

Alex. Beware of jesting now,
Associate me with thy tiger spirit,
And call it zeal? Thou mockest.

Almach (Rising.) No, mehercle!
I wished to pay divine and solemn honors
To thee, great Cæsar! but those Nazarenes
Refused obedience; braved thee in my person,
And I, to avenge the insult shown to thee,
Consigned them to the executioners.

Alex. Thou shameless hypocrite! I know thee well.
What honors didst thou bid thy hireling cut-throats,
Those Syrians, pay me in my tent? Ha! see,
Thy coward cheek is blanched. I'll tell thee all,
To show how vain thy efforts 'gainst one loved
And guarded by the gods. Thy hirelings came,
And gained admittance to the camp; nay more,
A post of honor near my tent. One night
Their murd'rous, vile attempt was made, but mark,
In all their calculations they forgot
That at my tent door slept a trusty guardian,
My faithful Goth, Maximin; they forgot
His presence, or they'd ne'er have ventured there,
No more than into Hades. I was roused
By clashing steel and groans of dying wretches.
Across the entrance stood my watchdog, while
A torch's glare shone on his iron mace,
Sweeping down death and ruin on the heads
Of thy assassin throng. The fight was o'er
Long ere th' alarm was given in the camp,
For human strength could not withstand those blows.
How many went to Pluto, my Achates?