



M^m. CROUCH as PYTHIA.

*By — I feel, I feel within
A Heaven born impulse —*

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CREUSA,

QUEEN OF ATHENS.

A

TRAGEDY.

BY WILLIAM WHITEHEAD.

ADAPTED FOR
THEATRICAL REPRESENTATION,

AS PERFORMED AT THE
THEATRE-ROYAL, DRURY-LANE.

REGULATED FROM THE PROMPT-BOOK,

By Permission of the Manager.

The Lines distinguished by single inverted Commas, are omitted in the Representation, and those printed in Italics are Additions of the Theatres.

LONDON:

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THE LIFE OF WILLIAM WHITEHEAD.

THIS gentleman was the son of a tradesman in the town of Cambridge, and was a member of Clare-Hall. He accompanied the Lords Viscount Nuneham and Villiers, sons of the Earls of Harcourt and Jersey, in their travels during the years 1754, 1755, and 1756. In 1757 he was appointed poet laureat, on the death of Colley Cibber, together with that of register of the order of the Bath. He is the author of several poetical works of considerable merit, and the following dramatic pieces:—1. *The Roman Father*, T. 1750.—2. *Fatal Constancy*, a Sketch, 1753.—3. *Creusa, Queen of Athens*, T. 1754.—4. *The School for Lovers*, C. 1762.—5. *A Trip to Scotland*, F. 1770.

CHARACTER OF CREUSA.

THIS tragedy is founded on the *Ion* of Euripides. But the subject is so ancient, so slightly mentioned by historians, and so fabulously treated by Euripides, that the author thought himself at liberty to make the story his own.

The plot is extremely heightened, and admirably conducted by our author; nor has there, perhaps, ever been a more genuine and native simplicity introduced into dramatic writing, than that of the youth Ilyssus, bred up in the service of the Gods, and kept unacquainted with the vices of mankind.

This play is dedicated to Lord Viscount Villiers.

PROLOGUE.

PROLOGUES of old, the learn'd in language say,
Were merely introductions to the play,
Spoken by gods, or ghosts, or men who knew
Whate'er was previous to the scenes in view;
And complaisantly came to lay before ye
The several heads and windings of the story.
But modern times and British rules are such,
Our bards beforehand must not tell too much;
Nor dare we, like the neigbh'ring French, admit
Ev'n confidantes, who might instruct the pit,
By asking questions of the leading few,
And bearing secrets, which before they knew.
Yet what we can to help this antique piece
We will attempt. Our scene to-night is Greece.
And, by the magic of the poet's rod,
This stage the temple of the Delphic God!
Where kings, and chiefs, and sages came of old,
Like modern fools, to have their fortunes told;
And monarchs were enthron'd, or nations freed,
As an old priest, or wither'd maid decreed.
Yet think not all were equally deceiv'd,
Some knew, more doubted, many more believ'd.
In short, these oracles and twitching rhimes
Were but the pious frauds of ancient times;
Wisely contriv'd to keep mankind in awe,
When faith was wonder, and religion law!

Thus much premis'd, to every feeling breast
We leave the scenes themselves to tell the rest.
—Yet something sure was to the critics said,
Which I forget—some invocation made!
Ye critic bands, like jealous guardians plac'd
To watch th' encroachments on the realms of taste,
From you our author would two boons obtain,
Not wholly diffident, nor wholly vain:
Two things he asks; 'tis modest sure, from you
Who can do all things, to request but two:
First, to his scenes a kind attention pay,
Then judge!—with candour judge—and we obey.

Dramatis Personar.

Men.

XUTHUS, King of Athens, - - - MR. BARRY.
ILYSSUS, an unknown Youth, attendant on the Temple at Delphi, - } MISS MACKLIN.

ALETES, a Grecian Sage, - - - MR. GARRICK.
PHORBAS, an old Athenian, - - - MR. MOSSOP.
PRIESTS of Apollo.

CITIZENS of Athens.

Women.

CREUSA, Queen of Athens, - - - MRS. BARRY.
PYTHIA, Priestess of Apollo, - - - MISS HAUGHTON.
LYCEA, and other Women, attending on the Queen, - - - } MRS. COWPER, &c.
VIRGINS belonging to the Temple,
GUARDS, &c.

Scene, The Vestibule of the Temple of *Apollo* at *Delphi*, and the Laurel Grove adjoining.



CREUSA.

ACT I. SCENE I.

The Vestibule of the Temple. Enter Ilyssus and Virgins.

Ilyssus.

HASTE, haste, ye virgins ! round the columns twine
Your flowery chaplets ; and with streams fresh-drawn
Of Castaly bedew the sacred porch
Of the great God of day. Already see
His orient beam has reach'd the double top
Of high Parnassus, and begins to shed
A gleamy lustre o'er the laurel grove !
Haste, haste, ye virgins ! From the vale beneath
I hear the noise of chariots and of steeds,
Which hither bend their course ; for every sound
Seems nearer than the former.—And behold
A reverend stranger, who perhaps proclaims
Th' approach of some great monarch, to consult
All-seeing Phœbus, or implore his aid.
Haste, haste, ye virgins !

Enter PHORBAS.

Phor. Tell me, gentle maids,
And thou, fair youth, who seem'st to lead the train,
Is this the Temple of the Delphic God?

Ilys. It is; and on the middle point of earth
Its firm foundation by immortal hands
Stands fix'd:—But break we off; the folded gates
Unbar, and lo! the priestess' self appears!

[*The Pythia speaks as she descends from the Temple.*

Pyth. Hence, ye profane! nor with unhallow'd step
Pollute the threshold of the Delian King,
Who slew the Python!—Say, from whence thou art,
And what thy business, stranger?

Phor. Sacred maid,
From Athens am I come, the harbinger
Of great Creusa, mine and Athens' queen.

Pyth. Comes she on pious purpose, to adore
The mystic shrine oracular?

Phor. She does;
And with her comes the partner of her bed,
Æolian Xuthus: he whose powerful arm
Sav'd Athens from her fate, and in return
From good Eretheus' bounteous hand receiv'd
His daughter and his crown.—Would he had found
Some other recompence!

[*Half aside.*

Pyth. [Overbearing him.] Would he had found!—
Old age is talkative, and I may learn
Somewhat of moment from him. Wherefore come they?
Does famine threaten, or wide-wasting plague?

Infest the land?

Phor. Thank Heaven, our crowded streets
Have felt no dire disease; and plenty still
Laughs in our blooming fields. Alas! I fear
The childless goddess who presides o'er Athens
Has found a surer method to declare
How ill she brooks that any stranger hand
Should wield th' Athenian sceptre.

Pyth. Does from her
The vengeance come?

Phor. I know not whence it comes;
But this I know, full fifteen years have roll'd
Since first their hands were join'd, and roll'd in vain;
For still the royal pair in silence mourn,
Curs'd with a barren bed. For this they come,
T' explore the latent cause, and beg of Heav'n
To grant an heir, or teach them where to fix,
On what selected head, the Athenian crown.

Pyth. And Heaven, no doubt, will hear and grant
their pray'r.

Ilyssus, haste, and bid the priests prepare
For sacrifice. You, Nysa, and your sisters,
Amid the laurel grove with speed perform
The morning's due lustration.

Then hither all return. Myself mean while
Will tempt the vice of age, and try to draw
Some useful secrets from him.

[*Aside.*

The good king
Of whom you speak, Eretheus, did his people
Esteem and love him as they ought? for Fame

Talk'd largely of his worth. He was a king—

Phor. He was my good old master, such a king
As Heaven but rarely sends. Did we esteem
And love him, dost thou ask? Oh, we ador'd him;
He was our father, not our king!—These tears
At least may speak my heart,—We must not hope
In these degenerate times to see him equall'd.
He never did an unkind act, but once,
And then he thought the public good requir'd it;
Though much I fear the evils we lament
From thence derive their origin,

Pyth. What act?

What unkind act?

Phor. O maid, 'twere long to tell
The whole unhappy story! yet in part
Hear what to me appears too closely join'd
With these our present ills. There was a youth,
Athenian born, but not of royal blood;
His name Nicander: him unlucky fate
Had made the lover of our present Queen,
While yet a maid. What will not love attempt
In young ambitious minds? He told his pain,
And won the fair in secret to admit,
And to return his passion. The good King
Was for a time deceiv'd, but found at last
Th' audacious fraud, and drove the guilty youth
To banishment perpetual. Some say
'Twas by his means he fell, though that my heart
Consents not to believe. This much is sure,
Nicander wander'd forth a wretched exile,

And ere few days had past, upon the road
Were found his well-known garments stain'd with blood,
Sure sign of murder, and as sure a sign
No needy robber was the instrument.

Pyth. How bore Creusa this?

Phor. At first her sorrows
Were loud and frantic. Time at length subdued
Her rage to silent grief. The good old king,
To sooth her woes, consented she should raise
A tomb to her Nicander; and perform
A kind of annual rites to parted love.

Pyth. But that not long continued, for we find
She married Xuthus.

Phor. 'Twas a match of state;
He sav'd her country, and she gave her hand
Because that country ask'd it. But her heart
Is buried with Nicander. Still to him,
And Xuthus' self permits it, she performs
Her yearly off'rings, and adorns with flowers
An empty tomb.—Would he had liv'd and reign'd
Her wedded lord! we had not wanted then
Th' assistance of a stranger arm to guard
Th' Athenian state, nor had we then been driven
To search for heirs at Delphi.

Pyth. Stop thy tongue,
Or speak with rev'rence of the sacred shrine.
—Thy words were hasty, but thy silence now
Makes just atonement for them.—Then perhaps
Thou think'st this want of heirs a curse entail'd
By Heaven on Athens for Nicander's death

And Xuthus' reign?

Phor. I am Athenian born,
Nor love Æolian kings, however great
And good they may be.

Pyth. The imperial Xuthus
Is much renown'd.

Phor. Is virtuous, brave, and pious;
Perhaps too pious.

Pyth. How!

Phor. Forgive me, maid,
I speak my thoughts with freedom.

Pyth. What thou speak'st
To me is sacred. Then perchance thou rank'st
His journey hither to address the God
Among those acts which thou wouldst call too pious?

Phor. For me the Gods of Athens would suffice.
Yet do I pay just rev'rence, holy maid,
To thee, and to thy shrine.

Pyth. Thy zeal for Athens
Is too intemperate.—But the train returns
And interrupts our converse. Say, Ilyssus,
Are they prepar'd?

Enter Ilyssus and Virgins.

Ilys. They are, and only wait
Th' approaching victims.

Pyth. By yon train, the Queen
Is now on her arrival. Thou, Ilyssus,
Receive her here; while I, as custom wills,
Deep in the Temple's inmost gloom retire

Act I.
And wait th' inspiring God.—Ilyssus, hear;
When thou hast paid due honours to the Queen,
Haste to Aletes, in the laurel grove
Impatient I expect him; tell him, youth,
Things of uncommon import do demand
His instant presence.—But the crowd approaches.
Stranger, farewell.—I feel, I feel within
An heav'n born impulse, and the seeds of truth
Are lab'ring in my breast.—Stranger, farewell.

