survivor take her to his arms,
And strike her to the heart!

GRAC. Zenobia!

ZENOBIA. Shall
Zenobia's child grace proud Aurelian's triumph—
In fetters march through Rome's outpouring streets—
Alive with eyes that look insulting pity?
Shall it be so?

GRAC. No: death were a boon, and fame a longer life
Than life slain by dishonour!

Enter ZABDUS, with papers, R. U. E.

ZENOBIA. (to ZABDUS) Wears not hope
A gallant crown?

ZABDUS. (down L.) The crest of conquerors!
Who gazes there looks not on men, but gods—
With every one a fearless soul within him—
Which terrors cannot quail, nor death destroy!

ZENOBIA. (c.) And with each day from Persia and Armenia,
March armies to our aid.

ZABDAS. *Third tableau* That's not true valour

That being beaten, must lie down and kick,
Or send for older help. Stand up and die,
But bravely die. There's not an arrow kills,
Shot against him, but ennobles him
Who shoots it, and degrades the man that's slain,
As if he wore his wounds behind his back !
Let snow and storms lock up these helpers' march,
Till we have done the work—then let 'em come :
We'll give 'em leave to share the plunder with us,
And shout with us, but not an inch of glory :
Give us the honour all ! give them the rest.

ZENOBLA. (c.) What are those scrolls you carry, Zabdus ?

ZABDAS. (l.) These ?

That's well remembered. As I entered here,
A messenger half dead with riding hard,
To 'scape the enemy's darts, came up. He bore
These tidings for Zenobia, from her friends
Now marching to her aid.

(gives them to ZENOBLA, who walks to r. reading them)

Why, Gracchus, boy,
That's not thy battle brow, nor fits that garland
The head whereon the casque should glitter proudly—
And in that hand the lance and sword should gleam
As lightnings in the hand of Jove.

GRAC. (avoiding him) The Queen
Seems moved.

ZABDAS. What say the scrolls, great Queen ?

ZENOBLA. (crossing to c.) Dark words
That kill to read them : the Armenian legions
Have taken bribes from Rome to play us false,
And have retraced their homeward steps.

ZABDAS. That's well :
We have no thanks to pay them for their help :
And better they should stay away, than bring
The palms that cannot choose, but itch for gold,
To play us false at last. We know them now.
We might have bought our knowledge dearer far,
Had they arrived to fail us in the hour
We leaned upon them most.

ZENOBLA. (examining the other paper) Why worse and worse !

ZABDAS. What's worse ?

ZENOBLA. The Persian horse within a league,
Encountered with the Emperor.

ZABDAS. I trust
Were soundly thrashed ?

ZENOBLA. Fought bravely !

ZABDAS. To be sure

They'd never tell you how they ran away.

ZENOBLA. They fought till nightfall, but—

ZABDAS. I like that but—
It sounds like victory lost.

ZENOBLA. Alas!

ZABDAS. They were
Defeated there!

ZENOBLA. They were!

ZABDAS. I thank the gods!

Call you that worse? I call it better still!
Now we owe nothing to our friends, but stand
To live or die: the name of victory
Is nought: it is the deeds that hallow it,
And rise like eagles on it to the skies,
To tell each hero's story to the gods,
And win him state there! (*pointing up*)

ZENOBLA. Where's this messenger?
I must learn more of him! Beloved Palmyra!
What will to-morrow see thee?

ZABDAS. Something better
If it entombs us 'mid its monuments,
Than if it shelter'd mercenary soldiery,
Who shed their blood—for plunder!

(pulls the wreath off the head of GRACCHUS) Off with this!
By Isis, in a spirit-rousing time
Like this, but that I know you honorable
And valiant too, I should despise you, Gracchus,
For being half a man! Should Zabdas fall
And you wear still this love-sick character,
Who then will lead the soldiers of Palmyra,
Against the foe?

GRAC. Antiochus!—on whom
Death striking, would give life to me, but living,
A desolation bitterer than death. (*weeps*)

ZABDAS. What does this mean? as I'm a man, he weeps:—
Check them—come check them! Tears to men are sparks
Of fire from the heart. Why, soldier Gracchus!—
Boy!—Friend!—Old friend, to look upon thee thus,
Turns the red blood a backward course within me,
And chills and roughens all my flesh!

GRAC. You're right:
I'll hide my degradation till my eyes
Change tears for fire—like flashes! (*turning, l.*)

ZABDAS. No, not yet,
Till you have shown your heart to me—you spoke
Of one just now—

GRAC. Antiochus, to whom
If he survives the fury of the battle,
And Persia's aid should fail her, (as it has,)
The Queen has promis'd—

ZABDAS. What?

GRAC. The hand of Julia!

ZABDAS. (*startled*) You dream!

GRAC. How now! this paleness of the grave—
These trembling limbs, and you have tears too now.

ZABDAS. 'Tis false! I'm iron upwards from the heart:
I have no tears: my limbs are firm; my cheek
Belies me if it pales—look, look again!
See, do I weep, wax pale, or tremble now?

GRAC. You are again yourself. O, dare I trust you!

ZABDAS. With your heart, Gracchus!

GRAC. Can we hoop our hearts
Like mortal things! Can we shut out from them
Their monarch, love!

ZABDAS. Why ask you me this thing?
Think you I—love?

GRAC. No, Zabdas, for I know
Your soul hath but one mistress in the world,
And that's Palmyra's glory.

ZABDAS. (*bitterly*) O yes—yes.
Well then, your love—

GRAC. I tremble when I speak,
Lest you despise me, but it masters me—
It is my breath, my sunlight, my religion!
How I love Julia—

ZABDAS. Julia!

GRAC. Like the birds
Love day-dawn, or the flowers the fresh rain
That brings them life and beauty out of heaven. (*crosses to R.*)

Enter ANTIOCHUS from L. U. E., who remains at the back overhearing.

And she returns the love.

ZABDAS. Returns it? Ah!
You're sure of that? She told you so herself,
With her own lips?

GRAC. Hath nothing else a voice
But the inanimate and bell-like tongue,
That answers but the will?
A look, a sigh,—'tis with these
Julia declared her love, and these alone
Will nerve me to dispute the golden prize
With proud Antiochus! (*crosses to L., ANTIOCHUS threatens*)

ZABDAS. He! Antiochus, love!—
And such an incarnated gentleness
As Julia's: it must be! Go seek her!—
I'd speak with her: and if she loves you—Go, go! (*goes R.*)

*Exit GRACCHUS, L. 1 E., ANTIOCHUS following at a distance,
threatening with a dagger.*

And still I've kept my secret—held it in,
Though it came spouting upward like a flood
Of burning lava—it shall burn me up—
Consume me into ashes ere it finds

A tongue abroad ! Now if she loves him—Well,
What's then to do? Why this Antiochus
Shall never wed her ! If he turns his back,
Or his cheek blanches looking on the foe,
I'll strike the coward dead !

JULIA utters a shriek outside and rushes on, l. 1 e.

'Tis Julia's voice !

JULIA. Oh, save him, Zabdus, or revenge him !

ZABDAS.

Who ?

JULIA. Gracchus is slain : struck by a base assassin
Here in the corridor—a cloak'd man's hand—
I saw the blow, but not the striker. Oh,
My brain seems bursting while I tell it ! Gracchus,
They've murdered him, and struck—

ZABDAS. Two hearts at once ;

Now, Julia, your caged prisoner hath escaped :—

Love blazons its bright colours like the prism

That waits upon the rainbow !

SOLDIERS enter slowly from back of pillars, l., they are carrying the body of GRACCHUS extended on their shields.

Shame upon me !

That prating thus, I let the murderer 'scape,
The victim bleed !—You say you mark'd not well
The man who struck ?

JULIA. I gazed with eyes that saw
No form but Gracchus.

ZABDAS. Was he tall or short ?

JULIA. In the one glance, he seemed somewhere about
The stature of Antiochus.

ZABDAS. Antiochus !

JULIA. O look, look, look ! the white rose of the dead
Is on his cheek—turning lookers-on
To senseless marble !

