

**AMBITIOUS VENGEANCE;
A TRAGIC-DRAMA**

Hannah Cowley

SCENE in and near Milan.

ACT I. SCENE I.

A Hall in the Ducal Palace at Milan. THERESA, CLOTILDA, ALBERTO, and others, composing a Court.

THERESA.

NOW thriving peace scatters her lib'ral stores
O'er happy Lombardy; the Peasant now
May careless carol to the morning breeze,
As on he drives his ploughshare's patient toil,
Nor dread the rapine, nor the rage of war.
Returning Autumn shall not force the sigh
From his torn breast, nor leave him to deplore
His ruin'd olives, and his rifled vines.
No more, Alberto! we demand thy aid
To lead our valiant troops to victory;
But still Theresa claims her brother's care,
Yes, I require thy counsel, to direct
My maiden weakness; it is thou must curb
The womanish spirit in me, teach me how
To govern wisely, steadily, and justly:
Consult the people's good, and rule in mercy.
So shall we be in fact two sovereigns,
The real thou, and I th' ostensible.

Alb.

'Twere better, gen'rous sister! thou should'st choose
Some youthful prince of honour, and renown,
To share the splendid toil of government,
And be thy wedded friend than stoop to me,
A heedless soldier, hot, impolitic;
O rather think of Naples' royal heir,
Illustrious Carlo! let your charms reward
His well-prov'd valour, for in him unites
All that is noble, worthy and engaging;
Then is it just and proper he receive
All that is virtuous, lovely, and benign.
Perchance, his last year's residence at Milan
Gave thee occasion to remark him well,
And to esteem his matchless excellence.
What says Theresa?—why that rising blush?

Ther.

I thank thy kind attention, good Alberto
And feel the pointed merriment; but yet,
Methinks, I shall prefer my single state,
Which is perhaps, best suited to my mind,
And gives me greater pow'r to do thee service.
Alb.

O let no thought of me impede thy bliss,
For I am unambitious, and require
But ease, and freedom, with society;
And be assured my wishes were complete
In my dear sister's nuptial happiness.

Clot.

How!

[Aside.

Ignoble youth! thou should'st aspire to all.

Ther.

Thou too, my father's well-belov'd Clotilda!
Shalt not regret, or splendor, or respect,
Due to thy merit, and my father's mem'ry.
Unslaken'd honour shall attend thy steps,
And thy heart's ev'ry wish be gratified.

Clot.

Gracious Theresa!

Alas! my tongue wants pow'r to speak my thanks.

Say'st thou, my wishes gratified! but that

[Aside.

Can never be, while humbled by thy bounty.

Ther.

And you, the lords and ladies of my court!
Show me how best I may express my love,
And gain your hearts, and that way I'll pursue.
Yet, yet I feel it is most arduous
To rule and satisfy, for all have views
To aggrandize themselves, while those who fail
In rising to the summit of their aim,
Turn bitt'rest enemies; nay, I fear that most
Hate whom they flatter, and the giddy crowd
Wish for eternal change. Naught can suffice
To gratify ambition's endless rage,
To fill the coffers of pale avarice,
Or deal out favours with so rich a hand
To equal each man's wishes; for alas!
The sovereign pow'r is bounded, whereas hope
Is without bounds, and each succeeding day
Bestows fresh force, and hightens its impatience.

Alb.

Thou reason'st wisely, and with truth, Theresa!

But how didst thou acquire such sage reflection?

Ther.

Oft would our father pour into my ear
This sage instruction, which I still received
With due attention tho' with heavy heart.

Nor can I choose but tremble when I think
That all the pow'r of evil, and of good,
Centres in me; each error I commit,
Loads me with secret curses, and vile hate,
Yet will I labour for the gen'ral good,
And my intention shall at least be pure,
So those, alas! I may not chance to please,
Shall but unjustly murmur.

Clot.

Long may'st thou reign in glory, royal maid!
And acting from such gen'rous sentiment,
Revive the sad, and suff'ring multitude,
Like Heaven's fresh dew that cheers the languid plain.
O that the dew of Heav'n might fall to night
Upon thy sepulchre.

[Aside.

Ther.

But yet, Clotilda! I could wish to be
Placed in a station not so eminent,
Where all my weakness, and perhaps my faults,
Would neither injure, trouble, nor offend.
Born in some humble cottage, I had known
No wild commotion of exalted care,
But cheerful hied me forth at early morn,
Tho' the bleak north-wind swept the mountain's side;
Or when warm summer sooth'd the vocal grove,
At ruddy eve, my occupation done,
Have jocund danc'd upon the verdant lawn.

Alb.

Thou would'st have been a charming shepherdess,
Driving with flow'ry crook thy whiten'd flock
To crop the wild thyme on the fragrant down,
And list the humming bell, that seems to shake
The distant dome, and with sad-ling'ring note
Pants on the dying gale. Young Carlo, too,
Sould have been there, a gentle, rural swain,
To take his plaintive pipe, and fondly pour
The song of suff'rance, to subdue thy heart;
Or have been seen at infant dawn's first gleam,
Carving thy name upon the polish'd beach,
The boast, the wonder of the rustic race,
For comeliness, and manly strength, and song.

Ther.

Nor would it have displeas'd me, for truly
I think there does not live a nobler youth.
His actions vaunt, and not his tongue, of glory.

Gen'rous as love, and stranger to offence,
He wins each heart, nor proudly e'er pretends
To gain by mimic affability:

The common error of our princely tribe!
Unmatch'd in virtue, sense, and dignity,
And ev'ry charm of youthful manliness.
If aught that's mortal can approach perfection,
'Tis Carlo—and I do not blush to own it.
Alb.

This honest frankness well becomes thee, sister!
And gives a sweeter lustre to thine eye,
Than all the tricks of timid bashfulness.
I much rejoice that he will soon be here,
For well I know, his promise is an oath
He would not break for worlds; then let me hope
His meed may be thy hand, and more thy heart.
Ther.

Thanks for thy mirthful wishes, but at present
I shall retire; and recollect, Clotilda!
Thou mayst command my utmost pow'r to serve thee,
Now fare ye well awhile.

[Exit.

The Court retires. Manent CLOTILDA and ALBERTO.
Clot.

[Aside.]

It is thy death I would command, and that
I will procure without thy kind consent—
Besides, methinks, when royal Carlo here
Shall sway the sceptre as thy wedded lord,
The pow'r of serving me will be transferr'd
To him, who, should caprice incline, may veil
In clouds and darkness all my starry hopes,
And, scorning the condition of my baseness,
Breed a dire tempest o'er my hated head.
I must a speedy vengeance execute.

