



W. Hill del.

MR. HOLMAN as EDWARD.

*how shall I thank thee
for this rich gift?*

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ALBINA,
COUNTESS RAIMOND.

A
TRAGEDY.

By MRS. COWLEY.

ADAPTED FOR
THEATRICAL REPRESENTATION,
AS PERFORMED AT THE
THEATRE-ROYAL, HAY-MARKET.

REGULATED FROM THE PROMPT-BOOK,
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LONDON:

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1797.

TO THE
RIGHT HON. LORD HARROWBY.

MY LORD,

ALBINA had the honour of being known to your Lordship, almost from her infancy. Her faults, and her graces, you are already acquainted with, as she grew up in some measure beneath your Lordship's eye. She is now arrived at maturity; and if in her present state, my Lord, you should find her more polished, than when she had last the honour of your attention, it is chiefly owing to the hints with which you then favoured me.

I have honour to be,

My Lord,

Your Lordship's grateful,

And obedient humble Servant,

H. COWLEY.

THE LIFE OF MRS. H. COWLEY.

THIS lady is the daughter of Mr. Parkhouse, of Tiverton, in Devonshire—distantly related to the family of the celebrated Mr. Gay. Her husband, Mr. Cowley, has enjoyed a place under government, and occasionally employed himself in literary pursuits.

Mrs. Cowley has been a very successful writer for the stage, each of her performances having met with applause. Her first production, the *Runaway*, received some touches from the hand of Mr. Garrick. It was first performed at Drury-lane theatre, in 1776, and, as well as all her subsequent pieces, was received by the town, after repeated exhibitions, with considerable approbation. Her other productions are:—

2. *Who's the Dupe?* A Farce, performed at Drury-lane theatre, in 1779.

3. *Albina*, a Tragedy, acted at the Hay-market theatre, in 1779. In a preface to the first edition of this play, Mrs. Cowley charges the Managers of Drury-lane and Covent-garden theatres with unfair practices while it was in their hands. In this she is not singular. Similar charges have been often made by other authors: but, probably, they originated more in their own fancy than in the conduct of the Managers.

4. *The Belle's Stratagem*, a Comedy, performed at Covent-garden theatre, in 1780. A despicable Comedy, of the same title, made its appearance in the following year. This is only mentioned, to prevent the reader from mistaking it for Mrs. Cowley's.

5. *The School for Eloquence*, an Interlude, acted for Mr. Brereton's benefit, at Drury-lane theatre, in 1780. This piece was intended to ridicule the number of disputing clubs which at that time infested the metropolis.

 PROLOGUE.*

[Prompter, speaking without.]

PRAY, Sir, come back—come back—the Author swears,
That, if you speak—

Hang Authors and their airs!

*I say, I will speak, though she burst with rage:
What right has she upon our Summer stage?—
With dismal stories, and long acts in verse,
Solemn, and slow-pac'd, as a midnight horse?
Bid her march off—troop back again to Drury—
There! there's a look! Defend me from the fury.
Hey-day! from floor to roof, display'd in rows,
As though we shiver'd in December snows!
'Tis dev'lish odd!—Beneath a burning sky
Who'd crowd in here, to pant, and sob, and cry,
Whilst madmen swagger, or their madams die?
'Twas my advice to keep these doors close shut
Against that ranting, bloody-minded slut,
Melpomene. I never yet could see
Those charms of her's—I'm sure she's none for me.
My mistress—little Thal.—you know I mean,
The laughing Princess of the comic scene—
—She sent me here, and dubb'd me Plenipo.
“Dear Parsons! Quick!” she cry'd, “this instant go!*

* The first part of this Prologue, which was intended for Mr. Parsons, was not spoken on the Stage.

" Fly to yon audience, who in judgment sit,
 " And plead our cause before the Jury Pit.
 " Tell 'em this Authoring abjures my reign,
 " To fill my haughty sister's sanguine train;
 " A lawless rebel, from my banner flown—
 " —I call for justice—justice from the town!"
 I'll do't, said I; and then, in aid of you,
 My wrongs I'll usher to their worships' view.
 Me she forsakes; her little Dolly slights,
 He who hath toil'd so many weary nights,
 And talk'd of Algebra, and Greek, and Latin,
 Till larned Scholars could no word squeeze pat-in.
 Down with her tragedy! down, down, ye wits!
 For me, and Thal. the fickle baggage quits.
 Spoil her heroics! her new buskins doff!
 And then—

Monster! [Enter Mrs. Massey.
 You there! oh, oh, I'm off, I'm off!

[Exit,

Not write in tragic style!—Pray tell me why?
 Sure those who made you laugh, may make you cry.

WHEN the light scenes our Author's pencil drew,
 Extorted—all she ask'd—a smile from you;
 Her grateful mind a new born ardour caught,
 A loftier fancy, and sublimer thought:
 To her rapt eye the martial ages rose;
 And, as her muse impell'd, her story flows,

'Tis true, she calls you from the tempting shade,
 The zephyr'd meadow, and the leafy glade;
 And not to cheer with Satire's poignant hit,
 Ironic Humour, or the flash of Wit.
 Her wand she waves; and instant to your eyes
 Tempestuous passions, guilty deeds, arise!
 For these our Author's magic line was drawn;
 For these she bids you from the fragrant lawn:—
 To rend with fear, to melt with tender woe,
 And bid the graceful drops of pity flow.
 Majestic Nature's plan she follows there,
 Who, when thick vapours clog the sultry air,
 When glowing Sirius, from his fervid eye,
 Sends noxious languors through the sick'ning sky,
 Arou'd—amidst her thunders she appears,
 And in terrific grandeur strikes our ears!
 The wide-stretch'd concave blackens with her ire;
 Through lab'ring æther darts the living fire;
 The heav'ns, the earth, all aid her mighty rage,
 And elements with wrathful elements engage!
 Then—whilst the trembling world is lost in fears—
 She melts the lurid clouds in healthful tears.

Your tears we mean to prompt, whilst you, secure
 Amidst the coming storm the wreck endure;
 Harmless our tempest roars within this pale,
 Whilst ventilators catch the cooling gale.
 But should a tempest in your quarter rise,
 'T would scare us more than thunder in the skies:
 Guiltless to you the storm within these doors;
 Do you then save us harmless, Sirs, from your's.

Dramatis Personae.

Men.

KING, - - - - - Mr. USHER.
WESTMORELAND, - - - - - Mr. DIGGES.
EDWARD, - - - - - Mr. DIMOND.
GONDIBERT, - - - - - Mr. PALMER.
EGBERT, - - - - - Mr. AICKIN.
OFFICER, - - - - - Mr. EGAN.
OSWALD, - - - - - Mr. R. PALMER.
STEWARD to Westmoreland, - Mr. GARDNER.

Women.

ALBINA, - - - - - Mrs. MASSEY.
EDITHA, - - - - - Miss SHERRY.
ADELA, - - - - - Mrs. POUSSIN.
INA, - - - - - Mrs. LE FEVRE.

Guards and Attendants.



ALBINA.

ACT I. SCENE I.

*A Magnificent Hall in the Gothic style. Enter the Earl of
WESTMORELAND and a Gentleman.*

Westmoreland.

BEAR back my duty to my royal master ;
Tell him I will obey his gracious summons,
And meet the council at th' appointed hour :
—Yet would I hope the flying rumour false.

Gent. Too well, my Lord, the tidings are confirm'd ;
Again the sacrilegious Turk hath broke
The peace he ask'd—again the crescent's rear'd
Upon the holy plains, whilst yellow streamers,
Fann'd by the wanton air, which late embrac'd
The christian standard, to the world proclaim
The impious war.

West. Give back the years, O time !
When such a tale as this had fir'd my soul,
And sped me to th' unrighteous camp, on wings
Of holy zeal ! The fire's not yet extinct,

But cank'ring age the sinews of my youth
Hath eat away.

Gent. Be not thus thankless to an age,
Which in its slow advance, to gain a welcome,
Brought honours, triumphs, and a nation's love!

West. Forbear! thou com'st a messenger of war;
Away then with the flatt'ring arts of peace,
And deal in words more suited to the times!

Gent. Your pardon, Lord! know then, the King
in haste

Orders his vet'ran nobles to attend him.

A powerful army he'll in person lead
To Asia's plains. Ten thousand choicest warriors
Mean time are his precursors to the field,
Led on by him they love—the gallant Edward—
Who, ere the down of youth forsook his cheek,
Deeds had perform'd that laurell'd age might envy.

West. His manhood will fulfill his youth's fair pro-
mise—

—A star, or I mistake, which rose in splendour,
And will in glory set. Had Heav'n bestow'd
On me a son like him, without regret
I'd sink into the arms of nerveless age;
Count his exploits, grow vain upon his conquests;
And, when my country claim'd her ancient warrior,
I'd proudly show my son. [withheld,

Gent. Though from your prayers a son hath been
A daughter was bestow'd, so rich in graces,
So excellent in mind—

West. She's my heart's darling—

—My only pledge of chaste connubial love!
Her mother's beauty, and her mother's worth,
Survive the grave—They live in my Albina!

Enter a Servant.

Serv. The Lord Edward, with earnestness, demands
An audience of your grace.

West. Instant admit him. [Ex. Serv. and Gent.
He comes, to boast a soldier's happiness.

Enter Lord EDWARD.

West. Welcome, young hero! I partake the transport
Which this high honour, this unsought command,
Must give a heart—panting, like your's—for glory.

Edw. My Lord! [Confusedly.

West. How's this? have I misread your heart?
Now, whilst our fiery youth are all in arms,
And martial ardours dart from ev'ry eye;
Edward, as if oppress'd with maiden shame,
Blushing, averts his head—

Edw. Well may I blush!

The soldier, chosen by the King, to lead
His warlike bands, and carry Britain's thunder
To holy Zion's gates—he whose rapt bosom,
No flame, but glory, should confess—
—He stands before you, with a fainting heart,
To tell a tale—of love.

West. The time's unapt;
Yet 'tis a tale at which a soldier needs not blush.
He, who most ardent in the sanguine field,

Contemning danger, braves the whizzing storm;
He is most fit to storm a maid's reluctance,
He best deserves the happiness of love.

Edw. This, from a hero's mouth, warrants my sighs.
Edward no longer then shall fear to own
The power of silken tresses, and fair eyes:
But, Westmoreland! with equal patience hear
That she, who in my heart hath rais'd this flame—
—She, who doth pityless receive its sighs,
Is matchless Raimond—is thy beauteous daughter!

West. Heaven, I thank thee! [*Aside.*] Is this a sudden
Bred from the fever of hot youthful blood? [*passion,*
Or kindled by some casual glance?

Edw. Oh, no!

A faithful love—with my existence twisted;
Nor know I when th' attachment first began.
Deep in my heart she'd fix'd her beauteous image,
When, by my father sent, I England left
For distant lands.

West. So early!

Edw. E'en so early.

Ere glory or ambition touch'd my breast,
Albina fill'd it with resistless love.

West. Had you disclos'd your passion to my daughter?

Edw. If the unartful language of mine eyes
Disclos'd the tale, she knew I was her slave;
But youthful bashfulness seal'd up my lips:
And when I left—reluctant—Albion's shores,
Not one soft glance my longing eye could catch,
To sooth the raging passion in my breast.

West. But Gallia's shores a ready cure bestow'd:
Her beauties kindly heal the wounds they give,
Nor let their lovers languish in their chains.

Edw. In vain the beauties of the Gallic court
Spread out their nets—In vain the dames of Italy
Display'd their charms—Impatient I return'd
To lay my heart at your Albina's feet—
—Oh day of horror! She was wife of Raimond!
Fury, despair, seiz'd my distracted mind—
I curs'd his fortune, curs'd myself, and loath'd
His hated name——

West. Young Lord, you do forget
Earl Raimond was my son—the chosen husband
To whom I gave Albina.

Edw. Oh pardon, Sir, the transports of my grief,
Which, at this distant period, shake my frame,
And guess from them what Edward hath endur'd!
Earl Raimond's arms, and mine, against the Saracens
Our monarch did command—and then I prov'd
That I was worthy of Albina's hand.

West. Your valiant acts by fame have been proclaim'd.

Edw. Of fame, of valour, 'tis not that I boast,
'Tis not the prowess of my arm in war,
'Tis of a deed a Roman might have claim'd,
And you will thank——

West. You warm my expectation.

Edw. 'Twas on a day, when truce had been proclaim'd,
I pass'd beyond the lines, t'observe the foe.
Directed by the gleams of burnish'd mail,
Within the bosom of a tufted thicket,

Three Saracens, waging unequal fight
 Against one English warrior, I espy'd.
 My bounding courser bore me to the spot—
 There Raimond I beheld, o'erpow'r'd and prone.
 Lifting this temper'd sword, I cleft the arm
 Which, aiming at his heart, had instant pierc'd it—
 He rose with strength renew'd, and we grew victors.

West. Talk not of Roman, 'twas a Briton's act,
 And well became a Christian warrior.

Go to Albina—boldly speak your passion—
 She must, she shall reward thy truth and honour!
 Tell her, her father doth approve thy suit,
 And speeds thee, with his wishes, to her heart.

Edw. For this, O noble Westmoreland! I thank thee;
 But vainly I've assail'd with warmest vows
 Albina's heart: sorrow, like a chill atmosphere,
 The beauteous dame surrounds, quenching each dart—
 Each burning dart of love.—

West. Oh, you've not yet been vers'd in women's ways.
 You, who can brave Bellona, when she shakes
 Her iron locks, I warrant, are dismay'd
 At Beauty's frown, and tremble if she sweeps
 Her train in scorn: but you must learn t' o'erlook
 An hundred follies—vanity behold
 In every shifting form, and yet be pleas'd—
 Still patiently admire, or never hope
 To win fantastic woman.