ZABDAS. (*looking at the body, crosses to c., waves on two LADIES, R., who take JULIA off*) No, not dead, but yet
Upon the brink of the unfathom'd lake
That runs into eternity.

Enter ANTIOCHUS, l. 1 e.

ANTI. What means
This rumour of attempted murder ?

ZABDAS. See,
Noble Antiochus, the damned hand
Of some all-sacrilegious wretch hath struck
Life's altar in its temple ! But there's hope
He yet may live.

ANTI. Not much, the blow was sure.

ZABDAS. Indeed ! Were you far off when he was struck ?

ANTI. I was.

ZABDAS. Nor saw the wound inflicted?

ANTI.

No!

ZABDAS. How know you then

The blow is sure, who neither saw it given,
Nor were near when it was struck?

ANTI.

How?—am I not

A soldier—are not death and wounds familiar?

ZABDAS. True, true—take up the body, bear it in,

We'll try physicians' help: the hand that struck
Fitted some such a bulk as yours, Antiochus.

(they move the body a step or two, R.)

ANTI. Who could have done it, who?

ZABDAS.

Ay, who indeed?

SOLDIERS enter, L. 1 E.

Take in the body. (as they are bearing it out, L. 2 E., he points to SOLDIERS who stand behind ANTIOCHUS)

ANTI.

What means this? a captive!

ZABDAS. If Gracchus dies, Antiochus, to-morrow

Shall see you hanging from the battlements. (ANTIOCHUS starts)
Think of it—the Egyptian keeps his word.

ZABDAS stands in centre—his finger pointing threateningly—
ANTIOCHUS stands L., baffled and surrounded by the
GUARDS—the drop falls.

END OF ACT II.

ACT III.

SCENE I.—*The Hall of Hujus's House.*

Enter HUJUS and BULBUS, L. 1 E.

HUJUS. And so my freed-man, Spontaneius, gave you this packet to deliver to the Queen a few days back?

BULBUS. Not to me: to uncle Tettus, who would have brought it to you himself, only he's too busy preparing the marriage feast.

HUJUS. The marriage feast! what feast? whose marriage?

BULBUS. The Princess Julia with Lord Gracchus: it's to be celebrated in the Temple this night.

HUJUS. He bids fair to live then?

BULBUS. Catch him dying ! he never meant to die a bachelor, my lord. He sunk and sunk, lower and lower, till the Queen, to save his life, gave her consent to the union, and then he recovered, at an astonishing rate !

HUJUS. Humph ! love is a subtle physician. Then to revenge yourselves on Spontaneius, who is your rival in a woman's love, you opened and read this packet confided to your care ?

BULBUS. Opened, not read, your nobleness.

HUJUS. Not read, because—

BULBUS. We couldn't read. But we hoped it might draw him into a hobble for betraying your confidence.

HUJUS. You were right. But in betraying him, you confess yourself implicated in his villanies. Begone ! breathe but a word of this and I'll have you bow strung, and your uncle hanged.

BULBUS. What for being honest, we expected reward.

HUJUS. You were honest for your own ends, not mine ! besides, honesty is its own reward ! hence ! (*goes up*)

BULBUS. All the world's in a general conspiracy to snub me ! but there's one comfort, I've undone Spontaneius !—and uncle's in the mess too ! *Exit, l. 1 e.*

HUJUS. (*comes down*) Reward ! ha ! ha ! his fears will seal his lips, And that saves money. Then this scroll—my freed-man Hath play'd the spy, and would betray us here To the revengeful Queen : this overthrows him.

(*goes to door, and speaks off, l. 1 e.*)

Ho, soldier ! bid your captain come to me.
We must be sudden : for above us threatens
The hair-hung sword of Damocles. To-night
They wed : here's news to cheer Antiochus,
Whose life hung on the Roman's. Then the act
Long plotted, ripened day by day to fruit,
Must 'neath the shadows of the night be pluck'd.
By day-dawn the attack : noon victory,
And then immortal wealth—

Enter a CAPTAIN, l. 1 e.

Who's there ?

CAPTAIN. My lord,
You sent for me.

HUJUS. Did I—for what ? I know—

Seek Spontaneius—he's about the house,
Bind him, and bring him hither :—heed him not,
Let him say what he will, but bring him here.
To all his cries, entreaties, and commands,
Answer but this, it is my order. Go.

Exit CAPTAIN, l. 1 e.

Enter ANTIOCHUS, R.

Joy to you, brave Antiochus !

ANTI. For what ?

HUJUS. He lives, and you are free.

ANTI. You wish me joy
Of that which is my curse !

HUJUS. What's now to do
Must be at once : the deed and resolution
Must tread the one upon the other's heels :
To-night will foil us quite else.

ANTI. How, to-night ?

HUJUS. You know not ? True : the prison walls were thick.
To-night the temple will be hung with flowers !
And Hymen Hymenæus crown with wreaths
Two hearts that love —

ANTI. Not theirs ! It poisons me
To speak his name with hers, but look me no :
Look yes, and I detest thee.

HUJUS. If I look
The truth, I must be hated, for it is so.

ANTI. They wed to-night then ? (*crossing to L. thinking*)

HUJUS. Aye, to-night !

ANTI. (*kneels*) To thee,
Bridegroom of hatred, purple-arm'd revenge,
Thou hypocrite spirit of the law
Call'd Justice, and thou—brother to the fiend
Of evil harvest, evil-breeding Atè,
I do commit myself, and my whole soul
Devote to thee and thy death worship, till
My debt is to the uttermost discharged.
'Tis sworn ! (*rises*) Now, Hujus, hear and mark me :—when
The choral hymn swells highest, and the hearts
Of joy partake of heaven more than earth
Look for the tempest :—see the secret gate
Unbarr'd for my return with Roman troops,
To swoop upon them like a bird of prey ;
Draw off the guard, and be you blind and deaf
To threat and peril till we meet again. (*going, L.*)

HUJUS. You'll bring the gold ! that's in the bargain.

ANTI. Yes.
Your soul is bought, and shall be paid for justly :
Each to his idol ! Mammon is your god,
But mine, revenge !

HUJUS. I would not change with thee.
Each to his idol ! I will worship mine,
For wealth is man's true paradise, the gates
Of which are opened with a golden key,
And any price is cheap that buys it ; ha,
They have secured the spy.

Enter CAPTAIN and SOLDIERS with SPONTANEIUS, L. 1 E.

SPON. (*L.*) What means this usage ?
My lord, they say your order—

HUJUS. (*c.*) Oh dear no, (*satirically*)
This is some error, you're my servant—friend—

And sometime, confident, you're noble ; you !
This Captain hath mistaken.

SPON. On your order
They do aver I was thus made prisoner,
And dragg'd before you.

HUJUS. Spontaneius, you—
Were never guilty of the coward act
Of slinking in the track of talking men,
And listening to their speech, or penning it
For eyes to look upon, who reading there ;
Turn all their thoughts to vengeance ! some such man
As this, I bade the soldiers seize upon.
Deny it, and be free.

SPON. Is not this strange—

HUJUS. Oh, above strangeness strange ! that guilt, that sins
Above the shame-rich level of a lie ;
Shrinks at a lie at least, If you denied it,
Here's that would strike you dumb, and blind, and dead,
As though it were the lightning ! Look at it.

SPON. I do, the words are mine !

HUJUS. And you avow them.

SPON. Proudly avow them ; as in looking there,
I see a venture to preserve the land,
And foil a traitor.

HUJUS. Hence ! (*crosses, L.*)
Howl out this sermon to the dungeon walls,
A slow and lingering death be thine, to starve
In rayless darkness, by the world unseen,
And by mankind forgotten.

SPON. Not by heaven ! *Exeunt, c. d.*

HUJUS. (*aloud*) With him will die all record of this deed,
Save on such tongues as money will buy silent ;
And I, to-morrow shall be rich enough,
To pay the price. He came to triumph—ha !

Enter ZABDAS, SPONTANEIUS liberated, and CAPTAIN, c. d.

We little know how fast we near the grave,
Or who shall fill it first ;

ZABDAS. Old age is wise,
And sometimes utters prophecy.

