

Solemn and stern, like those unearthly sounds  
Which Moses heard from out the burning bush,  
And 'midst the thunders of that dreadful mount  
Where God declared his law; or that which fell  
On Abraham's startled ear, when him it bade  
Lead forth unto Moriah's mount his son,  
His only son, the child of his old age,  
And offer him a precious sacrifice  
Unto the Lord his God.

*Esther.* And art thou too, my father, thus required  
To show thy faith, and seal it with the blood  
Of her, thou long hast cherished as a child?  
If so, I ready stand—nor shall the sin  
Of disobedience rest upon my head.

*Mordecai.* Not with thy blood, my child—oh, not  
with that!

But I must ask thee to surrender what  
Thou hold'st than life more dear. Yet, boots it not,  
Perchance, more to unfold.—Didst thou not say  
Thou wouldst not be a queen?

*Esther.* And dost thou speak with earnest thought of  
this?

I never *dreamed* that such a thing *could* be!  
Nor would I have it so.—I can stand forth  
At thy command and dare even death itself;  
Yea, cheerfully lie down as on a couch,  
And bare my bosom to the sacred knife,  
If so my God ordains. Ah! rather far  
Would I do this than scale that giddy height,  
Whence I so late beheld one, bright and fair  
As ever wore earth's proudest diadem,  
Dashed headlong down, without one warning word,—  
The sport and victim of a tyrant's will!

*Mordecai.* A moment list, my child. Time serves  
not now

To test the justice of the monarch's act,  
Or scan the merits of the banished queen.  
We are sad exiles from our palmy vales,  
We languish for the music of our streams,  
And the green hills o'er which our fathers roved.  
Long, long thou know'st we have besought our God  
To loose our galling bonds, and lead us forth