And of that period I could cite such times,
So dolorous, distressful, melancholy,
That the bare mention of them would excite
Amazement how I live to tell the tale.
But I forget the present in the past.
No wonder, for this moment is the first,
That opes the sluices of a heart o'ercharged,
And bursting with a flood of grief conceal'd.
But I must turn me to another theme.
The earnest eyes of all are bent on me,
Watching my looks, and prying to discern
Symptoms of innocence or signs of guilt.
Hear then the frank confession of my soul:—
I have transgress'd.

King. Stain of a noble race!
Dost thou avow thy crime?

Ornis. Mistake me not,
I have transgress'd my duty to my father:
Without his knowledge, and against his will,
Moved by a tender lover's parting tears,
I join'd myself in wedlock to Alonzo.
My king, my father, pardon the offence
Which against thee I own I have committed:—
But may I ne'er of God or man be pardon'd,
Nor friend nor father ever pity me,
If I have swerved one step from virtue's path,
Or broke the smallest parcel of that vow
Which binds a faithful wife!—O Prince of Persia
Thou art the best of friends and benefactors;
Thou comest to end my most distracting woes,
And to dispel the impenetrable cloud
That darken'd all my days. Now I shall know
Why I have been abandon'd and forsaken,
Why I have been detested and despised,
As never woman was. Proceed, my lord.
And whilst thou keenly dost assail my life,
And, dearer far, my honour and my fame,
Secure in innocence, I'll calmly hear.
From thee, I hope the end of all my cares.

*Abd.* Even thus Alonzo told me she would speak,
And thus proclaim her innocence.

*Ormis.* Did he?

O! would to heaven Alonzo heard me now,
Fearless defend his honour and my own!
My voice, which once was music to his ear,
Like David's harp which soothe'd the gloomy king,
Would charm his malady, would drive away
The evil spirit, and call back again
The better genius of his earlier days.
O! thou that wert so good, so great, admired
Of all mankind, my loved, my lost Alonzo!
For thee, in this humiliating hour,
More than myself I mourn.

Abd. [Half aside.] Eternal Power!
To whom the secrets of all hearts are known!
Hear, hear this woman, and between us judge!
'Tis not my business to contend with words,
These are the conquering arms of womankind.
A nobler course of trial lies before me:
In a wrong'd husband's name, I charge this lady
With infidelity; and crave the doom
Of law upon her head. If any knight,
Spaniard or stranger, dares assert her cause,
Let him stand forth, and take my gauntlet up;
Which on the ground I throw, my gage to prove
That she is false to honour and Alonzo.

Ornis. Before the gage of death is lifted up,
Hear me one moment. By Alonzo sent,
Thou com'st instructed in Alonzo's wrongs.
Let me conjure thee then, by all that's dear,
By all that's sacred to the great and brave,
Thy mother's memory, thy consort's fame,
Not on a general charge, obscure and vague,
To which there is no answer but denial,
To found the claim of combat: Single out
What circumstance thou wilt of special note,
Of such a kind as may be tried and known
For true or false. Tell us at least his name
With whom Alonzo's wife her honour stain'd,
And let us be confronted.

[Young Alberto steps forth.

Alb. Heaven forbid
That thou shouldst be confronted with a villain,
Princess of Spain! Be sure some wretch there is,
Some renegado, false to God and man,
Suborn'd, and ready with a lying tongue,
To second this brave prince who wrongs thy fame,
And wounds thy modest ear. Too much by far
Already thou hast heard.—Pretended prince
For there is nothing royal in thy soul!
Thou base defamer of a lady's name!
I take thy gauntlet up, and hold it high
In scorn, and fierce defiance, to thy face,
My gage to prove thy accusation false,
And thee, the author of a tale invented
To rob a noble lady of her fame.

Ormis. Where am I now? What shall I do,
Teresa? [Aside.

Ter. The God of heaven direct thee!
Abd. Boy! to thee
I answer nothing. I suspect the cause
Of thy presumption, and could wish that Spain
Had given a worthier victim to my sword.

[Walks aside.

Ormis. O, valiant youth! much am I bound to thee:
But I have reasons that import the state,
Which shall, whatever is my fate, be known,
And own'd hereafter to be great and weighty,
Why I decline the assistance of thy sword.
If this appeal to combat is the law,
And I can find no champion but Alberto,
Without the chance of combat let me fall,
For I will not accept——

Alb. Recall these words,
Too gen'rous princess! I can read thy thoughts:
Thou think'st my youth unequal to the foe;
Thou fear'st the weakness of Alberto's arm.
My strength exceeds the promise of my years.
Oft have I bent the bow, and drawn the sword,
Nor fly my shafts, nor falls my sword in vain.
This day against a troop alone I fought;
But never did I fight in such a cause,
Nor was I e'er so certain to prevail.
A fire divine invades my zealous breast:
I feel the force of legions in mine arm.
Thy innocence has made thy champion strong!
The God of battle is our righteous judge;
And let the cause be tried.

*Warrior armed, with his helmet on, steps forth.*

*War*. But not by thee!
Thy father’s voice forbids, too daring youth;
Stand back, and let thy master in the art
Of war, now claim the combat for his own.—
My liege!

*King*. That voice I know: Thy figure too
Resembles much a chief, lamented long
As slain in battle.

*War*. I am he, Costollo.
'Tis true, O king! that on the field I fell,
Fighting for Spain. How I was saved from death,
And where, for many years, I have remain’d,
This is no time to tell. This hour demands
A soldier’s speech, brief prologue to his deeds.—
On me, proud Persian! turn thy gloomy eyes;
Hear me, and let thy ready sword reply.
With hell-born malice, levell’d at her life,
Thou hast defamed a princess, honour’d, loved,
By all, who virtue or fair honour love.
The fell hyæna, native of thy land,
**Has not a voice or heart more false than thine,**
Thou counterfeit of truth! whom I defy
To mortal combat, and the proof of arms.
Thy full-blown fame, thy unexhausted strength,
Deceitful confidence, I laugh to scorn;
The conquering cause is mine.

*Alb.* My lord, the king!
And ye his counsellors for wisdom famed!
You will not sure permit the good old man,
By fond affection for his son impell’d,
To meet so stern a foe. His hoary head,
His wither’d veins, are symptoms of decay.
Lean not upon a reed which time hath bruised,
Nor trust the life and honour of the Princess
To the weak arm of age.

*Abd.* I’ll fight you both,
Father and son at once. Together come,
Tongue-valiant men! and try Abdallah’s arm.
I’ll have it so; for both of you have dared,
Ignoble as you are, to match yourselves
Against a prince who moves not in your sphere,
And utter words for which such blood as yours
Is poor atonement.
Cos. Every word thou speakest
Is insolent and false. Son of a slave!
For Eastern monarchs buy with gold their brides,
The blood by thee despised, flows from a source
Purer than thine and nobler.

Alb. Nay, my father!
That's said too far.—Fierce and disdainful prince,
Vain is the offer which thy passion makes.
Perhaps the conqu'ror of the Moor may find
One Spaniard is enough.

Cos. A father's right
Unmoved I claim, and with determined voice
Forbid the combat.

King. Hence let us retire
To the pavilion. There our peers shall judge
Of your pretensions.

[Exeunt King and Spaniards.

Abd. Come with me, Velasco.

[Exeunt Abdallah and Velasco.

Manent Ormisinda and Teresa.

Ormis. My thoughts are of my son. Mine own
estate
Is desperate. The husband whom I loved,
On whom I doated; and from whom I suffer'd,
What never woman with such patience bore,
Conspires against my honour and my life.
Long cherish'd hope, farewell!

_Ter._ To guard thy son:
Defend thyself; and, to prevent the combat,
In thy demand persist. Call the accuser
To circumstance of proof. _That is the thread_
To lead us through this labyrinth perplex'd.
Nor has the Persian thy demand refused.