HUJUS. Lord Zadbas !
(*sees SPONTANEIUS and speaks aside*)

Free, and with him ! there's peril near me then.
And I must brave it firmly.

ZABDAS. This man hath fallen under your displeasure,
I do entreat his pardon.

HUJUS. He deserves
Death at my hands—the traitor !

ZABDAS. Do all traitors
Deserve no less than death ?

HUJUS. I'm caught, and yet
To hesitate were fatal. (*aside*) Nought but death.

ZABDAS. (*as if repeating to himself*) "We little know how fast we
near the grave,
Or who shall fill it first!"

HUJUS. (*quickly*) What's that?

ZABDAS. A quaint conceit.
Where is Antiochus?

HUJUS. (*trembling*) I know not.

ZABDAS. Ha!
How ill these white hairs sort with falsehood, Hujus,
Look in my face and answer me.

HUJUS. (*L.*) I know not—
I have forgotten— (*hesitatingly*)

ZABDAS. (*R.*) Shall I help your memory?
For we have engines to extort the truth
From stubbornness, as wine express'd from grapes!
Grinding and torturing! The truth!

HUJUS. (*aside*) To tell it
Destroys my golden hopes: I lose the wealth
I've sinned so much for. If I keep the secret,
I lose but life! and let life go—for gold.

ZABDAS. I wait your answer, Hujus.

HUJUS. In your ear
I'll tell it: not to these around us now—
Come closer—this!

(about to stab ZABDAS, SPONTANEIUS foils and wounds him
with his own dagger; he is caught by the CAPTAIN)
Well struck, for you have lock'd
The secret up in death! Go, call your tortures:
"We little know how fast we near the grave,
Or who shall fill it first!"

(dies, and is borne off, l. 1 E., by the CAPTAIN)

ZABDAS. Unfortunate!
For there was much to learn concealed beneath
This mass of white infirmity. This haste
Has undone all. Strange rumours are abroad
Of treachery now threatening Palmyra,
And of Antiochus' flight! Should it prove so,
We have worse foes than Romans to encounter—
Traitors among ourselves.

Enter ALCANDER, hastily, l. 1 E.

Now, this speed
Foreruns some news of import.

ALCAN. Pardon me,
Are you Lord Hujus?

ZABDAS. I am not Lord Hujus:
But if your business concerns the state,
I am its friend, and yours.

ALCAN. (l.) Forgive my tidings,
For the dark omen that they wear.
 ZABDAS. (c.) Declare them :
Let omens frighten children ! the proud heart
Of Zabdus quails not at a shadow'd fear.
 ALCAN. Antiochus—
 ZABDAS. What of Antiochus ?
 ALCAN. (in alarm) My lord, he has fled.
 ZABDAS. Well, then, he has fled : (calmly)
To join the Emperor ?
 ALCAN. 'Tis even so.
 ZABDAS. Why, then, he has left room for better men.
And is this nothing all ?
 ALCAN. He meditates
A treacherous assault upon the city.
 ZABDAS. Well, let him try : we do not sleep unarmed,
Our helms will guard our heads. What more ?
 ALCAN. To take
Zenobia captive.
 ZABDAS. We've our shields around her :
Let him think twice upon it.
 ALCAN. And to seize
The person of the Princess at the altar,
And force her to be his.
 ZABDAS. (energetically) Let him take care
He fall not on our swords in the attempt,
And slay himself. (crosses, l.) The serpent shows himself :
And this is but the slough he leaves behind.
The mischief is abroad. (crosses, c.) Let every guard
(to SPONTANEIUS)
Be doubled—every point of danger scann'd—
The troops in readiness upon the word
To answer to the battle-call ! For thee,
There's gold. (to ALCANDER) No thanks, I'm deaf o' that ear.
Follow ! (crosses, l. ; ALCANDER goes r. c.)
Assault the city ! Let him try ! Attack
The Queen ! well, let him try ! Seize on the Princess,
And force her to the altar to be his—
Ah, let him try !
I pray that he may come ! that no cross hap
May keep him back, and mar the pleasant greeting
I'll give him when he clasps her ! Let him try !
 Exeunt, c. d.

SCENE II.—*The Entrance to the Sacred Grove. A flight of steps rises from stage, and the path is continued to the back of the stage, lined on each side with alternate trees and statues.*

Enter ZENOBLA and GRACCHUS, L.U.E.

ZENOBLA. Nay : calm this intemperate extacy ! your wound
Is not yet cured.

GRAC. Julia's mine!

And in those brief words and eternal thoughts,
Are centered empyreal extacies !
Oh, Queen—oh, mother—dearer in that name
Than thy regality, demand some proof
How much I honor thee.

ZENO比亚. If the worst fall, and we are conquer'd
'Twere better that she died i'the innocent spring
Of life, than live to share a conqueror's bed,
Made hateful by its shameful splendour!

(in the distance music is heard)

GRAC. (crosses L.) Hold!
Hark to that music ! O let not sounds that bear
The gloomy warning of a raven's note
Mix with your joyful melodies that voice
Our happiness to heaven.
I'll meet them at the Temple ! Ah, the thought
Of her bright smile brings all the summer back,
And dissipates the winter on my heart !

Exit up steps, L.U.E.

ZENO比亚. How light a step, how bright a glance, how gay
The heart that throws its radiance all around.
And yet to-morrow may ! I will not shade
To-day with presages of fear ! to-morrow
Is the dead's day !—to-day is for the living.

Enter JULIA from back, R. down the c. steps.

Julia, and here !

JULIA. I've sought you, gentle mother !
To feel your kiss, and hear you speak the words
Of blessing to the timid bark that sets
Her tiny sails unto the winds that blow
Across the ocean of existence. Love
Is a new world I steer for, and to-morrow
I cast my anchor in its bay.

ZENO比亚. How true,
Love sees not past to-day : to-morrow, Julia,
You'll learn the duties of a wife.

JULIA. The duties ?
You'll say, the gods speed thee,
Upon my voyage, mother !

ZENO比亚. With a heart
That hath a voice more hallow'd than my words,
And bids God speed thee as we utter prayers,
Where heart and voice subliming into one,
Are heard and answered with a blessing, girl.

Enter ZABDAS, L. U. E.

(crosses to him) Here's valiant Zabdas, you have yet a word
Of lovingness to him.

ZABDAS. (*to himself*) All is prepared :
No item overlook'd. The Queen—the Princess !
ZENOBLA. To say farewell, brave soldier. For the wife
Disowns the friendships that the maiden made
For higher aspirations, brighter thoughts,
And nobler dreams. The Temple waits : one word
To Zabdus, and then join me, Julia.
You'll follow quickly ? (*goes up, c.*)

JULIA. (R.) Ay, as life to heaven
Upon the summons of the angel Death.

Exit ZENOBLA up steps, c. into Temple, l. u. e.
You'll bless me, too ? (*gaily*)

ZABDAS. My blessing ? And to you ? (*pause*)
Yea, with my soul within, which blesses thee
As it adores the sun !

JULIA. (R.) And bless thee, too,
That strove to make me happy in this marriage,
With my soul's idol ! I owe all to thee !
For who but thou couldst trace the growing love
That had no voice to speak, but in its stealth
Grew fast and strong ; and when at last it breathed
Its tale to mortal ear, found only thine
That listened with a brother's tender patience,
And bade it smile and flourish ? Oh, I love thee,
As only sisterhood can love, and thank thee
With tears that teem with blessings.

ZABDAS. You are happy,
And joyfully leap forward to a step
Which made, is past recalling.

JULIA. Happy ! Oh,
So happy !

ZABDAS. Then I am content—content
As he that sees his sinking child caught up
While he is drowning.

JULIA. That's a sad content.
Yours should be gayer—brighter.

ZABDAS. More refined,
More mated with the angels and the gods.
Yes, it should be so, and it shall be so.
And you love Gracchus well ?

JULIA. With a passion deep
And fervent as eternity.

ZABDAS. That's well.

JULIA. Oh, but to listen to his honey'd tales,
The music of his tones, that syren like
Might draw the listen'r to destruction, or
To perish 'mid delight ;

ZABDAS. Love tales ! I'd weave ye,
A score of idle legends in an hour,
As true as his.

