

That she may use thee for her wicked ends,
And work the ruin of thy hated house—
Herself to reign supreme.

MARIANNE, (*addressing Herod.*)

Believ'st thou this ?

Say, have I sought to work upon thy love ?
Mad as it was, I turned it to no use,
Made it subserve no purpose of mine own,
But with frank speech, avowed, as now I do,
My deep abhorrence of thy fearful crimes—
Shrank from thy blood-stained hand, and coldly
turn'd

A callous ear to thy entreating words.
A mean revenge prompts my accuser's tongue,
And with fell purpose, has she seized the hour
Of sharp contention betwixt me and thee,
To ripen her dark plot. Haughty I am,
Proud of my lineage high, and spotless name,
And oft, at times, when she has chaf'd my blood
With insult rude, and contumelious word,
I have reproach'd her with her low descent,
And said 'twas hard—and so in truth it is—
For the proud eagle to forsake her nest,
And dwell with meaner birds. For this alone,
This, my unguarded speech, she seeks my life—
Seeks what is nothing worth—not e'en to me—
For secret foes are in my daily path,
And it is wet with drops of precious blood,
Shed from those hearts, which nature knit to mine,
In tenderest bonds of amity and love.
Yet, before Him who reads our secret thoughts,
I here deny all knowledge of the crime
With which I'm charg'd. I am not skill'd
In drugs, or spells, or any potent charms
Of sovereign power. Could I have used them,
'Twould have been to save dear friends from harm,
Myself from enmity, and bitter hate.
As for the page—I know him but by name—
He's of thy train, lately returned from Rhodes—
One of those Gauls who Cleopatra served,
So have I learn'd—and, doubtless, school'd by her
To fraud and wicked arts. I have said all—
And with a tongue of truth—all I can say,
To save my threaten'd life. More words were vain ;
Therefore I would begone. My mother's heart
Years to behold my children—let me go,
And, if it is to seek their last embrace,
May God forgive the souls, stain'd with my blood !

(*As she attempts to retire, Herod throws himself
before her.*)

HEROD.

Speak, Marianne, yet one little word !
Only one word, to say thou lov'st me still,
And all shall be forgiv'n ! This tale shall die,
And I will hug the spell, if it be one,

Which binds my soul to thine, and makes thy love,
The brightness of my life !

SALOME, (*with eager haste.*)

I tell thee thou art mad, degraded, lost !
Summon thy page forthwith, or try the rack
On her most faithful slave, Eurotedas—
He doubtless knows her guilt, and will confess,
When wheels and pulleys shall have strained his
nerves,
And forced him to the act. Till then, I pray,
Proffer not life to her who stands accused,
And who, methinks, from her proud look and air,
Will scorn it on thy terms.

HEROD.

Sister, I pray thee, peace !

Speak, Marianne—shall we all forget,
And love, as once we did ? If life has charms,
It can be bought by casting off thy hate,
And putting on that robe of wedded love,
Which should adorn a wife.

MARIANNE.

Herod, the robe is rent, and threadbare worn,
And cannot be renewed, e'en as the dress
Which we cast off today, and don again,
When on the morrow it has been repaired.
And as for life—but for my children's sake,
I'd crave it not—and on the terms thou nam'st—
If on those only it can still be mine—
I stand as one just ready for the grave.
Herod, my love is withered, root and branch !
'Twas thou did'st shed the mildew o'er its leaves,
And o'er its glory cast a fearful blight.
Nor genial shower, nor sun, nor early dew,
Can ever more revive it from the dust,
Or cause it to send forth those verdant shoots
Of hope, affection, joy, that once adorn'd
Its young and vig'rous stem. And now farewell.
I leave my fate with thee—'twere worse than vain
To utter one appeal to her false heart.
But for thyself, I warn thee to beware,
If thou dost ever covet peace of mind,
How thou dost yet again imbrue thy hands
In guiltless blood !

(*As she precipitately retires, Herod rushes after,
and endeavours to detain her. But when she eludes
his purpose, he pauses on the threshold, in a paroxysm
of anger and disappointment.*)

HEROD.

This is too much !

She spurns me, and prefers death to my love !
Yet I adore her still ! With frenzied heart,
Dote on her charms ! A spell ? It must be so !
Some magic potion mix'd by cunning hands,
Works in my brain, and fires my soul with love !