_Ormis._ He had not time to speak. Alberto's voice
Broke in like thunder in his mother's cause.
Amidst the anguish of my tortured heart,
My soul exults, Teresa, in my son!
When in the pride of valour forth he came,
And for my sake defied the bold Abdallah,
His look (he seem'd a cherub in my eyes!)
His voice (at every word my bosom yearn'd!)
Transported me so much, that I forgot
His state and mine, and had well nigh sprung forth
To clasp my blooming hero in my arms.

_Ter._ No wonder that his mother's soul was moved!
His brave demeanour the spectators charm'd.
Valour, which sheds a glory round the head
Of age and ruggedness; how bright its beams
When in the lovely front of youth they shine!

Ormis. I have heard of strange and perilous essays
To try the pureness of suspected virtue.
I'll undergo whate'er can be devised.
By ordeal trial let my faith be proved.
Blindfold, barefooted, on the smoaking soil,
With red-hot plough-shares spread, I'll walk my way;
Plunge in the boiling oil my naked arm,
But will not risk my young Alonzo's life.
The Moorish host hangs o'er our heads no more.
The heir of Spain shall for himself be known,
Alonzo's son.

Ter. He will not be allow'd
Alonzo's son, nor yet the heir of Spain,
Whilst slander's breath sullies his mother's fame.

Ormis. Now thou hast touch'd a string, to whose deep sound
A mother's heart replies. My son! my son!
I weigh thy virtues down, hang on thy life,
Attaint thy blood, thy birth, thy right to reign!
The birds of prey that dwell among the rocks,
The savage beasts that through the deserts roam,
The monsters of the deep, their offspring love,
And to preserve their lives devote their own.
Athwart the gloom, I see a flash of light,
That opens the horizon. I descry
A hand that points a high and lofty path,
Which I will boldly tread. Now to my father.
Upon my knees his aid I'll first implore.

[Exeunt.]
ACT V.

SCENE,—The City, as before.

A bd allah and V elasco.

*Vel.* Before this day she ne'er beheld the boy. Far from this place, in Catalonia bred, He came to see the famous combat fought. 'Twas he, my lord, who slew the Moorish chief, And in his own defence such wonders wrought. That action to the Princess made him known, The rest in honour of his valour follow'd.

*Abd.* How dost thou know?

*Vel.* With admiration struck, When he stood forth, and braved a foe, like thee, Of divers persons curious I inquired, Who, and from whence he was.

*Abd.* Pity it were To hurt the stripling. 'Tis a noble boy.
I love the outbreak of his Spanish fire
Against the Moors.

\textit{Vel.} Ay, and against Abdallah,
Whom ancient fame and recent glory raised
Above all mortal men. Spare this young plant,
Who makes so fair a shoot.

\textit{Abd.} How can I spare him?
Should their election send him to my sword,
How, good Velasco?

\textit{Vel.} When the peers return,
The king, the princess, with their champion chosen,
Then to the wond'ring audience, in the face
Of her that's guilty, let my lord relate
The truth-mark'd story he to me has told.
Detected thus, confounded and surprised,
Pierced with a thousand eyes, that gaze upon her,
And dart conviction; can she still deny,
And by denial, make her guilt ambiguous?
But if her sex's genius is so strong,
That she the port of innocence maintains,
And, from the fulness and excess of vice,
Derives a boldness, that may look like virtue,
Then let the sword decide.

\textit{Abd.} What you propose
Is worth the trial. I am loth to spill
The young Alberto's or Costollo's blood:
For they deserve no harm. Even you, my friend,
Before my hand unclasp'd the book of shame,
Her champion would have been.

Vel. Against the world.

Abd. I will adopt the counsel of Velasco,
And probe more deeply still her fester'd mind.
I see 'tis better that she should confess
Her guilt, than with her vanquish'd champion fall,
By doom of law, protesting to the last
Her innocence.

Vel. Better a thousand times.
Her dying voice would shake the hearts of men,
And echo through the world.

Abd. Behold the king,
And young Alberto marching by his side,
As if he trod on air.

Vel. See, Ormisinda
With folded hands implores her listening sire.

Enter the King, Ormisinda, Teresa, Alberto, Costollo, &c.

King. The peers of Spain have judged. Stand forth, Alberto!
Behold the champion of my daughter's fame.
Alb. Before the trumpet's voice unsheaths the sword,
Which one of us shall never sheath again,
Permit me, Prince of Persia, to entreat
A moment's audience. Not from fear I speak.
The cause I fight for, and the mind I bear,
Exalt me far above the thoughts of danger;
But from a conscious sense of what is due
To thee, renown'd Abdallah. In the heat
Of our contention, if my tongue has utter'd
One word offensive to thy noble ear,
Which might have been omitted, and the tone
Of firm defiance equally preserved,
For that I ask forgiveness.

Abd. Less I mark'd
The manner than the matter of thy speech:
If thou dost need forgiveness, freely take it.

King. 'Twas generously ask'd, and nobly granted:
Such courtesy with valour ever dwells.
Let me too crave for a few words thine ear.
Throughout the trying bus'ness of this day,
Thou art my witness, that my mind upright
Has never been by powerful nature bent,
Nor sway'd to favour and opinion form'd,
By long habitual and accustom'd love;
But I with equal hand the balance held
Between thee and my child.

_Abd._ Thou hast indeed.

It is but justice that I should declare it.

_King._ Then to thy candour let me now appeal,
And beg of thee to grant me one request,
Which I do not, but might, perhaps, command.

_Abd._ What is it?

_King._ I have search'd my hapless child,
Even to the pith and marrow of her soul,
Have touch'd her to the quick. She never shrinks
Nor wavers in the least. Perhaps, my lord,
Some fool officious, or some wretch that's worse,
(If there is aught comes between man and wife
That's more pernicious than a meddling fool,)
Some false designing friend has wrong'd her fame,
And pour'd his poison in Alonzo's ear.
If thou wilt give some scope to her defence,
And bring the charge from darkness into light,
Then she shall forthwith answer on the spot
Where now she stands before us.

_Ormis._ If I fail

To clear my fame even in Abdallah's sight;
If but one dark suspicious speck remains
To make mine honour dim, let me be held
Guilty of all. Before-hand I renounce
The right of combat, and submit to die.

*Abd.* Thy wish is fatal, but it shall be granted,
This instant too.

*Ormis.* Blessings upon thy head!
Ten thousand blessings! O, thou dost not know
How happy thou hast made me! On my breast
A mountain lay. Thy hand has heaved it off,
And now I breathe again.

*Abd.* O woman, woman!
A little way from hence my people wait;
With them remains a necessary witness.
Thither I go, and quickly will return
To ring thy knell. [Exit Abdallah.

*Ormis.* The knell of all my woes!
My heart knocks at my side, as if 'twould burst
Itself a passage outwards. Yet a while,
Poor, suff'ring heart, and thou shalt beat no more.
Shortly for what I am I shall be known,
Then let my doom be squared to my desert
Without indulgence.

*King.* I can trust thee, now:
Thine eye secure beams innocence and honour.
Thou art my daughter still.

Alb. I fear, O king!
Some practice vile, some infamous imposture,
Supported by false witness. Still I wish
The fair decision of the honest sword.

Enter Abdallah, in a Spanish dress, as
Alonzo.

King. God of my soul! What mockery is this?
Unless my eyes deceive me, 'tis Alonzo.

Orm. My husband! Ah!

[Runs to embrace him, he repulses her.

Alon. Away, thy husband's shame,
Shame to thy sex, reproach of womankind!

Orm. O, shield me, heaven! Abdallah was
Alonzo.

Alon. To heaven appeal not.

Orm. I appeal to heaven,
Justice on earth will come too late for me.

King. [To Alonzo.] Hast thou no other wit-

ness than thyself?

Alon. I have no other, and none else require.

King. Unfeeling man, to trifle with our sorrows,
And like a pageant play a mimic scene:
This is thy hatred of Pelagio's house,
Thy passion to confound a rival race.
Would I were young again!

Alb. [To Alonzo.] Defend thyself.
I can no longer hold me from thy breast.

Vcl. Sound, trumpet, sound! and heaven defend the right!

Alon. His blood be on your heads.

[Drawing his sword.

[Ormisinda throws herself between their swords.