JULIA. But if you heard him tell them

You would retract your scorn, and laugh as I did
 At those of others telling.

ZABDAS. Aye, you'd laugh
 At some such tale as this ! How proud a hero
 Did armour up his heart 'gainst love, and stood
 A stately monument o'er peering verdure,
 Which seemed at its own littleness aghast,
 To shrink and shrivel up : secure in this,
 It heeded not the shrub which crept beside it.
 Climbing and clinging till it overgrew
 The noble pile ! Now, Julia, laugh at this—
 At the proud man about whose human heart
 Nature wound itself in an angel's form.
 This is a theme for laughter ; for she came—
 This childish girl—and poured into his breast
 The secrets of her own, he could not fly,
 The net was round him firm ; she came again,
 This is the jest—to tell him that she loved—

JULIA. Himself !

ZABDAS. No, no, the sport is better. How
 She loved another ; in her childish way,
 Made him her go-between—her confidant—
 The grizzly fool ! Caused him to bring about
 Her happy marriage with the favoured one,
 And on the day when every heart but his
 Threw off its shadow, while his put all on,
 And in the sunlight was the darker still—
 Came to him for his blessing ! What did he ?
 This tale grows merry, eh ?

Why, Zabdas—

ZABDAS.

He

Gave it with all his being ; blest her then !
 Saw her gaze on him with her face of light,
 And kept his secret with a smile without,
 While broke his heart within ! Now, Julia, laugh
 At this poor story of another's telling. (crosses, R.)

JULIA. Ah, Zabdas, 'tis thine own.

ZABDAS. What mockery !

JULIA. In thy attempt to give it the denial !

I see it—read it ! (music played till ZABDAS on platform)

ZABDAS. Go to Gracchus, go !

JULIA. And you have loved me thus !

Enter PRIESTESS, c., from the Temple, L.

PRIESTESS. The Temple waits.

JULIA. Will you not speak ?

ZABDAS. You hear, the Temple waits.

JULIA. Forgive—forgive the blindness of the girl,

That could so idly dally with a heart
 So nobly suffering ! You will forgive—
 Chide, but forgive !

ZABDAS. *With a sigh of regret.* Chide thee ! forgive thee !—Go !

Thy lover waits thee : he that's left behind
Worships thy image ! Go, I say—you see
There's nought but smiles upon my lips, and words
Rich'd with warm wishes ! To the Temple ! Go !
The heart that loves thee best, cries “To the Temple !”
For there waits happiness and Gracchus !

*Exit JULIA and PRIESTESS up steps, c. into Temple, l.
Gone !*

My limbs lose power—every fibre shakes
With the strong combat that was fought within !
I grow o' the sudden old, as if I stood
Upon a precipice looking down on death,
And could not move or cry ! She's gone, the world
Is empty, and the sun expired—the stars
Rayless as eyes of death, and one great blankness
Fallen over creation ! Zadbas, now no more :
A tottering broken motiveless old man.

(music ceases—he sinks on his knee—on a sudden, in the
distance are heard shouts, the screams of women, and the
voice of conflict)

No, no, not motiveless ! I have left revenge ! (starting up)
The slave told truth—the threaten'd treachery
Hath burst upon them, but, unlook'd for by them,
Hath met my timely-set precautions ! (murmurs) Yes !
I hear the battle-cry of our brave legions
Mingling with the outwitted traitors' yells
For mercy !—Do not give it ! Slay them all,
Except Antiochus ! For Aurelian's empire
I would not have him slain ! I dedicate
His blood unto the Fates !

Enter SPONTANEIUS, l.

Well, is it done ?

SPON. Beyond your hopes ! the Romans burst on them
Before the very altar : those brave troops
Of your own choosing were in readiness
And at my trumpet-call rush'd like a tempest
Upon their enemies !

ZABDAS. Load high that slave,
That brought the news with gold !

SPON. I struck the ruffian
Dead at my feet that seized the Queen !

ZABDAS. That deed
Shall make thee noble : well, the Princess—

SPON. Clung
With terror to the altar, Gracchus soon
Was dragg'd away, but rescued

ZABDAS. Well—go on.

SPON. **Antiochus—**

ZABDAS. That's him ! go on, go on !

SPON. Soon tore her

From her frail grasp, and would have borne her off,
Despite her shrieks and cries, but for a spearman
Who fell'd him with the broken staff !

ZABDAS.

God bless him !

SPON. Quickly a host released the Princess from his grasp,
And she's at liberty.

ZABDAS.

Thank heaven !

SPON.

Then

The trustiest swordsman of the camp engaged
The desperate Antiochus, and he—

ZABDAS. Was taken ?

Yes !

ZABDAS. Good night, Antiochus ! (*crosses to L.*)
He lives ! you're sure he lives ?

SPON.

He lives indeed,

But wounded dangerously.

ZABDAS. Send round the city
For the most skilful surgeons—bind his wounds !
Tend him as gently as a bird, and cherish
The smouldering spark of life, until it glows
With fiery health ! I would not have him die
For all the treasures 'twixt the earth and heavens !
Not till we meet foot set to foot, and sword
Cross'd against sword ! Feed him with choicest viands
To generate fresh strength : tempt him with wines
To give him blood to shed, as I will shed it,
An offering to Julia and revenge !

(*SPONTANEIUS crosses behind to L.*)

Don't speak to me, but lead me to him—Quick ?
My soul is there already !

*Rushes out, L., with SPONTANEIUS
(as he goes off, in the distance three distinct shouts of
triumph are heard)*

END OF ACT III.

ACT IV.

SCENE I.—*A Street in Palmyra, supposed to be that in which the house of Hujus is situated; the portal of the house, with doors closed and barred on one side, with steps before it.*

Enter JOPPA and JILPHA with bag and baggage, crying and consoling each other.

JOPPA. It's all over, Jilpha : we're outcasts and wanderers like the little birds, condemned to perch wherever we can, and to live on what we can pick up. Oh, who would be a widow !

JILPHA. Don't talk of widows, mother : who'd be a maiden in these times of war.

JOPPA. Hang the fellows !—there's nothing thought of but military glory now : and connubial comfort is mentioned among the things that were. (*changing her tone suddenly*) What a fool you were not to accept Tettus, the Queen's cook : he was madly in love with you.

JILPHA. Well so I was : but who could resist Spontaneius ?

JOPPA. Spontaneius ought to have blushed for his insensibility to me, till he was red hot from his toes to the roots of his hair : but they've made him an officer, and he's all armour and importance.

JILPHA. What's to be done, mother ?

JOPPA. I'm sure I don't know, girl. I'm willing to drown myself in the great conduit, only I'm afraid of sticking in the water-pipe, and thereby incommoding the city. Let's go over to the Emperor !

JILPHA. What, desert our native town, mother ! no, never !

JOPPA. Why not, girl ? they say the Emperor is very kind to the gentle sex, and has already made liberal presents to those who have surrendered themselves to his mercy—perhaps he buys widows.

JILPHA. I'd die first. Besides, there may be a chance of getting a husband here in Palmyra.

JOPPA. I don't know whether it's grief or the weather affects my eyesight, Jilpha, but I don't see so well as I did. From this distance, that's very like Bulbus's walk.

JILPHA. And Tettus is with him. Let's hide ourselves.

JOPPA. Hide ! I don't put my candle under a bushel for any man. Step aside with me, and I'll teach you how to make the best use of tears. Ha ! I should never have been a widow but for them : your poor father was insensible to a hurricane, but he couldn't stand rain, so he always had it. I took care of that.

(*they retire up stage*)

Enter BULBUS and TETTUS, L. 1 E.

BULBUS. But you see, uncle——

TETTUS. But you don't see, nephew—at a time like this, we must look on ourselves in a mercantile point of view—our married soldiers being all killed, all the single men are getting promoted : therefore, this fall of husbands creates an answerable rise in bachelors. Now widowers stand between married and single like pilots between land and sea, with the experience of the one joined to the availability of the other. Now when these widows, past, present, and future, fall in love with us——

BULBUS. Well, but suppose they don't.