Edw. Oh, such services
 Albina never claim'd; yet, if she did,
 Whole years I'd spend to gratify her taste,

And would be any thing to please her fantasy—
 But now, to those sweet homages which love
 Delights to pay, a cruel period's fix'd—

Within three days, England I quit for Palestine.
West. 'Tis a short period. It will scarcely serve

To break a piece of gold, or carve her name,
 With your's entwin'd, on some young willow's bark.

Edw. Ah, my good Lord, treat not my griefs thus
 For if I leave your daughter, Raimond's widow, [lightly!]

I go to certain death—if Edward's bride,
 I will return in triumph to her arms,

Lay my proud laurels at Albina's feet,
 And seek no future glory, but her love.

West. Well, to my daughter I will plead your cause.
 This do I owe the love your father bore me,
 And to the fame your virtues have attain'd—
 Here meet me in an hour, and hope success.

Edw. This—this, O Westmoreland! I dar'd to hope;
 Yet joy and gratitude, like fires confin'd,
 Struggle within my heart for room—for utterance—
 My tongue, unus'd to descant on felicity,
 Denies its words—yet trust to me—

West. Nay, keep them
 For purposes more fit; words may win ladies,
 But soldiers must be won by deeds! [*Exeunt severally.*]

SCENE II.

The Garden of ALBINA. Enter EDITHA and ADELA.

Edi. Why shines the sun thus gaily on the world?
 Why do the feather'd habitants of air

With melody, and cheery songs, insult me?
Is it to prove that, 'mongst all Nature's beings,
I am the most unblest? Th' unconscious birds
Chant songs of gratitude for good possess'd;
I know no good—I feel no gratitude—
—An outcast, and undone!

Ad. Your sorrows, Madam,
Seem to gain strength with time!

Edi. To griefs like mine,
Time brings no lenient balm. Each dawning day,
Is a fresh witness of my abject state.
Born, Adela, to an exalted rank,
Bright pomp attending on my early years,
And blessings springing round me as I trod—
—Oh! thou should'st wonder that my swelling soul
Can stoop a moment to this vile dependence—
—It cannot stoop! Misfortune bears upon me,
But my aspiring mind is unsubdu'd.

Ad. You think too deeply; sorrows keen as yours
Are frequent in the page of human life.

Edi. 'Tis from our feelings sorrows take their force—
—And what are mine? State, fortune, rank, with all
The joys they bring, torn from my eager grasp—
—Torn from my grasp, still present to my thoughts;
Their shadows haunt me whilst I bend my knee,
And humbly take, with thanks, my daily bread!

Ad. Alas! you think unjustly of the Countess;
Still amiable and good, she soothes your griefs,
And, with unceasing kindness—

Edi. Ha! her kindness?

And was I born to bear Albina's kindness?
Thou, who art left the sole remaining wreck
Of my lost grandeur, knew'st me once her equal.
Her goodness tortures me—Earl Sibald's heir
Should grant, and not receive; she should protect,
Not seek protection.

Ad. Though now dependent,
Yet still such blessings do attend your state—

Edi. Thou, Adela! to low dependence born,
Enjoy'st its little comforts; me they torture.
The height from which I fell, I must reclimb—
—The tow'ring eagle builds not with the thrush,
Nor stoops to batten with the lowly wren.

Ad. Why struggle thus with fate? the noble Countess
Studies your welfare, and deserves your love.

Edi. Had I ne'er fall'n, and were I not dependent,
I might perhaps esteem, nay, I might love her;
But now!—hear my whole soul—then think, my Adela!
How I must love her! Know that 'tis through Edward,
Through Edward only, I could hope to gain
The glorious steep from which my fate hath cast me—
But this Albina—she whom I must love,
Hath caught his sordid vows in nets of gold.

Ad. Is't possible? Lord Edward!

Edi. Even him.

Ad. Sure 'twas his father that brought woe on your's;
He wing'd the ruin that o'erwhelms your house—
—He caus'd the ills you mourn.

Edi. Have I forgot it?
No—His stern loyalty made me an orphan,

And Edward shall repair my bitter wrongs.

The only good Editha can accept,

Is to partake his greatness, and his name.—

—That would be bliss; all less than that is insult.

Ad. Will then Lord Edward—will this bliss be your's?

Edi. The Countess stands 'twixt me and all my hopes.

Had fortune smil'd less lavishly on her,

Edward's whole heart had been resign'd to me—

And I restor'd to all my native honours.

Ad. And why not still? for she, reserv'd and cold,

With unselecting eye, beholds her lovers,

And Edward sinks unmark'd amidst the crowd.

Edi. So may he still!

Raimond scorn Edward! and thou, Edward, know

That all my native hate is but suspended—

—My mind's in equipoise, ready alike

To hold thee as my lover, or my foe!

Ad. The Countess and her father come this way.

Edi. Ha! then retire unseen. [*Exit Adela.*] My low

May make me deem'd obtruder on their privacy— [estate

—This bow'r conceals me. [*Enters the bow'er.*

Enter WESTMORELAND and ALBINA.

Alb. Oh, my good lord, urge not your daughter thus!

Ne'er be it said of noble Raimond's widow,

That she grew sick of weeds in one short year,

And lightly chang'd them for the bridal vest. [hours,

West. Full fourteen months have led their pensive

Since the sad obsequies of your dead lord:—

He was the husband of my choice, whom you

In duty took—

Alb. And will in duty mourn.

Nay, had Albina's heart forgot the virtues,

Which made her lord so worthy of its love;

Yet still she dares not slight the laws of custom,

Nor to licentious tongues give themes for slander.

West. Enough to custom, and to grief, thou'st giv'n.

Wilt waste thy blooming youth in widowhood,

Because some months you bore the name of Wife?

Alb. I have not sworn to know no second love.

To Raimond's mem'ry grant another year;

And then—in truth, my Lord, you prompt my tongue

Beyond discretion's bounds.

West. Come, come, Albina;

Though to a lover you might wear this guise

Of coy reserve; yet, to a father's eye,

Your mind should now appear as legible

As in the days of prattling infancy.

Raimond deserv'd the tribute of your tears,

And you have wept a deluge to his manes.

Consider now, the brave, the youthful Edward—

The prize for whom contending beauties strive!

His name and wealth amongst the first are rank'd,

And he stands high in royal Henry's favour.

Alb. I know his merits, and I know his love;

Nay, I will own that when my dying Lord

From Palestina wrote, he gave me charge,

That if again the holy marriage bonds

I e'er should wear, that I should chuse—beyond

All others chuse—his friend, the noble Edward;

But did not bid me hymeneals sing
Upon his turfless grave.

West. Then sing his dirge,
And with it join Lord Edward's, who'll perchance
Be soon entomb'd—victim alike of love
And war.

Alb. Say you, my Lord!

West. I say, my lady,
That in three days Edward returns to Palestine.
Our Royal Master hath on him bestow'd
The levies for the holy war; from which
He'll ne'er return, save he leaves you his wife.

Alb. Can this be true?—Or do you mean to try
If in my heart there is not hid more love
For Edward, than modesty would own?

West. Truly not:
Modesty hath not wove so thick a shade
As to conceal your love. To Holy Land
He surely goes;—in triumph to return,
Or hopeless die—Albina must decree.

Alb. Then coy reserve, and women's arts, adieu!
Danger tears off the veil—
Oh, spare my burning blushes whilst I own,
Edward is dearer to Albina's heart
Than fame or conquest to the beaver'd soldier.

West. Well said, my child!—

Alb. When on Lord Raimond you bestow'd my hand,
E'en then the image of the blooming Edward
Made duty—to my heart—an arduous task;
But virtue aided my devoted mind,

Whilst Raimond's worth, and manly tenderness,
Had, I believ'd, converted all my love—
—'Till freedom taught, that virtue had but hid,
Not rased, the deep impression.

West. Well may my heart be proud of such a daughter!
Oh, the pure transport!—the exalted joy!
By fav'ring Heaven for parents' minds reserv'd,
When in the fiery combat of the passions,
Their children rise, victorious from the trial!
By honour led—by sacred virtue crown'd!
To thee I give a child's most glorious meed,
To thee I give a Father's grateful thanks.

Alb. Alas! my Lord, you much o'errate a duty,
In which to fail, were gross—were deadly shame.

West. The best reward, Albina, now awaits thee;
Thy Edward loves thee—loves with fervent truth—
—Yield then thy hand, to him who wears thy heart;
Let me, to-morrow, greet Lord Edward—son!

Alb. Oh grant a longer space—a few short days,
To cheer the sadness from my widow'd brow,
Lest I insult the blissful marriage feast
With pensiveness, ill-suited to the day!

West. Within three days Edward must England quit,
—Must quit the land where Peace and Beauty reign,
For hostile camps, and scenes of savage war!
To-morrow, then, consent to be his bride—
—To-morrow, bless the man thy country honours!
A father—'tis a father asks the boon.

Alb. The boon my father ask'd, my heart or lips
Have never yet denied; to-morrow, then—
—Since you, my Lord, command—to-morrow's sun

Beholds Lord Raimond's widow Edward's bride.

West. Then all that's good shine doubly in its beams!
Ye passing moments, bear away her sorrows!
Ye which approach, come fledg'd with young delights.
—Lead on the dawn that crowns her truth and virtue;
Be it distinguish'd in Time's circling ring,
Mark'd out with blessings and peculiar joys—
—The favour'd morn that makes Albina happy!

[*Exeunt.*]

Enter EDITHA from the Bower.

Edi. Be it accurst! Oh torture! are my hopes,
Like airy visions, fled? The darling hope,
Which hath enrich'd life's barren scenes, is vanish'd,
And I awake to horror! mad'ning thought!
Albina triumphs—and Editha's scorn'd!
All that remains of yesterday's gay dream
Is to behold a haughty rival's bliss—
At grov'ling distance, see her tow'ring fate,
And pine away a hated life in envy.

Enter ALBINA.

Alb. In tears, Editha! Whence such marks of woe,
Whilst joy and happiness beam forth on me?

Edi. When I have cause, I too shall boast of joy,
And brave the mischiefs of the scorning world. [*passion,*]

Alb. Hear then a cause! You know, with ardent
The noble Edward long hath sought my love—
Now know, that, though conceal'd, the tender flame
Within my bosom glow'd; and that, to-morrow,
The holy rites will sanctify our love.

Edi. You, therefore, may rejoice—but on Editha

What glorious fortune beams, that she must yield
Her heart to joy, and dress her face in smiles? [you?]

Alb. What bliss e'er shone on me, that reach'd not
Come, chase away this unavailing gloom!
Albina is your friend; and, in her love,
Thou shalt find shelter from the world's cold frowns.

Edi. More hateful is this insolence of goodness,
More cutting, than contempt. [*Aside.*] I thank you,
madam.

Well do I know I am your bounty's creature:
Your table feeds me, and your coffers clothe.
I, who boast ancestry as great as your's,
Am now dependent on your charity.

Alb. And blame you me for this, unjust Editha?
Your ruin'd fortunes often have I mourn'd,
And sooth'd your sorrows with a sister's kindness.
Methinks you lack your usual courtesy.

Edi. Your pardon, Lady!—
You know I am not fashion'd like my sex;
I have no sympathy for lovers' feelings;
Their hopes, their fears, their soft solicitudes,
Have here no unison—the fire which animates
My breast is a true flame—'tis bright Ambition!

Alb. Ambition was not meant for feeble woman.
Leave it the boist'rous sex, whose minds capacious
Are aptly fitted to so proud a guest!
A sweeter province Nature gave to us—
As a fond parent to its last-born child,
For woman she reserv'd her choicest gift,
And call'd the blessing—Love—

Edi. Love! be thou ever stranger to my heart!
Thee, more than age, or ugliness, I dread!
Who gives thee place, a ruthless serpent bosoms
To poison her repose, and snare her virtue!
Thou merciless dost wreck the virgin's fame—
Shadowing all her cheerful morn of life,
As dreary vapours veil the bright Aurora,
Folding in dismal gloom the springing day.
The curse pronounc'd on disobedient woman
In love is wrapp'd, inflicted, and fulfill'd.

Alb. Oh, 'tis all false! Thou dost profane the source
From whence our blessings spring.
The heart untouch'd by love, is like a lute,
Whose pow'rs the master never hath call'd forth,
Or with unskilful finger struck harsh discords;
Yet touch with truth the strings, and harmony will flow,
And tones mellifluous enchant the ear,
Filling with melting music empty space.
When these effusions of a female heart
Thou can'st with patience bear—Editha, find me!

[*Exit.*]

Edi. First will I find Lord Gondibert.—
What revolutions hath this love accomplish'd!
And shall less power belong to bright ambition?
Ambition! thou whose hallow'd flame can live
Only in minds refin'd from the gross elements
Of which the herd of human kind are made!
This deity of fools shall yield to thee.
I'll straight to Gondibert, whose long-pent passion
Will, like a torrent, from its mound break forth,

O'erwhelming its opposers: his fierce transports
With the soft voice of friendship I will meet,
And guide them to my purpose.

ACT II. SCENE I.

*A Gothic Colonnade. Enter GONDIBERT, followed by
EGBERT.*

Egbert.