Ormis. Hold!--Strike through me!
You know not what you do, unhappy both!
This combat must not, nor it shall not be.
The sun in heaven would backward turn his course,
And shrink from such a spectacle as this,
More horrid than the banquet of Thyestes.
You have no quarrel. I'll remove the cause.
A Roman matron, to redeem her fame,
Before her husband's and her father's eyes
Plunged in her breast the steel.

[Stabs herself, and falls.

King. O, desperate deed!
What fury urged thy hand?
Ormís. Condemn me not.
There was no other way to save—but that
Must not as yet be told. My husband! hear
My dying voice! my latest words believe,
Whose truth my blood hath seal'd. I'm innocent.
As I for mercy hope at that tribunal
Where I shall soon appear, I never wrong'd thee.
When that is manifest, remember me
As love like mine deserved, and to this youth,
Who is—

Alon. Who is this youth?—All-seeing God!
A secret horror comes upon my soul—
Who is this youth?

Ormís. He is thy son.

Alon. My son!

Ormís. Whom thy forsaken wife in sorrow bore,
And gave in secret to Costollo's care.

Alb. Art thou my mother! Dost thou die for
 me?

Ormís. I die with pleasure to be just to thee.
O! if that Power which did inspire my soul
To rush between your swords, would let me live,
To prove my innocence! Alonzo, speak!
Whilst I have breath to answer.
Alon. Though disarm'd
And soften'd, even if guilty to forgive thee,
Thy solemn call I instantly obey.
That night appointed for our last farewell,
That fatal night for ever curst—thou know'st
What happen'd then.

Ormis. I know thou didst not come,
Forlorn thou left'st me.

Alon. Thou wast not forlorn,
In the dark wood with thee there was a youth.

Ormis. [After a pause.] O heaven and earth! a youth! It was Teresa.

Alon. Teresa!

Ter. Yes, that memorable night,
My brother's sword and helmet plumed I wore.

Alon. Great God! the snares of hell have caught my soul.

Ter. The night before, the Princess, as she went,
Was fright'ned in the wood, and I assumed That war-like form, to seem——

Alon. No matter why!
I saw thee then, and thought thee what thou seem'd'st.
King. She’s innocent; like gold tried in the fire,
Her honour shines: Would I had died for thee!

[To Ormisinda.

Orm. Why didst thou never till this moment speak?

[To Alonzo.

Alon. Because I am born and destined to perdition.

Had I a voice like Ætna when it roars,
For in my breast is pent as hot a fire,
I’d speak in flames.

Orm. My lord!

Alon. Do not forgive me.

Do not oppress me with such tender looks:
I will not be forgiven.

[Ormisinda raising herself and stretching out her arms.

Orm. Come to my arms,
And let me soothe thine anguish! Had I been
What I to thee appear’d, thy rage was just.
A Spaniard’s temper, and a Prince’s pride,
A lover’s passion, and a husband’s honour,
Prompted no less.

Alon. Hear, men and angels, hear!
Let me fall down and worship.

[Throws himself down into her arms.

Oh, I loved thee!
I loved thee all the while, to madness loved.

Ormis. My husband, dear as ever to my heart!
In my last moments dear!

Alon. My heart is torn.
My head, my brain! How blest I might have been!
With such a wife, with such a son!

Ormis. To him
Pay all the debt of love thou owest to me.
Embrace thy son before mine eyes are closed:
Let me behold him in his father's arms.

Alon. Thou brave defender of thy mother's fame!

Ormis. He's gentle too; his soul dissolves in grief.

Alon. My fault'ring tongue dares scarcely call thee son.
Canst thou endure the touch of such a father?

Alb. My bursting heart, amidst its grief, is proud
Of such a father. Let me clasp thy knees,
And help to reconcile thee to thyself.

[They embrace.
Ormíz. This pleasing sight subdues the pains of death—

My son!

Alb. My mother, oh!

Ormíz. My dearest husband—

Alon. What would'st thou say? Alas! thine eye grows dim;
Thy voice begins to fail.

Ormíz. Remember me
When I am dead; remember how I loved you.
And thou, Alonzo, live to guard thy son,
To fix the Spanish sceptre in—

[Dies, looking at her son.

[Alonzo remains silent, with his eyes fixed upon Ormisinda.

Alb. My father!
Under thy gather'd brows I see despair:
Have pity on thy son, who lived so long
In total ignorance of what he was;
Who has already seen one parent die,
And for the sad survivor trembles now.
My mother's last request!

Alon. I'm mindful of it,
And to her sacred memory will be just.
Hang not on me, my son! go to the king,
And pay thy duty there.

[The King embraces Alberto.]

King. My child, my all!
I loved thee at first sight.

Alon. 'Tis well; 'tis well.
The good old king hath still some comfort left.
Now is my time.—[Draws his sword.
Oft have I struck with thee,
But never struck a foe with better will
Than now myself.[Stabs himself and falls.

Vel. Cost. Alas!

[Alberto turning.] Alb. 'Twas this I fear'd.

Alon. There was good cause to fear. I would have lived
For thee, if I with honour could have lived.
My son! thy fathers were renown'd in arms:
The valour of our warlike race is thine:
But guard against the impulse of their blood.
Take warning by my fate.

King. Thou might'st have lived,
Renown'd Alonzo; even I forgave
And pitied thee.

Alon. I am more just than thou—
For I did not forgive, nor would I live
Upon the alms of other men, their pity.—
Farewell, my son!—O, Ormisinda! stay
Till I o'ertake thee. [Dies.

King. [To Alberto.] Dwell not on this sight,
Prince of Asturia! leave the scene of sorrow. [Exeunt.
EPILOGUE,
WRITTEN BY MR GARRICK.
SPoken BY MRS BARRY.

Though lately dead, a Princess, and of Spain,
I am no ghost, but flesh and blood again!
No time to change this dress, it is expedient
I pass for British, and your most obedient.

How happy, ladies, for us all—that we,
Born in this Isle, by Magna Charta free,
Are not, like Spanish wives, kept under lock and key!
The Spaniard, now, is not like him of yore,
Who in his whisker'd face his titles bore!
Nor joy, nor vengeance, made him smile or grin,
Fix'd were his features, though the devil within!
He, when once jealous, to wash out the stain,
Stalk'd home, stabb'd madam, and stalk'd out again.
Thanks to the times, this dagger-drawing passion,
Through polish'd Europe, is quite out of fashion.
Signor th' Italian, quick of sight and hearing,
Once ever list'ning, and for ever leering,
To Cara Sposa now politely kind,
He, best of husbands, is both deaf and blind.
Mynheer, the Dutchman, with his sober pace,
Whene'er he finds his rib has wanted grace,
He feels no branches sprouting from his brain,
But calculation makes of loss and gain;
And when to part with her, occasion's ripe,
Mynheer turns out mine Frow, and smokes his pipe.
When a brisk Frenchman's wife is given to prancing,
It never spoils his singing or his dancing:
Madame, you false— *de tout moun cœur*—Adieu;
*Begar you cocu me, I cocu you—*
He, *toujours gai*, dispels each jealous vapour,
Takes snuff, sings *vive l'amour*, and cuts a caper.
As for John Bull—not he in upper life,
But the plain Englishman, who loves his wife;
When honest John, I say, has got his doubts,
He sullen grows, scratches his head, and pouts.
What is the matter with you, love? cries she;
Are you not well, my dearest? Humph! cries he.
You're such a brute!—But, Mr Bull, I've done:
And if I am a brute—Who made me one?
You know my tenderness—My heart's too full—
And so's my head—I thank you, Mrs Bull.
O you base man!—Zounds, madam, there's no bearing,—
She falls a weeping, and he falls a swearing.
With tears and oaths, the storm domestic ends,
The thunder dies away, the rain descends,
She sobs, he melts, and then they kiss and friends.
Whatever case these modern modes may bring,
A little jealousy is no bad thing:
To me, who speak from nature unrefined,
Jealousy is the bellows of the mind.
Touch it but gently, and it warms desire,
If handled roughly, you are all on fire!
If it stands still, affection must expire!
This truth, no true philosopher can doubt,
Whate'er you do, let not the flame go out.
ALFRED;

A

TRAGEDY.