Alb.

Thou seem'st absorb'd in anxious thought, Clotilda.

Clot.

I have at times a wand'ring mind, and oft
Imagination, with her fairy train,
Leads me to fountains, or enamell'd meads,
To cull an humble garland of fresh flow'rs.
Or, on the promontory's height, I seem
To wander, at the midnight hour, and catch
The thrilling sounds of the far distant wreck.
The voice of coming war, with sudden burst,

Perhaps then strikes my ear: Anon, I view
The ransack'd town, the agonizing band
Of hapless females with dishevell'd locks,
Piercing the air with cries; and then, methinks,
I am a queen, and hush their clam'rous fears,
Change desp'rate terror into rapt'rous joy,
And govern with a prosp'rous moderation.
When thus my mind's bewilder'd, I remain
Lively, or sad, or fix'd in solemn thought,
As the wild-woven visions interest.

Alb.

Much, much I fear that something troubles thee,
For I have oftentimes observed of late,
Thou'rt absent e'en amidst society;
As tho' the busy lab'ring of thy breast,
Taught thee to scorn attentive ceremony.
O, pr'ythee dissipate the low'ring gloom
That hangs oppressive on thy pensive spirits,
And deck thy face in smiles and gentleness:
For all should smile beneath Theresa's reign.
[Exit.

CLOTILDA *sola*.

I doubt Alberto's unaspiring nature
May not be roused to deeds of dreadful greatness:
True he is brave, and no mean personal fear
E'er touch'd his heart, yet will he surely shrink
From treach'rous daring, and intrepid crime.
Then let me not unbosom me to him,
But mask th' intention from his piercing eyes,
And be myself the bloody executor,
So he in tranquil innocence shall enjoy
The dazzling 'vantage of Supreme command.
Enter ARNALDI.

Arn.

Not always thus in humble garb array'd,
I trod with timid step these spacious halls.
But time, that fleets along on restless wing,
Bears human happiness for e'er away,
So has it mine.—Yet will I seek Clotilda,
For once she did not scorn me; hah! 'tis she,
Alone in deep reflection; the hour suits well.—
Madam! if wretchedness may plead excuse
For this abrupt intrusion, I surely
May be forgiven, for alas! my woes,
Are seldom parallel'd. Hither I come
To throw me at your feet, implore your aid

To lift me from a state of grov'ling sorrow,
And bid returning fortune smile upon me.
Clot.

I know thee not, intruder! quit my sight.
Arn.

I am Arnaldi, fallen, lost Arnaldi!
Who once enjoy'd your tenderness and friendship.
Clot.

I do remember, and now greet thee kindly;
Then give thy woes an utterance.
Arn.

It is thou
Canst turn the youthful mind of fair Theresa
To justice and compassion, tell her, that
There was a time, when splendidly I flourish'd
In the bright ray of our late sov'reign's favour;
His confidant, and friend; until at length
By treachery undermin'd, by malice ruin'd,
Each post of profit, and of high import,
Forc'd I resign'd, and uncondemn'd I bear
The stigma of suspicion. Then I found
My youthful patrimony, near consum'd,
Was all that I retain'd, which scarcely serves
To conquer hunger, and subdue my thirst,
Or throw a rustic cov'ring o'er my limbs.
O Madam! think how cruel 'tis to bear
Such sad reverse of fortune; fallen thus
From wealth and pow'r, to lowest poverty.
Clot.

[Aside.]

This man may suit my purpose;—true Arnaldi!
I have full oft deplored thy fate, and pray'd
A pardon for thee, tho' I pray'd in vain.
And when thy house was humbled, and thyself
Thrown unregarded on the scornful world,
I wept the suff'rance I could not prevent:
For thou hadst always interest in my thoughts.
But say, Arnaldi! hast thy silent scorn,
Or open satire, e'er provok'd Theresa?
Arn.

With all humility, and loyal heart,
I look'd for justice from her hand, but ne'er
Disclos'd the bitter anguish of my soul
By mark'd disdain, or public murmuring.
Clot.

O then it is most marvellous, to see

How she abhors thy name; within her breast,
Th' apparent seat of mercy and of love,
Dwell rancour and destructive cruelty.
Thou might'st as easy check the ebbing force
Of foaming Neptune with thy naked breast,
As try to bid her settled hate subside.
I fear, my friend! that greater grief awaits thee,
And not forgiveness.

Arn.

O Heavens!

Clot.

Yet, yet methinks, there is a road may lead
Thy footsteps to prosperity; but perhaps
Thou with a coward's patience dost prefer
To bear thy wrongs, than manfully avenge them.
O canst thou, nurs'd in wealth, and train'd to glory,
Accustom'd to behold a cringing crowd
Court thy protecting smile, and bend before thee,
Now wander up and down in threadbare sorrow,
This alter'd town, to meet the cold neglect
Of unobserving greatness, and encounter
The wretch's humour of equality?

Were thy lot mine far other thoughts would rouse
My burning breast, and settled deep revenge
Should be the polar star to guide my course
Thro' the rough waves of mis'ry and despair.

Arn.

Nor is my mind dead to a glorious vengeance,
Did any luring prospect of success,
Or hopes of happier days encourage it.

Clot.

That's nobly said, pursue th' heroic thought;
And if thou find but any means to crush
The glitt'ring asp that lurks on Milan's throne,
That midst the fragrant flow'rs of courtesy
Prepares to wound us all with venom'd sting,
I here pronounce thy fortunes shall be raised
To their accustom'd splendor, for the deed
Will place the sceptre in Alberto's hand,
And I can bend his pliant disposition
To my desires. If I but give the word,
My enemies shall vanish from my sight,
Like earthly mists before the morning blast;
And where I point my favour, shall descend,
A copious show'r of all-refreshing bounty.

Arn.

Thy words, thus pouring in my heart, are oil,
That makes the latent fire rush forth in blaze:
Give thy commands, and I with promptitude,
And steady resolution, will perform them,
Whate'er they may be. Acquainted long
With narrow suff'iance, pains contemptible,
And all the rending littleness of want,
I gaze upon a greatly impious deed,
And thinkit glory: fear alike is fled
With moulder'd wealth, and faded reputation.
Then bid me seek the solitary cave,
Where sleeps the brinded wolf in grim repose,
To drag him forth, and I'll not hesitate;
Or plant a dagger in the lily breast
Of timid innocence, and I'll obey thee.
Clot.