[*The Pythia returns to the Temple, and the gates shut.*

Enter CREUSA and Attendants.

Creu. No farther need we conduct. Bid the guards
Return, and wait the King.

Phor. Does ought of moment
Detain him on the road?

Creu. He stops a while
At great Trophonius' cave, that he may leave
No duty unperform'd. Heaven grant his zeal
May meet with just success!

Ilys. Please, you great Queen,
In yon pavilion to repose, and taste
Some light refection?

Creu. Ha!—Lycea,—Phorbas,—
What youth is this? There's something in his eyes,
His shape, his voice.—What may we call thee, youth?

Ilys. The servant of the god, who guards this fane.

Creu. Bear'st thou no name?

Ilys. Ilyssus, gracious Queen,
The priests and virgins call me.

Creu. Ha ! Ilyssus !

That name's Athenian. Tell me, gentle youth,
Art thou of Athens then ?

Ilys. I have no country,
Nor know I whence I am.

Creu. Who were thy parents ?

Thy father, mother ?

Ilys. Ever honour'd Queen,
I never knew a mother's tender cares,
Nor heard th' instructions of a father's tongue.

Creu. How cam'st thou hither ?

Ilys. Eighteen years are past
Since in the temple's portal I was found
A sleeping infant.

Creu. Eighteen years ! good heaven !
That fatal time recalls a scene of woe—
Let me not think.—Were there no marks to shew
From whom or whence thou wert ?

Ilys. I have been told
An osier basket, such as shepherds weave,
And a few scatter'd leaves, were all the bed
And cradle I could boast.

Creu. Unhappy child !
But more, O ten times more unhappy they
Who lost perhaps in thee their only offspring !
What pangs, what anguish must the mother feel,
Compell'd, no doubt, by some disastrous fate—
But this is all conjecture.

Ilys. O great Queen,
Had those from whom I sprung been form'd like thee,

Had they ere felt the secret pangs of Nature,
They had not left me to the desert world
So totally expos'd. I rather fear
I am the child of lowliness and vice,
And happy only in my ignorance.

—Why should she weep ? Or if her tears can fall
For even a stranger's but suspected woes,
How is that people blest where she presides
As mother and as queen !—Please you retire ?

Creu. No, stay. Thy sentiments at least bespeak
A gen'rous education. Tell me, youth,
How has thy mind been form'd ?

Ilys. In that, great Queen,
I never wanted parents. The good priests
And pious priestess, who with care sustain'd
My helpless infancy, left not my youth
Without instruction. But O, more than all,
The kindest, best good man, a neighb'ring sage,
Who has known better days, though now retir'd
To a small cottage on the mountain's brow,
He deals his blessings to the simple swains
In balms and powerful herbs. He taught me things
Which my soul treasures as its dearest wealth,
And will remember ever. The good priests,
'Tis true, had taught the same, but not with half
That force and energy; conviction's self
Dwelt on Aletes' tongue.

Creu. Aletes, said'st thou ?
Was that the good man's name ?

Ilys. It is, great Queen,
For yet he lives, and guides me by his counsels.

Creu. What did he teach thee?

Ilys. To adore high Heaven,
And venerate on earth Heaven's image, Truth!
To feel for others' woes, and bear my own
With manly resignation.—Yet I own
Some things he taught me which but ill agree
With my condition here.

Creu. What things were those?

Ilys. They were for exercise, and to confirm
My growing strength. And yet I often told him
The exercise he taught resembled much
What I had heard of war. He was himself
A warrior once.

Creu. And did those sports delight thee? [them.

Ilys. Great Queen, I do confess my soul mix'd with
Whene'er I grasp'd the osier-platted shield,
Or sent the mimic javelin to its mark,
I felt I know not what of spirit in me.
But then I knew my duty, and repress'd
The swelling ardour. 'Tis to shades, I cried,
The servant of the Temple must confine
His less ambitious, not less virtuous cares.

Creu. Did the good man observe, and blame thy
ardour?

Ilys. He only smil'd at my too forward zeal;
Nay seem'd to think such sports were necessary
To soften what he call'd more rig'rous studies.

Creu. Suppose when I return to Athens, youth,
Thou should'st attend me thither! would'st thou trust
To me thy future fortunes?

Ilys. O most gladly!

—But then to leave these shades where I was nurs'd
The servant of the god, how might that seem?
And good Aletes too, the good old man
Of whom I speak?—But wherefore talk I thus,
You only throw these tempting lures to try
Th' ambition of my youth.—Please you, retire?

Creu. Ilyssus, we will find a time to speak
More largely on this subject; for the present
Let all withdraw and leave us. Youth, farewell.
I see the place, and will retire at leisure.

Lycea, Phorbas, stay.

Ilys. [Aside.] How my heart beats!
She must mean something sure. Though good Aletes
Has told me polish'd courts abound in falsehood,
But I will bear the priestess' message to him,
And open all my doubts. [Exit.

Phor. Great Queen, why stand'st thou silent? Some-
thing seems

To labour in thy breast.

Creu. Alas! good Phorbas,
Didst thou observe that youth? When first my eye
Glanç'd on his beauteous form, methought I saw
The person of Nicander.

Phor. Gracious Queen,
Your heart misleads your eyes. The image there
Too deeply fix'd makes every pleasing object
Bear some resemblance to itself.

Creu. Lycea,
And yet, though thou wast there I well believe
Thy youth can scarce remember how he look'd,

When from the fight triumphant he return'd
 Grac'd with the victor laurel—such a wreath
 As now Ilyssus wears. Indeed, Lycea,
 Thy mother, had she liv'd, had thought as I do.
 Nay when he spoke the voice too was Nicander's.
 I know not what to think, perhaps 'twas fancy,
 Perhaps 'twas something more.

Phor. Illustrious Queen,
 You do abuse your noble mind, and lend
 To mere illusions of the brain the force
 And power to make you wretched. Grant there were
 Some slight resemblance of Nicander's form
 In young Ilyssus, though my eyes perceive not
 Even the most distant likeness; grant there were,
 Yet wherefore should the sight so nearly touch thee,
 Casual similitude? We know too well
 Nicander left no heir. [She seems disturbed.
 I say not this,
 Great Queen, to heighten, but relieve your sorrows,
 And banish from your breast each vain surmise
 Which fancy might suggest.

Creu. Too well indeed,
 O Phorbas, much too well indeed we know
 Nicander left no heir to his perfections,
 No image of himself.—And yet, good Phorbas,
 Blame not my folly, nor demand a reason
 If I intreat thee to examine strictly
 The fortunes of this young unknown. The priests
 Or priestess may know more than they entrust
 To his unwary youth. The sage he spoke of,

Could'st thou not search him out? 'tis somewhere near
 He dwells, I think, upon the mountain's brow.
 Thou wonder'st at me; call it, if thou please,
 A woman's weakness; but obey me, Phorbias.

Phor. You say I wonder; 'tis indeed to see
 My honour'd Queen employ her thoughts thus idly
 On griefs long past; when things of dear concern
 To her and Athens should alarm her nearly.

Creu. What things of near concern?

Phor. Sees't thou not, Queen,
 Thy crown, Eretheus' crown, the crown of Athens,
 Wav'ring in fortune's power?

Creu. The Gods will fix it.

Phor. The Gods! Ah, great Creusa, may my fears
 Be vain and groundless! but I fear the Gods
 Have left us to ourselves. When we resign'd
 Th' Athenian sceptre to a stranger hand
 We did reject their guidance. Wherefore come we
 To Delphi now, but that th' offended Gods
 Have turn'd too long an inattentive ear
 To our ill-judg'd petitions.

Creu. Why ill-judg'd?
 We ask'd for heirs.

Phor. We did; for Xuthus' heirs,
 The race of Æolus. I know, great Queen,
 They were to spring from thee; but Heaven permits not
 The native pureness of th' Athenian soil
 Should mix with foreign clay. I wish we find not
 More alien kings at Delphi.

Creu. Think'st thou Xuthus

Deceives us then? His worth, his piety,
Forbid the thought. Besides, the sacred place
Admits not of deceit.

Phor. Credulity
Is not the vice of age. Forgive me, Queen,
If I suspect that piety which brings us
To search for kings at Delphi. Might not Athens
Have chosen her own monarch? Her brave youth,
Her bearded sages, are they not the flower
And pride of Greece? Nay, might'st not thou, Creusa,
With liberal hand bestow th' imperial wreath?
And who has better right?

Creu. The Gods, who gave it
To me, and my great ancestors.

Phor. Whate'er
The Gods bestow can never be resum'd,
Though we repent. The pious populace
Will rev'rence Kings from Heaven.

Creu. And wherefore not?

Phor. O Queen! perhaps my fears are too officious;
But let thy servant beg——

Creu. I know thy zeal
For me, and for thy country. Rest assur'd,
Creusa never will consent to aught
Which can endanger Athens.

Phor. My heart thanks thee!

Creu. Mean while the youth, Ilyssus——

Phor. Should the King,
Confirm'd by oracles, presume to fix
A stranger on the throne——

Creu. He will not do it.

Phor. I hope he will not; yet——

Creu. The youth I spoke of,

Wilt thou enquire?——

Phor. Should Xuthus lay aside
His usual mildness, and assume at once
The monarch and the husband, could'st thou then——

Creu. In Athens' cause I could resist them all.
But cease these vain suspicions. A few hours
Will prove thy fears were groundless. Mean while,
Thou wilt find methods to inform thyself [Phorbas,
Touching this unknown youth.

Phor. By yonder guards,
The King should be at hand.

Creu. I will retire
To the pavilion, and expect him there.
Yet hear me, Phorbas; let not Xuthus know
Why thou enquir'st.

Phor. Xuthus has other cares.

Creu. The priestess too, I would confer with her:
Tho' that Lycea may perform. Farewel,
And prosper in thy task.—Alas, Lycea! [Exit Phorbas.
There is a secret labours in my breast,
But fate forbids that I should give it utterance.
This boding heart was early taught to feel
Too sensibly; each distant doubt alarms it;
It starts at shadows——But retire we, maid.
Grief is th' unhappy charter of our sex;
The Gods, who gave us readier tears to shed,
Gave us more cause to shed them. [Exeunt.

SCENE I.

The Laurel Grove. Enter ALETES and ILYSSUS.

Aletes.

SEEM'D she disturb'd when she beheld thee?

Ilys. Much;

And when I gave her the slight hints I knew
Relating to my fortunes, she dissolv'd
In silent tears: such soft humanity
Sure never dwelt in any breast but her's.
Nor did I think till now that I had cause
Of discontent; but since she wept my fate,
I seem to find a reason in her grief,
And feel myself unhappy.