---Lector i credere mavult.---

Horace.
THE success of a dramatic piece on the stage, depends, says Voltaire, upon accidental circumstances, but the day of publication decides its fate.

Persuaded of the truth of this remark, the Author of the Tragedy of Alfred would have submitted his performance to the final judgment of the reader, without preface or apology, if he had not been advised, and indeed urged, to make a reply to some hostile criticisms, which appear to have been founded upon prejudice and opinion, rather than reason and argument.

It has been alleged, that the character of Alfred, in the Tragedy, does not agree with the character of Alfred in history: "that the hero, the legislator, is degraded to a lover, who enters the Danish camp, from a private, not a public motive, and acts the part of an impostor."
In tragedy, if the subject be historical, an author is not permitted to introduce events, contrary to the great established facts of history; for instance, in the Tragedy of Alfred, the hero must not be killed, nor driven out of England by the Danes; but, preserving those ancient foundations, as the piers of his bridge, the author may bend his arches, and finish the fabric, according to his taste and fancy; for the poet is at liberty, and it is the essence of his art, to invent such intermediate circumstances, and incidents, as he thinks will produce the most affecting situations. In this department, the poet's fancy is controled by nothing, but probability, and consistence of character;—the barriers of dramatic truth. Let us apply this principle to the point in dispute.

Alfred was a young man, when he fought the battle of Ethendune. The victory, which gave him possession of the kingdom, must have been gained before he begun to model the state. Is it improbable to suppose, that a young hero was in love? Is it inconsistent to represent the person, who was a legislator when advanced in years, as a lover in his youth? Does it degrade the character of a hero to suppose, that he was in love with the Princess,
whom he afterwards married? Is it not rather injurious to his heroism to conclude, that he chose a consort whom he did not love? If this reasoning is just, there will be no difficulty in vindicating the subsequent conduct of the hero. The dramatic and the real Alfred, are both involved in the charge of imposture; both enter the Danish camp in disguise; the previous events, as narrated in the tragedy, are nearly the same with those mentioned in history. Alfred, for almost two years, had wandered through England, concealing himself under feigned names and characters. He lived in the midst of his enemies, by being supposed to be dead. Emerging from this obscurity, he appears in the tragedy, and is informed of the alarming, ambiguous situation of Ethelswida; his usual stratagems present themselves, one would think, naturally to his mind, extremely agitated, and prone, both by temper and habit, to the most daring and romantic enterprises. He resolves to enter the Danish camp, to learn the fate of Ethelswida, and observe the strength and order of the enemy's army, before he ventures a decisive engagement.

The continued artifice is inevitable. The conduct of Alfred, in the camp of Hinguar; the man-
ner in which he deceives the Dane, is extremely similar to the conduct of Orestes in the *Electra* of Sophocles, which no critic hitherto has blamed. Orestes enters the palace of Ægisthus, as the messenger of his own death, carrying an urn, which contains, he says, the ashes of Orestes, whose untimely fate he most circumstantially relates. The Grecian hero practises the deceit with an intention to kill the persons whom he deceives. The English hero deceives Hinguar only to gain access to Ethelswida, without meaning to hurt the person of his enemy. To praise Sophocles, and blame the author of *Alfred*, for the same conduct, seems a direct contradiction, which can only be accounted for in one way; an imaginary idea has been formed of the character of Alfred, as an old, mortified, ascetic sage, of spirit too sublime and ætherial to descend to human passions or human actions. But the real, as well as the dramatic Alfred, was a young hero, a bard, a winner of battles, brave and magnanimous, but compelled by the pressure of those desperate times, in which he lived, to practise a thousand arts, to exist by simulation and dissimulation. Whoever recollects and weighs these circumstances, will, it is presumed, readily pardon the artifice of Al-
fred, in the tragedy, and acknowledge that the *seigned* incidents of the piece are altogether consistent with the true. If not, the author must be contented to labour under the imputation of an erroneous judgment, for he meant nothing less than to degrade the character of Alfred; on the contrary, finding, in the records of a remote and barbarous age, a hero of great renown, but from the defect of his historians, involved in clouds and darkness,

*Qui caput inter nubila condit,*

he was tempted to seize his name, and display his character in new situations, connected with the old and well known events of his life and fortune. The play is printed as it was performed. An alteration has been made, in *one* scene, and sent to the theatre, which, if the tragedy should be resumed or revived, may perhaps contribute to heighten its effect.
PROLOGUE.

To furnish a new prologue for each play,
To dress the self-same dish a different way,
Exhausts the poet's art. And every year
Palates grow nicer, rarities more dear.
The cabinet, who in the green-room sit,
The secret juncto of the realm of wit,
In these hard times, resolved their stock to spare,
And crib the prologue from the bill of fare.
Alfred on English ground alone may stand,
The darling hero of his native land:
No, no, our poet cried—this is no time,
Nor is it prudent now to save your rhyme;
Fired with my subject I have rashly dared,
And you in prologue should protect your bard;
When my adventurous muse, indulged before,
Now vent'ring further, needs indulgence more;
She dares to trace the workings of a mind,
The greatest and the best of human kind;
Adjust its movements to dramatic plan,
And blend the god-like hero with the man.
The greater Alfred's fame, our bard risks more:
Such weight the flying coursers never bore.
Alfred! whose life such strange events adorn,
That history beholds romance with scorn;
Him to present, here in his native land,
Where still his genius, and his laws command.
Is an attempt like his, who rashly tried
The burning chariot of the sun to guide!
Yet this attempt from admiration rose,
Nor should he find in Alfred's kingdom, foes;
He, who by temper led, not love of fame,
Is the fond echo of your hero's name.
DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

Alfred, King of England.
Edwin, Earl of Devonshire.
Earl of Surrey.
Hinguar, King of the Danes.
Rollo, a Danish Chief.

Officers, English and Danish.

Ethelswida, betrothed to Alfred.
Ronex, Consort of Hinguar.
Edda, 
Ellis, }

Attendants on Ethelswida.
A L F R E D.

ACT I.

SCENE,—A Camp.

Earl of Devonshire and Officer.

Off: The name of Surrey and the shield he bore,
With ease deceived the unsuspecting soldier:
I knew the port of Alfred.

Devon. So he thought;
And, ere he laid his weary limbs to rest,
Gave me, in charge, to warn thee to be silent.

Off. My Lord of Devonshire, on me depend.
Steel shall not tear the secret from my breast,
Astonish'd as I am at such a secret.
Who can unfold the cause? Why, at this hour,
When, big with England's fate, each moment rolls,
Does Alfred hide himself in clouds and darkness,
And spread uncertain rumours of his state,
Confounding all belief?

Devon. He spread them not;
From his uncertain fate those rumours rose,
E'er since that time, when the perfidious Dane
Attack'd the English, in the hour of peace,
On Alfred's wedding day.

Off. It was believed,
That Alfred, in the general carnage, fell
At Cyppenham; that in the swelling flood
Of wintry Avon, Ethelswida perish'd.

Devon. Such was the first report.

Off. Fain would I hear
Th' eventful tale of much-enduring Alfred,
And what is yet of Ethelswida known.

Devon. When faithless Hinguar with his host
advanced,
The king, distracted for his lovely bride,
Sent off a hundred knights, by Surrey led,
To guard the Princess to a place of safety;
Then, furious, faced the Dane. With odds opprest,
Around their king his faithful nobles fell.
Alfred, by favour of the night, escaped,
And wander'd long, obscure, from place to place,
Through woods and forests, like some beast of prey.
By cruel hunters chaced. Much he endured;
And much his people suffer'd. English virtue,
Like England's oak, grew firmer from the storm.
Often the peasant his last morsel brought
To the dark wood or cave, where Alfred lay;
If questioned by the Dane, denied the deed;
And died, undaunted, to preserve his Prince.

Off: The story thrills my blood; by heaven and earth—
Where did he rest at last?