We must be speedy in all desp'rate acts—
Consider wisely, firmly execute.—
Receive this key, it opes a secret door
In the lone wall near St. Antonio's dome;
Thence comes a secret passage to my chamber;
Which thou wilt traverse, at the silent hour,
When solemn Midnight spreads her dark'ning wings;
And naught his heard, save the fierce felon's tread
Pacing to meet his comrades; O Arnaldi!
Haste to me then, and let thy bosom burn
With dire revenge, and unrelenting rage,
For I shall have an action to propose,
That will require a heart of adamant.
Arn.

Doubt me not,
I am not to be shaken; but explain.—
Clot.
Are we unnoticed, hangs no list'ning ear
Attentive on the purport of my words?
Know then, I will prepare a cordial drink
Shall calm for e'er Theresa's restless spirit:
The which thy hand shall minister.—How's this?
Thy abject eye seems bursting with dismay;
And pallid terror trembles on thy cheek;
Hast thou forgot her hatred, and thy wrongs,
Or certain recompense I promis'd?

Arn.
No,
I am wound up to execute; my soul
Recoil'd a moment from the dire attempt,

And now returns again with double firmness.
But how shall I gain entrance to her bed?
Clot.

She occupies the chamber of her father,
From mine to which there is a hidden way,
The duke's contrivance, only known to me,
Made for convenience of our sportful hours.
So shalt thou gain admittance to thy prey,
And from behind the arras steal upon her;
Then either force her drain th' oblivious cup,
Or fix a mortal poignard in her heart.
I would myself have done it; but I fear
A momentary weakness of my sex
Might shake my purpose, at the very time
When hesitation would be my destruction:
This faithfully perform'd, thou shalt be rais'd
To Milan's proudest honours, and thy house
Shall back retort the scorn it has receiv'd,
Upon the heads of all thy enemies.

Arn.

This night it shall be done; and why should I
Let weak compassion turn me from the deed?
For none can pity me! then let me wade
With daring step thro' crimes, until I reach
The wish-for port, when, like the fortunate,
I'll damn the humble villain, turn to scorn
The baleful vices of necessity,
And grant no virtue in the man that errs,
Whate'er the fatal cause or circumstance.
Clot.

Thou hast much injury t'inflame thy rage,
And I to urge it, as thou soon shalt know;
But leave me now Arnaldi! lest my son
Chance to return, and to behold thee here,
Might raise suspicion to disturb hereafter.
Has no one mark'd thy entrance?

Arn.

O no; disguised in poverty, I passed
With others thro' the gate, while the stern guard
Disdain'd to challenge such a wretch as I.
All unobserv'd I hither bent my course.
Clot.

Then hasten to you chamber for a while,
There lie conceal'd, and I will meet thee soon;
When we will sagely meditate, and prepare,
The necessary prelude to our greatness.

Thence thou may'st hie thee home the way I mention'd,
And so return at midnight.

Arn.

It shall be done.

[Exit.

Clot.

So pliant is the virtue of the poor.

The fallen poor, who once have known the sweets

Of better time; not those, whose industry,

Tho' hardly exercised in humblest toil,

Gives daily bread, and careless independence

'Tis well I profit by this wretch's want,

And save myself the horror of the deed.

No longer Milan's sceptre shall elude

Alberto's grasp, for on Theresa's death

He is th' appointed heir, and must be duke.

O •...ble Night! bring quick th' important hour

To ratify th' intent; for thou, dread queen!

Altho' to frequency of crimes inured

Shall view an act of gloomiest dignity.

So when thy rival, fresh Aurora, opes

Her laughing eyes beneath the front of Heaven,

She shall behold Clotilda's pow'r complete.

END OF THE FIRST ACT.

ACT II. SCENE I.

A Bed-chamber in the Palace. CLOTILDA sola. A Lamp burning.

CLOTILDA.

IS it, alas!

The penalty and sad concomitant of guilt,

That time for ever now must labour on,

With secret workings of unbosom'd pain?

Ah, no! the tyrant conscience soon throws by

His blunted shafts, and reason laughs to scorn

Each servile fear.—He said it should be done

Ere light appear'd, nor is the day yet broke

Nor have the busy race of toil begun

Their early murmurings; Milan's late-throng'd streets

Seem like some lonely cloister's pensive aisles.

Perhaps th' attempt has fail'd, then dark despair

And shame must fall upon me; and my son

Bow the base knee to his own father's daughter,

Because her birth was fann'd by the priest,

And his unlicens'd. O forbid it pride!

Ambition too prevent it!—Ha! who's there?

Enter ALBERTO.

Alb.

O grant me pardon, mother, at this hour!—
What means that star, the look of wild dismay,
This early watchfulness? 'tis very strange!

Clot.

Be not surprised,
For often when the night-flies break my rest,
Or shrill winds whistle, or the cricket cries,
I quit an irksome bed, and to and fro
Traverse my room till day-light, fancy then
Teems with wild thought, and each slight noise alarms me.
But, say, my son! at this unusual hour,
Why dost thou seek me?—for tho' always joy
Attends thy presence, now 'tis mix'd with wonder.
Would he were gone before Arnaldi comes.

[Aside.

Alb.

After you left the table, for awhile
Theresa staid, being in a merry mood;
And by her gay discourse, and artless wit,
Won ev'ry hearer's love; the old she charm'd,
Pointing her mirthful satire at the vain,
The foplings of her court; while they themselves,
For some were present, laugh'd with willing heart,
To find their foibles drolly singular;
The spacious hall, with echo of her praise
Resounded; when I, with voice prophetic,
Cried, to retort her humour, gentle sister!
Would princely Carlo, were but here to tame thee!

Clot.

And canst thou thus lavish thy praises forth
On her, who mars thy fortune?

Alb.

Attend the sequel,—scarce had she retired,
When thro' the palace arch, with rattling hoof,
A swift steed brings the wish'd-for messenger;
For 'twas with news of Carlo that he came.
By this, the prince is near, for day and night
He has pursued his journey, like a lover
Warm and sincere, and worthy of Theresa.
These tidings pleased me so, I would not sleep,
But rather chose with watchful readiness,
To wait the coming of my friend, my brother.

Clot.

Thy friend! thy brother!

Alb.

My friend he is, for we have fought together!
And will be soon my brother! but, Clotilda!
Excuse my rash intrusion, since you know
The rapt'rous cause that urged it.

Clot.

O! call it not intrusion, for the tidings
Have struck me deeply—with delight—but now
I must require thee—leave me to repose—
That sinking nature claims.

Alb.

You do well.

Compose yourself a little, for you're pale,
And something overpow'rs you; when you're better,
Go to Theresa, 'tis a pleasing task,
And wake the heavenly maid to love and transport.
Meanwhile I'll hasten to prepare a welcome
For noble minded Carlo—so adieu.

[Exit.