Alet. Why unhappy?

Ilys. I know not why: and yet to be confin'd
Thus to a single spot, to draw in air,
To take in nourishment, to live, to die,
For this was man design'd? Ah, good Aletes!
Sure thou hast taught me, godlike man was made,
For nobler purposes of general good,
For action, not for rest. The Queen propos'd
I should attend her to th' Athenian state;
Would'st thou advise it? Dost thou think, Aletes,
She meant I should attend her?

Alet. Doubtless, youth,
If she propos'd, she meant it.

Ilys. And would'st thou

Advise I should attend her?

Alet. Wherefore not?

Ilys. May I desert these shades? Or can I leave
Thee, thee, my good Aletes?

Alet. O, Ilyssus!

Strive not to hide thy heart; from me thou can'st not:
I form'd it, and I know it. Delphi's shades
Have now no peace for thee; thy bosom feels
Ambition's active, unrelenting fires.
Thou wishest and thou hop'st thou know'st not what.
'Tis glory thou would'st have. Go then, brave youth,
Where Virtue calls thee: be the means but noble,
Thou can'st not soar too high.

Ilys. My more than father!

Thy words inspire me, and I feel a warmth
Unknown before—But then, my birth—

Alet. Thy birth!

Did I not teach thee early to despise
A casual good? Thou art thyself, Ilyssus.
Inform me, youth, would'st thou be what thou art,
Thus fair, thus brave, thus sensibly alive
To glory's finest feel, or give up all,
To be descended from a line of Kings,
The tenth perhaps from Jove? I see thy cheek
Glowes a repentant blush.—‘ Our greatest heroes,
‘ Those gods on earth, those friends of human kind,
‘ Whose great examples I would set before thee,
‘ Were once unknown like thee.’ And yet, if birth
Concern thee, know, prophetic is my speech;
Thy fate is now at work, and a few hours

May shew thee what thou art—My words alarm thee.

Ilys. They do indeed. Oh, tell me!—

Alet. 'Tis in vain

Thou would'st enquire from me what Heaven conceals
Till 'tis fit time. Did'st thou not say, Ilyssus,
The Pythia would be here?

Ilys. She comes.

Alet. Retire,

And leave us to ourselves.

Ilys. I will—And yet,
Might I not know?—

Alet. From me thou canst know nothing.

Ilys. A few hours, said you?

Alet. Hence and beg of Heaven
To prosper the event. Retire, and leave us.

[*Exit Ilyssus.*

Enter PYTHIA.

Pyth. Now, good Aletes, if thy pregnant mind,
Deep judging of events, has ever fram'd
Such artful truths as won believing man
To think them born of Heaven, and made my name
Renown'd in Greece, Oh, now exert thy power!
No common cause demands it. Kings and States
Are our solicitors, and Athens' fate
Hangs on my lips.

Alet. I know it. And now,
If, as thou say'st my secret kind advice,
And worn experience in the ways of men,
Have gain'd thy altars credit, and with gifts

Loaded thy shrines, now, by one grateful act
Thou may'st repay me all.

Pyth. What act? Oh, speak!

And gladly I obey.

Alet. An act, my Pythia,
Which, tho' at first it may seem bold and dangerous,
Shall in the end add lustre to thy shades,
And make ev'n Kings protectors of thy fane.
Oh, Pythia! 'twas the hand of Heav'n itself
Which brought these royal suppliants to thy shrine.
I could unfold a tale—but let it rest.

Thou shalt ere night know all, and bless with me
Th' indulgent Powers above. Only in this
Obey me blindly, Pythia.

Pyth. Say, in what?

Alet. Declare Ilyssus heir to Athens' crown.

Pyth. Ilyssus heir! What mean'st thou? 'Tis a fraud
Too palpable.

Alet. I knew 'twould startle thee.
But 'tis because thou know'st the fraud, my Pythia,
That it alarms thee. Didst thou really think
This youth were heir to the Athenian crown,
Would'st thou not seize the happy gift of chance,
And to the world proclaim it?

Pyth. True, I should;
And bless my fate that in these sacred shades
I had nurs'd up unknowingly a King
For my protector. But what then might seem
The consequence, now seems the cause, Aletes:
Will they not say I made the King, to gain

The kind protector?

Alet. So to thee it seems;
But who will say it? The believing many
Will bow with rev'rence and implicit faith
To what thy shrine ordains; and for the few
Who may suspect the cheat, true policy
Will keep them silent. Should they dare detect
A fraud like this, and spurn at right divine,
Where were their power? The many headed beast
Would feel the slacken'd rein, and from his back
Shake off the lordly rider. ' Nay, should Athens
Be blind to her own good, the States of Greece,
Thou know'st it well, would arm in thy defence,
And force her to receive the King thou gav'st her.
His form, his unknown birth, his winning softness,
His education here in Heav'n's own eye,
All plead in his behalf. And, as he tells me,
The Queen already with unusual marks
Of favour has beheld him. For the King,
A pious awe and rev'rence for the Gods
Is his distinguish'd attribute.' Thou seem'st
To weigh my words. To clear thy doubts at once,
Know, many days are past since first I knew
Of their approach. Thou think'st I should have told
thee.

It needed not. I have myself prepar'd
Each previous circumstance, and found due means
To forward the event. Thy part is easy;
Behold the oracle.

[of woe.]

Pyth. [Reads.] "A banish'd youth is Athens' cause

How know'st thou that? [Looking earnestly at him.]

Alet. Demand not, but read on.

Pyth. [Reads.] "For that youth banish'd Athens
must receive

Another youth; and on the young unkown,
Who tends my shrine, and whom I call my son,
Bestow th' imperial wreath. The God declares
No more."

Alet. Thou seem'st amaz'd.

Pyth. I am indeed,
To find thee thus instructed on a theme
I came prepar'd to mention. The Queen's passion,
Her lover banish'd—

Alet. What thou seest I know
May tell thee I know more. ' But say from whence
Thou gain'dst thy intelligence.

Pyth. From one
Whose zeal may thwart thy schemes; a warm old man,
And firm in Athens' cause, who came to-day
Before the rest, and, led by my enquiries,
Gave me those hints on which I thought to build
Prophetic, doubtful answers. But I find
My best instructor here.

Alet. Perhaps thou dost.
Of this rest well assur'd, I ne'er had ask'd
Of Pythia ought but what I knew with safety
She might comply with."

Pyth. Tell me what thou know'st.

Alet. Not yet; 'tis better thou remain in ignorance
Till all be finish'd. But pronounce the oracle,

And leave the rest to me. Dost thou distrust me ?

Pyth. I do not. Yet, if on slight hints alone
Thou form'st this weighty fraud, consider well
What may or may not follow. By thy looks,
There should be something hid. ' Thy coming hither
Was much upon the time we found this child ;
And since, with what almost paternal care
Thou hast instructed him. Tho' that indeed
Might spring from thy benevolence of heart,
Which I have known is boundless.' Say, Aletes,
What should I think ? Thou smil'st.

Alet. Wilt thou obey me ?

Pyth. I will : ' and yet if 'tis a fraud, Aletes,
The warm old man of whom I spoke detests
A stranger King. Ev'n Xuthus' self, whose worth
He doth acknowledge great, he views with pain
Upon th' Athenian throne.
' Alet. I know him well ;
' Tis Phorbas. Do not wonder at my words,
But find a means that I may see the Queen
In secret, unobserv'd by prying eyes,
And all that old man's fears and rage shall vanish.
He shall with joy receive a stranger King.
Wilt thou devise the means ?

Pyth. I now begin

To hope indeed, there is some secret hid
Of most important weight. But does the Queen—

Alet. I will not answer thee ; my time's too precious.
Only devise some means that I may see her
Quite unobserv'd by all.

Pyth. You cannot see her
Till all be past. Will that suffice ?

Alet. It will.

Pyth. Here in the laurel grove.

Alet. No place more fit.

But, Oh, be careful, Pythia, that the King
Observe us not ! for 'tis of mighty moment
He should believe this substituted youth
Of race Æolian. To which end, my Pythia,
I have among the priests these few days past,
When they suspected not th' approach of Xuthus,
Dropp'd doubtful hints as if I had discover'd
Some antique marks amid the osier twigs
Which form'd Ilyssus' cradle, that denote
He sprang from Æolus. And at the cave
Of great Trophonius have I ta'en due care
Such answers should be given as would induce
One of less faith than Xuthus to expect
An heir of his own family.

Pyth. The boy,

Knows he of thy intentions ?

Pyth. No, nor must
Till ripening time permit. His fate depends
Upon his ignorance. Soft, who comes here ?

Pyth. It is the warm old man, and, as I think,
Some fair attendant on the Queen. Retire.
I would know more, but—wherefore dost thou gaze
So ardently upon them ?

Alet. Hence, away !

We must not now be seen.

[*Exeunt.*

Enter LYCEA and PHORBAS.

Lyc. This place seems quite retir'd. Here if thou I will inform the Queen, and her impatience [wait, Will bring her on the instant. Surely, Phorbas, Something mysterious lurks beneath her tears, Her strange anxieties. Since thou wert absent This unknown youth alone has fill'd her thoughts; Of him alone she talks, recounts his words, Describes his looks, his gestures, loves to dwell On each particular. Ere thou wert gone She wish'd and even expected thy return; Dispatch'd me often, though she knew 'twas vain, To watch for thy arrival. When the King Approach'd, she smooth'd her brōw, as if to hide The strugglings of her mind: nay, seem'd afraid He should suspect her sorrows.

Phor. Then to him
She mention'd not this youth?

Lyc. Her conduct there
Was most mysterious. With a voice of fear,
She slightly dropp'd that she had seen a youth
Whom she could wish to bear with her to Athens.
The King consented, and with smiles propos'd
They should adopt him.

Phor. Ha! adopt him, saidst thou?

Lyc. In short, he spoke—but at his words a glow
Of sudden joy spread o'er her face, her tongue
Forgot restraint, and in his praise grew lavish;
Then stopp'd again, and, hesitating, strove

To check its zeal, as fearful to betray
Some hidden transport.

Phor. Whatsoe'er it be,
I soon shall damp her joy. This youth, Lycea,
Must not to Athens—But behold, the Queen.

Lyc. Oh, how impatient! ere I could return
To tell her thou wert here, she comes herself,
Eager to learn thy tidings.

Enter CREUSA.

Creu. Now, my Phorbas,
Say what thou know'st at once. The King already
Consents he should attend us.

Phor. Never, never
Shall Athens see that youth!

Creu. What mean'st thou, Phorbas?

Phor. Too much already of Æolian blood
Has hapless Athens known.

Creu. Æolian blood!

Phor. The King consents! I doubt not his consent—
Yes, 'twas my word, great Queen—Æolian blood;
This youth descends from Æolus.

Creu. Be dumb,
Or bring me better tidings.

Phor. Worse I cannot;
But what I speak is truth.