Devon. He never rested;
Even when he had a place of refuge found:
Where the deep winding streams, Parret and Thone,
Their waters mix, a little island lies,
With alders overgrown. No name it had,
Though now the name of Athelney it bears.
Marshes and pools, by inundation form'd,
Perplex the dire approach. There Alfred fix'd
His dreary habitation. Two brave knights
At first were all his train. Day after day
The numbers grew; and many a gallant knight
Found out the wild asylum of his lord.
From thence, with inroads fierce, they gall'd the Dane.
Dark as the spirits of the night they came,
And vanish'd at the dawn. In that retreat,
The sun, through every sign, o'er Alfred roll'd.

*Off.* Did Ethelswida there rejoin her lord?

*Devon.* Nor she herself, nor any of her train,
Have e'er been heard of since she left her lord.

*Off.* For certain, then, she lives. If she had perish'd,
Her fate would have been known.

*Devon.* The Danes ascribed
To me the inroads made by daring Alfred;
And both the Danish princes took the field.
Hinguar, with fire and sword laid waste the land.
Hubba, his host to Kenwith Castle led,
And, with strong siege, begirt my ancient towers.
Then Alfred issued from his lonely isle,
Conceal'd, as now, beneath another name.

*Off.* Did Alfred fight in Kenwith's bloody field?

*Devon.* He fix'd the fortune of that doubtful day,
When Hubba with his life the Reafen lost,
The enchanted standard, on whose magic wings
Conquest, till then, had flown. The battle won,
Alfred, impatient, bent his rapid course
To Westmoreland; where, as he fondly hoped,
His Ethelwida dwelt. He found her not;
And, late, last night, in deep despair, return'd.

**Off.** I see the clouded track, through which he pass'd
Invisible. Now he has reach'd the point,
And will break forth in splendour. We shall fight
To-morrow or to-day.

**Devon.** On these steep hills,
By nature and by art impregnable,
Which far and wide command Wiltonia's vale,
In absence of the King, my camp I pitch'd.
Audacious Hinguar occupies the plain,
And braves us to descend.

**Off.** Proclaim the King,
The King of England, at his people's head,
Then roll their rising valour on the foc.

**Devon.** Thy zeal becomes thee. He will chuse his time.

Meanwhile, the story of his death believed,
Lessens the weight and burden of the war;
Prevents the junction of the Danish chiefs,
And makes our foes secure. Soldier, farewell!
The King expects me: In my tent he rests.

**Off.** My bosom throbs to see him rise in arms.

[Exit.]
Manet Devonshire.

Spirits in heaven may there attain perfection;  
But weakness in this world is nature’s stamp,  
With which she marks the sons of men her own.  
Who can compare with this accomplish’d prince,  
In valour or in virtue? He excells  
The counsellor, the sage, in civil wisdom;  
The light of ancient times shines in his soul;  
And the bards listen to his voice divine:  
But vain his virtue, and his wisdom vain,  
Against affection’s power; too much he loved,  
And mourns too much his Ethelswida lost.  
He comes, with grief oppress’d.

Enter Alfred.

Health to the King!  
Has balmy sleep descended on his cares?  
Alf. My sleep is haunted with my waking thoughts;  
The vision of the night is Ethelswida.  
Sometimes, a broken scene of other woes  
My troubled fancy to her image joins,  
And adds the monarch’s to the lover’s grief.  
This very night, in dreams, I thought myself
Under the friendly roof, where once I lay,
Beset, on every side, with Danish spears;
When, to preserve my life, a noble youth,
The only offspring of a widow'd dame,
Unknown to me, my personage assumed,
And stopp'd the hounds, that bay'd for Alfred's blood.

*Devon.* O gen'rous youth!

*Alf.* Full in the gate he stood;
And brandishing his sword, aloud proclaim'd,
That England's King alive should ne'er be taken.
Headlong the foes rush'd on. Numbers he slew:
At last, unshrinking, in his place he fell;
And still the Danes believe that youth was Alfred.

*Devon.* No wonder that they should!—

*Alf.* This very night,
Pale in his wounds, the gallant form appear'd,
Whilst o'er the bleeding body of her son,
Majestic in her grief, his mother hung.

Enter a Messenger.

*Mess.* [To Devonshire.] A warrior from the Danish camp, demands
Admittance to thy presence.
Alf. Let him enter. [Exit Messenger.
[Alfred walks aside.

Enter a Warrior, with his beaver down.

Devon. Stranger, unfold thy purpose.

[He takes off his helmet.

Surrey, by heaven,
In Danish armour! [Alfred, turning, sees him.

Alf. Ha!

Sur. My royal master!

Alf. Surrey! that strange array, thy aspect sad,
Denounce thy tidings.—Ethelswida—


Alf. She lives!—Why, like the messenger of death,
Dost thou before me stand? Some dreadful thing
Thou smother'st in that pause. I charge thee speak.

What has befall'n my love?

Sur. Captivity—

Alf. Is Ethelswida captive!

Sur. Yes, my lord.

Alf. To whom?

Sur. To Hinguar.
Alf: To my mortal foe!
Is she in Hinguar's power? Is brutal Hinguar
The master of her fate?

Sur. Would that I durst
This painful truth deny!

Alf. O wretched Alfred!
Destined to suffer misery and shame,
That princes seldom feel! All other ills,
Although in troops they came, I have endured.
Manhood and patience yield to this.—O Surrey!
Had I been Surrey, and hadst thou been Alfred,
I ne'er had brought such tidings to my friend!

Sur. Great is the grief, that renders thee unjust.
Hear me, O king! and if thou blamest me then,
Ill-fated Surrey shall offend no more.

Alf: What has my passion spoke? Thy pallid
Thy hollow eye, those inauspicious arms,
Are signals of distress!

Sur. The story hear,
Of Ethelswida's fortune; how it chanced,
That Surrey lives to tell it.

Alf. O, my friend!
Forget my words. With destiny at odds,
And with myself, impatience glanced at thee,  
The martyr of my cause.

_Sur._ That fatal night,  
When, with my precious charge, I left my lord,  
Through many dangers happily we pass’d;  
But when we reach’d fair Eden’s distant vale,  
We found no refuge there.

_Alf._ Too well I know,  
The Scots had razed Pendragon’s lofty tower:  
Then, whither didst thou fly?

_Sur._ There I dismiss’d  
Most of my faithful knights. A few I kept,  
Of chosen men the choice. Eastward we steer’d,  
Towards the wilds, beyond the source of Tyne.  
By midnight marches, in untrodden paths,  
That wind o’er mountains vast, through vallies deep,

We reach’d a lonely mansion, in a dale,  
Which at the foot of snow-clad Cheviot lies.  
There Ethelswida found a safe retreat;  
And in those desarts wild she might have dwelt,  
Unheard of and unknown.

_Alf._ Why did she not?

_Sur._ The rumour of thy death a tempest raised,
Which, from that harbour, drove her out to sea.
On me she laid her absolute commands,
To guide and guard her, as I could, to Kenwith:
My friends I warn’d to meet us on our way,
And on we went, till, one unhappy time,
The Danes surprised us in a narrow vale.
Against their fierce attack, our little band
Around the Princess form’d a fence of steel.
More and more narrow still the circle grew,
Till I alone was left with Ethelswida.
Alone I fought, till at her feet I fell.
Her dismal shrieks, her piercing cries I heard;
More grievous far, than all the wounds I bore.

\textit{Alf.} Methinks I hear her cries! She call’d on Alfred;

\textit{Sur.} Did she not, Surrey? Providence divine!

Why was not Alfred near?

\textit{Sur.} As I have heard,

\textit{Alf.} From some who in the troops of Hinguar fought,

\textit{Sur.} For her it was who led the hostile band,

\textit{Alf.} She swoon’d with grief and terror on the spot.

\textit{Sur.} The Dane to her unwonted pity shew’d,

\textit{Alf.} And raised her from the ground.

\textit{Alf.} Tell me the truth;

\textit{Sur.} Do not deceive me, Surrey.
Sur. O, my lord,
I never did, nor will I now deceive thee!
But of the Princess this I only know,
That in the Danish camp she still remains,
Guarded with care, her name and rank unknown.