Clot.

Thanks to indulgent fortune thou art gone;—
How did thy presence, at this pregnant time
Of busy mischief, shake each secret nerve.
'Tis very like, perhaps I'm pale—O Chance!
This is thy cruel sport, young Carlo comes
Flush'd with the mingled, pleasing expectation,
To wed Theresa, and to reign in Milan.
But he shall find her in the arms of Death;
And the proud dukedom fallen to my son
By legal course; for so his father will'd,
In case the maiden died. Yet 'tis unlucky,
For the too prying prince, burning with love,
And stung to fury by his baffled hopes,
May happen to suspect; well let him then,
For I will 'scape suspicion, my hot tears
Shall glide unnumber'd, and my sea-like breast
Shall labour with a tempest of affliction,
'Till half the pity to Theresa due,
Be turn'd on me her melancholy mourner.
But O! perhaps she lives, Arnaldi's false—
If so, ambition be his curse, for then
My schemes are vain, Alberto's greatness gone.—
Now, now he comes, my fate is on his lips.
Enter ARNALDI, by a private door.

Arn.

Theresa sleeps forever!

Clot.

'Tis well, but tell me all.

Arn.

'Twas three hours after midnight, as thou know'st,
When with a creeping sacrilegious step
The private stairs I mounted to her chamber.
Just as I pass'd the op'ning tow'rds the garden,
Methought her father's spectre threat'ned me,
And as I cautious turn'd thy traitor key,
The lonely Night-fowl shriek'd the note of death;
Then my limbs trembled, and my hair uprose.

Clot.

Didst thou recoil?

Arn.

I paused a moment only, and then enter'd—
But O! what forceful language can describe
The innocent beauty of the sleeping fair!
Hadst thou been there, it would have chang'd thy heart,
And melted thee to mercy.

Clot.

Is she not dead then?

Arn.

The quiv'ring lamp, as conscious of the deed,
E'en strove to hide its light; and the carv'd cupids
That adorn her bed, seem'd to plead for her.

Clot.

Didst thou refuse?

Arn.

No, I determin'd stood,
Like some relentless tyger of the desert,
To gaze awhile upon my destin'd prey.

Clot.

And when you woke her, was she not in fear?

Arn.

Her cheek grew whiter than her throbbing breast,
Her eye look'd frantic, and with falt'ring tongue
She cried, what would'st thou here? I answer'd,
Peace, listen, and obey,—accept this cup,
Thy brother's mother sends it. Here she scream'd,
Then with uplifted dagger I pursued;
Shriek not, Theresa—or within thy heart
This steel shall rankle; since thou needs must die,
Drain the calm cup, and die without a pain.

Clot.

And so she drank it?

Arn.

After a show'r of tears, and many prayers,

To change my stubborn heart,
Finding all hope was vain, she drank it up:
Implored forgiveness on thy head and mine,
Then turn'd her with a piteous sigh and slept.
Clot.

What made thee loiter when the act was o'er?
Arn.

A giddy horror seiz'd my brain, and then
Cold fearful stupor sunk me to the floor:
Where long I lay, if so my absence seem.
When sense renew'd the consciousness of crime,
I with a coward's agitated step,
Quitted the murder'd loveliness of virtue,
And hither came to tear my villain's hair,
Beat my mean breast, and curse my poverty.
Clot.

Thanks to thy manly firmness, bold Arnaldi!
Which let no idle agony disgrace;—
Hast thou not heard of Carlo's near arrival?
Arn.

Of Carlo's near arrival, say'st thou? no;
That may promote enquiry, and breed danger.
Clot.

To us it cannot, we are sov'reign now,
And Justice waits our nod; but yet beware,
Nor ever in discourse appear mysterious;
But mask thy secret thoughts with open brow.
And when at table, or in public talk,
Cold observation whispers forth his doubts,
And Malice prattles of Theresa's death;
Bestow a casual heed, but no remarks;
Like one to whom such great events import not.
Soon as the gen'ral wonder shall subside,
And new ideas turn to common thoughts;
When brave Alberto shall be firmly fix'd
Upon the throne, thy recompense shall come.
Arn.

I trust me to thy bounty and protection,
Clot.

Expect thy just reward.

Arn.

So fare thee well.

[Exit.

Clot.

And thou shalt have thy just reward, Arnald•...
For to thy guard I will not trust my honour,

Hard-hearted murderer! thou canst nothing urge
In poor extenuation of thy deed
But avarice, and base servility;
While I can plead, in the dark acts excuse,
Maternal love, ambition, pride, and hate.
Then shall thy death appease Theresa's shade,
And thus my justice wipe away my crime.
Now will I seek my couch, that when the news
Of young Theresa's death shall shake the palace,
I may be found in seeming calm repose.
CLOTILDA throws herself upon the Bed, and the Scene closes.

SCENE II.

In the Palace.

Enter ALBERTO, and a Neapolitan Lord.

Alb.

Left you his highness far behind, my lord?

Lord.

Another hour will bring him to your gates,
And willingly he speeds, for he admires
The hospitable manners of your town,
Your beauteous ladies, and your valiant youths.
Yet most his spirit languishes to view
Your royal sister,—her he loves sincere,
And her alone: but eight short months are gone
Since last he left her; yet he oft will talk
Of ages past in absence. The gay court
Of Naples found him, on return, no more
The laughter-loving prince, who sported wild
Midst social mirth, and liveliest dissipation,
But sad, and pensive; fond of solitude,
He only chose to seek the cypress grove,
What time unruffled evening's dewy hand
Bedecks in blushing robe her fav'rite star.

Alb.

'Tis true he loves,

Oft have I seen him dwell with raptur'd eye
On every varying charm of fair Theresa—
Nor does he need our pity.—It were well
She knew of his approach, lest joy, perchance,
To meet him unexpected, should appear
Like sorrow, and dissolve in tears.

Who waits there?

Enter Attendant.

Alb.

Go tell the ladies of her highness' chamber
To give her information, when she wake,
That royal Carlo hastens to her court.

Attend.

It shall be so, my Lord.

Alb.

O! he's a noble, and a gen'rous youth,
Open of heart, benevolent, and valiant.

Lord.

Next to Theresa, most he loves Alberto,
And boasts thy friendship with a manly pride,
Protesting in the circle of this world,
For virtue, honour, spirit, feeling, truth,
There lives not thy superior.

Alb.

His praise to merit, and to share his friendship,
Is all I ask, and the chief bliss, I wish him,
The dear possession of Theresa's beauty:
For she is as the counterpart of him,
Lovely and perfect.

Enter LUCINDA.

Luc.

