

But yester eve, beneath this trellised vine,
I heard our kinsman, Mordecai, discourse
With Joatham, the rabbi—and they said
Thy brow was formed to grace a diadem,—
And pity 't were thou wast not born a queen.

Esther. A queen, saidst thou?

Far be such fate from me! I thank my God
That he has placed me in a humbler sphere,
Where peace and love, and sweet affections grow,
Like fragrant violets, nurtured in the shade.
Believe me, boy,—I speak no idle words,—
I'd rather be a captive Jewish maid,
Cherished by Mordecai, beloved by thee,
Than reign unrivaled o'er this mighty realm,
Clothed with the splendor of its lawful queen!

[*Enter Mordecai.*]

Mordecai. Thou wouldst not be a queen!

Saidst thou not so my child?

Esther. In truth I did,—save of my father's heart!
That is the only empire which I crave.
For there I can maintain my queenly state,
Without a cumbrous crown to press my brow,
Within whose jewelled circlet lurk sharp thorns
That pierce the maddening brain—wear such who
will—

I ask no richer diadem than this
Which crowns me now, woven by Azor's hand,
Of buds and simple bells that drink the dew,
And cool my temples with their balmy breath.

Mordecai. My child, for years

Thy smile has been the sunlight of my heart,
Thy voice, the music I best loved to hear,—
Yea, sweeter seemed it than the strains rung forth
From Judah's harp, when with a lofty tone,
It told the glories of our princely race.
I know for thee ambition has no charms,
No syren voice to lure thy gentle soul
From quiet joys, and the fond interchange
Of kindly thought, to climb her dangerous heights.
But duty often prompts us to forego
Our cherished hopes, and yield to her control,—
And now her voice is murmuring in my ear