Alf. What should I think! Can she submit to live—
To live, her honour lost? How didst thou 'scape
From such a slaughter? And how camest thou hither,
Commission'd by the Dane?

Sur. When night came on,
Some English peasants, who had seen the fight,
Crept from their huts, in secret, to the field,
With pious purpose to inter the dead.
In me alone, some sparks of life they found.
Their care preserved me. When my strength return'd,
To Hinguar's camp I went, gave out myself
Of Danish race, although in England born.
My service was accepted. I have found
Favour in Hinguar's sight, and in the band
That guards his person serve. From them I learn'd,
That Ethelswida, near his tent, is lodged
A mournful captive.

_Alf._ Near his tent! O heaven!

How have I merited?

_Devon._ Raise not thine eyes,
Nor lift thy hands to heaven: Far other looks,
Far other actions, heaven of thee requires.
Thou art a king, a soldier, and a lover;
Fight for thy crown, thy country, and thy bride.
Go forth this instant, animate thy troops,
And lead them to revenge their wrongs and thine.

_[Alfred muses._

Why does my royal master hang his head,
And bend on earth his eyes?

_Alf._ Forbear, my lord.—

_[To Surrey._] What is thine errand to the camp
of England?

_Sur._ To offer battle. But the true intent
Of Hinguar, is to learn if Alfred lives;
For various rumours have perplex’d the Dane.

_Alf._ He shall be satisfied. I see a ray,
Which through the darkness breaks. It grows
more bright.

My friend, the tumult of my thoughts forgive.—
_Surrey!_ [Goes aside with Surrey.]
Manet Devonshire.

What does he meditate? I know
His mind with dreadful images is fill'd,
In Hinguar's arms he sees his ravish'd bride:
Ravish'd or not, she's captive to his foe.
Enslaved by force, 'tis force must set her free.
He cannot treat with Hinguar; that he knows,
By sad experience; for the woes of Alfred,
And all the evils of this hapless land,
Arose from England's confidence in Denmark.
No ties, divine or human, bind the Danes.
Of all the impious race, by far the worst,
And most profane, is Hinguar.

Alf. [To Surrey.] Go, prepare
For my reception.

Sur. 'Ah, may heaven avert
Those ills, which my prophetic soul forebodes!

[Exit Surrey.

Devon. I heard the parting words of faithful
Surrey,
Which mark too well the colour of thy purpose.

Alf: Thy approbation I did not expect.
None can approve, but those who feel like me.
The Danish camp, disguised, I will explore,
Clad in the vesture of a British bard,
And learn, for certain, Ethelswida’s fate,
Whatever has befall’n my hapless bride;
Assured of that, my heart shall shake no more.

*Devon.* Something like this my anxious soul forctold.

*Alf.* I read thy thoughts, but urge me not to hear
Thy friendly counsels, which I cannot follow.
In great events, the agitated mind
Consults its genius only. Low or high,
The active spirits in that level flow,
Nor fall nor rise, to act another’s counsel.
That potent counsellor directs me now;
I feel the impulse, oft in perils felt.
Nor is my arm confined to Ethelswida;
The strength and honour of the Danish host,
How, and what quarter, I may best attack,
Attentive I’ll observe.

*Devon.* Since thou hast fix’d
Thy resolution, to contend is vain;
The part of friendship now is to consult,
How we may guard thee best.

*Alf.* By the moon’s light,
As, with a swift career, their camp I pass’d,
A wood, extended on the right I saw,
(Their left the village Ethendune defends,)
Canst thou inform, if they have open'd paths,
Or planted watches there?

Devon. Neither, my lord.

Presumptuous Hinguar holds such caution vain.

Alf. When dusky eve descends, in the dark time,
Between the fall of night, and the moon's risc,
In silence, thither march a thousand men,
Chosen with care, the bravest of our host;
There let them watch till morn; if no alarm
Comes ere the dawn, at dawn they may retire.

Devon. To chuse and lead that band shall be my care.

My warriors are the hunters of the hill;
Accustom'd to the woods, fearless they move,
By the pale glimpses of the clouded moon.
To them the changeful aspects of the night,
Whose false presentments armies oft confound,
In all their forms are known.

Alf. I would not wish
A better leader, nor a braver band.

Devon. The word?

Alf. St George.
Devon. O, may he guard the King!
And, as the minds of yonder heathen host
In darkness lie, so may their eyes be dark
And blind to Alfred!

Alf. As they still have been.
This is no new, though seeming bold attempt.
I have essay'd it, for a slighter cause;
When in the Isle of Athelney I lay,
The quarters of the Dane I oft explored,
In this disguise, and mark'd destruction's line.
Farewell, thy wisdom no direction needs;
Nor shall I long be absent from my friend.

[Exeunt.]
ACT II.

SCENE,—The Danish Camp.

Enter Surrey.

Sur. The tale of Orpheus, (which in Rome I heard,)
Whose lyre harmonious civilized mankind,
Is verified to-day. The stubborn sons
Of Denmark sympathize with Alfred's strain:
And, as he leads the song, their passions flow.
Hinguar himself is wonder-struck.

Enter an Officer.

Off. Begone;
Thou tread'st already on forbidden ground.

Sur. Inform the King, that Erick is return'd.

Off. Hinguar approaches, and with him the Bard,
Whose lyre is framed, by necromantic art;
Enchanted are the strings.—Away, with speed.

[Exit Surrey.]
Enter HINGULAR and ALFRED, in conversation.

Hing. [To the Officer.] Withdraw.—

[Exit Officer.

Now I believe the death of Alfred.
This ring, the well-known signet of his power,
He never trusted to another hand.

Alf. When, in the rocky cave, I found him dead,
I then resolved, King of the warlike Danes,
To bear to thee the tidings of his death;
And as a proof, which could not be deny'd,
That ring I took, which erst mine eyes beheld
Upon his finger placed, with rites and charms,
When he was crown'd; in London, England's King.

Hing. I will reward thee to thy utmost wish.
Thou art no Saxon, but of British race,
And lovest the mountains of thy native land;
Chuse where they fairest rise; they shall be thine,
With all their valleys and their sylvan streams.
The gods I serve have sent thee to my aid.
'Tis my belief thou can'st assist me much,
In what is dearer to my soul than empire.

Alf. How can the bard assist a prince like thee?

Hing. In high respect I hold thy art divine.
Whate'er thou art, magician, bard, or seer,
Or if thou art all these, I crave thine aid.
Amidst my victories, I am most wretched;
By love tormented, unsuccessful love.

Alf: Thy love, with equal love, is not return'd?

Hing: More grievous still. The fair, my soul
    desires,
Cannot distinguish nor reward my love.
If thou her cruel malady can'st charm,
And drive wild frenzy from her troubled mind,
Task, to fulfil thy wish, the power of Hingvar.

Alf: In me behold the man of thy desire.
Unlawful arts I neither use nor know;
But am in nature's secrets deeply skill'd.
Far from the pleasures and the cares of men,
By strange misfortune to the desert driven,
A lonely anchoret, for years, I lived.
To me are known the virtues of each plant,
That grows in hill or dale, in sun or shade;
How one, by sympathy, with madness taints;
And how another clears th' infected blood.
Much I can help, or harm.

Hing: Exert thy skill;
And plant and herb, or song and spell employ.
Do what thou wilt'st, so thou restorest the fair.
Alf: Did her dire frenzy from distress arise?
From sudden perturbation of the mind?
Or is the cause unknown?

Hing: From grief, from fear,
From terror to excess, her frenzy rose,
Dreadful the shock she suffer'd!

Alf: How, my lord?
What did she suffer?

Hing: In her person, nothing;
But agony of mind, to an excess,
Not easy to describe.

Alf: Has she reveal'd
Her name, her family?

Hing: By different names
She calls herself; and when with questions urged,
She makes extravagant, fantastic answers,
And seems unconscious of her true condition.

Alf: Her general temper; is it sad or gay?
For frenzy is most various.