Creu. Peace, monster, peace!
Thou know'st not truth. 'Tis thy affected zeal
For Athens, for thy country, that suggests
This horrid falsehood; 'tis thy hate of Xuthus.

Phor. What means my Queen? Or how have I done
Such harsh expressions? Does my honest love [serv'd
For Athens and Creusa subject me
To such unkind suspicions?

Creu. Gracious Gods!

It cannot be.—Alas, forgive me, Phorbas!
I know not what I say! thy words strike through me,
They pierce my very soul. Oh, I had hop'd!—
But tell me all; though I believe thee honest,
Thy zeal for Athens, and for me, may make thee
Too hasty of belief. Why art thou silent?

Phor. Amazement stops my tongue; these starts of
This violence of grief, must have a cause. [passion,

Creu. Perhaps they have, perhaps to thee, good Phor.
This bursting heart may open all its sorrows. [bas,
But tell me first, what are thy proofs? From whence
Gain'dst thou this curs'd intelligence?

Phor. O Queen!

Thy looks, thy words—I know not how to answer.
Yet if there be offence in what I speak,
My ignorance offends, not I offend.
Know then, Creusa, from the priests who 'tend
This Delphic shrine, by your command I learnt
My first intelligence.

Creu. And did they say
This youth was of Æolian race?

Phor. They did:
At least their words import little less.
They judg'd me Xuthus' friend, not enemy,
As would thy rage suggest, and as a friend,

Dropp'd hints they thought would please me.

Creu. Then, perhaps,

It was not truth they spoke; they but deceiv'd
Thy ear with well-judg'd flattery.

Phor. What follow'd

Confirm'd it truth. Has the King mention'd to thee
What promises were given him at the shrine
Of sage Trophonius?

Creu. General promises
Of sure success, no more.

Phor. Know then, great Queen;
As I return'd from converse with the priests,
I met his friend and bosom favourite, Lycon.
Joy sparkled in his eyes, and his vain tongue
O'erflow'd with transport. I observ'd it well,
And gave the torrent passage; nay, with art,
Ev'n led it blindly forward; till at length
He open'd his whole soul, and, under seal
Of firmest secrecy, told me the King
Would find an heir at Delphi, such an heir
As would rejoice the unapparent shades
Of his great ancestors. At that I started.
He found his error then, and told me, glozing,
That great Trophonius had almost proclaim'd,
Though not expressly, Xuthus here should find
An heir of his own race.

Creu. Of his own race!

Phor. So said he. Whether great Trophonius spoke
This oracle, I know not; but I know
Too well whose oracle to me declar'd it.

Creu. Think'st thou this youth—

Phor. Grant it were only done

To try my zeal, why should they try it now,
Unless some close design requir'd that trial?
Yes, mighty Queen, I do believe this youth
Is our intended king. But, by yon heaven,
If it be he, or any other he
Of Xuthus' race, he shall not reign in Athens.
This poniard first shall drink his blood.

Creu. Forbear!

That thought distracts me---though perhaps 'tis just--
Oh, Phorbas! 'twas my hope, my wish, my prayer,
That youth might reign in Athens. But thy words
Strike deadly damps, like baleful aconite,
And poison all within.

Phor. What means my Queen?

Creu. O, Phorbas! O, Lycea! But first swear
By Nemesis, and the tremendous Powers
Who punish broken faith, no word, no hint,
Shall 'scape your lips of all your Queen declares.

Both. We swear.

Creu. Know then, Oh pain to memory!

I had a son.

Phor. A son!

Lyc. Good Heaven!

Phor. A son!

Creu. Oh, my full heart! --- Thy mother, my Lycea,
Knew all the fatal process of my woes,
And was their only solace. Phorbas, yes,
I had a son; but witness every God

Whose genial power presides o'er nuptial leagues,
Nicander was my wedded lord. That night,
That fatal night, which drove him forth from Athens,
Forc'd from my swelling womb, ere yet mature,
It's precious burthen. To thy mother's cares
I ow'd my life. In secret she assuag'd
My piercing pangs, and to Nicander's arms
In secret she convey'd the wretched infant.
What follow'd well thou know'st. Nicander fell,
And with him doubtless fell the dear, dear charge
Consign'd to his protection. Yet, good Phorbas,
When I beheld this youth, his looks, his voice,
His age, his unknown birth, all, all conspir'd
To cheat me into hopes. Alas, how fallen!
How blasted all!

Phor. Great Queen, my tears confess,
An old man's tears, which rarely fall, confess
How much I share your anguish! Had I known
Nicander was your lord, by earth and heaven,
I would have rais'd all Athens in his cause;
Nay, been a rebel to the best of masters,
Ere the dear pledge of your unspotted loves
Should thus have fall'n untimely. Now, alas!
I have not ev'n one flattering hope to give thee,
Till now I oft have wonder'd why so far
Their rage pursu'd Nicander. 'Tis too plain
They knew the precious burthen which he bore,
And for the hapless child the father died.

Creu. Oh, Gods! I feel the truth of what thou utter'st,

And my heart dies within me! Oh, Lycea!
Who, who would be a mother?

Phor. Be a Queen,
And turn thy grief to rage. Shall aliens sport
With thy misfortunes? Shall insulting spoilers
Smile o'er the ruins of thy hapless state,
While all the golden harvest is their own?
Shall Xuthus triumph? Shall his race succeed,
While thine (I mean not to provoke thy tears)
Thy tender blossoms, are torn rudely off,
Almost or ere they bloom?

Creu. It shall not be;
No, ye immortal Powers!—Yet let us wait
Till the dire truth glare on us. One short hour,
And doubt shall be no more. Then, Phorbas, then,
Should he presume to place on Athens' throne
His alien race, nay, though this beauteous youth,
This dear resemblance of my murder'd lord,
Should be the fatal choice, by that dear shade,
Which perish'd as it reach'd the gates of life,
I will—I think I will—assist thy vengeance—
Soft! who comes here? 'Tis he! how innocent,
How winning soft he looks! Whate'er it be,
He knows not the deceit. Look on him, Phorbas;
Nay, thou shalt question him.

Phor. Not I. Great Queen,
Resume yourself, nor let this fond persuasion
Betray you to a weakness you should blush at.

Creu. If possible I will.

Enter ILYSSUS.

Ilys. Illustrious Queen,
The altar stands prepar'd, and all things wait
Your royal presence. From the King I come
His messenger.

Creu. We will attend his pleasure.
Be near me, Phorbas; I may want thy counsel.

Ilys. She looks not on me sure as she was wont.
I'll speak to her. [Aside.] Permit me, gracious Queen,
To pay my humblest thanks; for, by your means,
The King is kind as you are.

Creu. Rise, Ilyssus.
Perhaps you needed there no advocate.
Phorbas, lead on. My resolution melts,
And all my sex returns. One look from him
Outweighs a thousand proofs. Phorbas, lead on,
Or I am lost in weakness. [Exeunt Creusa and Phorbas.]

Ilys. [Stopping Lycea.] Gentle maid,
Stay yet a moment. Wherefore does the Queen
Look coldly on me? Know'st thou if in ought
I have offended?

Lyc. Things of mightiest import
At present fill her mind, nor leave they room
For less affairs. My duty calls me hence. [Exit.]

Ilys. I hope it is no more; yet each appearance
Alarms me now. Aletes, thou hast rais'd
Such conflicts here, such hopes, such fears, such doubts,
That apprehension sinks beneath their weight.
Well might'st thou say these solitary shades

Have now no peace for me. Yet once thou taught'st
That the pure mind was its own source of peace. [me,
But that philosophy, I find, belongs
To private life; for where ambition enters
I feel it is not true. [Exit.

ACT III. SCENE I.

The Vestibule of the Temple. Enter ALETES.

Aletes.

WHY should I doubt? It will, it must succeed.
Yet I could wish that I had seen Creusa
Before 'twas undertaken; for perhaps—
'Tis better as it is. Her part had then
Been difficult to act; now what she does,
Assisting or opposing the design,
Will all seem natural.—The Pythia sure
Will act as I directed.—Hark! the rites
Should be ere this perform'd. Why stay they then?
That noise proclaims them finish'd, and the crowd
Will soon be here.—They come: I must not yet
Be seen; the Pythia in the laurel grove
May tell me what has pass'd. [Exit.

CREUSA descends hastily from the Temple in great dis-
order, LYCEA following.

Lyc. Stay, mighty Queen;
You know not what you do; your rage transports you;

You leave the rites unfinish'd, and the crowd
In wild amazement gaze on your departure.

Creu. I will not stay; nor will I tamely bear
My disappointed hopes. Oh, honest Phorbas!
Oh, good old man! thy penetrating mind
Saw early their designs. 'Tis to supply
Nicander's loss (Oh, ne'er to be supply'd!)
That we must call in strangers to the throne,
And yield our sceptres to Æolian hands.
Yes, ye great shades of my progenitors,
I hear ye call; ye shall, ye shall have vengeance!

Lyc. Whatever you design, conceal at least
This transport of your rage.

Creu. Why loiters Phorbas?
He saw my anguish; wherefore comes he not
To its relief? They fool me past endurance.
Rely they on the weakness of my sex?
Lycea, they shall find this feeble arm
In such a cause can lay the distaff by,
And grasp th' unerring thunderbolt of Jove.
Oh, Phorbas, art thou come?

Enter PHORBAS from the Temple.

Phor. Now, mighty Queen,
Are my suspicions just? Is Phorbas honest?

Creu. As light as truth itself. My counsellor,
My bosom friend!

Phor. Now shall a casual likeness,
If such there be, a semblant cast of features,
The spoilt of Nature in a human form—

Shall trifles light as these weigh down conviction?
 Oh, Queen! from first to last th' apparent scheme
 Glares on us now. Why were we brought to Delphi,
 But that this youth has long been nurtur'd here
 In secret from the world; perhaps the son
 Of Xuthus' self, plac'd here at first, to hide
 The guilt and shame of some dishonest mother,
 Tho' now applied to more pernicious ends.

Creu. It may be so.

Phor. And why, say why, to-day,
 While Xuthus stays behind for oracles
 He wanted not, is young Ilyssus bid
 To meet your eyes, and win with artful tales
 Your easy heart?

Creu. Bid! Was he bid to do it?

Phor. I saw the priestess whisper something to him,
 Then loud she bid him wait for thy approach.
 She must, forsooth, retire to sacred glooms,
 And wait for inspiration. Xuthus' gold
 Was what inspir'd the traitress. Yet, good Heaven,
 When from the shrine she gave the fradful words,
 With what strange art the holy hypocrite
 In mimic trances died!—“A banish'd youth
 Is Athens' cause of woe.” Too truly said,
 Tho' for a wicked purpose, to allure
 Thy easy faith, and lead thee to admit
 The fraud which follow'd.

