

From out the stranger's land, to our own soil,—
 That goodly soil, where rest our father's bones,
 And where our God has made his presence known.
 Exiles we are, beneath a pagan sway—
 Yet has this prince, a heathen though he be,
 Granted us many boons, and been our shield
 From evils that assailed. He lent us aid,
 When we implored it, to rebuild the temple,—
 And free permission has he ever given,
 That we adore our God, and keep our fasts,
 And hold our solemn festivals, unharmed,
 Unscathed by all.

Esther. And yet my father——

Mordecai. Nay, sweetest daughter, patience yet a while.

This heathen king is lenient to our race,
 And many favors may be wrought for us,
 Perchance, deliverance from our irksome bonds,
 By a most weak and humble instrument,
 Whom God shall raise, and station near the throne.
 Nay, Esther, start not—by that changeful look,
 I see thou read'st my purpose. Say'st thou, yea?
 Or dost thou with a maiden's timid fears,
 Shrink from fulfilling the high destiny
 To which by Heaven thou'rt called? Full well thou
 knowest

The edict is abroad through the wide realm,
 For the ingathering of its fairest maids.
 Fast are they thronging in,—but go thou forth,
 Bright in the peerless lustre of thy charms,
 Strong in thy purpose, and the prize is won;
 The crown is thine, thy people are redeemed,
 And songs of grateful joy shall greet thine ears,
 And blessings wafted from a thousand tongues,
 Make thy full cup of happiness o'erflow.

Esther. My father! this is but a fevered dream,—
 Unreal! impossible! it cannot be!
 Send me not forth to such a cruel fate!
 Still be my dwelling-place thy sheltering arms!
 There let me rest, thy tender love my shield,
 Thy guardian care the blessing of my life.
 E'en should I win the favor of the king,