MY Lord, your sorrows pierce my aged heart;
But I entreat you lend an ear to reason!

Gon. Reason! Distraction!

Eg. When you, my Lord, did study in the schools,
I've heard you much of Reason talk, Philosophy,
And Virtue—now, when all their force you want,
You spurn them, with a blind contempt, away.

Gon. They have no force, no pow'r, beyond the
schools [preach 'em

Where they are taught. Dost think the fools who
E'er felt, like me, the energies of passion,
Or the keen torture of an hopeless love?

Eg. That it is hopeless, is a cause—

Gon. For madness—Cease, Egbert—thy chilly blood,
Creeping with torpid motion through thy veins,
Ill suits thee for a counsellor to me.

Give me one made of fire! one whose high mind,
Superior to the bugbears of his childhood,
Makes Virtue and Philosophy his servants;
Nor stoops to be their slave!

Eg. Think on the bars,
Th' eternal bars, that Heav'n hath plac'd between you!
Think—she's your sister!

Gon. Curses on the word!
It is a viper's sting—an incantation,
That conjures up an hundred fiends to rack me.
Oh! were she not my sister!—Egbert, Egbert!
I could turn girl, to think on what I've lost—
—But two short days before my brother's marriage,
I from the war return'd; and the first hour
She met my ravish'd eyes—was at the altar.

Eg. It was, in truth, my Lord, a trying moment.

Gon. Oh! should the curtain'd sun, in full refusal
Dart through the shadows of the night his beams; [g]ence,
Not more amaze would seize the minds of mortals,
Than seiz'd on me when I beheld Albina.

Oh, my curst fortune! one short week had sav'd me.
For sure the ardours of my burning love—
—The pow'rful pleadings of my youth and form—

Must soon have taught the timid, beauteous maid,
That Raimond were for Gondibert well chang'd.

Eg. Your sorrow, then, you virtuously o'ercame;
Why should it now break out with strength renew'd?

Gon. Will she not wed again?—

I could have borne my life without more bliss
Than the soft rights which custom gives a brother;
To see her ev'ry day—to fix my eyes,
Whole hours, with doating love, upon her face—
To feast my ears with the bewitching music
Of her sweet voice—Oh, 'twas a mine of happiness!

Eg. It was a snare that might have plung'd ye both
In irremediable woe!

Gon. Impossible!

For I do swear, such mast'ry of my passion
Had I obtain'd, to such refinement rais'd it,
Angels with greater purity ne'er lov'd:
No wish unhallow'd liv'd within my breast.
But shall she to another yield her heart—
Yield her whole self?—

Earth open first, and swallow me! or snatch him—
Oh swift perdition!—snatch him from his joys! [sions!]

Eg. Oh, yield not thus, my Lord, to your wild pas-
Like caleutures, they will mislead your reason,
With images that no where do exist,
But in their own false colours.

Gon. He—this Edward,

As my ill star, doth ever cross my fortune.
His headlong valour in the field my name
Obscur'd; and in the tournament at Orleans,
In th' eye of France, he bore from me the crown:
And now he tears away the scanty bliss,
Which, whilst I did possess, I envy'd not
His trophies, or his fame.

Eg. Then be reveng'd!

Strive to regain the fame of which he robs you—
Court glory—woo her in the fields of death!
She's the fit mistress for your rank and years!
Oh, shame! to waste those days in languid sighs,
In which your mighty ancestors obtain'd
Their deathless names, by deeds of hardy valour,—

In guarding their dear country's precious rights.

Gon. Albina wed! No.—

All arts I'll try; and, if they fail, this arm—

This arm shall drench their marriage-torch in blood!

[*Exit.*]

Eg. How do rude passions the fair mind destroy,
Bestow'd by Heav'n from the all-perfect source!
This Gondibert would once have shrunk from vice,
As the chaste plant that bears no mortal touch.
From infancy I've watch'd his springing virtues;
Seen him beat back misfortunes when they clung,
Like wary cowards, on each other's skirts;
And bear, with fortitude, affliction's stripes:
But now, unballow'd love the pile destroys;
And vice will triumph o'er the noble ruin.
Still must I save him. If one spark of virtue
Yet hovers in his mind—Oh, grant me, Heaven!
To kindle it afresh, and be the flame immortal! [*Exit.*]

SCENE II.

An Apartment. EDWARD and ALBINA discovered sitting on a Couch.

Edw. [*rising.*] Blest be the orders which thou deem'st
so cruel,

But for the King's command, more irksome years
I might have sigh'd, without a gleam of hope,
Nor known—On transport! I was dear to thee.
That rapt'rous thought is sure presage of vict'ry—
—'Twill give thy Edward's arm resistless force,

And fire his soul with more than mortal valour.

Alb. Ah! Love, that fill'd your breast, whilst doubts
Did feed its flame, already yields to glory. [and fears

Your eye, by strong imagination fir'd,
Impatient glances through the burnish'd field—

—The clang of arms arouses ev'ry sense—

The songs of triumph vibrate on your ear—

—Love and Albina are alike forgot,

And you're again the hero!

Edw. Then may cowardice

Enerve this arm, when with our valiant hosts

I shall oppose the mockers of our faith!

May I forsake, in sight of armed nations,

The holy cross, and, trembling, plead for mercy,

If for one moment I forget Albina!

'Tis o'er thy charms mine eye impatient roves—

—The ardours of my love, that you accuse.

Alb. Will you i' th' battle's conflict think on me?

And will you, when seducing glory prompts

To some advent'rous charge—remember then,

That 'tis Albina's life which you expose?

Edw. O glory! conquest! what are ye to this?

Yes, I do swear, thou mistress of my fate!

Thy bright enchanting image shall with-hold me,

When a rash enterprise may court my daring,

Mine is no common life—to thee united;

Mark'd out for bliss extreme, and boundless joy,

As thine I will preserve.

Alb. Here is my picture.

When the shrill trumpet gives the awful signal—

Ere, in the dreadful ardour of the fight,
 Reflection's lost—Oh bind it on your arm!
 When you do look on't, think you see its smiles
 To horror turn'd; the cheerful eye bedim'd
 With ceaseless tears; its lips reproaching you
 With deeming lightly of the life engag'd
 To her, whose form it bears.

Edw. How shall I thank thee
 For this right gift? It is a talisman
 Which will protect me when hemm'd in by dangers,
 And turn aside death's blunted arrows.

Enter a Female Attendant.

Att. Lord Gondibert, if it so please you, madam,
 Hath weighty matters for your private ear. [Exit.

Edw. Lord Gondibert!

Alb. He hath a brother's right;
 And doth regard me for his brother's sake.
 Indulge us now, my Lord, with privacy!
 'Tis the sole day—oh, may the sound delight thee!
 In which thou wilt not claim all embassies to me.

Edw. Farewel then, sweet! farewell, my sweet Al-
 How dear, how precious, doth the time become, [bina!
 Enrich'd with happiness like mine! To leave thee
 A moment now, seems a lost age in love. [Exit.

Enter GONDIBERT.

Con. Pardon th' obtruder, madam, who, unbidden,
 Breaks on your happy hours—

Alb. This stern excuse,

And that impassion'd air, seem meant for chiding;
 Such looks sit strangely on a brother's brow—
 They're most unkind!

Con. Smiles, and unruffled looks,
 Become those favour'd youths, who, at the feet
 Of rigid Beauty may—oh! Raimond, bear with me!
 Fain would I speak to thee with angel's softness,
 But tides of passion bear my wishes down!

Alb. Of what would'st speak?

Con. Of him.

Alb. Of whom? Lord Edward?

Con. Yes, he—Edward—your Paramour!

Alb. How's this?

Is this—this rude reproof, from Gondibert? [brother,

Con. From whom then should it, madam, but his
 Whose memory you wear so light? These sables
 Ill suit the wanton spirit of your eyes;

Your air, as ill, the sober guise of widowhood. [lege

Alb. Surely, my Lord, you stretch a brother's privi-
 Beyond its bounds. Doth Gondibert presume—
 —Doth he Albina dare accuse, in words

That would besit the loosest of her sex? [Weeps.

Con. Would all your passions might thus melt in
 And weep themselves away! The probe of truth [tears,
 Doth touch you, Lady—you must bear it still.

The public voice condemns your eager marriage;

And maidens blush, that she, who lately shone

The bright, the envied sample of their sex,

Now sudden, like a panting fawn, o'ersprings

The fence—that painfully she hath endur'd.

Alb. Tears would disgrace me now. Bethink you,
'Tis Raimond's widow whom you thus insult— [Sir,
'Tis his—your brother's honour, which you wound
With these base taunts. I do believe you're false.
The public voice dares not arraign my conduct—
—Or, if it did—the brother of Lord Raimond
Should surely punish, not avow their slanders.

Gon. Oh he would trample on the slanderer
Of Raimond's faithful widow—with his blood—
—With life itself, defend her name, and honour;
But the coarse slanders thrown on Edward's wife,
He can behold unmov'd, and unreveng'd.

Alb. The wife of Edward needs no other arm;
He will protect me; he's my guard and champion.

Gon. Then arm him! and in me behold the guard,
The champion, of dead Raimond's memory—
—Dishonour'd by your passion.

Alb. Ha! dishonour'd!
Where's the proud dame, whose glory would not be
Lord Edward's love? Is there a fame so bright
In Henry's court? His noble birth is vulgar,
Placed by his nobler qualities. His mind
Knowledge illumines, and bright virtue loves.

Gon. Perish his fame—his virtues!—I abhor him.

Alb. He who abhors my Edward, must shun me.—
Farewel, my Lord! Henceforward he alone
Can meet a welcome here, who pays just tribute
To Edward's worth. [Exit.

Gon. Oh, stay—Albina, stay!
Ha, gone! Curse on my fierce impetuous passions!

What have I done? I've work'd her up to hatred—
In the sole moment that my fate allow'd
To win her from the purpose which undoes me.
Fool! fool! were such the arts I had devis'd?
Fury, and threats, are ye the wiles of love?
Oh, I have fix'd my fate!—Albina will be Edward's.
Hold, hold, thou cracking brain!—one hope's still left—
One road's still open, to prevent their marriage,
Or to escape the woe. I'll challenge Edward:
He falls, or I; and which, to me is equal. [Going.

Enter EDITHA.

Edi. Thou child of fury! Victim of blind passions!
Why challenge Edward?

Gon. Why! because I hate him,
My vengeance and my love demand the trial—
Both he must satisfy, or both destroy.

Edi. Obey their impulse—Be reveng'd and happy!
But risk not on a rival's sword thy life. [umph;

Gon. Ha! how?—what, meanly steal a coward's tri-
Snatch a vile conquest that my sword might purchase—
—Creep, an assassin, on his guardless hours!—

Edi. Still wilfully, my Lord, you wrest my words.
No plot upon his life I've form'd—Then hear me!
On what pretences can'st thou challenge Edward?
Wilt thou proclaim thy love for Raimond? No.
Love so unsanction'd starts from human customs,
And from all human laws. Yet still methinks
He should not win the Countess.

Gon. Should not! shall not,

Edi. With what an insolent content he left her—
 He pass'd me! but too full of bliss was he,
 To see an object less than his Albina.
 Sudden it struck me—now, with how much ease
 This haughty joy might be transform'd to woe!
 Thy heart now swelling with triumphant passion,
 A little word, that touch'd it with suspicion,
 Would, with a serpent's tooth, its raptures cure.
 Suspicion, once awaken'd, never sleeps.

Con. Suspicion! of Albina!

Edi. Yes—suspicion.

Infuse its poison!—'twill be balm to thee.

Con. Impossible!—

Resplendent lilies, that in deserts bloom,
 Where man's licentious eye hath never roam'd,
 Boast less unsullied pureness than her mind.

Edi. Though to the world she spotless may appear
 As mountain snow, yet can no doubtful tint
 By a suspicious brother be discern'd?
 Lord Raimond may have trusted Gondibert
 With fears that he kept chary from the world;
 Or, may not you in some unguarded moment—
 —Admitted by a brother's rights, have caught
 Her frigid virtue melting at the suit
 Of some young Paramour?

Con. Ha!

Edi. Your tried honour
 Must stamp the story with the face of truth,
 And force conviction on his heart, in spite
 Of all the doubts which passion may retain

To plead in Beauty's cause.

Con. Oh, ye just Powers!

What must the passion, what, be the despair
 That prompts my haughty soul to such mean arts?
 Deceit! till now, a stranger to my heart,
 Welcome! with all thy wiles—
 Upon my tongue distil thy subtle poison
 To blister Edward's peace! Yet 'tis not possible;
 One look, one tone of her's, would controvert
 The blackest tales that malice could suggest.

Edi. Let him but feel the sting of jealousy,
 And every tone, and look, will fix it deeper.

Con. Should he be wrought to such accurst belief,
 Not he alone, but all mankind would scorn her—
 The antiquated maid, the wife, the hypocrite,
 Whilst the loose wanton hails, with impious joy,
 A sister in Albina. Horrid thought!
 That form, beheld by the admiring world
 With chaste respect—shall it with loose contempt
 Be gaz'd on?—shal! the angelic mind of her
 My soul adores, e'er feel the stings, the bitterness
 Of scorn?—

Edi. Be it thy prayer, thy hope, thy comfort!
 Think on the riches of that bounteous hour
 When Raimond, drooping, sunk beneath the shame
 The world will pour upon her guiltless head—
 —By Edward left—abandon'd by her father;
 The eye of nature, virtue, friendship, shut;
 In thee alone, she finds respect and love!
 Beholds thee weep her woes, and share her anguish—

—Accomplish this, and thank thy lib'ral stars!