TETTUS. They must : they can't help themselves ! all these repeated sieges are killing married men and raising our price in the matrimonial market. Three days ago I'd have married the pretty little kitchen maid, Jilpha ; next day, I wouldn't have struck under to less than a merchant's daughter ; yesterday, I only would have condescended to espouse a knight's widow ; to-day,

I'll not take fetters but from a princess ; and to-morrow, the Queen, or nobody.

BULBUS. And when you are married, shall you fight ?

TETTUS. Well, Bulbus, I shall not volunteer : when I marry, in the depopulated state of the country, I shall have a duty to society to perform which won't admit of fighting much. And for you—if I marry the Queen, who, being mother of her subjects, can have no objection to extend the title—you shall marry—

BULBUS. Her tire woman !

TETTUS. Her apron-string ! the Princess.

BULBUS. Well, but she's married this very day.

TETTUS. But her husband's sure to be killed.

BULBUS. But suppose he is not.

TETTUS. He can't help himself I tell you, and he's no choice in the matter ; if he's a man he'll die for glory, and if she's a woman she'll marry again.

(turning from each other they find the Women on either side of them pretending to cry, JILPHA next to TETTUS, and JOPPA next to BULBUS, they turn up their noses at the sight of them and cross each other; by which means they find their positions reversed, TETTUS meeting JOPPA and BULBUS encountering JILPHA)

JOPPA. }
JILPHA. }
(crying) Oh, dear ! Oh, dear !

BULBUS. I never noticed it before, but Jilpha is certainly prettier than her mother.

TETTUS. I don't think the old woman would make a bad match in case the Queen and I shouldn't quite bring matters to the square.

JILPHA. Bulbus, I always liked you.

BULBUS. I am not surprised to hear it.

JOPPA. Love, you know, is not our fault.

TETTUS. The flesh is weak, widow, and I am weaker and fleshier than many men.

JILPHA. I have been told I was pretty.

BULBUS. Odd singularity—so have I.

JOPPA. I have taken care of myself, friend Tettus.

TETTUS. Pattern of prudence, so have I.

ALL. And so—*(about to embrace)*

Enter SPONTANEIUS and SOLDIERS, JILPHA avoids BULBUS' embrace and runs to SPONTANEIUS who receives her.

JOPPA. Spontaneius !

BULBUS. Forty thousand devils—tails and all !

SPOX. Nay, Jilpha, I had not forgotten you, though greater businesses engaged my mind. Soldiers, see this lady safely conducted to my quarters ; if heaven sees me 'scape the perils of to-day, to-morrow makes you my wife.

JILPHA. How delightful !—so soon ?

SPOX. Quick impulses are sometimes happy heralds, Jilpha ; I act

on impulses. Besides, in busy times like these when law is forced to wink at minor evils, the good hour is the present one !

JILPHA. (*consequently*) Good bye, good friends ! I invite you all to my marriage, good folks ! I'm going to be quartered ; I haven't the least idea what it is, but I suppose it's a military manœuvre.

Exit with SOLDIERS, L.

BULBUS. I'll be hanged if I don't hang myself.

Exit, R.

TETTUS. It's a bargain, widow, between us.

JOPPA. Clinched and soldered. But your poor nephew, how wretched he looked ; Captain, (*crosses to SPONTANEIUS*) look at poor Bulbus, it pains me very much to see youth suffer ; you said just now that law winks its reverend eye at minor evils ; do you think it would bestow a tight wink on a small bit of bigamy ?

SPOON. Psha ! see—yonder comes the General.

Exit, L.

TETTUS. Does he ? then I'll secure my game before he pounces on it. Widow, love is retiring, and goes home early.

JOPPA. And matrimony goes home with it ; Spontaneius, you have lost a great chance ; I am lost to you for ever.

Exeunt JOPPA and TETTUS, R. 1 E.

SCENE II.—Terrace before the Palace, R. ; with a beacon on the pillar to be fired during the Scene. A View of Palmyra, with beacons painted in perspective around the city, to be lit (the early ones by fire the distant ditto by transparencies) at a given signal in the Scene.

Enter JULIA and GRACCHUS, disturbed, R.

JULIA. And you have promised this ?

GRAC. But hear me—

JULIA. Promised to give me up to the assassin's knife.

A calm and passive victim ! See me bound
An offering at the altar to the gods.

Angered against our city ! At that altar
Whereon still burns the sacred fire that glow'd
Upon our vows of ever-flaming love !
Oh, Gracchus, could it be your tongue that spoke ?
The angel and the fiend !

GRAC. You will not listen.

If the victorious Emperor takes our city,
And paler every day our hopes become,
What is your fate ?

JULIA. He will not murder us.

Barbarians spare the sex that mother'd men :
Aurelian is a man.

GRAC. Your lives he'd spare,
To stud his triumph with, like a stolen jewel,
A centre for all gloating prideful eyes
And pitiless sneers. Protectionless, can you

Face Rome's rejoicing with insulting pomp,
Or (*sinking his voice*) fall a victim to the lustful rage
Of conquering soldiery ?

JULIA. Come the worst, your arm
Will guard me.

GRAC. Mine ! Will Rome forgive a Roman
That fought against her ?—for a Princess' love
Gave country up and life ? If falls Palmyra,
My doom is ending death or endless bonds.
I choose the former.

JULIA. Gracchus, save me from this fate,
And let me hallow thee as well as love thee.

Enter ZABDAS from back, r. u. e.; he comes down, c.

ZABDAS. Gracchus, the Queen would speak with you within.
Leave Julia to my care.

GRAC. You seem disturbed,
Your brow is clouded.

ZABDAS. Psha ! these are not times
To wear eternal summer.

GRAC. I obey
The Queen's desires. Be careful of my bride :
My soul stays with ye.

Exit, r. u. e.

ZABDAS. Julia, look on me.
A word—not of the past—(for that is sunk
Among the wretched yesterdays of life)—
But of ourselves—of thee ! I've seen the Queen,
And she hath told me—

JULIA. Should Palmyra fall,
Julia must die. But, oh, to die so young !
And life so sweet as liberty denied
For years and freshly gained ! Love's world new found—
Not one would strike the blow !

ZABDAS. Yes, Julia.

JULIA. At
The breast that's rich with gentleness to all !
Whose heart so stern ? whose arm so firm ?

ZABDAS. The heart
That broke for you—not broken by you, Julia,
And arm to strike, not as a murderer strikes,
But as the ancient Roman smote Virginia,
That she might live eternally in honour !
Mine, Julia, mine !

JULIA. Then to my heart at once,
My lip shall never quiver, nor my cheek
Wax pale, nor tongue upbraid you for my death ;
But patient, like a victim—

ZABDAS. No, not yet.
Here, Spontaneius.

(crosses, c.)

Enter SPONTANEIUS, L. 3 E.

Julia, there is hope
Yet left you of escape. A secret passage
Emerging many miles beyond the city
Is known to this true friend. To-morrow noon
Your mother and your husband follow you.
And in another land around you weave
A deathless happiness.

JULIA.

And you—

ZABDAS.

Will stay here.

What should I do elsewhere? this is my grave,
And I can rest here peacefully. No more.
He will be ever near you, and let peril
Threaten the city, trust him in your flight,
For heaven hath written him man. Be on the watch,
For you may fly to-night! (*SPONTANEIUS crosses behind*)

JULIA.

Should we ne'er meet

In life again—

ZABDAS.

Why then, we part for ever;
But like dear friends that sail for distant climes,
Blessing those left behind.

Exeunt SPONTANEIUS and JULIA, R. 2 E.

And now I stand

Alone upon the wreck amid the storm,
Heedless and hopeless!

Enter CAPTAIN and four GUARDS with ANTIOCHUS, L. 1 E.

Brother general,

I greet you humbly, you have shunn'd us lately:—
We've miss'd your noble company; the foe
Batter our gates, and we have look'd in vain
For valiant faithful true Antiochus
To head our sallies. You are welcome back
To long-deserted honour.

ANTI.