Creu. Never, never, Phorbas,
 Will I that fraud admit. How readily
 Did Xuthus, when my foolish fondness ask'd it,

Consent to my request! Thou heard'st him say [*To Lyc.*]
 We should adopt this youth; in seeming sport
 He spoke it, but ev'n then th' insulting tyrant
 Couch'd fatal truths beneath the ambiguous phrase.

Phor. Why should a youth design'd for solitude
 Be taught the arts of war? He saw himself
 The impropriety. Who is this sage
 That has instructed him? And why should Lycon
 O'erflow with sudden joy, but that he found,
 From thy apparent fondness for the boy,
 Their schemes grew practicable. Nay, to-day,
 When to the priestess' self my honest love
 For Athens, and dislike of stranger Kings,
 Burst freely forth, she chid my hasty zeal,
 Commended Xuthus, talk'd of piety,
 And reverence to the Gods: 'twas to their priests
 She meant, their meddling priests, who dare presume
 To sport with thrones, to sell their Gods for gold,
 And stamp rank falsehoods with the seal of Heaven.

Lyc. Forbear, you are too loud so near the Temple;
 Xuthus himself will hear.

Creu. We would be heard.
 Instruct me, Phorbas, by what means to crush
 This impious combination.

Phor. Athens yet
 Has honest hearts. Yes, Phorbas yet has friends
 Who dare be patriots, and prefer their country
 To Xuthus' kindest smile. Some such are here,
 Ev'n now at Delphi. But, illustrious Queen,

We must with caution act. The name of Heaven,
Howe'er usurp'd, adds vigour to their cause,
And weakens ours. We might in secret find
A sure revenge.

Creu. What?

Phor. Death.

Creu. Of Xuthus?

Phor. His

Might follow, but the more immediate cause
Should earliest be remov'd—the boy.

Creu. The boy!

Why should he die? Believe me, honest Phorbas,
He knows not of the fraud. His every look
Proclaims his innocence. If impious men
Make him their instrument of evil deeds,
Can he be blam'd? Bred up in shades, poor youth,
He never knew the arts of base mankind,
Nor should he share their punishment.

Phor. O Queen,

They have too well succeeded. This fond passion,
Which their insidious cunning first inspir'd,
Clings close about your heart, and may at last
Undo us all.—But hark! that noise declares
The finish'd rites. Retire we to the grove,
And there will I enforce—

Creu. No, let us stay.

I will confront this artful politician,
And shew him I am yet a Queen.

Phor. Perhaps.

'Twere better to retire till our full scheme

Were ripe for vengeance.—Yet if we remain,
High words must rise, which will alarm her pride,
And fit her for my purpose.

[Aside.]

Enter XUTHUS, ILYSSUS, Priests, Virgins, Guards,
&c. from the Temple.

Xuth. [Coming up to Creusa.] Thy looks, Creusa, thy
abrupt departure,

Affronting to the God himself, and these
His sacred ministers, too plainly shew
Irreverent rage, resisting Heav'n's high will:
Nor dost thou want, I see, unthinking woman,
Inflamers of thy folly.—But of this
Enough; behold the youth whom Heaven designs
Thy heir and mine.

Creu. My heir!

Xuth. Thy heir, Creusa.

What means that haughty look? Why with contempt
Dost thou behold him? Is he chang'd, Creusa?
Have a few hours so totally transform'd him?
Is all that winning grace of which thou spak'st
Almost with rapture, is that native charm
Of innocence all vanish'd? Hear him speak,
Hear if he talks less sensibly than when
Thy pleas'd attention hung upon his words,
And lent each syllable an added grace.
What hast thou found, or thy grave monitor,
What has he found, which can so suddenly
Have wrought this wondrous change? Is it because
The Gods have thought with thee that he deserves

A crown? Or is it that my will consents?
And therefore thine, proud Queen, perversely strives
To combat thy affections?

Creu. We, methinks,

Have chang'd affections. The calm, steady Xuthus,
Whose equal mind ne'er knew the stormy gusts
Of discomposing passion, now can feel
Indecent warmth, when touch'd by pious zeal,
Nay he, to whom the tend'rer sentiments
Seem'd but the weakness of the human frame,
Now wakes inspir'd with some unusual softness.
Have oracles the power to raise at once
The kind affections? Or did he conceal
The smother'd flame, till authoris'd by Heaven,
It might burst out unquestion'd?

Xuth. Haughty Queen,

I understand thee well; thou think'st this youth
A substitute of mine, and dar'st affront
Yon awful shrine, the fountain of pure Truth?
But by that God who bears the vengeful bow,
And whose large eye—Yet wherefore should I strive
By oaths to undeceive thee; breasts like mine
Can scorn th' imputed falsehood they detest,
Nor am I now to learn from what vile source
Thy vain suspicions rise. But know, proud Queen,
This youth shall reign in Athens; and yet more,
To punish thy vain pride, since thou provok'st it,
I do believe him of Æolian race.

Creu. Thou dost?

Xuth. I do. A race as glorious, Queen,

As Cecrops' boasted lineage. For the youth,
Were I to beg the choicest boon of Heaven
From my own loins to rise, I could not hope
A nobler offspring.

Phor. Hear'st thou that?

[Aside to Creusa.]

Creu. I do,

And will revenge the insult.

Ilys. [Kneeling] Gracious Queen!

What have I done which should estrange thee to me?
Am I the unhappy cause of these dissentions?

Creu. Kneel not to me, Ilyssus.

Xuth. Kneel not to her:

'Tis I am thy protector, and thy friend,
Nay, now thy father.

Ilys. Yet, Oh, mighty King,
Permit me at her royal feet to pay
My humblest duty. If I call thee father,
She sure must be a mother. [She turns away disordered.]

Xuth. Rise, Ilyssus,
Thou seest she stands unmov'd.

Ilys. No, now she softens,
I see it in her eyes.

Creu. I will, I will
Be mistress of my soul. Why kneel'st thou, youth?
I blame not thee.

Xuth. Me then thou blamest, Creusa.
I am the object of thy rage. 'Tis Xuthus
Thou think'st unworthy of th' Athenian throne.

Creu. Athens might well have spar'd a foreign lustre,
Secure of fame, had Xuthus ne'er been born.

Xuth. Urgrate'ul Queen! had Xuthus :e'er been
What now had Athens been? [born

Creu. Perhaps in ruins,
And better so than to become the prey
Of needy wand'ring strangers.

Xuth. Earth and Heaven!
This the return?—I knew thou never lov'dst me;
Yet, witness Heav'n, I ravish'd not thy hand.
Thou gav'st it sullenly, but yet thou gav'st it;
And I well hop'd thy female sense of honour,
Of duty to thy lord, might have secur'd
At least my future peace. Thy tend'rer thoughts,
The wife's best ornament, I knew were buried
In a plebeian grave.

Creu. Plebeian grave!

Xuth. Fool that I was, I flatter'd thy vain sorrows,
Indulg'd their weak excess, and rais'd, I find,
Imaginary rivals in the tomb;
But never more, Creusa, never more
Shalt thou affront my ill-requited fondness,
I will destroy that pageant of thy passion,
Tear from that idol shrine th' insulting wreaths,
And cancel thy mock worship.

Ilys. Gracious Queen,

Retire a while.

Creu. Begone,—Insulting tyrant,
Touch but a wreath that's sacred to Nicander,
And, by pale Hecate's awful rites, I swear
Thy life shall pay the forfeit; nay, the lives
Of thy whole dastard race.—Plebeian grave!

Had that Plebeian liv'd, imperial Xuthus
Had crouch'd beneath his feet.

Xuth. Oh, would to Heaven
This scepter'd arm could raise him from the earth,
That thou might'st see how infamous a slave
Thou dar'st prefer to Xuthus!—Come, Ilyssus,
We leave her to her follies. Look not on her,
She merits not thy tenderness. Away!
If reason should again resume its seat,
We may expect her at the banquet. Come,
All here must be our guests.

[*Exeunt* Xuthus, Ilyssus, &c.
Phor. Curb not thy passion, give it vent, great Queen,
And let it burst in thunder on thy foes.

Creu. It shall, by heaven it shall. I thought till now
My griefs were sacred; but this monster dares
Insult even misery itself. Oh, Phorbias,
Forgive me, if my tears will force a passage!
Now, they are gone, and I will weep no more.
Come, faithful counsellor of vengeance, come,
Instruct me how to act, steel all my soul;
Let not Remorse or Pity's coward voice,
The bane of noble deeds, intrude to cross us.
Nicander's injur'd ghost shall aid our counsels.
Say, shall he die?

Phor. Not yet, first be his schemes
Abortive all, his politic designs,
Then let him die despis'd.

Creu. Agreed; but how?

Phor. Now at the banquet may we crush at once

His full blown hopes. The fatal cause remov'd,
Th' effect of course must cease.

Creu. What cause?

Phor. The boy.

I see thou shudder'st at it; ' but, great Queen,
Hear but the cogent reasons I shall offer,
And thou wilt think as I do.' For the boy,
Heav'n knows, I wish to spare him, but no means
No earthly means but this can curse completely
This politic designer. ' Doubtless, long
This fav'rite scheme to place on Athens' throne
His hated race, has labour'd in his breast,
And all his hours employ'd. On this alone
He builds the firm foundation of his peace,
His happiness to come. His death were nothing,
He knows his friends, the minions of his fortune,
He knows all Greece, such is their dread and awe
Of Delphi's shrine, will join in the support
Of this deceitful claim; and that firm hope
Will make him triumph ev'n in death, and laugh
At our too shallow vengeance.

Creu. Laugh he shall not.

No, I will punish home.'

Phor. ' You cannot punish

By any means but this. And' know, great Queen,
I have a poison of such subtle force,
(Why dost thou start?) of such amazing strength,
Yet so peculiar in its operation,
That it shall seem the surfeit of the feast,
Not we have done the deed. At least shall seem so

To all but Xuthus' self; for he, methinks,
Should know the truth, at least suspect it strongly,
And yet not dare revenge.

Creu. I cannot bear it;

Howe'er we fail in our revenge, my Phorbas,
The boy must live.

Phor. Good heav'n! Is this Creusa?
Is this the vengeful Queen who would not hear
Remorse or Pity's voice?—Farewel then, Athens!
Yes, my poor country, thou must sink enslav'd
To foreign tyrants! She who should defend
Thy rights, thy liberties, stands tamely by,
And sees the yoke impos'd, nay, smiles to see it;
Thy Queen, the last of her illustrious line,
Consents to thy destruction!

Creu. Never, Phorbas,
Do what thou wilt, With this last parting pang
I give him to thy rage.—Yet, oh, beware
I see him not again! One look from him
Would baffle all thy schemes.

Phor. Now at the banquet
Will we infuse the draught, ev'n in the cup
Which the King's self presents to his young heir
In token of election.

Creu. Stay, good Phorbas.

Phor. Already have I for the just design
Symborn'd a faithful slave. Nay, should it fail,
I have a trusty band, a chosen few,
Athenian souls, who scorn to bow the knee
To any foreign lord; these will I place

At the pavilion doors, if need require,
To second our attempt.