Gon. Oh, 'twere a boundless luxury of bliss!
I'd steal her sorrows, rob her of her griefs,
And give her, in exchange, soft peace and love.
Yet, oh! it cannot be—me she'd regard
With a cold sister's brow.

Edi. Lovers, 'tis said,
Have eagles' sight, that can interpret glances,
And the soft language of a blush explain;
But eyes and blushes speak in vain to you—
Or you have read them backwards.

Gon. Ha! what say'st thou?
Lead not, I charge thee, to such dang'rous heights!
Yet tell me—

Edi. Tell thee! Strange, that Gondibert,
He who can penetrate the veil of policy,
Detect the sophist's arts, and trace the chain
Whose hidden links controul the will of man,—
That he should need be told, what not to know
Argues gross blindness, or determin'd error!

Gon. Blindness to what? Editha, speak.—Explain!

Edi. Recall then to your mind the marriage months
Of the deceased Lord. Did no complaint,
No word ambiguous, e'er escape his lips,
Reflecting on the coldness of Albina?

Gon. Her coldness!—Ha!—What then?

Edi. Nay, answer me.
Can you remember?

Gon. Yes, I've ne'er forgot,
That, as he feasted once my greedy ear

With praises of his bride, he sudden stopp'd,
And with a sigh—a sigh which seem'd t' escape
From hidden stores, exclaim'd—“ Yet, Gondibert,
All good and beauteous as she is, not yet
Have I inspir'd her icy heart with love.”

Edi. Then hear! She is not ice. Albina's bosom
Glow's with all nature's sympathetic fire.
Know too, that when a wife untouch'd appears
By a fond husband's tender, anxious love,
'Tis not because she's form'd of flint or snow.
Albina's heart was to her husband cold,
Because some happier youth engross'd its fire.
Some happy youth, unconscious of his fate,
The Countess lov'd, and thou—yes, thou wert he.

Gon. Then I am most accurst! It cannot be!
Albina lov'd not me—or, if she did,
Tell me, perfidious woman!—cruel! tell me,
Why did'st 'till now conceal the glorious secret?
Why now reveal it?

Edi. To confirm your purpose,
Compassion to your sorrows hath impell'd me
Now to reveal a confidence repos'd—
—No, not repos'd; to chance I owe the tale.

Gon. Editha! thou hast caught my list'ning soul—
—Her faculties, her every sense, she crowds
To one; I am all ear.

Edi. Oppress'd with cares,
As once upon a couch I had reclin'd,
To woo a short repose, Albina enter'd.
Tender her look, deep thought was in her eye,

Which pensively upon the vacant air
 She fix'd—then turn'd it eager on the portrait,
 Where you, a Mars, the living canvas shews ;
 And for a while, with ardent gaze, survey'd it—
 Saying, “ Had I the pencil held, that helmet
 Had been Love's chaplet ; and the uncouth armour
 Upon those graceful limbs, bright Hymen's flow'ry
 I started—she espied me ; and o'ercome [robe.”
 With shame, and sinking e'en to earth with fear,
 Conjured me, by the love I bore her fame,
 By all the sacred honour of our sex,
 Ne'er to divulge—ne'er whisper to my heart,
 The fatal secret, which through chance was mine.

Gon. It is enough—she loves—Albina loves !
 The truth divine swift rushes on my heart,
 And all its pow'rs confess the rapt'rous guest.
 Thousand sweet tokens now afresh start up,
 Darting like hidden sun-beams on my mind,
 And make it drunk with bliss. But Edward—Edward!
 Blind fool ! to feast on shadows—dream of happiness,
 Whilst one more daring boldly asks the substance,
 And bears it from my arms—my hopes, for ever !

Edi. Trust me, my Lord, if you can thwart their
 marriage,
 She will again return with height'ned ardour
 To her first love ; and with sweet chidings meet
 The tardy vows, that gave another leave
 To ask the heart she'd fain have giv'n to thee.

Gon. Oh, 'tis a bribe would tempt my soul to earth,
 If at the gates of paradise ! Thou phantom,

Honour ! hide thy stern head ; Conscience ! go sleep ;
 'Till sated love shall give thee leave to prate ;
 Then will I hear thee---wail in a friar's cowl
 The precious sin, and think monastic rigours
 Too slight---too poor a penance for my joys.

Edi. To 'scape suspicion's prying eyes, we'll part.
 When night's kind shades shall wrap all mortal things
 In doubtful semblance, meet me in the garden ;
 There Edward you shall see, and frame his mind
 To such conviction as I mean to give it.

Gon. Commands like mystic oracles you give,
 Hiding in doubtful words a glorious fate.
 To thee, sweet Priestess ! I resign my faith,
 Nor dare, beyond what you reveal, enquire.
 Ye hours ! wear wings, 'till we shall meet again. [*Exit.*

Edi. So !——
 To mould the frenzy of despairing love,
 Is no less easy than to wind the jealous.
 Oh, that man——
 A being form'd, as if in nature's vanity,
 To shew how great, how exquisite her skill,
 Should be the slave of such an abject passion !
 To a mere humour those vast pow'rs should yield,
 By which he grasps creation's mighty scheme,
 And emulates Omniscience.—

ACT III. SCENE I.*The Garden. EDITHA seated.**Editha.*

LORD GONDIBERT, methinks, is slow. The sun
Darts his last beams from the embroider'd West,
Pale twilight leads the pensive evening on,
And he's not yet arriv'd! Oh! did he feel
The keener jealousies ambition gives,
He would outstrip a bridegroom in his haste,
And think each moment stretch'd into a day,
That lent not physic to his bosom'd grief. [*Rising.*
—A step advances!—this must sure be he.
O Fortune! shield me in th' approaching conflict!
My fate is busy; and presiding spirits
Now weave the hist'ry of my future life.
Whate'er th' events, I have a mind to meet them.
Fearless I trust my bark, at once to sink,
Or ride triumphant through the coming storm.

Enter EGBERT.

Eg. Pardon me, Lady, if I have disturb'd,
With step unwish'd, your evening meditations!
But sure I may, without offence to Heaven,
Draw down your pious thoughts to earth awhile,
To minister to virtue.

Edi. Egbert! be brief.*Eg.* My tale, alas! is ting'd with shame and sorrow;

Sorrow, that I must yield up him to shame,
Whom to behold on Glory's pinnacle,
All that remains to me of health and life
I'd freely spare. I pray you now conduct me
Straight to Lord Edward, and the beauteous Countess.

Edi. Lord Edward, and the Countess! Ha! say
wherefore?*Eg.* A story to divulge, that in their ears
Alone should be repos'd.*Edi.* Methinks your errand
Wears a suspicious face; surely its purport
With me may be entrusted.*Eg.* Lady, I know
You have been long the Countess's try'd friend,
And that no secret in her breast she locks
From you. This then to you shall be disclos'd,
Though of much weight, and must be chary kept.*Edi.* Pr'ythee be quick.—*Eg.* Lord Gondibert, not bearing to behold
The much-lov'd widow of his noble brother
So soon forget his death, and light again
The nuptial torch—discord resolves to shed
Betwixt Lord Edward and his promis'd bride;
And to this purpose hath fram'd tales that—*Edi.* Ha!*Eg.* Start not, nor blame too deeply, gentle lady,
This first, this only error of his life!
When time hath brush'd away the mists of passion,
He'll then rejoice we've sav'd him from an act
Which all his future days would mark with horror.

Edi. With this design did Gondibert trust you?
Eg. Not with the circumstance he means to urge:
 I from disjointed converse drew his purpose.
 Ere morning dawns he hopes to disunite
 The noble pair.

Edi. So!—this is then your errand?

Eg. This is my errand; to preserve their hearts
 From fierce distraction's pangs, when they hear things
 That else might shake their faith.

Edi. 'Tis well, old man!

I will acquaint the Countess with your message,
 And bring you, here, her orders. [Exit.

Eg. Gracious Heaven!

Pardon, if I do break my faith to him,
 Whom I am bound to serve! I serve him now.
 I drag him from a deep abyss of guilt,
 Which all his future days, in deep remorse,
 And acts of virtue spent, would hardly purify.
 Repentance calls not back the deed it mourns;
 And years of penitence will not rase out
 The marks that sin hath grav'd.

Enter EDITHA, *with* Servants.

Edi. Seize that old traitor,
 And instant in the deepest dungeon plunge him.
 The Countess orders this.

Eg. Horror! For me?

Edi. For thee; who falsely hast defam'd thy patron,
 And stain'd the honour of Lord Gondibert.
 Away! nor listen to his prayers.

Eg. Oh, Lady,
 Be not so cruel to my hoary years!
 Egbert did never cast a stain——

Edi. 'Tis false;

For thou, with rude and most unseemly speech,
 Didst paraphrase upon the deeds of him
 Whose errors should by thee be cloak'd, and screen'd
 From mortal eyes. Why stand ye loit'ring thus?
 'Tis from your mistress these commands I bring—
 If you obey them not, 'tis at your peril.

Eg. Oh! hear me! hear for the sake of him!—

[They drag him off.]

Edi. When fools, like you, will prate, ye must be
 Lest ye should babble to the gaping world [cag'd;
 Of things ye have not pow'rs to comprehend.
 To chuse that dotard for a confidant!
 Better have told the story at the mart,
 Or to the mummers, who infest our halls;
 To be by them personify'd, on eves
 And holidays. Of his imprisonment
 His Lord must not be told. Should he survive
 These days of trouble, he shall be releas'd;
 Mean time he'll learn discretion. [Exit.]

SCENE II.

Another part of the Garden. Enter EGBERT *and*
 Servants.

Eg. Oh, wonder not that I should move thus slow
 Toward so sad an home!—If I might plead—

Ser. Master, fear nought! thou shalt taste sleep to-night

More sweet than her's—not in a loathsome dungeon,
But in repose, upon thy downy couch.

Eg. I thank thee; this is kind and christianly.

I fear'd you too were leagu'd for my destruction.

Ser. Didst thou then think I had forgot the hour,
In which from my poor infant eyes you wip'd
The streaming tears—cherish'd my grief-swoln heart,
And plac'd me in Earl Raimond's family—

Wherein to youth and manhood I have grown?

Thou, then, wert my preserver—now, I'm thine.

Eg. In truth, surprise and terror so dismay'd me,
I knew you not; now that I do, I bless you.

Ser. Such orders from the Countess ne'er were given;
But proud Editha's power made it unsafe

To thwart her. In that grotto thou may'st bide
Till th' evening grows more dark—then use this key;
It leads you to the grove. Farewel, good Egbert!

[*Exit.*

Eg. Farewel, my friend!—to-morrow, better thanks
I will present thee—Heav'n! 'twas not thy will,
That I should basely perish in my duty.
Forgive me, that my confidence did fail,
And, for a moment, gave me to despair! [*Enters the grotto.*

SCENE III.

Enter GONDIBERT and EDITHA.

Gon. It is beyond my hopes! 'tis a design,
Which sure some pitying spirit did inspire,

Who, once enrob'd in flesh, felt passion's sting—
And, sympathetic still to human sorrows,
Bestow'd the vision on thy quick'ning brain!
But how requite thee for thy gen'rous aid?
For me thy fame, thy welfare, thou dost hazard.

Edi. To your great brother I indebted stand,
That I have now existence.—'Tis but just,
That I should risk for you the welfare he bestow'd.

Gon. But where is he—this Edward—who hath thrust
'Twixt me and my felicity his claim?

Though now thou'rt perch'd upon the giddy wheel,
And thank'st thy fate for such a glorious stand,
Edward, beware! for I will have thee down,
Though thou dost crush me in thy fall! Where is he?

Edi. With Raimond; rioting, perchance, his fancy
On the bright prospect of to-morrow's blessings.

Gon. Ne'er shall that morrow come—or, if it doth,
The coursing sun, that lights them to the altar,
Shall finish his diurnal round in blood. [proof.

Edi. Try bloodless means—give circumstance and
Gon. Aye, stunning proof; such as would shake a
faith

Grav'd on the heart, ere its first pulses beat.
No tale, though varnish'd with the deepest skill,
No circumstance, though guided by the hand
Of art, can shade, or for a moment throw
The slightest cloud on Countess Raimond's fame.
But demonstration—demonstration, speaking
To his gross sense! that, Edward! that, shall force thee
To curse the paragon of Nature's works,

And yield her to thy raptur'd rival's arms.

Edi. Yet tale and circumstance will have their weight;
They'll mould his mind for the broad proof; which else
Like arrows striking 'gainst a marble rock,
Will shiver, or rebound. I go to watch
When he retires, and to direct him hither.
Be sure you mark each motion of his heart;
Catch ev'ry passion on a barbed hook,
And torture him, 'till he, with agony,
Shall hate her!—

Gon. The fierce transports of his rage
May prompt him on the instant to accuse her.

Edi. To counteract his transports be my care.
This lab'ring head, my Lord! hath not so fram'd
The close design, for blund'ring chance to mar.
May we depend upon your servants faith?

Gon. They are devoted to my will.

Edi. Enough!

