

*Vir.*—And Virginia dies for Regulus. [*Stabs herself, staggers and falls.*]

*Reg.*—Marcius! O my wife, Virginia, my love! [*Enter Marcius.*] Bid Capella bring some wine! Lose not a moment! [*Exit Marcius.*] Virginia, [*kneels beside her*] Virginia, speak to me, answer me! But I fear it can never be again. There is no sound—nothing, save the deathly silence as of many graves. Oh, thou wast a faithful wife to me, a pure woman, a noble friend. But now thou art gone. Thy pulse has ceased to beat and thy chaste breast to throb. O gods, she's dead!

[*Enter Marcius and Capella.*]

*Cap.*—Here's wine, Regulus!

*Reg.*—Aside, aside! She's dead. Virginia's dead [*kisses her brow*] and this is her corse—what else has the world in it for me now? Her purpled corse—slain by Carthage! Woe to the city that caused the shedding of this costly blood!

Therefore another oath. 'Twas in this room our youthful vows were whispered. Hear me ye walls that echoed to the clanging of the first coat of mail Virginia buckled on, hear me ye gods that hurl your thunderbolts at traitors, hear me! Once again I swear, but this time it is to dedicate myself—body, soul and all—to vengeance. Carthage shall be crushed, crushed by Rome!

What strange influence is this that comes upon me as I kneel? I seem to feel the spirit of Virginia near, hovering above me as an inspiration to noble deeds as in the years gone by. I'll come to thee soon, my love—oh, so soon! For this very hour I return to my Carthaginian dungeon and from that foul cell I shall return to thee.

Yes, Carthage, [*rising*] to glut thy coward eyes I know this throat shall bleed. But the ruby drops hot with anger shall melt my hated chains. And I shall be free—free with oath unbroken, honour unstained! Oh, splendid freedom!

And for thy kindness Rome shall pay thee back! The queen of the Seven Hills shall reward thee with a gift of myriad swords. But she shall hold the hilts, and thou into the false hearts of thy citizens shalt receive the blades! [*Taking up his sword.*] This it is that won the Punic war—this, the hero of every battle. Where is the limit to thy matchless power?