

ONIAS.

We but thy bidding wait, our swords to draw
In this high cause—the sacred cause of God,
And of our king, for so this princely child
Ere long shall be, who on his broad brow bears
In noble lines, that tell of strength and power,
The signet of his race.

JEHOIDA.

For his sake then,
We brave the peril of this bold emprise,
Nor brook defeat, but still our end pursue
Till it be won. Nor shrink we from the light,
In aught we do, as evil-workers would;
But on the morrow, in noon's broadest glare,
We will with holy oil anoint the brow
Of our young prince, observing all due pomp,
And solemn rite, such as the scene befit;
Then on his sacred head the ancient crown
Of Judah set, and to the listening throng
Proclaim him king!

ONIAS.

May we with safety
To ourselves and him, venture thus far?
The queen —

JEHOIDA (*interrupting him.*)

Her power is gone; all is prepared—
The people ripe for this. Around the king
We'll range a guard of strength—Levites and
priests,
Bearing unsheathed their bright and glittering
blades.

To smite the bold intruder, who shall dare,
With iron tread, and armed heel, profane
The temple's precincts, where our swords defend
Th' anointed of the Lord. A second guard
We at the gates will place, of dauntless hearts;
And still again, beside the brazen gate
Of loftiest height, which to the palace leads,
Where dwells the queen, in haughty state,
Yet trembling lest each hour some vengeful hand
Should smite her for her crimes—there, too, shall
stand

A phalanx strong, armed at all points—watchful
To ward impending peril off, and bar
All ingress to the temple's courts, of those
Who come with deadly weapons armed,
But suffering such as wear the garb, and utter
Words of peace, to pass unchecked.

ONIAS.

All is arranged
With most consummate skill, and such the hate
Which burns in every breast, towards the queen,
I doubt me not, as with one blended voice
From all our nation, will the cry burst forth,
For David's heir to sit on David's throne.
Yet for these thousands who our cause espouse,

Whence can we arms obtain? Doth not the queen,
She and her minions, hold in their own power,
The realm's rich armories? Whence, then, shall we
Equip our soldiers for the coming fight,
If fight should come, as seemeth me, it must,
Ere Athaliah yield, without a blow,
Her sceptred power?

JEHOIDA.

And if she strike, 'twill be
With palsied hand, by desperation urged,
To clutch the crown she sees with wild affright
Torn from her blood-stained brow—so let her
strike!

We too have weapons, bright as those she wields,
Whose points shall reach her heart. Hast thou
forgot

The royal armory, which in David's reign,
He built within the temple—to be closed,
Save when some great emergency, like this,
Made it expedient, for the public weal,
To draw its treasures forth? Well stored it is
With weapons of all kinds—javelins and spears,
Quivers with arrows filled, and well strung bows,
Hauberks and coats of mail, and swords whose
blades

Were tempered true, by cunning artisans.
Who ply their trade within Dammicus' walls.
Of these, I will draw forth a full supply.
For all who need—for Levite and for priest—
And to each captain of a hundred men,
Arms in abundance give, for the brave soldiers
Who beneath him serve.

Now know ye all—

So with unswerving faith, stand to your oath,
And form a living bulwark round your king,
Or in his cause yield up your latest breath.
Upon this eve, a solemn sacrifice
Of prayer for aid, we offer in the temple,
To our God. There will we meet again,
A brief hour hence. Duties elsewhere, await
My presence now.

(*Priests, Levites, &c. with a parting salutation
to Jehoshaphat, and the young prince, retire.*)

JEHOIDA, (*advancing towards Jehoshaphat,*)

My own fair wife, see now
Thy blessed hopes unto fruition ripe.
Nought, nought hath proved in vain thy love hath
wrought.

To our eyes visibly, as when it led
Our fathers' wandering steps, or Moses snatched
From the engulfing Nile, when lone he floated,
In his bulrush ark, on its broad breast,
With God's hand outstretched, to pluck from
death,

This helpless child, to be to us, we trust,
As Moses was to the oppressed tribes,