Hing: So is her's;
For she exhibits every various mood,
That frenzy e'er assumed. But thou shalt see
And judge her strange demeanour. In yon tent,
With purple bright, she dwells; and to this spot,
Where now we stand, she frequently repairs.
This is her usual hour. Behold! she comes.

*Enter Ethelswida, with two Women attending, fantastically drest.*

*Alf.* How beautiful she is! O pitcous sight!
Her frenzy's high.

*Hing.* Did e'er thine aged eyes
Behold her equal?

[**Ethelswida** passes them, and advances to the front.]

*Eth.* Eagles of the rock,
Lend me your sounding wings; cherubs of heaven,
Who soar above the sun, your pinions lend,
To bear me to my love.

*Hing. [to Alfred.]* Observe!

*Alf.* I do.

*Eth.* The crested swans were heard to sing
A sad lamenting strain;
As, floating with the stream, his corpse
Descended to the main.

*Hing.* Still of a lover lost. I never heard
Her roving words tend to one point so long.

*Alf.* Sorrow and rage excessive, both are madness.
Time always cures them, if the frame is sound.—
She speaks again.

Eth. My heart swells in my breast,
And stops my breath. Oceans of tears I shed,
And shake the high pavilion with my sighs;
But neither sighs nor tears give me relief.
[To Hinguar.] Thou keeper of the keys of death and hell,
Unlock the iron gate, and set me free,
Then I shall smile and thank thee.

Hing. Queen of beauty!
I am thy captive, and obey thy will.
To soothe the grief that preys upon thy heart,
My care has hither brought a bard divine,
Whose voice can charm the ache and agony,
Which spirits feel. He's gentle, mild, and wise,
And shall attend thy call.

Eth. I will not call him.
His garb is vile; I hate it.

Alf. Hate not him,
Whose heart is tuned to sympathize with thine.
I shun the house of mirth, and love to dwell
A constant inmate of the house of sorrow.

[While he speaks, Ethelswida gazes and knows him.]
Eth. Then thou art not so wise, as would appear,
From thy white head, and grave habiliments.
[Walks aside in great emotion. Returns.
If thou art fond and weak, and foolish too,
Why, so am I. We may consort together,
And build strong castles.

Alf. Yes.

Eth. Thy harp shall move
The trees and rocks. In order they shall rise,
As high as Babel’s tower.

Alf. Forthwith they shall.

Eth. Are all thy songs of melancholy strain?

Alf. The greater part.

Eth. Then thou hast lost thy love;
Else thou could’st ne’er have felt true melancholy.
I will not hear thee now. I’m poor in spirit,
And have not force to bear a strong affection.
I choose a garland song, a lighter strain.

There liv’d a youth by silver Thames,
Who loved the maidens fair;
But loose, at large, the rover ranged,
Nor felt a lover’s care.
We must not with one censure level all.
Some men are true of heart, but very few.
Those live not long; they die before their time.
'Tis pity of them.    Oh!        [Walks aside.

Hing. A shower of tears,
Fast falling, calms the tempest of her mind.

Alf. 'Tis a deep-rooted malady.

Enter a Danish Officer.

Off. My lord,
A troop of English horsemen from the hill
Descend into the plain,    Our warriors wait,
Impatient, thy commands.

Hing. I come.        [Exit Officer.

(To Alfred.)    Remain
Till I return.—Edda, Elisa, mark me,
Give her full scope; in nothing cross her mood,
That this reflecting sage, complete, may see
The picture of her mind.       [Exit.

Eth. (After a pause, approaches Alfred.)
Thou pilgrim sad,
Whose head the hand of time hath silver'd o'er,
Comest thou from Palestine?

Alf. From Rome I come.
Eth. From Rome! Thou dost not wear thy triple crown;
And yet I know thou art the holy Sire,
The common father of the Christian world.
Compassion shew to me. With wicked men,
With heathens and idolaters, I dwell,
Without the benefit of holy church;
Nor shrift, nor absolution have I known,
For sev'n long years.

Alf. I will, myself, confess thee.
The peace of heaven shall on thy soul descend.—
(To the attendants.) A course most fortunate her fancy steers;
Most likely to effect the King’s desire.
In this conceit, to me she may reveal
Her name, her parentage, perhaps the grief
That rankles in her breast. Please to retire,
As if it were confession.

Eli. Haste away,
For sickle is her mind.

Edda. (Going) I like it not.
This may be stratagem: They’re Saxons all.
’Tis fit they be observed. I’ll keep in sight.

[Exeunt.]
Manent Alfred and Ethelswida.

Eth. Alfred!——


Eth. O, beware!

Death lurks in every corner. Why expose
Thy noble life to such inglorious peril?
Not thus did I expect to see the King.
If c’er mine eyes beheld my lord again,
I hoped to see him in the light of steel,
Prompt to defend himself, or rescue me.
Why comest thou thus?

Alf. I come to know thy fate;
For, since I heard thou wast in Hinguar’s power,
Distraction here has reign’d.

Eth. I comprehend thee.

Could Alfred think I would survive my honour?

Alf. I knew not what to think: But much I fear’d.

Eth. Dismiss that fear; and be of this assured,
I shall be as I am, or shall be nothing.
Fly from this place of peril; fly, with speed.
Thy presence to us both is sure perdiction.
My own distress, with fortitude, I bore:
But feel my weakness, when the danger’s thence.
The part I act, I hardly can sustain.
Did'st thou not mark, when first I heard thy voice,
How real passion mingled with the feign'd?
When I beheld thee risen from the grave,
And braving death again for Ethelswida,
The veil of frenzy scarce conceal'd my transport.

_Alf._ I saw thy struggling soul; then—not till then,
Athwart the cloud the beam of reason shone.

_Eth._ Tarry not here; else I shall lose my reason,
And be the thing I seem.

_Alf._ Till night shall spread
Her favouring mantle o'er my secret steps,
I cannot leave this place; and then I hope
To bear thee with me, through the host of Den-
mark.

Of that we shall have time to speak hereafter.
This garb secures me frequent, free access.
Now, let me warn thee, should it be suspected,
That I am not the person I pretend,
Thy ready answer must, with mine, accord.
I am thy brother; Surrey is my name,
And Emma thine.

_Eth._ Alas! Ill-omen'd name!
In my defence, the noble Surrey fell.
Alf. He lives to serve thee in the camp of Hinguar.

Eth. What miracle! mine eyes beheld him slain.

Alf. They come, they come; resume thy wild demeanour.

[Ethelswida walks aside as formerly.

Enter Elisa and Edda.

Eli. The King draws near.

Eth. Array me for his presence.

I'll have a crown to deck my pensive brows;
It shall be made of sun-beams, and of stars,
Caught as they shoot; and when the rainbow rests
Its glowing shaft upon the mountain's side,
I'll dip my robe in gold. Away, away.

[Exeunt Ethelswida, Edda, and Elisa.

Enter Hinguar.

Hing. It was a false alarm. The English horse,
When we advanced against them, wheel'd and fled.
What judgment hast thou form'd? Did she say aught
In her confession?

Alf. She fled off at once
From that conceit. Her mind's a burning fire,
Where sudden thoughts like wreaths of smoke arise,
And, parting from the flame, disperse in air.
Her shatter'd fancy, like a mirror broken,
Reflects no single image just and true,
But many false ones.

_Hing._ Dost thou hope to cure
The malady, which thou describ'st so well?

_Alf._ There is more ground of hope than cause
of fear.

_Hing._ Forthwith the wonders of thine art essay;
Meanwhile, within the circle of my tents
Secure remain. Gotherd's imperious daughter,
(Whom in an evil hour, when new in England,
To please the Danes I was induced to wed,)
Is in the camp arrived. I guess her purpose,
And will prevent her speed.

_[A voice behind the scenes.]_
Presumptuous slave!

_[Another voice.]_
Thou can'st not pass.

_[First voice.]_
Who shall oppose the Queen?

_Enter Ronex._

_Ron._ I come too late; she's gone. Hail to the
King!
Who is this minion, that usurps my place,
And, with mock majesty, dishonours Denmark?