The dress prepar'd you'll find within my closet;
The antichamber enter, at the signal,
And instantly the private stairs descend—
—The rest, kind fortune to our wishes guide! [*Exit.*]

Gon. Painful the race! but Raimond is the prize!
Ye Beings! who, superior to humanity,
Behold, with supercilious eye, our slidings;
Oh, blame not me, thus tempted, if I yield.
Not Man, but thrifless Nature, be accus'd,
Who to seductions left our minds a prey—
—Nay more, who doth herself ensnare us;
Hath hung us round with senses exquisite,

Hath planted in our hearts resistless passions,
The first to weaken, and the last to war
On poor, defenceless, naked virtue!
How dark the night! The moon hath hid her head,
As scorning with her lucid beams to gild
This murky business. Through umbrageous trees
The whistling Eurus speaks in hollow murmurs;
And dismal fancy, in yon shadowy ailes,
Might conjure up an hundred phantoms.
How strong th' impression of our dawning years!
The tales of sprites and goblins, that did awe
My infancy, all rush upon my mind,
And, spite of haughty reason, make it shrink.
Who is't approaches?

Enter EDWARD.

Edw. Edward!

Gon. Gondibert!

Edw. What means this summons, at so late an hour,
I sought you here—sent by the fair Editha,
For the relation of important secrets,
Which to my private ear you mean t' intrust.

Gon. Could I intrust them, Edward, to your ear,
Without the poison of the words I utter
Distilling to your heart, I would with boldness
Speak them.

Edw. Surely a tale thus guarded, and hemm'd in
With words so circumspect, must have much weight;
But heavy matters suit not feath'ry hours;
My soul, now banqueting on its felicity,

And all her faculties absorb'd in bliss,
Looks down from an exalted height, and scorns
So low a thought as care—Farewel, my Lord!
You'll be our guest to-morrow—welcome guest,
Upon the happiest morn old Time e'er brought
To supplicating man.

[*Going.*]

Gon. I charge thee, stay—thou arrogant of bliss,
My tale, perhaps, may end in guest forbidding,
In the postponing th' hymeneal feast.

Edw. Say'st thou! postponing th' hymeneal feast?
By Heav'n, in the wide circle of events
That possibility may teem with, one
Shall not be found, to make me for a day
Suspend the bliss of calling Raimond mine!

Gon. Blind and presumptuous!—
The passing air hath borne away thy vow,
And in its track thy recantation follows.
Edward! Albina never can be thine.

Amazement sits upon thy brow: I swear
That, had the Countess kept her single state,
My ever-cautious tongue had ne'er divulg'd
What it must now reveal—But on the edge
Of sudden ruin, Edward! I behold thee,
And now extend my arm to snatch thee from it.

Edw. Thy words have form'd a chaos in my soul;
Something there lurks beneath their doubtful phrase,
I dread to hear—yet ask thee to unfold.

Gon. Then steel your mind, to bear the story's horror.
Call up your fortitude—

Edw. Thou tortur'st me—speak it!

Gon. The widow of my brother—is a woman—
Mere woman—weak woman;—of mould so tender,
It can't resist a lover's melting plea—
Nor bear so harsh a charge as cruelty.

Edw. Do I not know that she is tender? Soft
As dreams of cradled infancy, or note
Of Philomel—whose music, in the ear
Of the benighted traveller, makes beams
Of roseate morn unwelcome to his eye?
Why then to me mysteriously descant
Upon her gentleness?

Gon. 'Cause more than thee
Her gentleness with healing pity views;
And to benighted lovers makes the beams
Of roseate morn unwelcome.

Edw. Villain, thou liest! [*Drawing.*]

Gon. Come, come, this female rage ill suits a soldier.

Edw. It suits thy blasphemy, base coward!

Gon. Coward!

Edward, thou darest not, shalt not, think me coward.

Edw. Then guard thee, or I'll write it in thy heart!

Gon. Ha! come on then, plunge in thy weapon deep;
Be sure take heed thou dost not miss the spot,
Where ill-judg'd friendship, in that heart, for Edward,
Transform'd him into Gondibert's assassin.

Edw. Oh!—

Gon. Shrink not; appease your anger with my blood;
Then to Albina boast of having slain
The man who had unveil'd her to your eyes.

She'll fawn upon thee—cozen thee—and gull thee,

With the fond vows that have in other ears
Shed their sweet poison.

Edw. Should my father's spirit
From heav'n descend, t' abet thee in this tale,
I'd swear it ly'd.

Gon. Nay then, I crave your pardon!
Think it rank falsehood—phantom of my brain;
Raimond was guil'd when he believ'd her naught.

Good-night, my Lord. [*Going.*]

Edw. Hold! O stay, Gondibert!
Why, what a frame is mine to shake thus! Raimond
Didst say?

Gon. Yes—Raimond. But I see too well
You can't support it. Pr'ythee ask no more.

Edw. Nay, but I will ask, though each word you utter
Steals like a chilly poison through my veins,
And binds my blood in frost. Say, did your brother—
Oh, answer—answer me!—I cannot speak it.

Gon. He did; my brother oft hath call'd her—wanton,
And, in the anguish of his soul, hath curs'd her.
The Roman Julia, he would say, to her
Was chaste, whose loose desires—

Edw. Now thou dost lie.
By Heaven, such purity was never dress'd
In frail mortality! Her govern'd passions
Are the soft zephyrs of a vernal morn,
That breathe their perfume on the blushing rose.

Gon. The zephyrs of a vernal morn may swell
To hurricanes—Such undiscerning tumults
Her passions know—This piece of pure mortality!

Edw. Draw, villain!—
Or I will plunge my dagger in thy throat,
And bear thy lying tongue upon its point.

Enter EDITHA.

Edi. What horrid noise breaks through the sober
Shield me!—A naked sword! [*night?*]

Gon. You will not fight
Before a Lady, Sir?—I' th' morning meet me—
Meet me, before the hour the priest expects thee;
That, at the altar, when thou'lt eager join
Thy chiding bride, thou may'st atonement make;
And, with the marriage-ring, present the heart—
His bleeding heart, who, with ungentle truths,
To rob her of her husband—vainly strove. [*Exit.*]

Edw. Perdition catch thy breath!—
Knew you, Editha, when you sent me hither,
The purport of that villain's tale?

Edi. Your looks
Affright me so, my Lord! Pray sheathe your dagger!
Fain, fain would I escape this dreadful task!
My duty to the Countess binds my tongue—
Excuse me then, my Lord.

Edw. I charge thee speak!
By all the friendship which I bear to thee,
By thy own high regard to truth and honour,
I charge thee, spare me not—tell all, tell all!

Edi. Then I confess me privy to the counsel
Which Gondibert, to you, design'd to offer;
And for your honour t'were, that you should heed it.

Edw. Again thou bring'st me back to all my horror.
Dost thou say this, Editha? thou, who know'st
Each secret winding of her heart!

Edi. I do!

And what I've said, I'll back with proof.

Edw. What proof?

Edi. That if you wed her, you will be undone;
That you will only share Albina's love.
Unfair she deems it, having sov'reign beauty,
To scant its blessing to a single object;
Like the universal sun, she sheds her glories—
Beaming impartially on all mankind. [womer,

Edw. Vile slanderer! yet hold. There have been
Whose bosoms with licentious hell have burn'd;
But these were monstrous, and of actions horrible!
These did not wear the hallow'd looks of virtue—
The soul of chasteness breath'd not in their words:
Were Raimond, then, like those—

Edi. Ha, my good Lord!

You know not our deceitful, dang'rous sex!
Those minds imbued by vice, with deepest stains,
Are often mask'd in forms almost divine—
Deck'd forth in words, and looks, that Virtue's self
Might challenge for her own. Such is Albina;
Such did Albina to her Lord appear:
What cause, save that, sent him to Palestine?
Why went he there, for honourable death,
But that her faults did surfeit him of life?

Edw. If this is truth, Oh, truth, be thou accurst!—
Falsehood's from Heaven—Deceit! wrap me again

In thick impervious folds! Thou busy wretch!
Why rouse me from a lethargy of bliss?
Yet I'll have truth—if thou hast proof, present it;
If not, fly swifter than the lightning's fork,
Lest, like the lightning, I transfix thee! Oh no.
Swear thou art false, I'll twist thee round my heart-
strings.

Edi. I will abide the proof. Know that a youth,
Of birth obscure—in mien, a bright Adonis,
Hath long possess'd Albina's secret hours—
—That these last hours, she will devote to him,
And in her chamber you shall see him lodg'd,
When she retires to rest.—

Edw. Nay, now thou weigh'st me down. Oh! oh!—

Edi. If it o'ercomes you thus, my Lord, go home.

Edw. Home! I'll go howl in deserts with the wolves,
Forsake society, curse human kind,
But chiefly woman.

Edi. Nay, come with me, my Lord,
I'll lead you to the hall, where you'll observe
The doings of our house.

Edw. Thou art a fiend,
And tempting me to hell.

Edi. Nay then—

Edw. Oh, pardon me!
Conduct me to my woe.

[*Exeunt.*

Enter EGBERT.

Eg. Go, senseless lamb,
And meet the sanguine knife. Oh, merciful!

And is't a woman I have seen? Woman!
 On whom thou hast bestow'd Nature's best feelings,
 With nerves of finest tone, to catch each woe,
 And strike it on the heart! Oh, I'm asham'd
 That I stand kindred, in creation's scale,
 With such a being! Haply am I witness
 To the base league. Now in the toils, Editha,
 Which thou didst spread for me, thyself art fallen.
 Thus Heaven doth punish with our own acts,
 And makes our crimes our woe.

SCENE IV.

*A Hall, with a Stair-case, and Gallery. Enter
 EDWARD and EDITHA from the Garden.*

Edi. Stand here, my Lord. The hour is now arriv'd
 In which the Countess usually retires.
 Yet, oh, be patient! and I pray behold
 With fortitude this sample of her faith,
 Which I, alas! unwillingly disclose. [*Exit.*]

Edw. Now Heaven!—I cannot pray—my sinking
 heart
 Scarce yields me life to breathe; and dizzy images
 Before my eyes swim in imperfect shape.—
 —She comes!—
 Behold her, Slander!—and withdraw thy shaft.
 Her chastity is evident as truth;
 It glows, it animates each speaking line
 Of her enchanting face.——

Enter ALBINA, EDITHA, and Attendants.

Edi. Shall I attend you, Madam, to your chamber?

Alb. Not now, Editha, for you need repose.

Your pensive mind hath suffer'd much since morn,
 From the sad image of long past afflictions:
 Forget them now, and may sweet sleep attend you!

[*Albina ascends the stairs, and enters her apartment.*
[Exit Editha.

Edw. There's the rich temple that conceals my love:
 If she be naught, Nature's in league with Vice,
 And pour'd on Raimond such a waste of charms,
 To draw from sainted Virtue her disciples.

[*Attendants leave the apartment.*

Silence prevails——

Oh, on this spot I will with patience count
 The lagging moments of the night, to triumph
 In the sure failure of their promis'd proof!
 Ha!—hark! methought there was a noise. Alas!
 The clicking death-watch, or the passing air,
 Hath now a sound to freeze me.—[*A pause.*]——

*GONDIBERT enters at one end of the Gallery, and goes
 into the Chamber.*

Ha! stay, villain; stay!

EDITHA enters, and flings herself before the Stairs.

Edi. Ah, cease! cease, my Lord—you will undo me!

Edw. I am undone—but I will drag the villain—
 I'll tear him from her arms.

Enter Servants of GONDIBERT.

Edi. Help me—assist me!

Oh! drag him from the spot. Nay, go, my Lord!

Why wilt inhumanly destroy Editha?

[*They force him off, Editha following.*]

*Tis finish'd!—

The lion's caught, and struggles in his toils, in vain.

ACT IV. SCENE I.

An Apartment in WESTMORELAND'S Palace. Enter a Steward, with Servants.

Steward.

HASTE to Paul's Cross, and be you sure, at seven,
The fountain spouts with wine—spouts in full streams,
As copious as the noble donor's bounty.
Observe, when weak, or aged folk you see,
Press'd by the boist'rous multitude, assist them,
And let not sturdy ones take double shares.

1st Ser. I will be mindful.—

[*Exit.*]

Stew. You, Edric, for the populace, take care
The ox hath been well fed. Let not the poor
Dine on poor food, for a rememb'ring token
Of this most happy day.

2d Ser. I'll chuse the best.

[*Exit.*]

Stew. Have the old pensioners receiv'd their raiment?

3d Ser. Marry they have, and with o'erflowing hearts.

Stew. 'Tis thus our noble master doth rejoice!
Whate'er brings joy or happiness to him,
Is pledge of joy to all within his reach.
Were his lands bounded only by the seas
That girt our isle, he hath a heart as wide.
See, he approaches! with a face as gladsome,
As though he had redeem'd from glutton Time
His own blest nuptial morn.

Enter WESTMORELAND.

West. Come, come; no mirth,
No bustling with ye? Are the cooks all busy?
Is the hall trimm'd, and ready for the guests?

Stew. All's as you wish, my Lord.

West. Then all will feel content this happy morn,
And the dejected eye of sorrow
Be rais'd, with sparkling gratitude, to Heaven.
But where's thy joy? Thou art as old and grey
As if this only was a common morn.
Is't not Albina's wedding-day? Cast off
Thy age, and be a boy! Not sportive youth
Shall go beyond old Westmoreland to-day
In all the rounds of gay festivity.

[*Lord,*

Stew. My heart doth take its part, my honour'd
In all the happiness that beams around you.
Behold the sov'reign of the feast—Lord Edward!

[*Exit.*]

Enter EDWARD.

West. Hail to my son! Hail to this chosen morn—
This morn of bliss! These are a bridegroom's hours:

—Thou seem'st impatient of the lazy clock.