O direful fate, O miserable hour!
She's gone, she's gone, dead, dead!

[Faints.

Alb.

Dead, dead! Ah, who! what dost thou mean, Lucinda?
Now she revives, down, down my breaking heart!

Luc.

Alas! Alberto, must I tell thee all,
And plant a dagger in thy soul, but O!
My royal mistress, thy beloved sister
Is lost, is gone forever!

Alb.

Theresa dead! speak not the fatal word!
My tender sister, my fond heart's delight!
And must my Carlo thus be welcom'd here,
Feel what I feel? there's madness in the thought!
And have I 'scaped the rage of war for this?

Lord.

Too much I prove the anguish of his heart,
To offer comfort; I'll retire, and weep.

[Exit.

Enter CLOTILDA.

Clot.

Ah me, Alberto! how shall I support

These dreadful tidings? poor Theresa's death,
So unexpected, loads my heart with grief,
And turns my eyes to sluices, whence flows out
A stream of useless pity; O my son!

'Tis just we mourn, yet should we reason too,
Enter Attendant.

Attend.

My Lord, prince Carlo is arrived.

[Exit.

Alb.

I cannot, will not see him; let me fly
To some cold cavern, desolate, and drear,
Far from the haunts of men, where hated light
Shall be for e'er excluded, far from love,
And social intercourse, and friendship's ties,
Where I may wander like the raging wolf,
Howling my midnight sorrows all alone.
Madam you seem to bear this matter coolly,
And reason down your feelings, you may therefore
Receive ill-fated Carlo, and unfold
The horrible despair, while I escape
The dreadful shock to see a suff'ring friend,
Without a pow'r to help him.

[Exit.

Clot.

Gentle Lucinda! suffer not your grief
To overpower you thus, be more composed;
My bosom struggles with a cruel load,
Heavy as thine, yet will I not despair;
Despair is impious, 'tis to call in doubt
Th' eternal justice of the Lord of all.

Luc.

'Twas sad to see how tranquilly she lay,
Her features settled, not her visage chang'd,
As tho' exulting innocence had chose
To make death lovely.—O! my heart will break!

[Exit.

Clot.

Now for another blust'ring scene with Carlo,
Of rending hair and beating breast, and rage,
And all is over. Yet 'tis well I've order'd
Theresa's body to be laid in peace,
Midst the cold relicts of her ancestors.

Exit.

SCENE III.

A Chamber in the Palace.

ALBERTO *solus*.

I must believe it so, for I have mark'd
Her gaze with envious eye on my poor sister,
Who never knew suspicion, or design.
Thou fain would'st make me Duke, base, base Clotilda!
Little thou knew'st my heart, if thou could'st think
That it was fashion'd so, first to approve,
And then to profit by the desp'rate act.
But from the secret longings of thy soul,
Thou didst conceive of me. Beetle-ey'd ambition,
With headlong fury, winds his eager flight
'Gainst each abhorred crime. O mother, mother!
And must I still confess myself thy son!
Had I not all the vainest could desire,
Wealth, pow'r, and honour, dignity, respect?
Plac'd in the palace, I did more than reign,
Thro' the bright medium of Theresa's virtue.
Nay, ev'n thou wert treated like a sovereign.
Yet, if thou'rt innocent, I suspect thee vilely!
Ah no! 'tis true beyond the hope of error,
Else why that haggard cheek, that downcast eye
With which I found thee at the very time
My hapless sister perish'd? O Clotilda!
Thou hadst much reason then to look confus'd;
Well might'st thou shake, for then the gentle maid
Perhaps was struggling with the damn'd design;
Or on her knees, in unavailing tears,
Striving to melt her butcher. Heavenly powers!
I'll see her lovely body as it lies,
The senseless prey of all-devouring death,
And should my tears permit me, will observe
If she have suffer'd aught of violence.
How did the thought escape me! Ho, who's there?
Enter Servant.

Alb.

Haste, lead me to the melancholy chamber
Where lie Theresa's sad remains.

Serv.

My lord! e'en now with decent privacy,
To the sepulchral vault of Milan's house,
The corse was borne by order of Clotilda,
Who said some future day should be appointed
For public rites, religious ceremony,
And the due requiem of her parted soul.

Alb.

'Tis enough! away.

[Exit Servant.

That shall not screen thee, madam! yet indeed
'Twas wond'rous expeditious—but I'll think on't.

Enter CLOTILDA.

Clot.

My son, Alberto!

Rouse from thy lethargy of grief, nor let
Thy private cares 'ercome all public spirit.
Know that the senate wait in rev'rence due
Thy royal presence to proclaim thee Duke.

Alb.

How fares prince Carlo, madam?

Clot.

Alas! unequal to the sudden shock,—
His reason left him, at the very time
He had most need of all his fortitude.
Strangely he rav'd with incoherent speech,
And frantic gesture; while the noble lords
Of his illustrious train, with soothing sorrow,
Convey'd him to his chamber; where they strive
To calm and comfort him—tho' much I fear,
They long may strive in vain.

Alb.

Ill-fated Carlo!

Thy suff'rance throws fresh mis'ry on my heart,
That was o'ercharg'd before. Clotilda! Madam!

Clot.

My son!

Alb.

Observe me well, meet with a steady look
My searching eye; nay, nay, thou dost not tremble,
Yet art thou pale;—do not turn pale, lest I
Should think thee guilty of some horrid crime.

Clot.

What dost thou mean, Alberto?

Alb.

Some crime so dark, so cruel, and so base,
That it must take from Heaven the right of mercy,
And doom the agent to eternal pain,
At thought of which, my op'ning pores distil
A deadly dew, and ev'ry sensible nerve
Thrills with a strange vibration.

Clot.

Surely thy reason wavers also!

Alb.

Mark my words,
Much do I pity those, who kill'd Theresa
But more abhor them—let not that alarm thee.
Thou art an innocent woman, and my mother,
And thou would'st wish to see thy son advanc'd,
Thyself in pow'r; but there perhaps thou'lt fail.
While all thy high-built, guilty expectations,
Shall quit thee ere the hour of consummation.

Clot.

Wilt thou not deign, proud youth, to rule in Milan?

Alb.

Since thou'rt so eager, madam! in this business,
Haste to the senate make my pleasure known,
If it befit thy sex, and thy condition!
That, being troubled with a froward mind,
And little able to direct the state,
I am beside less willing—I refuse,
Without the shadow of hypocrisy,
All proffer'd honours, titles, dignities—
Clot.

This grief effeminate, these grov'ling thoughts
But ill become—

Alb.