Taunt me, Zabdus,

I am your captive, and must bear your buffets
Of scorn, whose stings sink deeper than the stripe
Of ignominy upon vassal slaves;
Taunt on! I'll bear it!

ZABDAS.

Would you not have sold

Our city to the Roman Emperor?

ANTI.

I would.

ZABDAS.

Betrayed the Queen?

ANTI.

I would.

ZABDAS.

And seized

By force the sacred person of the Princess,
Defiling the proud temple of the gods
With sacrilege and vestal-wronging lust,
Hateful and hideous! Yet you raise the tone
Of honourable valour, answ'ring scorn
Proudly as martyr'd hero!

ANTI. Yes, I did
All these; and were the things to do again,
I'd do them all again!

ZABDAS. To show the world
A thorough traitor!

ANTI. No, to show the world
My hate to thee! Egyptian, not alone
In honour, but in love, you thwarted me,
Well, let it pass; 'tis but an oft-told story,
And will be told again an hundred times,
But triumph not, for surely as the night
Succeeds the dawn, the blackness of defeat
Shall fall across the sunlight of Zenobia,
And proud Palmyra perish! Wait the hour—
Slowly and silently it comes, but surely!
Kill me, but at the gate of purgatory,
Upon the Stygian shore our shades shall meet
To take our journey unto heaven or hell
Together! (*distant attack*) Hark! My words turn prophecy!
The retribution comes!

Enter GRACCHUS and ZENOBLA, R. U. E.

ZENOBLA. The foe! the foe!
Mask'd 'neath the night, they've stolen to the walls
Unheeded! we are lost!

ZABDAS. Not yet; a torch! (*crosses to L., calls*)
Bear yonder traitor to the parapet;
There bind him where the foe may look on him,
And every dart of his new-called friends
Make passage to his breast! Away!

ANTI. Remember!
Hate's vengeance dies not with the life! 'Twill come
Unseen and terrible!

Exit ANTIOCHUS, guarded, R. U. E.

ZABDAS. Ho, there! A torch! (*a SOLDIER brings one, L.*)
Arouse our chieftains from their revellings
To sterner duty! Fire the beacons, ho!
(*at his command a SOLDIER lights the beacon, and rapidly, one by one, the beacons are lighted all round the city*)

Bring me my arms! *Exit SOLDIER, L. 1 E.*

GRAC. Where's Julia?
ZABDAS. Trust me, safe.

Waste no more thoughts for her. You're armed; that's well.
You, Gracchus, to the western bastion. (*crosses to c.*) You,
My Queen, inspire your soldiers to the east:
I'll to the towers and the ports! they shall not
Make it their boast they vanquished us like Cæsar
Conquered Pharnaces! For each Palmyrene
They slay, shall fall two Romans!

GRAC. But, my bride ?
I've heard your nobleness—

ZENOBIA. 'Twas worthy you—
You who out-work the olden heroes !

ZABDAS. Psha !
We'll talk of that to-morrow.

Enter all the NOBLES, R. and L., also the CAPTAIN and six SOLDIERS.

See, the chiefs
Rally round us !

GRAC. I'll to my charge.

Exit, R. 1 E.

ZENOBIA. And I.
Let fall the worst, the secret way is open
To cross the great Euphrates.

Exit, L. 1 E.

Enter the SOLDIER with ZABDAS' helmet, sword, and buckler, followed by the CHIEFS and LEADERS. ZABDAS arms.

CHIEF. To the battle,
We'll die with Zabdas !

ZABDAS. To the walls !

CHIEF. The attack upon the walls was but a mask :
The secret entrance to the citadel,
Betrayed by curs'd Antiochus, has oped them
A passage to the very heart of—

ZABDAS. Are they here
Already ?

CHIEF. Yes :—led on in person by
Cerronius Bassus and the Emperor !

ZABDAS. The Emperor ! I swoop upon your high game,
And he is mine alone ! the hand that slays
The Emperor is Zabdas' foe !

CHIEF. There's more
Of terror to be heard.

ZABDAS. Out with it, man !

CHIEF. The troops that held Antiochus in bonds,
Have been dispersed by conquering Aurelian—
Antiochus set free.

ZABDAS. The dog is loose !
There's work for thee, my sword ! Oh, heaven ! one thought
Beats on me like a hammer ! Julia—she
Flying that road, must fall into their hands,
And down falls every hope ! Come on, come on !
And he that loves his country best, and fears
The least to die—nay, fears not death at all,
Advance, and strike by me ! On, brothers, on !
For we are children of Bellona now,
And brothers to the death ! Who follows me ?

OMNES. All, all !
They rush out shouting with ZABDAS, R. 1 E., alarms without.

Enter ANTIOCHUS, bearing JULIA in his arms, R. U. E.

ANTI. Choose, Julia, and choose quickly ! Even now

Aurelian wins the city—the proud Queen

Is taken, and to-morrow sees you seated

Palmyra's Queen, and bride to Antiochus,

Or else his slave and mistress —choose !

JULIA. I'll call

On the august and just Aurelian

To save me and protect me. (*breaks from him, and goes, L.*)

'Tis beyond (*seizing her R. arm*)

Anti. His power : you are mine—my prisoner,

Sworn by his oath as price of services,

To be my slave or queen !—Palmyra's mine

In the great name of Rome !

JULIA. How bitter now

Grows life—so sweet a little hour ago !

How welcome death !

ANTI. Shall death usurp the realm

Of blushing love ? Thou'rt mine !

JULIA. Avaunt, away ! (*fiercely breaking from him*)

Gazing on thee, the hateful sight becomes

Time's minister, and on my girlish heart

Showers the strength of womanhood, matured

With woman's iron desperation !

ANTI. Thy anger, Julia,

Is pretty as the playful summer lightning,

And neither harms nor awes ! I'll be thy friend,

And force thee to thy fortune !

Enter ZABDAS, R. U. E.

ZABDAS. (*coming down between them*) To the Temple

Fly, Julia—if despair is there, at least

There's honour also ! We have met once more !

Exit JULIA, R. U. E.

ANTI. To part in death ! you bleed—

ZABDAS. And so do you.

You are unhelm'd—let mine go too. (*throws helmet away up R.*)

You bear

No buckler—there, I cast away mine own,

Now, sword to sword—and bleeding life to life—

The last of all the glories of Palmyra,

Doth Zabdus throw before thee !

ANTI. Ay, and hate

For hate, the bitt'rest and the deadliest,

I strike for vengeance !

ZABDAS. I, for Julia !

(*flourish and shouts—a short but fierce fight round—as*

ZABDAS beats ANTIOCHUS to his knee, he tightly grasps

him by the throat, when CERONIUS BASSUS, the Roman

General, enters suddenly with SOLDIERS, R. U. E.)

CERRO. (R.) You are Egyptian Zabdus ?

Yes !

To Rome defiant still !

CERRO. In the great name
Of conquering Aurelian, I command you
To yield yourself a prisoner, and restore
The General Antiochus.

ZABDAS. (*flinging down the dead body of Antiochus*) He's there !

Enter all the SOLDIERY, grand flourish, and the drop falls.

END OF ACT IV.

ACT V.

SCENE I.—*The Road to the Temple; a broken pillar, l. c.; JULIA, fainting, against it; SPONTANEIUS standing R., looking out; distant trumpets and shouts before and as the drop rises; lights down.*

Enter ZABDAS, R.

SPO. My lord is here.

JULIA. Oh, hide me from this scene of raging terror.

ZABDAS. You did not gain the Temple, then ?

JULIA. I strove :
But the mad tide of battle in the streets
Raged fiercely, and I timidly sank down,
Crouching in fear, till it had storm'd beyond me,
And then I strove to fly.

ZABDAS. The Queen's a prisoner.

JULIA. And Gracchus too : he saw him seized upon,
And flying for his life encountered me.

All's done that could be done, and every hero
Hath done a hero's duty.

ZABDAS. Which hath left
Our own undone, but must be done at last.
Plague o' these jewels, Julia, they but mock
Death's lily-like sublime simplicity.