Edw. Sorrow, like joy, is impatient of the hours,
And presses forward to untasted time.

West. Who talks of sorrow on a bridal morn?
Your tones, methinks, ill suit the occasion.

Edw. They suit too well the tenor of my mind!
Edward, alas! thou seest no happy bridegroom,
With ardour waiting, and impatient joy,
To hail his blushing bride—but a sad wretch,
Who hates the day, for breaking on his woe,
And longs for endless night.

West. Surely my joy
Hath been too powerful for my frail age;
Thy words do strike mine ear; but reason
Her faculty with-holds, nor shews their import.

Edw. Oh, look not thus! My tale will rive thy heart.

West. Albina!—my child!

Edw. Dread the worst;
That when the worst doth come, you may support
Its horror!

West. Speak quickly—Is my child well?

Edw. She is.

West. Then what keen stroke hath Heaven in store?
Through her alone I can affliction know—
If she be well, what ill can light on me?

Edw. Oh!—

West. I pry'thee speak—what labours in thy breast?

Edw. A deadly poison!—I can hold no longer—
Last night—oh, last night!—

West. Ha! what of last night?

[*Impatiently.*]

Edw. Memory! thou'rt a scorpion. To forget!
'Twere easier to blot out the horrid'st crimes.
The wrath of Heav'n's by penitence appeas'd.
But what, O memory! can rase from thee
The ills that thou hast register'd? Albina!
My heart its vital stream should yield, to expiate
Thy guilt.

West. Guilt! Dost thou join her name with guilt?

Edw. Yes; with most foul dishonour—blackest
guilt! [stain'd her;

West. Thou, then, art he—the villain who hast
And, by the Cross, thou shalt repair her shame;
Wed her this day—make her this hour thy wife,
And then I'll poniard thee, for having dared
Think lewdly of her.

Edw. Thy rage I do respect;
And, whilst my heart with agony is torn,
I pity thee. Unhappy Westmoreland!
Albina had been chaste as cloister'd saints,
Had all, like me, believ'd her honour sacred. [her?

West. What! with another—another! Dost accuse

Edw. I do!—Last night—oh!—I will find the villain,
If earth doth not conceal him in her womb,
Or Heav'n work miracles to save him—

West. He is already found. Thy thin-drawn arts
Leave thee expos'd, in all thy native guilt:
Thou'st ta'en advantage of relying Love—
—On one base hazard stak'd a boundless treasure,
And now art bankrupt, both of bliss and honour.
This wretch art thou, or a most foul defamer!

Edw. This rude, intemp'rate anger will not heal
Thy daughter's shame. I tell thee, thou fierce Lord!
These eyes beheld him hous'd, within her chamber,
At th' hour when virtue and suspicion sleep,
And lewdness riots in the mask of night.

West. Whom, say'st thou, thou beheld'st?

Edw. I knew him not.

Wrapt in night's sooty liv'ry, like hot Tarquin
To the fair Roman's bed, he softly stolè—
But, oh! he was not greeted like a ravisher.

West. Cease! cease thy impious, thy licentious tongue!
Its venom thou shalt purify. Nay, mark me!
Tho' thou hast been deceiv'd; and tho', to guile thee,
Each art that wickedness could frame, were practis'd;
On thee alone my chastisement should fall.
Thou should'st have question'd ev'ry testimony;
Doubted each sense; and, though they all combin'd,
Contemn'd them all—ere thou had'st dared to cast
On chastity the stains, that, once infix'd,
Are never purg'd away.

Thou art the sland'rer of my widow'd daughter;
Her husband dead, her father is her champion—
I dare thee to the field—

Edw. And I refuse
Thy daring challenge—weak, yet good, old Earl!
What! prove Albina in the face of day
A wanton? Her, on whose pure chastity,
Within a few short hours, I would have stak'd
My everlasting weal! Oh, thou fallen angel!
I'll mourn thy fault, but in my heart 'tis buried.

West. All this might cozen a fond female's anger;
But, Edward! I am Westmoreland!
In our long line of noble ancestry,
Not one base act e'er spotted the fair name,
Or slander dared to breathe on't!
Unsullied I receiv'd the glorious heritage,
And will, untarnish'd, bear it through the world.
Thou hast defam'd my child—her who will bear
The name, and princely fortunes, of our house—
Thy blood must do away the damning stain!

Edw. Would'st thou oppose thy waning life to mine?
Thou dost forget, old Lord! how many winters
Have left their hoary fleeces on thy head,
Since thou wert a fit match for one, who boasts
Th' unslacken'd nerves of youth.

West. Thy vaunted strength
I do despise. Was e'er the nerved arm
Of youth triumphant on the side of falsehood?
This wither'd arm, in my Albina's cause,
Shall cover with disgrace the budding laurels
That scarcely yet are fitted to thy brow.

Edw. Disgrac'd indeed! if spotted with thy blood;
And therefore I refuse thy proffer'd gauntlet.
If 'tis my life you seek, I shall, this day,
For Palestine embark, and die more gloriously
Than by a froward old man's petulance.

West. Insolent boy! I'll force thee do me right.
I'll instant to our sov'reign, and demand
The law of honour. Ere thou dost embark,
Thou sure shalt prove my daughter what thou said'st,

And leave these wintry locks drench'd in my blood—
Or I will write thee liar in thy heart. [Exit.

Edw. Is this my bridal morn?

Oh, ye soft budding joys! ye tender sympathies!
Ye offices of love! ye thousand nameless ties!
Where are ye fled?—

The sun of happiness, that blaz'd but yesterday,
And promis'd through eternity to light me,
Is extinguish'd!

Then, life, be thou extinguish'd too; but not
Ingloriously.—To Holy Land I'll speed,
And bear me as a soldier. Oh, Albina!

The sword that must be buried in my heart,
Thy hand will strike—A Saracen may wound,
'Tis Raimond kills. [Exit.

Enter WESTMORELAND, leading ALBINA.

West. Ha, my poor child! home—thou must home
Put off thy bridal vest, resume thy weeds, [again.
For thou must be a widow still.

Alb. My Lord!

West. Why, why did'st yield to thy weak father's
He pleaded for a villain. [suit?

Alb. For a villain!

What mean those dreadful sounds? Edward a villain?

West. He is. Thou too shalt think him so.

Alb. Impossible!

Lord Edward's breast is Honour's sacred temple!
In him, 'tis not a scope of moral words,
Or schoolmen's speeches—but a living soul
That starts from baseness, as annihilation.

West. Alas! my child, I judge him from himself.
How shall I tell thee—

Alb. What?

West. Thou art—rejected.

Yes, he rejects thee. Nay, he hath accused—

Westmoreland lives to hear his child accused—

Alb. Support me, Heaven! of what am I accused?

West. The shame will burn thy modest cheek—he
terms thee—wanton.

Alb. Me! Edward deem me—Oh!—

West. Yes, thee!

Thee, in whose bosom chastity is thron'd:
Thou, the bright pattern of each female virtue,
By Edward art accus'd of vile licentiousness.

Alb. Oh, horrible! [*Sinking into her Father's arms.*

West. Support thyself, my child!

On thy base slanderer thou shalt have justice.

Alb. Last night, I well remember, when he left me,
And pass'd beyond the reach of tender sounds,
Straining his eyes, he stopt—then towards Heaven,
With emphasis of action, rais'd his hands,
Seeming t' invoke its blessings on Albina.

Had he conceiv'd a doubt—

West. He has no doubt—

He dares not doubt the honour of my daughter.
But the rich prize, which, whilst at distance, plac'd
Almost beyond the stretches of his hope,
Seem'd worthy his ambition to attain,
Now, view'd at hand, palls on his sickly taste,
And he contemns the blessing he aspir'd to.

Alb. Oh! is't for this I rose with early dawn
To bless perfidious Edward? Is't for this
I gave consent, ere custom might allow,
To be again a bride? Base, base ingratitude!

West. Take heart, my girl! thy father swears thy
Shall not be wrong'd. [innocence]

Alb. Ah! what avails my innocence?
My lot is wretchedness. Condemn'd by him
To whom I'd giv'n my heart---and in whose love
I'd treasur'd ages of untasted bliss---
Forsaken! scorn'd! left like a loath'd disease!
Oh, to some convent's dreary cell I'll fly,
And there for ever hide my shame and misery!

West. First shall be sacrific'd a thousand Edwards;
Thy virtue shall be prov'd; and my Albina
Live through a race of blissful years, in honour;
E'en now I hasten to the King, to claim
The sacred rights of knighthood.

Alb. Ha! what say you,
My Lord?

West. Edward I've challeng'd to the lists;
There to give testimony, that thy virtue
Is spotless, is unquestion'd as thy beauty.

Alb. What do I hear? My father yield his breast
To Edward's sword! Edward! whose skill in arms
Leaves him unrivall'd in the voice of fame!
Oh, shield me fr m the horror of the thought!

West. Dismiss thy fears. Thy father's arm hath
humbled
Mightier men than he. This breast wears marks---

—Honourable marks, grav'd by the sword of heroes;
And shall a boy with contumely use me?

Alb. Horror! distraction! Oh, [*knéeing*] if my soul's
Be dear to thee, avoid this cruel combat! [peace
My mighty wrongs I will with patience bear;
But, father! heap not sorrows on my head---
Risk not such precious lives! Whoe'er doth vanquish,
Makes me the wretched victim of his prowess!

West. Dost Edward's life, beyond thine honour, prize?

Alb. Oh! frown not thus! I'll tear him from my heart;
I'll shun him, as I would the haunts of vice---
---But, oh! make not thy child a murderer!
A parricide!

West. Thy innocence insures
Thy father's life. In chaste Gunhilda's cause
A stripling triumph'd o'er a mighty giant,
Who seem'd the Atlas of a trembling world;
Thus arm'd by thee, I'd dauntless meet a legion.

Alb. Can'st thou demand a miracle to save thee?
As man thou'lt perish---oh! or should, indeed,
A miracle be wrought to prove my truth,
Then Edward dies!

West. Ah! could'st thou wish thy slanderer---
Thy fame's assassin, to survive his crime, [land---
I would disclaim thee. Shall the child of Westmore-
She, who doth carry in her veins the blood
Of royal houses---whose high ancestors
Gave honour to the sceptres which they bore---
---Shall she, when thus accus'd, be unreveng'd?
No more, no more---lest I think thy chaste mother

Did play the wanton, and gave me the daughter
Of some ignoble hind.

Alb. Wound me not thus!

My sainted mother, from thy blest abode,
Look with compassion on thy wretched child!
Sustain me, help me, in this trying hour,
Lest horror should uproot my tott'ring reason,
And instant plunge me in the depths of madness!

West. This keen, tumultuous sorrow misbecomes
thee;

It misbecomes thy rank, thy wrongs, thy virtue:
Recall thy fortitude; think what thou art,
And prove thee worthy of the space thou fill'st!

Alb. Oh father! Heaven! where shall I turn for
succour?

A father steals his heart, and Heaven forsakes me.
All things are wild---'Tis surely Nature's wreck!
---These fierce contending struggles are too big,
They'll burst the little mansion that confines 'em,
And I shall feel---shall agonize no more. [Exit.

West. Oh Honour! Nature! how shall I decide?
Obeying one, I may destroy my child,
And yielding to the other's powerful claims,
I give her up to shame. Must I do this?
Thy father yield thee to dishonour? No.
First I'll purge off the venom of black slander,
Restore its wonted lustre to thy fame;
Then, if thou diest---sink with thee to the grave.

SCENE II.

An Apartment in GONDIBERT'S Palace. Enter GONDIBERT.

Gon. O day! with heart appall'd I meet thy beams,
Thou racking conscience! wherefore torture thus
The breast where thou hast lightly reign'd 'till now?
A sleepness night I've past---Or, if perchance
A slumber for a moment clos'd mine eyes,
Sad images of woe convey'd such horror,
That better 'twere to wake to real misery.
And whence these new-born torments?---
Have I depriv'd the orphan of his bread?
Imbrued my hands in murder? Or look'd down,
With chilly eye, upon a bosom friend,
Beneath oppression's iron gripe? Oh, no.
I've been a child, and ly'd to keep a toy
Of which another would have robb'd me.---Pho!
I'm even less than woman---Not a female
Who would not laugh at such o'er-strain'd nice feelings,
For crimes 'mongst lovers put in daily practice.
Ha! my bright genius!---

Enter EDITHA.

That smile must be the herald of good news;
Misfortune ne'er was couch'd beneath an air so sweet.

Edi. There spoke thy coz'ning sex! Deceit and
Hang all their witchery upon your tongues; [flattery
Whilst maidens, like poor birds, by keen-ey'd basilisks
Allured, behold their danger, yet are charm'd
To their destruction.

Gon. Talk not of man ;

But sov'reign woman---Tidings of Albina ?

Edi. Array'd in bridal pomp, light in her steps,
Joy beaming from her eye, and happiness
Exulting on her brow, she left the palace ;
But soon return'd---a truly mournful widow.

Gon. Be quick.-----

Edi. Edward, in perfect faith of last night's guile,
Resigns his willing bride---returns her back
To lonely widowhood, or the soft cares
Of some more happy lover.

Gon. Oh, be that lover me !

Straight will I hasten to the charming mourner---
Help her to curse perfidious, changing man---
Damn my whole sex to gratify her spleen---
And, when her hatred to a frenzy mounts,
Seize on the instant of tumultuous passion,
To lure her back again to love and Gondibert.