Now, by my soul, tho' Milan were the world,
I would not be seduced to mount the throne.
What, shall I view my sister torn away
By ruffian violence, and shall I profit
Of the black deed?—no, hear my last resolve,
Not all the charms of fortune, or of pow'r,
Th' entreating clamours of the populace,
Nor yet my boasted right, nor more, my duty,
Shall e'er induce me to be sov'reign here.
I am a bastard of but little worth,
Yet much I fear me, worthier than my mother,
And therefore will not bring my faults to light
Amid the dazzling splendor of a throne.
Nor shall thy gentle shade, Theresa! see
Alberto rise to greatness by thy murder!
Clot.

[kneeling.]

O let me thus implore thee on my knees
To act more nobly; look on her who bore thee,
And change thy—

Alb.

Kneel not to me, but go and kneel to Heaven,

And do it with contrition; to obtain
Mercy, and pardon; but for me I'm fix'd—
Yet, ere we part;—Theresa's sepulture,
By thy command, so hasty and unhonour'd,
Occasions wonder;—think upon my words.

[Exit.

Clot.

Go, vent thy malice on th' embattled plain,
Or bid thy soldiers shake. I heed thee not.
Yet dost thou scorn the dukedom, base Alberto!
Have I then loaded thus my soul with sin
To lift thee into greatness, but in vain?
And torn the sceptre from Theresa's hand,
To cast it to the people? who, beside,
Will quickly work my downfall, for they hate me,
And hitherto have paid me cold respect,
Unwillingly, because I dwelt in favour.
But since my hopes are ruin'd by my son,
Thro' mere caprice of over-acted honour,
My bright day's star is set, and I must fall.
Forever then I tear him from my love,
And here devote him to severest vengeance;
Consoling vengeance! thee I invoke,
Wrapt in terrific mystery, and rage,
To sooth me with thy horror-breathing smile;
I am thy vot'ry now, be thou my guide!
END OF THE SECOND ACT.

ACT III. SCENE I.

Another Chamber in the Palace. CARLO, ANTONIO.

CARLO.

I WILL not wrong him, for I know my friend,
And that he would not act the traitor's part,
Tho' ev'ry kingdom should unite its crown
To diadem his head. Is he not brave?
And say did ever selfish meanness dwell
In the rich circle of a brave man's heart?
Then we will join in sorrows to discover
The loathed author of our mutual woe;
The wretch who tore Theresa from my arms,
And stole the loveliest jewel of the world
Ant.

'Tis wisely judg'd, ne'er could Alberto stoop
To work a deed so foul.

Enter CLOTILDA.

Clot.

O let me claim thy private ear awhile,
Illustrious prince! for I have that to say
Requires a solemn, and severe attention.
Far better suited to my fearful tale,
Were charnels dismal, and the noon of night,
Than this still-lingering cheerfulness of day.
For 'tis not crude suspicion bids me speak,
But clear and awful confirmation shakes
My agonizing breast; whereof the purport
I would disclose to thee alone.

Car.

My lord! be pleased to leave us.

[Exit ANTONIO.

Clot.

How strong the mother working at my heart,
Combats with justice! O, ye spirits impure!
Who hover o'er this earth, whose business is
To numb the feelings of th' assassin's soul,
Dry up each pity-flowing tear, and change
Meek nature's tenderness to cruelty.
O breathe a portion of your fury here,
That this parental weakness may not check
My duty to my country, and mankind!

Car.

what means Clotilda?

Clot.

I scarcely know myself, for in my mind
Confusion reigns, and unavailing grief.
Detested murder! to the common eye
That seem'st most shocking, how dost thou appear
View'd thro' the anguish of a mother's love!

Car.

Alas! thy words strike terror to my soul.

Clot.

Ah me! 'tis I who caus'd Theresa's death,
By hearing such a monster; so 'twere just,
I should receive the bursting punishment
Due to his crimes.

Car.

Quick, quick, Clotilda! free my lab'ring breast
Of this severe suspense.

Clot.

In yon blue vault, methinks Theresa sits,
Calmly resplendent, as the full orb'd moon,
When rising from the wat'ry waste, she throws

Her lustrous pearls upon the tossing waves.
Yet sadness hangs upon the maiden's brow,
To mark the torments of her brother's guilt,
And base ambition's triumph over virtue.
Perchance, she raises now some hallow'd hymn,
'Midst glowing seraphim, and cherub pure,
T' implore the mercy of all pitying Heaven
Upon her murderer.

Car.

O speak thy thoughts, lest cruel expectation
Break my sad heart before I know the worst.

Clot.

I must not, will not screen him, tho' he is
Dearer to me than life, or life's best joys.
Nor will I see his bloody hands defile
The crown of Milan—'tis Theresa's voice,
From the chill sepulchre, that cries for justice,
And I'll obey the call of her, and truth.
Know then, most royal Carlo yesternight,
When my lov'd sov'reign took her slight to Heaven,
As chance I lay a stranger to repose,
I heard a shrill shriek issue from the chamber
Where slept the royal maid. I started up,
And op'ning cautiously my door, beheld
Alberto quit her room, with silent tread;
And as he passed me by, he inly mutter'd,
"The deed is done, my hopes are ratified!"

Car.

Why didst thou not inform me so before
At our first interview; for had I known it
One hour ago, ere this he'd been in hell.

Clot.

Think on the struggles of a parent's weakness
That could not suddenly devote her child
To sure destruction, and dark infamy.
And now I do repent of what I've done,
For desp'rate anger frowns upon thy brow,
And evil will betide him. Do not, Carlo!
Snatch my poor son from penitence, and pray'r,
For he has need of utmost length of days.
To mourn his crimes, and make his peace above.
I must retire—but O be merciful!

[Exit.

Car.

And could ambition thus defile thy soul,
Once brave Alberto! could the tinsel train

Of servile courtiers, or the bauble crown,
Allure thy spirit to so damn'd a deed?
O man! how weak is all thy boasted virtue!
When strong temptation urges thee to wrong;
Nay, since my once-lov'd friend is sunk thus low,
I of myself am void of confidence.
Yet here I tear all friendship from my breast,
And pledge myself to vindicate the wrongs
Of lov'd Theresa—yes, my sword shall pierce
The unrelenting traitor's coward heart.
Enter ALBERTO.

Alb.
My noble friend! it is to thee I come
To ease my throbbing breast, and share thy woes?
So shall soft sympathy, perhaps, beguile
The grief that knows no cure; how, how is this?
Methinks with vengeful brow, and fierce disdain.
Thou look'st reproaches on me. Righteous Heaven!
I recollect me now, his brain's disturb'd.
[Aside.

O call me to thy mind, illustrious Carlo!
I am Alberto, who has fought beside thee.
Car.