Creu. Yet stay, good Phorbas.
How kindly did he seem to sympathize
With my distress! Nay, almost chid the King,
When his loud rage—

Phor. He had been taught his lesson.
'Twas all design, all artifice to work
Upon a woman's weakness.

Creu. Think'st thou so? [woman]
Phor. I do. But, oh, my Queen, be more than
Conquer this foible of thy sex!

Creu. Heav'n knows
How much it costs to do it! Go then, Phorbas—
I cannot bid thee prosper. [Exit Phorbas.
Oh, Lycea,
Thou know'st not what I feel.—Haste, call him back!
No, stay—I think the bitterness is past,
And I can bear it now. Lend me thy arm;
I would retire, Lycea.—Yet from what
Should I retire? I cannot from myself!—
Oh, boy! thou art reveng'd; 'whate'er thou suffer'st
Is light to what thy murd'ress feels! [Exeunt.

ACT IV. SCENE I.

The Laurel Grove. Enter PHORBAS and Athenians.
Phorbas.

THIS way, my friends; at the pavilion doors
Stand ready arm'd, that, if we need your aid,

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You may observe the sign, and crush at once
These vile usurpers on the rights of Athens.
I hope we want ye not. I must be hid
A while, lest Xuthus should suspect my presence.
The Queen too may repent; I'll therefore shun her
Till the deed's done, irrevocably done. [Aside.
—But stir not till I come—What noise is that?
Retire, my friends, the Temple's postern door
Grates on its hinge. Be secret, and we prosper.
[Ex. severally.

Enter ALETES and PYTHIA.

Alet. This quarrel was unlucky. A slight breach
Had lent my purpose strength; but wrought thus high
It may defeat our hopes. She cannot now
With ease recede from her too rash resolves,
At least not unsuspected. Did she, say'st thou,
Reject thy message?

Pyth. Scarcely did she pay
The decent dues my sacred office claims,
And when I prest her more, with sullen pride
She silently withdrew.

Alet. See her I must.
Where went she?

Pyth. To the shades which over-hang
Th' Aonian fount.

Alet. I will pursue her thither.
Pyth. It may not be, for now I know thy secret
'Tis my turn to be prudent. Know'st thou not
Thou should'st be cautious, nor expose thyself
To prying eyes? I heard her, as she pass'd,

In broken whispers bid Lycea haste
To Phorbas, and inform that trusty friend
That she would wait him in the laurel grove.
Here then thou may'st surprise them both, and crown
At once thy whole design.

Alet. Thou counsel'st well,
And I will guide me by thy kind advice.
‘ Oh, Pythia, how did every thing conspire
‘ To give me hopes that I should place the boy
‘ Secure on Athens' throne, unknown to all
‘ But those whom Fate had made his firmest friends!
‘ The very means I us'd to make it sure,
Have been most adverse to the cause I labour'd.
‘ Had I relied on Xuthus' piety,
‘ Nor mention'd Æolus, success were mine;
‘ And let me hope it still.’ What most I fear
Is the Queen's warmth of passion. To which end
I must proceed with tenderness, and hide,
For some short time, Ilyssus from her knowledge.
I have unnumber'd cautions to premise,
Which her o'erflowing joy may haply ruin.
The banquet, is it ready?

Pyth. It has long
In vain expected its illustrious guests.
The King already has forgot his rage,
And hopes returning thought may move the Queen
To equal amity: he therefore finds
Continual causes to delay the feast.

Alet. Retire. Perhaps 'tis she; I hear the steps
Of some who move this. [Exit Pythia.]

What means he here?
Why art thou absent from the banquet, youth?

Enter ILYSSUS.

Ilys. It has no joys for me. I fear, Aletes,
Thou and the Pythia have most foully play'd
For my advancement.

Alet. Ha!

Ilys. Where are the parents
Whom thou did'st promise to my hopes? Alas!
I find no parents here, no kind regards,
No inexpressive fondness. Stern debate
And foul dissension kindle here their torch
To usher in my greatness. Ev'n Creusa,
Whose tenderness, I know not how, alarm'd
My throbbing heart with hopes, and doubts, and fears,
Unfelt before—ev'n she has taught her eyes
To look with strangeness on me. The good King,
Who yet withdraws not his protection from me,
Seems lost in anxious thought. Unkind Aletes!
Art thou the cause of this? Say, am I sprung
Of race Æolian? For by Heaven I swear,
By that pure fountain of immortal truth,
I will not brook deceit. I will again,
Howe'er the glitt'ring mischief tempt my youth,
Become that humble unknown thing I was,
Rather than wear a crown by falsehood gain'd.
‘ Speak then, and give me ease.’

Alet. My dearest boy—
His virtue charms me, though it may prevent

His own success. Oh, happy, happy Athens,
To gain a King like him, whose honest soul
Starts at imagin'd fraud!

[Aside.]

Ilys. Speak on, Aletes,
And do not by that look of tenderness,
And murmur'ring to thyself, alarm me more.

Alet. What should I speak? This very morn, Ilyssus,
This very morn I told thee a few hours
Would shew thee what thou wert; but thy impatience
Brooks not that short delay. It seems Aletes
Has lost his usual credit with Ilyssus,
Ev'n with the youth his anxious care has form'd.
Think'st thou the man who taught thy feeling heart
To start at falsehood, would himself commit
The fraud thou shudder'st at? What have I done,
Which should induce thee to a thought so base?
Did e'er my precepts contradict my heart?
Did I e'er teach a virtue I not practis'd?
—I see thou art confounded. Know then, youth,
I blame not thy impatience, nay, I praise
That modesty which can so soon resume
Its seat, when all things round are big with wonder.
Ere night thou shalt know all; till then, Ilyssus,
Behave as Athens' King.

Ilys. Oh, good Aletes,
Forgive my rashness! Yes, I know thee honest
As truth itself, and know the wondrous debt
I owe thy goodness. Yet, if thou confess
That I have reason for these anxious cares,
Thou wilt permit me still to question thee.

Nay, look upon me whilst I speak to thee.
Perhaps thou hast some secret cause, Aletes,
For all that kind attention thou hast shewn me,
From infancy till now? Why dost thou turn
Thy eyes to earth? 'Tis plain thou hast a cause:
Thou know'st from whom I spring; how can't thou
With confidence assert, that yet ere night [else]
I shall know all? Say this at least, Aletes,
Shall the Queen's anger cease?

Alet. It shall, Ilyssus.

Ev'n now I wait her here; on what design
I must not yet inform thee. The next time
Thou shalt behold her thou wilt find a change
Incredible indeed, from rage to fondness,
From cold reserve to tears of bursting joy.

[Ilyssus is going to speak eagerly.]
—Ask me no more. Yet something did'st thou say
Relating to the cause which fix'd me here
Thy guardian, thy instructor, and—the time
Will come, when thou shalt know it all, Ilyssus,
And bless my memory.

Ilys. Thou weep'st, Aletes.
My tears will mingle too.

Alet. Forbear, and leave me.
Yet stay a while, for now perhaps we part
To meet no more.

Ilys. No more! Thou wilt not leave me
When most I want thy care? 'Twas my first thought,
'Twas the first boon I ask'd of the good King,
That thou might'st be my kind instructor still.

He prais'd my gratitude, and I had promis'd
To bring him to thy cottage. He himself
Shall be a suitor to thee.

Alet. Thou hast ask'd

Thou know'st not what: it cannot be, Ilyssus,
That Xuthus and Aletes e'er should meet
On terms of amity. The smiles of greatness
To me have lost their value. For thy love
I could do much, and to be sever'd from thee
Pulls at my heart-strings. But resistless Fate
Has fix'd its seal, and we must part for ever,
How hard soe'er it seem. Thy youth will soon
Amidst the busy scenes of active greatness,
Forget its monitor: but I must bear
In hopeless solitude the pangs of absence
Till thought shall be no more.

Ilys. Oh, heav'ly Pow'rs!

Then there is something dreadful yet conceal'd!
I cannot part from thee in ignorance.
Tell me, Aletes.

Alet. Would I could! But now

It must not be. Haste to the banquet, youth;
Thy duty calls thee thither.

Ilys. Go I cannot,

Till thou assur'st me we shall meet again.

Alet. If possible we will. If not, remember,
When thou shalt know thyself, that on thyself
Thy fate depends; that Virtue, Glory, Happiness,
Are close connected, and their sad reverse
Is Vice, is Pain, is Infamy. Alas!

These were the lessons of thy private life,
This I have told thee oft; but my fond tongue
Runs o'er its former precepts, and forgets
Thou now must mount a throne; a larger scene
Of duty opens.

Ilys. Yet the tender friend,
Who should direct me, leaves me to myself.
Cans't thou abandon me?

Alet. Would Fate permit,
I would attend thee still. But, Oh Ilyssus,
Whate'er becomes of me, when thou shalt reach
That envied pinnacle of earthly greatness,
Where faithful monitors but rarely follow,
Ev'n there, amidst the kindest smiles of fortune,
Forget not thou wert once distress'd and friendless.
Be strictly just; but yet, like Heaven, with mercy
Temper thy justice. From thy purged ear
Banish base flattery, and spurn the wretch
Who would persuade thee thou art more than man;
Weak, erring, selfish man, endued with power
To be the minister of public good.
If conquest charm thee, and the pride of war
Blaze on thy sight, remember thou art plac'd
The guardian of mankind, nor build thy fame
On rapines and on murders. Should soft peace
Invite to luxury, the pleasing bane
Of happy kingdoms, know from thy example
The bliss or woe of nameless millions springs,
Their virtue, or their vice. 'Nor think by laws
'To curb licentious man; those laws alone

Can bend the headstrong many to their yoke,
Which make it present int'rest to obey them?
Oh, boy! —

Enter PYTHIA hastily.

Pyth. Ilyssus! wherefore art thou here?
The King expects thee, and the banquet waits.

Ilys. I cannot go.

Alet. Thou must; thy fate depends
Upon thy absence now. The Queen approaches.
After the banquet I again will see thee,
And thou shalt know the whole. I will, by Heaven.

[*Exit Ilyssus.*

Pythia, away, and wait me in the Temple. [*Exit Pythia.*
She saw them not; on her contracted brow
Sits brooding care. She speaks! My heart beats thick,
And my tongue trembles to perform its office.
Now Fate attend, and perfect thine own work!

Enter CREUSA.

Creu. To what have I consented? Ha! who art thou
That thus intrud'st on sacred privacy,
When the o'erburthen'd mind unloads its griefs,
Its hoarded miseries?

Alet. Thy better genius!

Creu. That voice is sure familiar to my ear!
Who art thou? Speak.

Alet. One whom adversity
Has taught to know himself. I bring thee tidings
Of an unhappy man who wrong'd thee much,
But much repented of the wrongs he did thee; —
Of thy Nicander, Queen.