Edi. Hold, hold, my Lord ! such rashness would
Beware of proud vindictive Westmoreland ! [undo us.
A single glance, to his suspicious eye,
Would be a clue to ravel out our secret.

He hath a faculty to see men's souls,
As though their lineaments were written characters,
By which he reads their scarce-existing thoughts---
Fly from the danger, then, if you are wise.

Gon. Seek wisdom in the squalid monks' abode,
Where lean and sallow, by the mould'ring lamp,
She grows---In me the passions are wound up
To Nature's highest pitch---impulse, my law ;

That impulse leads to Raimond.

[*Still going.*

Edi. Still I must

Restrain you. I will home, my Lord, to watch
The motions of our house, and give you tidings
When ev'ry danger's past. Thou call'st me friend,
Yet wilt not trust to my sollicitudes.

Gon. Nay then, I yield---farewel, my guardian spirit---
Oh, count the moments by the lover's dial,
Where hours are ages!-----

Edi. 'Till he doth backward on the dial count,
Then ages shrink to points.

[*Exit.*

Gon. Now then, for Edward,
And for art ! art, to hide my doating thoughts,
And deck 'em in the sullen guise of hatred.
Only a few short hours these shores confine him ;
---These shores may never greet his eyes again.
Mean time, that he and his Albina meet not
T' exchange reproaches, is my only care :
That point attain'd---and all the rest is rapture. [*Going.*

Enter EGBERT.

Eg. I come, my Lord, th' unwilling messenger
Of heavy tidings. Hoary Earl Westmoreland
Hath challeng'd Edward, in the field to prove
His calumny against his daughter.

Gon. Confusion !

Eg. This day they enter on the solemn trial.
The King himself will judge the dreadful combat ;
And the whole court, in wond'ring sorrow wrapt,
Even now are hast'ning to attend the issue.

Gon. Issue! 'tis well---'tis well. Leave me, good Oh! 'tis too much---this is too keen a stroke! [*Egbert!* How shall I steer me in this fatal tempest? Confess my wiles?---Horror! leave me, I say--- Why stand'st thou thus, with such exploring eyes, As if thou'dst read the workings of my brain?

Eg. If right I read, your mind in balance hangs 'T'wixt the opposing principles of good And ill. Between these two the Pow'r that made us, Bestow'd free will to chuse: oh, let me then Direct your choice! Let him, whose tongue inspir'd The early love of virtue, once more---

Gon. Can'st thou Preach calmness to the furious sea? Wilt bid The whirlwind, that doth break the tow'ring spire, And in its vortex hurls the forest oaks, Restrain its rage? When they obey thee, Then Gondibert shall be again a child, And take instructions from the virtuous Egbert.

Eg. Oh, that these hours had not so sudden pass'd! I can recall, when this despis'd old man Was dear to you---when, hanging on my neck, You'd listen to---

Gon. No more! I do still love thee, Still reverence thy virtues---But oh, Egbert! I see them as the humid arch of Heaven, That distant, in bright order glows, and beautifies The scene---yet doth impart to man no influence, Nor yields him more than empty splendour.

Eg. Thus do men talk, who'd rather shine in words,

Than seek for truth. But, oh, my Lord! this once Let me resume my wonted place. This hour---

Gon. Hie to thy chamber, Egbert, and make prayers. Such holy men as thou art have no call In these rude times. The world is headstrong grown, And needs a firmer curb than thine to guide it.

Eg. Since only one way I can gain your ear, Know, thou rash Lord! I'm privy to the plot--- Th' inhuman plot by female cunning fram'd, In which you have most wickedly concurr'd.

Gon. Ha! how---when?

Eg. I was a hidden witness of the scene That pass'd, last night, within Albina's garden.--- How I came there, will make another tale. [*varlet,*

Gon. That thou wert there, thou prying, list'n'ing Is thy destruction--- [*Half-drawing.* Yet hold---fly me, whilst I command my rage--- Fly from thy wrong'd master, into whose secrets Thou hast, indecent! forced thyself.

Eg. I fear not Your anger, Lord! nay, I will gladly die, If, dying, on your mind I can impress Just horror for the---

Gon. Pedagogue! cease prating; And know a duty thou hast yet to learn--- To treat the slidings of thy betters with respect; Nor dare to comment on the will of those, Who, seen by thee from such a tow'ring distance, Should make thee jealous of thy own discerning, And keep thy rude, presumptuous judgment down.

Go, be gone! ————— [Pushing him off.

---What curst, untoward chance, made him a witness?

No matter—keener sorrows now surround me.

Oh, Westmoreland! why must I tear the pillow,

Thus cruel, from thy time-blanch'd head? Why drag

From age's soft repose, to give thy bosom [thee

To the inhuman spear? No, perish first.

I'll go, and to the King relate the crimes

To which a furious passion drove a wretch,

Who saw the only treasure of his soul

Torn from his grasp—to bless the man he hates.

[Going.

What! and thus mark---thus stamp myself a villain,

To aid the transports of triumphant Edward?

Oh! 'twere a suicide that Honour claims not,

That Nature would abhor. What then?

Oh! guide me, Heaven! or, instruct me, Hell!

I can't recede; and, to go on, is horror.

In what a sea of crimes hath one short day

Immers'd me! Vice, oh, thou fierce whirling eddy!

Touch but the outmost circle of thy ring,

Thy strong, resistless current drags us in;

Torn from the shore, despairing we look back,

And, hurried on, are whelm'd, ingulph'd, and---lost.

ACT V. SCENE I.

The Lists. On one side are ranged the King and Court; on the other, a Multitude, with Officers. WESTMORELAND and EDWARD appear, in Armour, attended by 'Squires, each under a Banner, on which are emblazoned their Arms, with Devices; their Lances and Helmets borne. A Herald advances.

Herald.

GUTHBERT, Earl of Westmoreland!

And noble Edward of Somerset!

The King commands that ye do now advance,

And, in the presence, openly declare

The cause for which a combat ye have ask'd---

Risking, in private feuds, the precious blood

Which for your country only should be spilt.

West. My liege! I answer the demand. Lord Edward

Did yesterday, with humble suit, entreat

That in his favour I would move my daughter,

Feigning true passion, and unequal'd love.

With warm regard I did accept the charge,

And, not without some difficulty, won her.

This morn was fix'd, by hymeneal rites,

To sanctify the passion they avow'd.

This very morn, whilst I, with joy impatient,

Prepar'd to hail him son—

He came, with slander charg'd---breathing base falsehoods,

To stain her name, and gloss the violation
Of his pledg'd faith---therefore I challenge Edward!

King. This charge, by Westmoreland's good Earl
alleg'd,

We have, with wonder and concern, attended,
'Mongst the bright ladies who adorn our court,
Not one so peerless stands as Countess Raimond;
Not one whose fame more fitly suits her birth;
Nor one whose honour more becomes her fame.

Why then, Lord Edward, hast thou, causeless,
stain'd it?

Why thrown away a gem, that throned monarchs
Might have beheld thee wear with envy?

Edw. Be witness for me, Heaven! you, my dread
Sovereign!

And ye, assembled people---bear me witness!
That Raimond's chastity I held unquestion'd,
As the high myst'ries of our holy faith.
I lov'd her with most honourable love,

And to have worn with her the marriage-chain,
More glorious deem'd it, than imperial crowns.

I, who would, yesterday, against a legion
Her honour have maintain'd, must now---oh horrible!
Here, in the blushing face of day, stand forth
The forc'd accuser of undone Albina!

King. Some wrong interpretation seems to lurk,

And to have caus'd this mischievous dispute.
We do advise ye, Lords, to take more time.
If, in short space, the knot doth not unfold,
We do consent that ye again shall meet,
And prove, at point of sword, whose is the error.

West. This sword, my liege! hath taught the east-
ern world

Submission to your laws. Its faithful point
Hath prob'd the hearts of infidels and rebels---
May its good service to confusion turn,
And may this arm cling nerveless to my side,
If I depart the lists, ere I have prov'd it
On the defamer of my spotless child!

King. In this nice point, we only with advice
Would interpose, not fetter with commands.
If this be your matur'd resolve, pursue it;
Though deeply we lament, that two such heroes
Should 'gainst each other's bosom turn the lance.---
---Sound to the combat!

Trumpet sounds, Herald advances.

Her. Ye knights! who gave and have accepted chal-
lenge,
Lords Westmoreland and Edward, your career
Begin! not doubting but his arm will vanquish
Who lifts it on the side of sacred truth.
God speed the right!

West. Now, Edward! the grey locks that thou did'st
taunt

Shall prove a wreath victorious.

[Snatches his lance, and goes eagerly towards his horse.

Edw. Since thy fierce spirit will with blood alone
Be satisfied, O Westmoreland! I follow thee.

[Seizes his lance.

But, righteous Heaven! direct my erring arm,
That, whilst it guards the life thou bid'st me keep,
It may not injure his, who thirsts for mine!

Enter EGBERT, rushing from the crowd.

Eg. Hold---oh, hold! stay, my Lords! ere ye com-
mit

A deed, that leads to horror and repentance.
I have a tale that will unfold---

GONDIRBERT springing forward.

Gon. Villain!

Thou ly'st! it chokes thee in the utterance.

King. Whence this irreverence? Disarm Lord Gon-
dibert!

And know, bold man, that in the eye of Kings
All hold an equal place. I bear a sceptre
Which is my people's staff, and shall support
Alike the peasant and his Lord. Speak, old man;
Whate'er thy tale, thou shalt have patient hearing.

Eg. Most gracious liege! to save the precious blood
Of these much injur'd Lords, with deepest sorrow
I witness bear, that in a snare they've fall'n,
Most wickedly devis'd for their destruction.

King. Whom dost accuse of this atrocious crime?

Eg. There are, my Liege, who have with groundless
jealousy

Poison'd Lord Edward's mind, and work'd on him
To yield to infamy his spotless bride.

Edw. Blest old man! prove me---oh! that monster
prove me!

King. Thou say'st there are, but nam'st not those in
fault.

Eg. Hard task!---in truth, the chief in fault is ---
Gon. Dastard!

Speak out; nor dare insult me with thy mercy,
'Twas I---I am the chief in fault---if fault
It be---I practis'd on a fool's credulity,
Shew'd him an angel in the garb of hell,
And he believ'd the cheat'ry.

Edw. Oh! thy words

Are barbed arrows. I am sick at heart.

Gon. 'Twas me thou sawest in Albina's chamber.
The tales, to which thou list nedst of her falsehood,
Were all imposture---and this I did, because
I love her.

Edw. Love her!

Gon. Aye! and wherefore---

---Say wherefore, but the casual name of brother,
Should I not boast---not glory in my love?
But for that cause, thou, Edward, had'st not dar'd
To think upon her.

West. Impious---impious passion!

Gon. Even now

I will maintain it. Instant will I arm, [*To Edward.*
And meet thee in the lists---and, since the laws
Ordain my love a crime, there thou may'st rip it
From my heart. [*Going.*

King. Stay, I do command thee, stay!
Thou hast no longer title to the rights
Allow'd to those, who, in the path of honour,
Have, persevering, shap'd their brilliant course:
Thy crimes beneath our yeomanry degrade thee;
And we decree, that whosoe'er accepts
From thee a challenge, be unworthy held
To try his lance with honourable knights.

Gon. My liege! [*Resentfully.*

King. Nay, deem not this an injury,
Nor this thy punishment:—
When men, of such exalted rank as thine,
Submit to crimes, to treachery, and baseness,
Justice, unshaken, on your heads should pour
The vial of her wrath; that ye may stand
As dreadful beacons to the world beneath.—
---Hear then thy doom!—We banish thee our realm.
If in twelve hours thou shalt be found within
The precincts of our court, or in three days
Within our kingdom—be it at thy peril!
Nor frame an answer—but be gone.

[*Exit Gondibert, Egbert following.*

---Stay, old man!
Thou, to whose love of sacred truth we owe

This happy change, by us shalt be retain'd;
Thy King will answer for thy fortunes.

Eg. Oh, gracious liege! unworthy I should be
To tread the earth, could I accept of blessings
From such a source as my lov'd Lord's destruction:
It is a horrid duty I've fulfill'd!
To some forsworn abode I'll now retire,
Wasting the cheerless remnant of my days
In sorrow for his fault; and weary Heaven
With prayers for his repentance.

West. Thy retirement
Is my care. Go, good Egbert, to my palace,
And wait my coming. [*Exit Egbert.*

Edw. Injured Westmoreland!
How—how shall I approach thee? Shame, despair,
Do rend my breast; nor dare I lift my eyes
To thine, lest I should read my sentence there.

King. Come, my good Lord! let me for Edward
plead—

For him, whose virtues, glory, and descent,
Demand an advocate not less than royal.
Surely, if fair Albina now beheld him,
With eyes in deep contrition bent on earth,
Pity would rob her anger of its sting—
She too would plead; and, in the voice of love,
Extort a pardon for her country's hero. [*mov'd*

West. Though high in spirit, proud, and quickly
With aught that glances on my precious honour—
Yet, gracious Sovereign! I can pardon too.

These public proofs of my Albina's virtue,
Restore my bosom to its wonted calm,
And thee, Lord Edward, to thy wonted place.

---Again I thus embrace thee as my son. [Shout.

Edw. O great, transporting, unexampled goodness!

King. This then is still the wedding-day---the rites

Be instantly perform'd. That no regret

May poison such an hour, we do recall

The order of your service in the east,

'Till we ourselves shall in the orient sea

Leave our proud oars; and with Britannia's sword,

Blazing destruction, like the guardian Seraph's,

Drive from blest Zion's walls the humbled infidel.