Do not, Alberto! calm thy guilty fears
With supposition that my reason errs;
It en'd alone' when I conceiv'd thee just,
Friendly and honourable; but it knows thee now.
A soul-contracted hypocrite, and a villain.

Alb.
Alas! poor youth, he thinks not what he says,
Lost in a labyrinth of mingled woe.
Subdue thy rage, my best-beloved Carlo!
Nor wound my ears with such afflictive sounds
Of vile upbraidings, and discordant frenzy.
Car.

Attend my words—when first my soul receiv'd.
The dreadful tidings of Theresa's death;
As right I deem'd, by treachery procur'd;
Convulsive nature own'd a sudden weakness;
And sunk beneath a momentary madness;
But now I know myself; thee too I know,
I know thee for a low ambitious coward,
False to thy friend, thy country, and thy sister,
A traitor every way, and more, a murderer.

Alb.
No further tempt my moderation, Carlo!

Nor cast such false indignities upon me:
Lest I forgetful of all tender ties,
Should scorn the social bonds of host and friend,
And punish thee for such unjust suspicion.
I am no traitor, and no coward I.

Car.

Say, was it noble, generous and brave,
To steal at midnight, with a ruffian's step,
And bathe thy hangman's hands in innocent blood?
Was it a brother's love, a soldier's pride,
That urg'd the deed? 'twas damnable ambition;
Which bade thy shameless spirit wish to reign.
Go, reign a slave, and be thy state thy curse.
But first I dare thee draw thy tarnish'd sword
In vile support of crime, while I will come
Arm'd with the fury of despairing love,
And rage of injur'd friendship to the combat.

Alb.

Then be it so, I shall not wish to fail thee.

Car.

Name thou some hour and place of solitude,
Sacred to gloomy death, and grim revenge,
Fit for the solemn conflict; there to prove
If infamy, or justice, shall prevail.

I once did love thee well, that time is o'er,
And now I call thee forth with deadly hate;
For be assured, or thou, or I must fall.

Then if to me the victory belong,
Theresa from her bless'd abode shall smile.

Alb.

'Tis like she may; and let me add, I praise
Thy val'rous bearing as a soldier should.
Nor will I shrink thro' consciousness of crime,
Or dread of all thy haughty menaces.—
Near to the ivy-crowned mausoleum
Of Milan's royal race, where wither now
The beauties of Theresa, is a spot
That suits our purpose well; I'll there confront thee,
'Tis just without the gates, and soon as e'er
The sickly moon shall raise her blunted horns
Above th' horizon, and around be heard
The far wolf's famish'd howlings, that awake
The flitting screech-owl's melancholy cry,
There shall thy wish'd-for triumph be complete.

Car.

Nor shall it wait me long, for even now,

O'er the still landscape beams the chrystal orb,
Whose fun'ral lamp, shall light thee to thy grave.
I go to meet thee, so till then, adieu.

[Exeunt

SCENE II.

Moonlight. The Mausoleum of the Dukes of Milan.

Enter CLOTILDA.

Clot.

O how congenial to my gloomy soul
Are these dumb horrors! hide thy lucid face,
Thou melancholy moon! for sure thou throw'st
With too much luxury, thy glitt'ring beams,
T' adorn this mould'ring mansion of the dead.—
O rather rise, ye rending hurricanes!
Loaded with lamentation, and despair,
And sooth my ear with desolating song.
Such is the musick I require to breathe
In solemn unison with my dark designs;
And ye unconscious relicts! that repose
In silent satire of magnificence,
That free from human cares, and wild desires,
Own the relentless tyrant's putrid sway,
All hail! I come to rouze your dull abode
With busy crime! And thou, Theresa's shade!
Let me appease thee now, for here I wait
To slay the base destroyer, and to place
Thy murder'd murderer beside thy corse,
Methinks the victim lingers! haste, Arnaldi!
Receive thy recompense, for lo! the end
[Puts her Hand upon a Dagger.

Of all thy expectations meets thee here.
Yonder he comes, I hear his eager step—
O let me steel my bosom to its purpose!
Enter ARNALDI.

Arn.

Obedient to thy wish, behold me here;
But tell me why thou didst appoint a time
When all the virtuous court the arms of sleep,
And mischief wanders forth? why this drear scene,
Where silence watches the remains of death?
It is most strange. Alas! my mind forebodes
Some over-hanging evil: Speak, Clotilda!

Clot.

Hear then, Theresa in this tomb reposes;
A few hours past interr'd; for so I order'd;
Lest by delay might be incurr'd some danger.—

Now, in the hurry of the time, with her
The richest diamond of the state was buried;
Which sparkled on her finger; that t' obtain,
I pray'd thy presence here; afraid to explore
Alone, the darksome vault of grisly Death.
Then guide my steps, Arnaldi! and protect me
From apprehension of creative terror;
So shall the jewel in reward be thine.
Here, take the key, and wrench the iron bolt.
That holds in bondage vile the race of Milan.
Arn.

'Tis well that I, the minister of death,
Should from the dead receive my just reward.
Thou dreary chamber! open thy hungry jaw,
[He unlocks the door
And let the living enter;—Ha! see there,
Yon glimm'ring lamp a paly lustre sheds
On cold Theresa's cheek; outstretch'd she lies
In deep repose I gave;—within my breast,
Ten thousand horrors dwell, and sad remorse
Sits thron'd a tyrant—mark, in awful range,
The sov'reign house of far-renowned Milan.
Lie side by side in social nothingness.
And, lo! Theresa! still she seems to reign
O'er the dull kingdom of relentless death;
Herself the bridal partner of his sway.
I cannot enter, for my trembling knees
Forget their office, and unusual dread
Hangs on my spirits—forward brave Clotilda!
And tear the glowing jewel from her hand,
While I await thee here.

Clot.
Dost thou, inur'd to crimes of blackest dye,
School'd in villainy, and lost to shame,
Presume to shudder now, and hesitate,
Like a young maiden, o'er her lover's grave?
Come on then, boldly—when I lead the way,
Thou sure may'st follow. Hark! I hear the steps
Of some approaching, let us quick retire
From curious observation.

[They go into the Mausoleum and shut the <◇>
Enter ALBERTO and CARLO.

Alb.
This is the sepulchre where sleeps Theresa,
And her illustrious ancestors; and here,
If chance thy arm should vindicate her wrongs,

I too shall rest.—

Car.

Draw, draw thy sword, nor work upon my friendship,
But be the noble youth my love once spoke thee,
Ere thou hadst lost thyself, and kill'd Theresa.

Alb.