_Hing._ Outrageous as thou art, respect at least
The stranger’s ear.

[To Alfred.] Retire, and shun the storm.

[Exit Alfred.

_Ron._ What pageantry is this?

_Hing._ Why hast thou left,
Without permission of thy lord, the place
Appointed for thee?

_Ron._ Ha! Am I thy slave,
That thou presumest to treat me with such scorn?
Hast thou forgot my birth? Dost thou not know
I am the heir of Denmark and of England—
That in my right thou reign’st?

_Hing._ To Denmark go;
There o’er thy barren rocks and deserts reign:
But fair and fertile England is my own.
The sword, that won, shall keep the pleasant land,
I conquer’d for myself.

_Ron._ Talk’st thou of conquest,
Thou woman’s warrior, who consumest thy days
In secret, lawless, and inglorious love,
Whilst o’er thy head thy slaughter’d brother’s ghost
For vengeance shricks in vain!
Hing. None of my foes,
Of whom the fellest far I reckon thee,
Shall long elude my vengeance. From this hour
I cast thee off; for ever I renounce thee;
And soon thou shalt behold another Queen
Exalted in thy place.

Ron. Fulfill thy threat,
And thou shalt soon behold another King.
The leaders and the soldiers of thy host
Revere in me the Scandinavian line.
When I am not thy Queen, thou reign'st no more.

Hing. This instant leave me, or by Denmark's
gods,
By Loda's altar, stain'd with human blood,
To Iceland's dreary isle thou shalt be borne,
There to repent thy folly.—Guards!

Enter an Officer with Soldiers.

Ron. Stand off!—
Tyrant, when next we meet!—

Hing. Force her away.
Never let Gotherd's daughter enter here.

[Exeunt Ronex and Guards.

Small is her boasted influence with my people;
And yet her jealous rage is fell and bloody;
My fair Norwegian felt her mortal hate.
I must not trust my lovely captive's life,
To the slight keeping of that officer,
Who yielded to the threats of haughty Ronex.
This instant I'll dismiss him, and appoint
The brave and faithful Erick to his place.

[Exeunt.]
ACT III.

SCENE, &c.—As before.

HINGUAR and EDDA.

Edda. Early my doubts arose. I ne'er believed
Her malady was real. Often, my lord,
Have I observed her looks sedate and calm;
Then, quick as thought, when she had caught my
eye,
She started into well-dissembled frenzy.

Hing. Why ne'er unfold thy doubts?

Edda. Till now I durst not,
Because I had no proof of my suspicion:
For in thy presence, with amazing art,
She counterfeits distraction. Well I knew
Thy partial love would ill receive a charge
On mere conjecture founded. What I saw
This day to certainty has changed my doubts.
Try her, my lord; and if I have deceived thee,
I ask no mercy.
Hing. If she has deceived me,
As I believe she has, I'll shew her none.
This is the lover whom her songs bewail,
The favourite, for whom she guards her charms,
And mocks the credulous Dane. He mocks me too.
I'll take luxurious vengeance!—Guards.

Enter Erick with a plume and scarf, with Danish Soldiers.

Erick. My lord.

Hing. Unsheath your swords. Be ready, at a word,
To execute my orders. [To Erick.]—Send him hither.—[Exit Edda.
Surprised, subdued, with dread of instant death,
I'll search his secret soul; and then the slave,
For his presumption, dies.

Enter Alfred, views the scene for a moment,
and then advances intrepidly.

Hing. Thou traitor! villain!
How durst thou, with thy puny arts, attempt
To practise upon me?

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Alf. Take back those names;
Which, utter'd here, do not dishonour me,
But on thyself return.

Hing. Ha! Dost thou brave me?
I'll pull thy courage down.

Alf. Thou canst not, Hinguar.
I mock the lifted sword, and smile at death.

Hing. Tell me, impostor, who thou really art,
And who that woman is, thy false associate
In this vile artifice?

Alf. Not from the dread
Of what thy vengeance can inflict, I answer;
But to assert my honour. To thy tents,
Although disguised I came; no traitor I.
I came not, Hinguar, to attempt thy life;
But to inquire a much loved sister's fate;
For whom I trembled, since the h'our I heard
She was thy captive.

Hing. Ha! thy sister, sayst thou?
What is thy name?

Alf. Surrey.

Hing. Thy name is known,
Of great account, amongst the foes of Denmark.
Thou art the chosen friend of English Alfred.

Alf. His faithful subject.
Hing. What's thy sister's name?

Alf. Emma. Alas! to great misfortune born!

Hing. Suspend a while thy judgment of her fortune.—

Retire.— [To the Guards, who go off.

The tale of Alfred was devised
To smooth thy way to Emma?

Alf. So it was,
Yet Alfred, if alive, in peril lives;
And, doubtful, at this moment, is his fate.

Hing. Dead or alive, I care not. If he lives,
He never can regain his kingdom lost;
Nor England e'er shake off the yoke of Denmark.
Surrey, though war and battle are my joy,
Yet I desire sometimes in peace to dwell.
Thy sister's beauty has inflamed my heart,
And policy accords with love's desire.
The charming Emma shall be Hinguar's bride;
And, England, partial to her own, obey
Princes, whose blood is native to the land.

Alf. Thou hast a queen.

Hing. What then? The gods of Denmark
Do not, like yours, their votaries confine
To the domestic bondage of one wife.
My soul abhors the daughter of old Guthred.
That furious woman, who was once my queen:
Her I divorce; and on her vacant throne,
Will place thy sister.

A Christian cannot wed a heathen lord.

Hing. Thy mind, averse, is fertile in objections.
Saxon, thou speak'st not with a brother's tongue.
Thou hast deceived me once.—Erick!

Enter Erick.

Erick. My lord.

Hing. Within my tent confine and guard him strictly. [Exeunt Alfred and Erick.]
I do suspect this is the lover still.
It much behoves me soon to be resolved.
'Tis just, with fallacy, to prove the false,
And turn the arts of woman on herself.
I'll give a rude alarm, and shake her soul,
Even to the centre.—To my wish, she comes,
Buried in thought. She has not yet observed me.

[Steps aside.

Enter Ethelswida.

Eth. I fear we are discover'd and betray'd.
That Danish woman, whom I never loved,
Has held a private conference with Hinguar;
She pierces me with her malicious eyes,
Swimming in joy, and conscious of detection.
She has o'erheard us.—

[Hinguar comes behind and seizes her arm.
Ah!

_Hing._ Why dost thou start,
And look so guilty? Where's thy frenzy now?
The artful semblance that deceived the Dane?
Thy fear betrays the fraud I knew before.
Confess thy fault, and trust to Hinguar's mercy.

_Eth._ Mercy!

_Hing._ Although thou hast offended deeply,
Thy beauty pleads for thee. My love forgives.
One victim is enough.

_Eth._ One victim! ah!

_Hing._ Yes, thy associate, the pretended bard,
Who call'd himself thy brother. He hath paid
The forfeit, with his life.

_Eth._ [Staggers, ready to faint.] Thou bloody Dane!

Inhuman monster! hast thou murder'd Alfred,
And dost thou speak of love to Ethelswida?

_Hing._ Alfred and Ethelswida!
Eth. Tyrant! Yes.
There’s nothing now to save or to deny.
In me, behold the bride of royal Alfred!
Thy treachery, and not thy valour, Dane,
Upon our nuptial day, divorced our loves.
But neither force nor fraud can part us now.
Where Alfred is, my soul shall shortly be.

Hing. Thou art greatly changed. This courage
is not real.
’Tis not thy nature.

Eth. I shall change no more.
My former fear from love extreme arose.
Then, life was dear to me, for Alfred’s sake.
But now, since he is dead, for Alfred’s sake
I wish to die, and loath the life I loved.

Hing. ’Tis bravely spoken.

Eth. ’Tis not my desire
To hold discourse with thee. Go, from my sight;
Thou’rt hideous to my eyes, thou vile assassin!

{Turns away.

Hing. Hear me!

Eth. I would not, if I could prevent it.
But what I can I will. I speak no more.
My lips are closed for ever.