CREUSA.

*Nic. What has my rashness done! the blush of life
Has left her cheek, the pulse forgets to move!*

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Creu. Nicander, say'st thou ?
Oh, then thou art indeed my better genius !

Alet. Now arm thy soul for wonders yet to come !
Perhaps he lives !

Creu. He lives !—[Looking on him with amazement.]
Alet. [After great irresolution and struggles with himself.] Behold him here ! [She faints.]
What has my rashness done ! The blush of life
Has left her cheek, the pulse forgets to move,
Where shall I turn ? I cannot call for aid,
Nor can I leave her thus.—She breathes, she stirs !
—Yes, yes, Creusa; thy Nicander lives,
And he will catch at least this dear embrace,
Though now thou art another's.

Creu. Gracious Gods !
It is, it is Nicander ! 'tis my lord !
Oh, I am only thine ! no power on earth
Shall e'er divide us more !—
It cannot be—my senses all deceive me—
And yet it is !—Oh, let me gaze upon thee,
Recall each trace which marks thee for my own,
And gives me back the image of my heart.
How time and grief have chang'd thee ! But my love
Can know no change. My lord, my life, my husband !
Where hast thou wander'd ? How hast thou been hid
From love's all-piercing sight ? The bloody russians,
How didst thou escape their rage ? Or did they wreak
Upon the helpless innocent alone
Their impious vengeance ?

Nic. Nor on me, nor him

Did vengeance fall.

Creu. Does he live?

Nic. He does.

* *Creu.* Oh, honest Phorbas! Murder now is virtue.

[*Aside.*]

* *Nic.* The fabled murder was all stratagem
Contriv'd for thy dear sake; no impious ruffians
Pursued our steps. I found that I had wrong'd thee
Beyond redress, nor knew another means
But by my death to save thee from dishonour.

'Despair, I thought, might conquer love, and thou
'Once more be Athens' pride.' The precious charge
Forbadé a real death, I therefore stain'd
With blood my well-known garments, which produc'd—

Creu. A curs'd effect! But I have nearer fears—
How cam'st thou hither? Wherefore to these shades?
The boy, where is he?

Nic. Far from hence—

Creu. Thank Heaven! [thee?

Nic. He lives in peace and safety. What disturbs

Creu. Nothing—I dare not tell him what I fear'd;
His honest breast might shudder at the guilt,
Though now it be more needful. The dear boy,
Say, is he brave?

Nic. As woman could desire.

Creu. And form'd like thee?

Nic. His person far exceeds

What my most vig'rous youth could boast, Creusa;
And his firm mind is wisdom's aged strength,
With all youth's graces soften'd.

Creu. 'Tis too much.

Oh, happy mother! Call'st thou him, Nicander?

Nic. No, Ion, 'twas the name the matron chose,
Who gave him to my care.

Creu. Then Ion be it,
Ion shall reign in Athens. Know'st thou, love,
The curs'd design which this *Æolian* here,
And the vile maid—

Nic. The priestess, it should seem,
With Xuthus has conspir'd to fix his race
On Athens' throne.

Creu. But never shall his race
That sceptre wield.

Nic. It never shall, Creusa.

I have a means—

Creu. My means, thank Heaven, is surer. [*Aside.*]

Nic. But I will tell thee all from first to last.
Hear then, and weigh my words, for fate is in them,
Xuthus, th' Athenian King—

Creu. I think not of him.

Nic. Beware of that. Whate'er thou think'st, Creusa,
Xuthus must still reign on, thy lord and husband.

Creu. Xuthus, my lord! then what art thou, Nicander?
Dost thou despise me for a crime thyself [der?
Hast forc'd me to commit? My soul was thine
Ev'n when I gave my hand, and still remains
Untainted, undefil'd.

Nic. I know it well,
Thou dearest, best of women! My torn heart
Props blood while I propose it; yet we must,

We must for ever part. Forbear, Creusa, [think,
That killing look strikes through me! Think, Oh,
What in this age of absence I have borne,
How combated each tender thought, and liv'd
For thy dear sake a victim to despair!
But now if thou consent'st, all, all is mine,
And I forgive my fate. The dear, dear boy,
I have a means to place him on the throne
Secure as we could wish.

Creu. Secure he shall be,
I will proclaim him to the world as mine,
And Athens shall with joy receive its sov'reign;
The tyrant Xuthus shall be taught to fear
A master's frown.

Nic. Thy rashness, my Creusa,
May ruin all.

Creu. I will be rash, if this
Be rashness, to declare to earth, to Heav'n,
A mother's heart-felt joy, whose only child,
Snatch'd from the grave, unhop'd for, comes to claim,
With every grace and every virtue crown'd,
Th' imperial seat of his great ancestors.
And shall we want a means?

Nic. We need not wait;
For by my care th' important means is found
Already, and no human power but thine
Can hinder our success. I would have hid
The secret from thee till thy wish'd consent
Had giv'n my purpose strength, but thou defeat'st
My utmost caution, and wilt force me tell thee,

Ilyssus is young Ion!—Ha! Creusa!
What means this look? Good Heaven! how her eye fixes!
‘ What have I done? What said, which could attack
‘ The seats of sense with this amazing force?’
My wife, my Queen, Oh, speak! —

Creu. Off, touch me not,
Thou canst not bring relief.—Oh, I am curs'd
Beyond all power of aid! Thou too art curs'd,
And know'st it not.—He dies, he dies, Nicander!

Nic. Amazement! Who?
Creu. Oh, had he not been mine,
His youth, his softness, each attracting grace—
I should have staid whole ages, ere in thought
I had consented to so damn'd a deed.
Tears, tears, why burst ye not?—But what have I
To do with tears? Those are for tender mothers.
‘ The tygress weeps not o'er her mangled prey.’
He dies, he dies, Nicander!

Nic. Who? Ilyssus?
Speak, speak, Creusa.

Creu. Phorbas urg'd the deed,
And I consented; at the feast he dies
By poison.—‘ Oh, my soul!’

Nic. Fly then, this instant!
Perhaps thou may'st prevent it: as thou cam'st
He parted hence—I knew not to his death!

Creu. I go, I fly.

Nic. Yet stay, thy rashness there,
If fate has sav'd him, may undo us yet:
—The Pythia! true, the Pythia shall rush in

To stop the fatal banquet, and declare
The feast unhallow'd; 'at this lucky moment
She waits me in the Temple.'—Stay, Creusa.

[Exit Nicander.]

Creu. The Pythia, no! I will myself outstrip
The lightning's speed. Whatever be th' event,
'Tis not too late to die. [Exit.]

ACT V. SCENE I.

The Laurel Grove. Enter PHORBAS and LYCEA.

Lycea.

OH, Earth! Oh, Heaven! Oh, wretched, wretched
Athens!

Phor. Speak on, Lycea; wherefore art thou silent?
Why dost thou lead me to this secret shade?
What mean thy flowing tears?

Lyc. The Queen, the Queen!

Phor. Say, what of her?

Lyc. I know not; all to me
Is terror and confusion.

Phor. What thou know'st
Relate.

Lyc. She sent me forth to seek thee, Phorbas;
I found thee not, but met at my return
Creusa's self. Despair was in her eyes,
With hasty steps she shot impatient by me,
Nor listen'd when I spake. I follow'd wond'ring,

And enter'd the pavilion.

Phor. The pavilion!

Why, went she to the banquet?

Lyc. Eager went,

Despair and anguish mixing on her look;

But, O good Heaven, how chang'd was that despair
To expressive joy, when from the crowd
She learnt Ilyssus had delay'd the feast,

And won the King once more to ask her presence.

"Where is he? let me clasp him to my breast,"

She cried; "I now no longer will resist
Heaven's high command." Imperial Xuthus rose
With transport to receive her, and loud shouts

Proclaim'd the people's joy. When, death to sight!

Eternal pain to memory! the slave

Presents the goblet: "fill," she cried, "a third,
I too will hail Ilyssus King of Athens.

But first, all swear, swear by immortal Jove,
By the far-darting God who here presides,
And the chaste guardian of our native fanes,
Swear here, swear all, and binding be the oath,

Ilyssus only shall be Athens' King."

Phor. What could she mean?

Lyc. Attentive Xuthus caught
With joy the happy omen, and all swore
Ilyssus only should be Athens' King.
This done, I saw her from Ilyssus' hand
Snatch the dire goblet, and to him resign
Her own untouch'd. The slave who mix'd the draught
Turn'd pale and trembled: I with eager zeal

Press'd forward, but in vain; she firmly grasp'd
The bowl, and smiling drank it to the dregs.

Phor. The poison, ha!—I knew her foolish fondness
Would start at murder's name. But wherefore die?
Why turn upon herself her impious rage?
*Twas madness all; or else some new contrivance,
Some fresh *Æolian* fraud.—I care not what.
I yet will blast their schemes.—Yes, let her die,
By her own folly perish. Athens still
Survives, and shall survive.—I must be sudden.
She doubtless will betray me to the King,
And cut off ev'n this last resource. Lycea,
Be secret, and thy country shall be free.

Lyc. Were it not better, Phorbas, first to see her.
Perhaps some secret unreveal'd may lurk
Beneath this show of unexampled rashness.
She left the banquet soon, and with the Pythia
Enter'd the Temple.

Phor. With the Pythia, say'st thou?
Then there is mischief toward.

Lyc. Yet now alone
We may surprize her, for I saw the maid
Quick from the fane return with hasty steps,
As if dispatch'd on some important message,
Perhaps to find thee out. Sure thou should'st see her!

Phor. And perish, ha!—No, no, my sacred country,
Too much already have I been deceiv'd;
I will not leave thee in a woman's power.
—Yet hold, Lycea may inform her of them,
And my designs prove yet abortive. Maid,

Thy presence may be needful.

Lyc. Mine! Good Heaven,
In what? Creusa will require my aid;
At least my tears are due to my poor Queen
In her last moments.

Phor. Stay, she wants them not;
I know the poison's force too well, Lycea,
To fear a death so sudden. This way, maid;
Nay, thou must go; I shall have business for thee,
Some secret message to the Queen, Lycea,
Which thou alone can'st bear.

[*Exeunt.*

Enter PYTHIA and NICANDER.

Pyth. 'Twas he, I saw him, and Lycea with him.
Sure he should be inform'd!—Thou hear'st me not.

Nic. This action of the Queen sits near my heart.

Pyth. She bade me tell thee. But why waste we time?
Thou now may'st enter at the postern gate
Unseen by all.

Nic. Why did'st thou not rush in, and stop the feast?
Thy speedy presence there had sav'd us all.

Pyth. What could I do? The Queen was there already,
And all seem'd peace and joy; could I suspect
That poison lurk'd beneath so fair a seeming?

Nic. She breaks thro' my designs. Unhappy woman!
My soul bleeds for her, and confusion hangs
On every rising thought.—The dear, dear boy!
Where is he, at the banquet still?

