

A plea for foul rebellion, which once raised,
He moves, this traitor arch, amid the storm,
His master-spirit,—swaying at his will
The elements of strife, till o'er them all,
He rides triumphant—planting firm his foot
Upon your necks, and in his outstretched hand
Grasping the sceptre of a ruthless sway!

JEHOIDA.

Peace, lying tongue!—thou shalt not thus pollute
The sacred air within these holy walls,
With thy false breath. Madam, thy reign is o'er!
The measure of thy crimes, filled to the brim,
And God—our God, whom thou hast dared defy,
Leadeth thee here to meet thy doom deserved.

ATHALIAH.

Ha! threat'st thou thus? I scorn thee, treacherous priest!

Despise thy malice, and thy boasted power
Smile at in pity, for its impotence.
Nay, stands there here, where treason dares uprear
Her crested head, one who with loyal heart
Will for his queen, danger and scorn defy,
Uncrown that baby minion, and the head
Of yon arch-traitor cast beneath my feet;
Mighty, or lowly, be his name and rank,
It matters not—for henceforth he shall be.
Aye, from this hour, a partner of my throne,
An equal sharer of my regal state!

(She looks around triumphantly upon the multitude as she pronounces these words, but a murmur of indignation is her only reply, while the guard circle more closely around Jehoshaphat, turning with menacing gestures the points of their weapons towards Athaliah.)

JEHOIDA.

Madam, thy promises are based on sand,
All golden as they seem. Thy reign is o'er!
Thy sceptre hath departed, and thy power
Is but an empty shade. This royal child,
Whom from thy cruel hate our God preserved,
Is our anointed king; the youngest born
Of Azariah's house—the latest shoot
From David's mighty tree, which thou in vain
Essayed to pluck, both root and goodly branch
From Judah's soil. See with what joy
All hearts acknowledge him. Vain then thy glittering bribe—

It calls forth scorn, aye, thirst for vengeance too,
In every breast—for terrible the past!
And as its bloody phantoms rise to view,
A thousand swords, their sharp and deadly blades,
Point to thy heart—one look, one word from me,
And instant thou art stretched, a bleeding corpse
Upon this marble floor!

ATHALIAH, *(becoming pale, but still with an air of defiance).*

Art thou a man

To threaten a woman thus, and she thy queen?
Shame to thy manhood, stained by act so foul!
Yet I defy thee, for I boast a heart
That scorns to quail beneath a traitor's frown!
Ho, there! my guards! Who hinders their approach?

Initiate, show forth thy boasted zeal and love
By hastening hither to protect thy queen!
Why comes he not? I hear his voice without—
Ye dare not bar him from me! I command—

JEHOIDA, *(interrupting her).*

Madam, 'tis vain! all are forbid, save those
Who guard the king, to enter here.
Resign thyself to the decree of heaven;
Aid cannot reach thee now. Thou hast withheld
From all the mercy craved, and now to thee
Mercy we must deny. But yet not here,
Not in these sacred courts shall flow thy blood:
Pure victims here, are offered to our God,
And no polluted sacrifice shall stain
The pavement of the temple where He dwells.
Haste! Abisim, and with thy hundred men,
And other captains of their hundreds joined,
Bear forth this blood-stained woman, to receive
The measure which we mete to crimes like her's.
Take her far hence, to Cedron's lonely vale,
And there let her be slain!

Should any dare

Stretch forth a hand to snatch her from this doom,
Let his blood flow with her's—justice decrees
We purge the realm of all who ply lend,
Or aid, to guilt so deep. In sorer straits
Our God hath succoured oft his faithful ones,
But Him she hath despised, and to her cry,
Now will his ear be deaf! She trusts in Baal;
Let her call on him, and if he answer,
Life shall still be hers, and we will burn
Incense upon his shrine;—but, be he mute,
And we will raze his temple to the ground—
Upon his altars, slay the priests who serve
Their idol dumb, and cleanse our nation
From the damning stain of heathen worship,
Sacrifice accursed, to blocks of wood and stone!

(While Jehoida speaks, the queen, though she repeatedly tries to interrupt him, is restrained by those who guard her, and when, in obedience to his command, she is borne forcibly away, she utters a piercing shriek, and rending her mantle, and casting her dishevelled hair about her shoulders, exhibits, by the frantic violence of her gestures, the rage and despair that possess her heart.)