(plucking ornaments off her dress and his own, and giving them with gold to SPONTANEIUS)

Fly, Spontaneius, these may buy you mercy
At Roman hands : where we go, Spontaneius,
Mercy is given, not sold. No word of parting :
Let your eyes speak farewell, and save your breath.

Exit SPONTANEIUS, R.

Come, hasten, Julia, for the time is speeding ;
And we've a long way to go, from earth to heaven.

(a distant peal of thunder)

Hush, do you hear ?

JULIA. A storm is coming on :
Fit emblem of the day !

ZABDAS. And of the night
That follows.
Come, you'll not tremble ?

JULIA. No : my heart is firm,
Though my limbs yield. You will not scorn me, Zabdus,
If a rebellious tear usurp mine eye—
Or my lips whiten—or unbidden shakes
My frame with tremors, when my foot shall tread
The threshold of my grave ? It is not fear ;
For even in its power I shall cry,
“ Strike, Zabdus,” though the words may catch and quiver
As they forsake my lips. It is not fear—
It shall not be for fear—so scorn me not,
But strike, and boldly ! *(distant peal of thunder)*

ZABDAS. Look thy last, and bid
Farewell to the gay world, across whose brightness
Yon iron thunder-cloud, like a dark death,
Dews its tremendous shadow.

JULIA. Oh, sweet world !
Never in all thy beauty sweet as now !
Never so bright as in this darkening hour,
I'm bidding thee farewell ! My only friend,
I turn to thee heart-wearied.

ZABDAS. As the child
Wearied with sporting with the frivolous world
In its upward course to manhood, turns its face
Unto Death's minister, and sleeps. Let's haste
To the great Temple ! There's my woman, Julia !
No, not a quiver—not a tear—but firm
As rooted trees, and on thy face a smile
Noble and death defiant. *(she sinks on his shoulder)*
Ah, it shakes thee !
Thou hadst over-judged thy strength ; but 'tis soon past.
I'm with thee, Julia. Do not tremble, girl,
I'm with thee—and the gods are with thee too !

Exeunt, L. 1 E.

SCENE II.—A Street.

Enter BULBUS, R., and TETTUS, L., meeting, disconsolate.

TETTUS. Is that you, Bulbus ?

BULBUS. Yes, it's me, miseries and all ! But that can't be you, uncle ?

TETTUS. I wish it couldn't, but it is. You haven't heard of course ?

BULBUS. Nothing : I've been so long preparing to hang myself, and so I should, only it's a new moon to-morrow, and it's lucky to hang one's self in a new moon. Oh, these Romans, uncle !

TETTUS. Oh, these Romans, nephew ! They've carried off the Queen !

BULBUS. They've carried off the plate in the palace !

TETTUS. They've carried off all the money in the treasury !

BULBUS. They've carried off the statues of the Temple.

TETTUS. The sacrilegious wretches ! but that's nothing.

BULBUS. What's worse ?

TETTUS. They've carried off mother Joppa.

BULBUS. They didn't dare !

TETTUS. Didn't they ! it's lucky I wasn't there—for my own sake !

BULBUS. (*gloomily*) I'm glad of it, for I can propose something pleasant.

TETTUS. Then let's have it—for the taste of it's quite out of my mouth at present.

BULBUS. Are you tired of life ?

TETTUS. Disgusted.

BULBUS. So am I. There's room enough at the other end of my rope—let's have a good breakfast to-morrow, to make us heavier, and then hang ourselves.

TETTUS. It's not a bad idea, Bulbus, if we were only certain of having quite time enough to do it, but I should hate being broken in upon and prematurely cut down. A brilliant thought !

BULBUS. Out with it.

TETTUS. I saw Spontaneius at the corner of the street but now, kissing Jilpha : let us betray him to the Romans, and conclude the kissing on our own account.

BULBUS. Not original. I've just done that myself. I gave the villain into the very hands of the Romans, flung myself at her feet—

TETTUS. Well ?

BULBUS. And the Romans kick'd me into the kennel, and carried off Jilpha as their prize.

TETTUS. Well, that's revenge—she isn't his !

BULBUS. No, it is not revenge. If one dog runs away with another dog's bone, and a third dog steals it from him, number two dog feels no glow of happiness at the disappointment of number one dog, but misery at the non-recovery of his bone from number three dog. (*crosses to L.*) I've a thought—let's surrender.

TETTUS. Then I've a thought for you !—let's surrender !

BULBUS. Well I don't see we can do anything else.

TETTUS. And it's not brave to kill ourselves.

BULBUS. Don't you think it is ? then its my natural bravery that kept me back from hanging myself just now ! I'm glad I didn't do it : I'd not have been a coward on any account.

TETTUS. Your hand upon it. We'll surrender ! we'll throw down our arms.

BULBUS. I did mine at the outstart.

TETTUS. I mean figuratively.

BULBUS. Oh, if you mean that way, I'm ready for any fate—hang me, draw me, quarter me—if you only do it figuratively.

Exeunt, L.

SCENE III.—*A Garden. A flourish of trumpets at opening.*

Enter ZENOBLA and GRACCHUS prisoners, led by TITUS FLAVIUS, R. 2 E., meeting AURELIAN the Emperor with GUARDS, L. 2 E.

AUREL. See, haughty Queen, the evil of the pride
With which you turned our offerings of love
Forth on the winds! Palmyra is a name
For something levell'd with the dust of earth,
And its proud Queen but lackey to that power
She greeted with such scorn!

ZENOBLA. Taunt on! were I
Your conqueror, I should triumph over you,
So say your worst.

AUREL. Lo, pride is fallen: see,
The renegade to honour and to Rome
Bound in his angry country's iron bonds,
On the open road to death!

GRAC. Aurelian, death
Is to the soldier scarce a terror. Wrong'd
By your great predecessor on the throne
Of high-brow'd Rome, in Flavius Claudius' power
Mine was a life of risk, and fleeing here
I found a welcome, by my land denied,
And for its love I loved it as mine own
That cast me from it. Kill me—but I struck
At Parthians and the Roman mercenaries,
But not upon my sword rusts there one drop
Of fellow Roman's blood.

TITUS. (L.) 'Tis true, my lord,
He would not strike at Romans.

AUREL. But he struck
'Gainst Rome and for Zenobia, who dared wave
Defiance in the teeth of a sleeping wolf.
Implacable when roused.

GRAC. Had not proud Rome
Uneasiness and realms enough within her sway,
But she should covet these?

ZENOBLA. What wonder, Gracchus!
It is the nature of the wolf to covet
More than it holds.

AUREL. Not more than it could win.

ZENOBLA. Dishonourable winnings.

AUREL. 'Tis a churlish loser
That rails against the winner. 'Twas a stake
High prized, and most labouriously won,
This paradise—Palmyra!

ZENOBLA. Ay, how won?
By cheating and false play! Enough! our City's lost.
Let liberty go with it into Rome;
Sold into slavery, to a race descended

From outlaw'd malefactors ; set our hands
 To till your fields, to feed your cattle ; tend
 Your meanest will and meaner pleasures, still
 I would not change the proud name of Zenobia
 For every jewel, set like stars in heaven,
 In Rome's imperial diadem.

AUREL. Zenobia,
 Those who have painted us ignobly to you—
 A bear in peace, a panther in the battle—
 Have wrong'd our honour and your ear. We fought
 Against your pride, and it is levell'd now—
 So ends our enmity. We who were foes
 An hour ago, the cause of quarrel past,
 Are friends right heartily. Beyond the Tiber
 Glitter bright lands, where you shall Queen it yet,
 Honour'd and lov'd. Aurelian's word is pledged
 To this before his lords.

ZENOBIA. What do I hear ?
 So noble ! You have found indeed a way
 To bend Zenobia.

AUREL. You've a daughter, Queen—
 ZENOBIA. Fierce thought, it strikes me palsied ! If she lives,
 She lives to perish.

AUREL. No : among my host
 I issued orders to preserve you both,
 At every peril.

ZENOBIA. I have rendered null
 Your every caution. Should the city fall,
 Zabdus is bound by solemn-utter'd oaths,
 Ere she should fall in Rome's marauding hands,
 To strike her dead i' the Temple !

AUREL. But my troops
 Will soon surround it.