I scorn to talk of innocence to thee,
Since that thou know'st me not; yet much I mourn
The deep regret, and anguish thou prepar'st thee.

Car.

War not with words, Alberto! I despise
Such mean, unmanly murm'rings; draw thy sword,—
Theresa's injuries rising to my thought,
Inflame my rage, and shall direct my blade
To the curst bosom of her base destroyer.

[They fight, ALBERTO throws himself upon the Sword of CARLO, and falls.]

Alb.

Thanks to thy sword, my Carlo! it is done,
And I no longer shall offend thy fight,
Nor suffer thy upbraidings;—yet 'tis strange,
In youth's gay prime to close the languid eye
Upon the splendid picture of the world,
And break each fond attachment: but, farewell!
The various interests of active life,
The social intercourse of friendly men,
And glory's luring charms, all, all farewell!
I now must be a banquet for the worm.

Car.

Why didst thou throw thee on my sword
Without a contest? didst thou wish to die,
And spare thy once lov'd friend? But O! forgive
The vengeful stroke, that robs thee of thy life.
And leaves me to despair; so gracious Heaven
May pardon thee the murder of Theresa.
Yet while thou canst, confess the fatal deed
For which I pierc'd thy bosom, so shall I
Better compose my mind,—thou die the better.

Alb.

Suppose me guilty, Carlo! of the act
For which I die, lest grief and sad remorse,
Prey on thy youthful days: I love thee well,
And wish thee happy, and may Heaven bestow
Mercy on me, as freely I forgive thee.
Thou'st acted nobly, Carlo! as became thee!
And if thou e'er shouldst think that thou hast en'd
Remember, error is the lot of man.

I bleed apace, and visionary forms
Crowd o'er my senses,—I must pause awhile.

Car

Spare me, ye minist'ring pow'rs
Of Heaven's high vengeance! rather, rather crush me—
He's innocent! O mark his dying brow,
Free from all symptom of disturbing guilt;
Yes, he is innocent, and I myself
Am the dark-minded, monster, and the murderer.

[A shriek is heard in the Mausoleum, which opens, and CLOTILDA is seen looking from THERESA, who advances in her sepulchral robe. CARLO starts, and ALBERTO raises himself in amazement.

Colt.

O glare not on me thus, thine eye's reproach
Is worse than hell—I cannot bear thy sight.
Tho' torments wait me at the hour of death,
Yet, while I live, thou hast no pow'r to punish.

Ther.

Where am I! do I live! what means this scene
Of desolation, sepulchres, and death?
There's one does bleed near the cold couch I left,
And here's another.

Car.

It is herself! it is the beauteous maid
Who lives and speaks! O welcome from the tomb
To thy own Carlo's arms, who hither comes
To screen thee ever from a brother's rage.

Ther.

My thoughts return, tho' wav'ring reason hangs
In wild uncertainty on all I see,
And all I hear,—but, thus let me enfold
The youth I love—yet 'twas no brother's rage
That drove me to the tomb; it was Clotilda
Sent the dull cup Arnaldi's hand presented,
And which I drank in part, but pour'd aside
The remnant unobserv'd: since then I've slept.

Car.

Now malice thou'rt content—my sum of ill
Cannot be greater, nor my punishment
Exceed my just deserving—O Alberto!
Clot.

A curse attend thy parted soul, Arnaldi!
For inattention; all had been secure
If she had drank the calming bev'rage up.
But I have had my premature revenge;
Yonder Arnaldi lies; 'twas I that kill'd him.

Why did I come to ope thy prison gates,
Abhorr'd Theresa? else thou'dst surely perish'd
Ye furies fierce, who bathe your snaky locks
In liquid flame! Clotilda is your own.

Ther.

O! do not rave thus bitterly!
I will forgive thee all; nor shall revenge
Tempt aught against thy life or thy repose.

Clot.

Curse on thy mimic moderation,
Thy shallow virtues and offensive goodness.
I hate thy clemency, thy pardon scorn,
And fly from such humanity to hell.

[Stabs herself and

What have we here? Alberto slain! 'tis he!

[Seeing Alberto.

This must be Carlo's deed—I triumph now.
Gentle Theresa! view this bleeding youth,
Who lov'd thee tenderly; I die reveng'd. Oh!

[Dies

There.

What sayst thou, does my dear Alberto die?

Car.

Inhuman fiend! 'twas thou didst point my sword
[Carlo to Clotilda.

Against his life; yet stay, O stay my friend!

[To Alberto.

And I will wash thy wound with my heart's blood.

Wretch that I was to give implicit faith

To such apparent, shallow artifice.

Is there no fiery bolt of righteous Heaven

To end my woes, and save me from distraction?

Ther.

Did Carlo wound thy gen'rous breast, Alberto!

[Kneeling.

Then must each hope of future happiness

Fade in the blossom. Therefore will I seek

Some holy monastery's lone retreat,

And pour at early dawn the fervent hymn

For thy dear soul's repose—and all night long

Will I solicit mercy for my Carlo!

Yet, yet thine eye has lustre, thou hast breath,

Could'st thou but live, this were a world of joy!

Alb.

The hand of death weighs pond'rous at my heart,
And life's vain dream is o'er; yet, ere I go,

O hear me and assent. Theresa, Carlo!
I pray you check your tears, and promise me,
That you will wed—"Tis true, indeed, my friend!
Thou gav'st the stroke, but it was I that sought it.
Thou, like an honourable prince, desy'dst me,
T' avenge th' imagin'd murder; I too proud
To pause, explain, or lead thee from thy error,
Treated accommodation with disdain,
But rush'd upon thy sword to prove my truth.
O! then, Theresa! here accept thy husband,
If that thou would'st my spirit should have peace.

Car.

It is too much!

Ther.

I will accept him at thy hand, Alberto!
And cherish love amidst eternal sorrow.

Alb.

And wilt thou! Carlo! wilt thou take this maid?

Car.

Yes; I receive this offer'd excellence
With gratitude and mingled admiration
Of more than human greatness. O! Theresa!
Here let me hold thee, till my life shall end,
With sad contrition for my past offence.—
Tumultuous grief returns, I scarce can utter.
Once more thy pardon, noble-minded friend.

Alb.

Name it not, Carlo! for no dark resentment
Glooms my calm breast; it was a deed of chance,
And mutual hastiness. My blessing on you—
Long may you reign in peace, and each new day
Greet you with happiness! But, for Clotilda, O
Pity! nay more, forgive her, Royal Pair!
Implore Heaven's mercy on her guilty soul,
And strive by frequent pray'r to melt its justice,—
'Tis all I ask—nor is it pain to die.

[Dies.

Freeeditorial 