Pyth. He is,

Nic. And where Creusa?

Pyth. I already told thee,
But thou regard'st not, in the Temple's gloom
Retir'd she sits, expecting thy approach.
We there may settle all.

Nic. I fear her much.

'Thou seest her passions are too near concern'd
'To be of use to us; thy cooler sense
'Must here direct us.' Does the poison's power
Affect her yet?

Pyth. Not yet; I would have tried
Some powerful antidote to quell its force;
But she refuses life, and only begs
To see her son and thee.

Nic. I will attend

Upon the instant. But first hear me, Pythia;
Thou seest on what a precipice we stand,
It were in vain to hope we could conceal
The truth from Xuthus, from the rest we may;
'Tis thy task therefore—

Pyth. What? To own the fraud,
And publish to the King that Delphi's shrine
Is not oracular? Ha!

Nic. To the King

'Twere better sure to publish the deceit
Than to the world; and where's the means but this
To hide it? By Creusa's art thou say'st
He is already bound in solemn oaths
To leave Ilyssus heir to Athens' throne.
Can't thou not add still stronger oaths, or ere
Thou dost reveal the secret of our fate?

Then who shall dare to break them? Shall the King?
Thou know'st his scrup'lous piety extends
Almost to weakness. What should tempt him to it?
Creusa dead can frame no schemes against him;
The boy to him alone must owe his greatness;
And for Nicander, never more shall Greece
Hear his forgotten name.

Pyth. It must be so;
And yet—

Nic. What yet? To Phorbas thou with ease
May'st own the truth. He will not start at fraud
In sacred things.—But see, the Queen approaches
Impatient of our stay. She changes not!
The bloom of health is still upon her cheek!
Fain would I hope—But hopes, alas! are vain.—
What hast thou done, Creusa?

Enter CREUSA.

Creu. Sav'd Ilyssus!

Nic. Thou might'st have liv'd with honour.

Creu. Liv'd! good Heaven!

I start, I tremble at the thoughts of life.
Can'st thou reflect on what I had design'd,
On what I am, and what, alas! I have been,
And not perceive death was my only refuge?
—Am I not Xuthus' wife, and what art thou?
O had'st thou seen the torments of my soul,
When in one hasty moment it ran o'er
The business of an age, weigh'd all events,
Saw Xuthus, thee, Ilyssus, Athens bleed

In one promiscuous carnage!—Light at length [claim'd
Burst thro' the gloom, and Heaven's own voice pro-
One victim might suffice.

For Xuthus honour strove, and mightier love
Assum'd Nicander's cause. Who then could fall?
Could Xuthus? Could Nicander?—No; Creusa.

Nic. Would thou hadst been less kind! But, O my
To blame thee now were vain. [Queen,

Creu. To blame! 'Tis praise,
'Tis triumph I demand. He lives! he reigns!
Young Ion lives! young Ion reigns in Athens!
O bring him, Pythia, bring him to my arms!
Let me but pour a last sad blessing o'er him,
And death has lost its terrors!
How now, Lycea?

Enter LYCEA hastily.

Lyc. Mighty Queen, I know not
If thy command would authorize th' attempt,
But Phorbas, with an arm'd Athenian band,
Now enters the pavilion, to destroy
The King and young Ilyssus.

Nic. Earth and Heaven!
What say'st thou, maid?

Creu. O let me fly to save him,
Here shall their poniards—

Nic. Rest thou there, Creusa.
Thy embassies to-day have prov'd too fatal.
My life for his I save him from the stroke,
And on the instant send him to thy arms;
Now, fate be doubly mine!

[Exit.

Creu. Off, let me go! I will not be restrain'd!
They tear him piecemeal.

Pyth. Patience, mighty Queen!
What man can do Nicander will perform.

Creu. He is a father only to my child,
He cannot tell them what a mother feels.

—Phorbas was born the curse of me and mine.
I might have known to what his impious rage
Would urge him on, and should have first inform'd
—Gods! must I never know sweet peace again? [him].
Not even in death have rest!

Pyth. Behold who comes
To bless thee ere thou diest, and cease to murmur,
At Heaven's high will,

Enter ILYSSUS.

Creu. It is, it is Ilyssus!—
My son, my son!

Ilys. Good Heavens! and do I live
To see a parent melt in fondness o'er me?
—Aletes say'd me from the soldiers' arms,
And bade me fly to find a mother here.
Art thou indeed that mother, mighty Queen!
And may I call thee so? Thou art, thy looks,
Thy tears, thy kind embrace, all, all proclaim
The truth—O let me thus, thus on my knees!—

Creu. Rise, rise, my child! I am, I am thy mother!

Ilys. O sacred sound, Ilyssus is no more
That outcast youth!—A mother and a Queen
He finds at once!

Creu. But art thou safe, my child ?

Hast thou no wound ?

Ilys. The old grey-headed man,
Who brought this morn the news of thy arrival,
Had rais'd against my breast his eager sword,
Defenceless I ; when good Aletes came
And snatch'd me from the stroke. I would have staid,
Unarm'd with him have staid, but his command
Was absolute, that I should fly to find,
What I have found, a mother ! [Embracing.
Yet, Oh, Queen !

Why am I thus encompass'd round with wonder ?
May I not know this riddle of my fate ?
Why first condemn'd to pass my infant days
In this obscure retreat ? If I am thine,
Thy son, illustrious Queen, sure I was born
To thrones and empires ?

Creu. Thou art born to thrones,
And shalt in Athens reign.

Ilys. As Xuthus' heir—
Is Xuthus then my sire ? Forgive me, Queen,
I have a thousand, and a thousand doubts.
Can Xuthus be my sire ?

Pyth. Forbear, Ilyssus,
Nor press thy fate too far. When time permits,
Thou shalt know all.

Creu. Shalt know it now, Ilyssus.
Not Xuthus is thy sire, but that brave man,
Who but this instant snatch'd thee from thy fate,
And by that act proclaim'd himself a father.

Ilys. Aletes !

Creu. Not Aletes, but Nicander,
My wedded lord, thy sire ! And see, he comes
To bless thee, and confirm the sacred truth.
—Good heaven, he bleeds !

Enter NICANDER.

Nic. To death, to death, Creusa !
Amid the fray I met the fate I sought for,
All else is safe, and Xuthus now pursues
A scatter'd few, who fall beneath his sword.
—Where is my boy ? — Ye guards of innocence !
How has he been beset, and how escap'd !
—Where is my boy ? for I may own him now,
And clasp him to my breast ; no more Aletes,
The sage instructor of a youth unknown,
But the dear father weeping o'er his child !

Ilys. Oh, Sir, what gratitude before inspir'd
Let duty pay !

Nic. I have no time to waste
In fondness now. Hear my last words, Ilyssus,
And bind them to thy heart. Thou still must live
The son of Xuthus. The good Pythia here
Will tell thee all the story of thy fate ;
And may'st thou prosper as thou dost obey
Her sacred counsel. Xuthus too must know
The fatal tale ; but to the world beside
It must be hid in darkness.

Pyth. Phorbas sure
Should be inform'd.

Nic. Phorbas has breath'd his last;
And the brib'd slave who mix'd the poisonous draught
Fell by this hand. *Ilyssus,* Oh, farewell!
I will not bid adieu to thee, Creusa—
Thy colour changes, and the lamp of life
Fades in thy eye; we soon shall meet again.
Ilyssus, Oh!—

Ilys. How hard he grasps my hand!
My lord, my father! Have I learn'd so late,
To call thee by that name, and must I lose,
For ever lose?—Good heaven, she grasps me too!
What means it, Pythia? the cold damps of death
Are on her.

Creu. Oh, my child, enquire no farther;
'Tis fitting we should part! *Lycea, Pythia,*
Intreat of Xuthus—yet I need not fear [him],
His goodness, though I wrong'd him, foully wrong'd
He yet will prove a father to my child,
And from the world conceal the fatal truth.
Oh, I am cold—what bolts of ice shoot through me!
How my limbs shiver!—Nearer yet, my child—
My sight grows dim, and I could wish to gaze
For ever on thee!—Oh, it will not be—
Ev'n thou art lost, Ilyssus.—Oh—Farewell! [Dies.]

Ilys. She dies, she dies! Was I then only mock'd
With a vain dream of bliss, to be plung'd back
In deeper misery? Did I but hear
The tender name of child breath'd fondly o'er me,
To make me feel what 'tis to lose that name?

Oh, I am ten times more an orphan now,
Than when I knew no parents.

Enter XUTHUS, &c.

Xuth. Where is this murd'ress, who with vile deceit
Seem'd to consent to our's and Heaven's designs,
Only to make us a more easy prey
To her assassins?—Ha, Creusa, dead!
And the brave stranger who preserv'd us all?
Is he too dead?—The boy—

Pyth. Ilyssus lives.
And thou hast sworn, great King, that he shall reign
Supreme in Athens. Say, dost thou confirm
That oath?

Xuth. I do, by heaven!

Pyth. Ask here no more.
The fatal tale is for thy private ear.
Retire, and learn it all. For poor Creusa,
She wrong'd not thee, upon herself alone
She drew Heaven's vengeance. And too surely proves
That murder but intentional, not wrought
To horrid act, before th' eternal throne
Stands forth the first of crimes. Who dare assume,
Unwarranted, Heaven's high prerogative
O'er life and death, with double force shall find
Turn'd on themselves the mischiefs they design'd.

[Exeunt.

EPILOGUE.

SPOKEN IN THE CHARACTER OF PYTHIA.

AT length I'm freed from tragical parade,
No more a Pythian priestess,—though a maid;
At once resigning, with my sacred dwelling,
My wreaths, my wand, my arts of fortune-telling.
Yet superstitious folks, no doubt, are here,
Who still regard me with a kind of fear,
Lest to their secret thoughts these prying eyes
Should boldly pass, and take them by surprise.
Nay, though I disavow the whole deceit,
And fairly own my science all a cheat;
Should I declare, in spite of ears and eyes,
The beaus were handsome, or the critics wise,
They'd all believe it, and with dear delight,
Say to themselves at least,
“The girl has taste;” “the woman's in the right.”
Or, should I tell the ladies, so dispos'd,
They'd get good matches, ere the season clos'd,
They'd smile, perhaps, with seeming discontent,
And, sneering, wonder what the creature meant;
But whisper to their friends, with beating heart,
“Suppose there should be something in her art.”
Grave statesmen too would chuckle, should I say,
On such a motion, and by such a day,
They would be summon'd from their own affairs
To tend the nation's more important cares;
“Well, if I must——how'e'er I dread the load,
I'll undergo it——for my country's good.”
All men are bubbles, in a skilful hand,
The ruling passion is the conjurer's wand.
Whether we praise, foretell, persuade, advise;
‘Tis that alone confirms us fools or wise.
The devil without may spread the tempting sin,
But the sure conqueror is——the devil within.