Edw. My Prince, my guardian, and my royal master!

With rapture I accept the leave you grant,

And give my helmet to the God of Love.

[Westmoreland and Edward kneel at the foot of the throne, and the scene closes.]

SCENE III.

An Apartment in GONDIBERT'S Palace. Enter GONDIBERT, followed by EDITHA.

Edi. 'Tis thus that men, when sinking, from the
Which their own folly bred, accuse the heavens, [ruin
And execrate their stars. Curse not thy fate,
Nor Egbert; 'tis thyself on whom thou should'st
Revenge thine injuries.

Gon. Editha, spare me!

My mind, w th wild contending passions torn,

Now, like a hart by worrying dogs forsook,

Sinks into apathy.

Edi. Hear then a tale,

Will rouse thee from thy lethargy---this night

Albina will be Edward's wife.

Gon. This night?

Edi. This hour!

Gon. It is enough.—My wrongs awake

In all their strength, and cry aloud for vengeance.

There is an insult in this over-haste,

That finishes the whole. [Pausing.] Editha, leave me.

On dreadful things I now would ruminate!

Edi. On what? Impart to me thy thoughts---instruct me.

Gon. No. Leave me.

Edi. Ha! I see his mind is full

Of some important deed. His low'ring brow,

And that fix'd eye, bespeak some latent mischief.

Mischiefs, awake! to ye alone my soul

Bears unison. I'll urge him to the quick.

—Conceive the transports of victorious Edward!

Conceive his triumph—triumph over thee!

That, e'en in Raimond's arms, points every bliss—

Makes rapture sweeter—

Gon. Fiend! hast thou no mercy?

Dost riot in my woes? Are these the gifts

Of friendship?

Edi. No—the gifts o wild despair.

Oh, wert thou such a dotard to believe
That pity—pity to thy woes, e'er prompted me
To steep my soul in crimes?

Gon. What is't I hear?

Edi. That I aspir'd to greatness, and perceiv'd
No road to reach my hopes but through Lord Edward;
That to behold another in his arms,
Is madness; and that thee I made my tool
To interrupt their hated loves.

Gon. Perdition!

Fly me, thou monster! lest thy womanhood
I should forget, and scatter thee in atoms
To the tempestuous winds!—

[*Exit Editha, with an air of menace.*

[*Musing.*] Be firm, my soul! nor let unworthy weak-
Destroy the vengeful purpose thou hast fram'd. [ness
Banish'd—robb'd of my country, and my name;
Yet they have left a mind defies their vengeance—
Which, though these limbs were lock'd in bolts of steel,
And darkness wrapt these precious founts of light,
Would rise superior to their bounded power,
And scorn alike their fetters and their laws.
He for whom I'm exil'd, for exil'd Gondibert
Shall weep with his heart's blood; and ev'ry vein
Pour tribute to my mighty sorrows. Edward!
This night, in which thy pulse beats high to transport,
Thy senses giddy with approaching bliss—
This night beholds thee in death's icy bands;
Thy shroud shall fold thee, not Albina's arms! [*Exit.*

SCENE IV.

Changes to ALBINA'S Garden.

Enter ADELA.

Ad. Alas! my mistress! vainly have I sought her
Through ev'ry gloomy, solitary walk,
To give the tidings that will kill her peace.—
Ah! she is here. How mournful is her air!

Enter EDITHA.

The ceremonial's past—unhappy Lady!
Lord Edward and the Countess now are one.

Edi. 'Tis well! I hear thee, Adela, unmov'd!
Can one grow callous from repeated woes?
Shall the scourg'd wretch not feel the added stripe?

Ad. With decent pride, and with affected anger,
The Countess long her lover's prayers withstood.
At length, the King—to save her from the shame
Of yielding to her heart's most eager wish—
Commanded she should take Lord Edward's hand,
And he himself would join them at the altar.

Edi. Dæmons preside o'er the detested nuptials!

Ad. I was preparing to attend you here,
When the Lord Edward met me. "Go!" said he,
"Seek out your mistress. Much oppress'd she seems,
And overcome with care. Bear her these lines—
Her anguish they'll relieve."

Edi. To me,—a letter!

[*Reads.*] "The injuries the Countess hath received
 "cannot be pardon'd; yet I'll not expose you.
 "Leave Albina's castle, yet leave it as your vo-
 "luntary act. The ills his family hath brought
 "on you, Edward will not increase, but study to
 "relieve. A stipend, suited to your rank, shall
 "be assign'd you; but you must live at distance
 "from Albina."

—Insolent!

[*flinging away the letter.*]

Shall Edward, then, prescribe my breathing-place?

Shall he point out the spot where I must eat

The morsel he assigns me? Sibald! Sibald!

Will it not rack thee, even in thy tomb,

That thy Editha must depend for bread

On his curs'd son, who brought thee to the block?

Ad. Be not thus mov'd; but rather, Madam, think—

Edi. I think on nothing but my wrongs.

Ad. The Countess

Commanded me to seek her friend, and chide

An absence---so unkind!

Edi. Must I return,

To witness her extravagance of bliss;

With gratulations meet whom I'd destroy?

Yes; such the joys, Dependence! thou bestow'st;

Such the distinctions that adorn thy slaves! [*Exit.*]

Enter GONDIBERT.

Gon. Receive, ye bowers, ye sacred solitudes!

A murder'er to your shades. Rise, rise, ye horrors!
 A murderer is here—yet Nature shrinks not!

In such an hour no star should shed its rays,
 Nor planet glisten in the low'ring sky.

Pale spectres now should dart athwart the gloom,
 Whose hideous shrieks, tearing th' affrighted ear,
 Would heighten horror into madness.—

But, hark! how melting sounds of music float
 On th' air, and hang upon night's drowsy bosom!—

To the chamber—to teach a wanton bridegroom
 That death's ill-manner'd, or too proud to wait

'Till he hath surfeited on bliss.—Yet, hold!

Yet let me pause upon this deed of horror!

Murder! Is murder then so light a thing?

Can I become a bloody, cool assassin?

Religion! Nature! Oh, thou common mother!

Thus on thy flinty bosom do I fling

[*Throwing himself on the earth.*]

A pond'rous weight of woe. Take me---oh, hide me!

Hide from the radiant eyes of night a wretch,

Whose persevering crimes should they behold,

Would blot with horror their celestial orbs!

Ha!—'tis too late!—repentance comes too late!

[*Starting up.*]

See, see, my hands already dy'd in blood!

He falls, he gasps—in agonies he writhes!—

That groan!—death's in that groan!—Oh, it has pierc'd
 My brain!—my brain's on fire!—the tempest rages!—

Come on, ye furies! I can match ye here—

Here are such tortures as ye never gave.—

[*Much agitated, and starting, with a distracted air.*]

—O blasting sight!—'tis Raimond—'tis Albina!
 Grasp'd by a blooming youth—another lover!
 She pulls him to her heart—Nay, then for this—
 Vainly thou fliest—I'll stab thee in his arms.
 Ha! 'twas an empty shade—a shade?—a vision.
 Though Edward bleeds, will not a thousand rivals
 Spring, like the hydra, from his grave, and one
 At length be blest? O glorious thought! I'll die—
 I'll die—and bear Albina with me to the grave!

[Runs wildly off.]

SCENE V.

Changes to ALBINA'S Anti-chamber.

Enter ALBINA, with Attendants.

Ina. Permit us, Madam, to perform our duty.
 Unusual weight hath sudden seiz'd my spirits,
 And something here forbids me to obey you.

Alb. Such pensiveness oft follows, when the mind,
 Surcharg'd with joy, hath yielded all her pow'rs
 To the insidious guest. But leave me, Ina;
 My nightly duty is not yet perform'd.
 Mean time Editha send; some secret grief
 Preys on her mind, and fain I would relieve
 Her bosom'd anguish.

[*Exit Attendants, leaving two candles on a distant table.*

Now, whilst giddy mirth
 Shakes the high dome, and festive merriment

Expands the heart—let me awhile retire,
 And offer up my grateful thoughts to Him,
 Who hath through snares and wondrous perils led me—
 —Led me, secure, to happiness and love.

[*Exit, taking one of the candles.*

After a pause, enter CONDIBERT.

Con. Mad Riot spreads her banners o'er the house,
 Whilst, unperceiv'd, Death to the bridal room
 Hath work'd his way.—His way—alas! for whom?
 Wilt thou not shrink? [*Looking on his dagger.*
 Wilt thou not turn and sting me,
 Rather than touch her living alabaster?
 —The bed!—the marriage-bed!—Arise, ye furies!
 Light your infernal fires within my breast!
 Drain from my veins each drop of human blood,
 Lest it return, unbidden, to my heart,
 And check my arm i' th' act of holy vengeance!
 O jealousy! more fell than the mad tigress,
 When, bounding o'er the Ethiopian plain,
 She roars in anguish for her ravish'd young— [not—
 To what would'st thou transport me?—Ask not, think
 This moment gives Albina's wondrous beauties,
 Her heav'n of charms, to Edward—or to death!
 To death—to death—'tis fixt. Here will I seek her.
 [*Exit.*

Enter EDITHA.

Edi. Was not the triumph of Albina finish'd
 'Till lost Editha witnesses the scene?

Still with officious goodness doth she haunt me—
 Me, who ne'er sought, but hate compassion. Pity!
 Why do men call thee gentle? Thou'rt an asp
 Within a rose—thy breath is perfume, and thy words
 Sweet blossoms, that contain a venom'd sting—
 Kindlier is hatred in her honest garb,
 Than stinging Pity in her meek-ey'd mask.
 How gay, how full of bliss, is all around me!
 But, oh! within is an abyss of wretchedness,
 Which the bright beams of joy can never reach—
 And this, O Raimond! do I owe to thee!
 Ha! had my wishes but the force of spells,
 That bridal couch should be a bed of thorns—
 Thy dreams be cloth'd with images of horror—
 —With images so strong, they'd seize thy brain,
 Drag reason from her throne, and bind her slave
 To furious phantasies—then would'st thou wake
 Unconscious of thy bliss, and execrate,
 Like me, the happiness thou could'st not taste.—
 She comes! to meet my curses in the teeth—
 Ha!—no, 'tis Edward.

[Going.

Enter EDWARD.

Edw. Thou wilt not fly me?
 Turn, my heart's treasure!—to thy husband turn!
 Edi. Torture! I am not she!
 Edw. What says my charmer!
 Why dost thou cruelly avert the eyes
 Whose glance is transport to thy Edward's heart?
 Come, my Albina! come; too long thou'st kept me

[Aside.

From the blest circle of thy arms.

Gen. [Rushing in.] Stay longer!

[Plunges his dagger into Editha, who screams and sinks.
 Stay my leave! 'Tis Gondibert who wills thy fate.
 Hewhom thou'st scorn'd—in love and glory vanquish'd,
 Confess him, now, thy conqu'ror! See at his feet
 Thy vaunted bliss! But where's the tow'ring joy
 That, yesterday, did madden in thy veins,
 And bore thy haughty soul beyond humanity?

[Edward stands in an attitude of horror and amazement; then drawing his dagger, rushes on Gondibert.

Edw. This for Albina!

Gen. Fool! the stroke of death
 Is mine.

[Arrests Edward's arm, whose breast is exposed to his dagger.

This for Albina—this!

[Stabs himself, and falls.] Now, Edward,
 She is my bride!

Edw. Villain! devil! I cannot stay to curse thee.
 Albina! my sweet bride! my murder'd wife!
 The tomb must now be our cold nuptial bed.

[Kneeling by the body,

A moment stay—I follow thee—I come!

As Edward lifts his arm to stab himself, ALBINA enters
 on the opposite side.

Alb. What mean these dreadful sounds? Oh, sight
 of horror!

'Tis death!—a sea of blood!—O Edward! come,
And catch me ere I fall.

Edw. She lives! she lives!

[*Throwing away the dagger, clasps her in his arms.*

Gon. [*Feebly.*] Albina living! Whom then have I
slain?

Oh, Heaven! thy hand was here.

West. [*Without.*] This way, this way
Lead to my daughter's chamber—there's the noise.

*Enter WESTMORELAND, preceded by lights, follow'd by
Guests.*

Oh, dismal sight!—

Gon. A moment still is spared me to unfold.
The madness of despairing love impell'd me
To kill Albina—but in her stead—oh!—
—My life doth flow too fast!—pity, forgive me!
My guilty passion, even, now expires—
It rushes from my heart, in crimson streams,
And mingles with the dust. My crimes alone
Remain—they'll not forsake—they'll never quit me.
And now I'm summon'd—where— [Dies.]

Alb. May mercy meet thee!
My brother! I forgive, and mourn thy errors,
As I adore His hand, who hath preserved me.

Edw. Accept, high Heav'n! my penetrated heart.
This day, in each revolving year, I'll celebrate.
The debtor shall behold his bonds fall off,
The poor rejoice, the orphan's tears be dried—
—Nor sighs, nor tones of woe, profane the day—



The hallow'd day! on which thou sav'd'st Albina.

West. [*Speaking to the Guests.*] Oh, mark th' effects
of passions unrestrain'd!

Within the bosom of this noble youth
Bright virtues sprung, as in their native bed;
'Till vice—alluring in the shape of love—
Crept silent to his heart—there spread her poisons,
There her black empire fix'd; then dragg'd her slave,
Through infamy, to death.

[*Exeunt omnes.*]