GRAC. And confirm her doom.
 The first that strikes at the great Temple's gate,
 Strikes Julia dead !

Enter two SOLDIERS and a ROMAN OFFICER, with SPONTANBIUS prisoner, L.

OFFICER. A prisoner, my lord :
 When taken, he essayed with jewell'd bribes
 To buy his liberty. These gems we took
 Argue a nobler owner than this man.
 Look, sire.

GRAC. The jewels of the Princess !

SPON. Zabdus gave me these,
 Saying that death had need of no such gauds,
 And with the Princess Julia took the road
 On towards the Temple.

GRAC. She is lost then !

AUREL. No.

Fly, Captain, to the Temple: preserve the Princess
At any cost from this self-sacrifice.

Spare threats, for that may bring the upraised knife
Surely and swiftly down. Promise life, honour,
Or whatso'er demanded: I will back
Whate'er you promise with performance. Speed!

Exit CAPTAIN, TITUS, and two SOLDIERS, L.

This Zabdas is already wounded?

SPOK. To the death;
But yet not dead, sire: there is life enough
To do this act of agony.

ZENOBLIA. Haste you,
With favour of Aurelian, to the Temple:
He knows your voice.

AUREL. A timely thought! Away!

Exit SPONTANEIUS, L. 1 E.
For Julia, she—

If truth begot the rumour—yesterday
Wedded Lord Gracchus?

ZENOBLIA. Yes, sire.

AUREL. It would ill

Become a day of noble deeds and mercy
To stain it with revenge! the Princess safe—
Which heaven grant—take, Gracchus, to your arms,
With trust and dignity in place of that
Wrench'd from you by the Emp'ror Claudius: pardon
And honours from Aurelian.

GRAC. Noble Emperor!
I am your faithful servant unto death!

ZENOBLIA. If I could feel a pride in my city's fall,
Twould be that such a conqueror subdued it.

AUREL. Say so, when the fickle and short-mem'ried world
Speaks of me after death—and say, Aurelian
Had something nobler than the outside form,
Inherited from heaven! Come, let's follow!
Heed not the storm,—the brightness of the heart
Out-glitters all the darkness, like a sun!

Exeunt, L. 1 E.

SCENE THE LAST.—*The Temple, open at the top, the storm is seen raging fiercely without: an altar with sacred fire; around the Temple are grouped PALMYRENES, in various attitudes,—some wounded are assisted by their wives, sons, brothers, &c.; some kneeling; some watching the enemy's approach; ZABDAS discovered at the altar, his sword upraised, JULIA kneeling in prayer before it. Thunder and lightning during the scene.*

ZABDAS. Ye gods of crush'd Palmyra! embleming
The many virtues of the only one,
Here 'fore thy altar I throw down this sword,
Which in thy grace-forgotten city's cause—

Struck to the last. (*throws down sword*) There lies Palmyra too,
 Edgeless and glittering prostrate in the dust! (*thunder*)
 Rage on, ye thunder! for ye chide the deeds
 That rouse the anger of the ruling powers! (*lightning*)
 And flash, ye lightnings! for your gleaming ire
 Is witness that they see and pity us! (*murmurs, R.*)

A CITIZEN. See, Zabdas, soldiers of the Emperor!

ZABDAS. I must be sudden then. Julia! (*thunder*)

JULIA. (*rising*)

ZABDAS. Do you not hear? they come!

JULIA.

I'm ready, Zabdas.

Death's terrors have flown from me like a dream:
 To die were pleasant now.

ZABDAS. That's my brave girl! (*advances to her*)
 And yet so fair—so lov'd. Is this a time to prate?
 Can we not yet throw off the earth about us,
 And calmly look to heaven? To the altar,
 And let our proud pursuers meet us there
 And hear us speak from there! In the last hour
 Let us be victors o'er the conquerors,
 And noble 'bove nobility. (*they go up to the altar*)

Enter TITUS FLAVIUS, and SOLDIERS, R.

TITUS. To thee,

Lord Zabdas, I bear message from Aurelian,
 Commanding thee to yield the Princess up
 To his all-conquering hands.

ZABDAS. You hear him, Julia!
 Commands—let him command the dead to walk,
 And we'll obey him then.

JULIA. Go, tell your Emperor
 We scorn him, and defy him in his power!
 And from our sorrow, made by pride sublime,
 Pity and mock him yet.

TITUS. But hear me.

ZABDAS. Speak:
 And keep your eager soldiers back, or this
 Will foil your Emperor yet. (*shows dagger*)

TITUS. Back, sirs! (*SOLDIERS retire*) Aurelian
 Commissions me, in his imperial name,
 To grant your wishes as his own commands,
 As price of your immediate surrender.

ZABDAS. The liberal Emperor! Who can resist
 Such floods of magnanimity? Go, tell him
 I do accept his mercy!

JULIA. Zabdas! you—

ZABDAS. Yon shivering wretches!

Quail 'neath the Emperor's frown and dread his fury!
 Your honour, in Aurelian's name, to give
 Them liberty and life, and what remains
 In a few seconds more of us are yours.

TITUS. I promise it.

ZABDAS. On oath?

TITUS. On sacred oath!

ZABDAS. Live, thou despairing ones; go free, and leave
The Temple to the gods and us.

The People go out, R. 1 E.

TITUS. I'll keep

My word most faithfully; keep yours.

ZABDAS. I shall!

And thus (*raises dagger*) take all that will remain of us
That's man's to take, and man's to give. Our bodies,
Our souls, and lives, own them another lord's—
To whom, like faithful stewards, we offer back
His mighty own! Look, Romans, on her now!
Stately in beauty, like a throned angel
Radiant with virtue—glittering like a star,
With graces that inspire and garnish love!
Pure as the immaculate vestals, and more rich
In noble thoughts than mines of diamonds:
Up from the clogging and soul-cramping earth
She turns her eyes of light; and tearless, voiceless,
Majestic in her simpleness, she stands!
Her heart already up among the gods,
Her body only upon earth, which thus
I sever at a blow.

SPONTANEIUS *rushes in R. 1 E., as he speaks to ZABDAS in C., back to the audience.*

SOPHONIUS. Lord Zabdas,

Zenobia's free! the noble Gracchus lives—

The Emperor—— (in C., back to audience)

ZABDAS. Ha! art thou bought and sold.

Time chides me, and the quiver of my hand

Tells me my number'd moments. (SPONTANEIUS gets L.)

AUREL. (without) For your life

Hold your mad hand!

TITUS. The Emperor!

ZABDAS. He's welcome

To see a sacrifice in fall'n Palmyra.

I greet thee, Roman!

Enter AURELIAN, ZENOBLA, GRACCHUS, NOBLES, OFFICERS, &c., R.

ZENOBLA. (entering) Spare her, great Zabdas!

GRAC. (entering) Julia! my bride, my wife!

(JULIA, hearing his voice, utters a cry of delight and rushes forward to his arms; ZABDAS falls at the altar's foot, and the characters close anxiously and pitying round him; ZENOBLA gets to L. C.)

GRAC. We're free, my Julia, free!

Lands, honours all, in Rome,—an Emperor's love
And friendship to enhance the boon!

JULIA. My mother ! thee ! Am I in heaven, or on earth ?

AUREL. With men, not all confounded with the viler things
That are earth's slanders ! (JULIA crosses to AURELIAN)

ZENOBLA. (crossing c.) Where is Zabdus ?

ZABDUS. Here ! (the people support him forward, c.)

ZENOBLA. And dying !

ZABDUS. Free ! free as the air, my Queen !
Would you not have it so ?

ZENOBLA. I would ! I would !

ZABDUS. Stand from me ! give a great soul room to die !

For you there's a bright world yet, with summer in it !

For you. (to JULIA) Keep yet my secret—no, no tears

Conjure one smile, though it shine through thy tears

To set my soul free. Yes, there shines the sun !

The storm is all around—but there's the sun !

I see it in my blindness—feel its beams

Through this death-chill ! 'Tis on me as I go.

Unchain my heart—it clings to thee in death ;

It will not leave thee to the last—the last ! (he dies)

Curtain.