Athaliah

by Jean Racine

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Author: J. Donkersley

Jean Racine

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ATHALIAH:

A Tragedy, Intended For Reading Only, Translated Into English Blank

Verse, FROM RACINE, (A. Gombert's Edition, 1825,)

By J. Donkersley.

1873

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PREFACE.

Racine, the author of Athalie (Athaliah), flourished in the latter half of the 17th century. At his appearance, Corneille, the great French Dramatist, was in the full splendour of his fame, whose rival he was afterwards recognised to be. Athalie is a

Tragedy in rhyme, consisting of six Iambic feet, similar to the Alexandrine verse found occasionally in our English poets at the termination of a sentence or paragraph. Dryden, and a few others of less note, in the reign of Charles IL, introduced the rhyming drama to the English public; but the clank of its fetters was unpleasant to the British ear, which had become attuned to the freedom and majesty of blank verse. Blank verse, therefore, being our recognised vehicle of dramatic productions, has been employed in this translation. I did, however, intend in the first place to render the chorus into rhyme; but after maturer consideration it appeared to me that irregular blank verse would be more capable of tragic expression; and that it would also be more in harmony with the Hebrew rhythm as represented by the scriptures, from which the plot was appropriated.

In carrying out my conception of what the translation ought to be, I have endeavoured to preserve the dignity of the subject, without sacrificing the freedom of dramatic force. It has, therefore, not been my aim to produce smooth monotonous numbers, but to harmonize the whole versification with the spirit and conditions of the theme.

I have retained several of the French names, on account of their measure and euphony. Joas and Joad I have, I believe, invariably versified as one syllable, and Baal also, with one exception, which occurs in the first page; these words, to my judgment, being scarcely of greater quantity than thought, wrought, brought, &c.

Should the reader realize the same amount of interest in the perusal of this translation that I have had in its production, I shall be amply rewarded for the genial labour bestowed upon it.

J. DONKERSLEY,

South Street Academy,

Huddersfield.

HISTORICAL OUTLINE.

"Athaliah was the daughter of Ahab and Jezebel, who exercised a sanguinary dominion over Israel, and both, (more especially Jezebel,) rendered their reign infamous by their worship of idols, and their cruel persecution of prophets. She had been espoused by Jehoram, king of Judah, son of Jehosaphat, and the seventh king of the race of David. His son, Ahaziah, seduced into idolatry, as well as Jehoram, by the example of Athaliah, after a reign of one year was put to death, together with all the princes of the house of Ahab, by Jehu, whom God had anointed by his prophets to reign over Israel, and to be the minister of his vengeance. Athaliah, irritated by the massacre of her family, undertook on her part to exterminate the royal race of David, and accordingly perpetrated the murder of all the children of Ahaziah, her own grandchildren, Joas, at that time an infant in the cradle, alone escaped the fury of her slaughtering sword: he was rescued by Jehosabeth, the half-sister of Ahaziah (being daughter of Jehoram by a different mother), and wife of the high-priest Joad. It is the establishment of this scion of David upon the throne of his ancestors that forms the subject of this drama."

CHARACTERS

Joas, King of Judah, son of Ochoziah.

Athaliah, widow of Joram, Joas's grandmother.

Joad, the High-priest

Josabet, wife of the High-priest, and Joas's aunt.

Zachariah, son of Joad and Josabet.

Salomith, Zachariah's sister.

Abner, one of the principal officers of the kings of Judah.

Azartah, Ishmael, and three other priests and Levite chiefs.

Mathan, apostate priest, pontiff of Baal.

Nabal, Mathan's confidant.

Agar, a woman in Athaliah's suite.

Troupes of Levites and priests.

Nurse of Joad.

Choir, daughters of the tribe of Levi.

The Scene is in the Temple of Jerusalem, in a vestibule of the High-priest's apartment.

A T H A L I A H.

ACT FIRST.—Scene I.

JOAD, ABNER. ABNER. TO worship the Eternal, yea, I come Into his temple, come to celebrate, According to our ancient, solemn use, In company with you, the hallowed day On which upon Mount Sinai unto us The law was given. How changed are the times! No sooner did the sacred trumpet sound That day's return, than holy people thronged In multitudes the temple's porticos; And all in order 'fore the altar placed, Bearing the fields' new produce in their hands, Those first-fruits offered up to the One God: The sacrifices overtaxed the priests! Stopping that concourse, an audacious woman Has changed those glorious days to days of gloom. Scarce a small number of true worshippers Dare give faint semblance of the ancient times; The rest have shewn a fatal thoughtlessness Towards their God, or worse, have even rushed To Baal's altars to initiate Themselves into his shameful mysteries; And curse the name their fathers have invoked. To speak right openly, I am in dread That Athaliah from the altar will Tear you, yourself; and casting off, at length, The remnants of her

forced respect, complete On you her deadly vengeance. JOAD. Whence comes to-day this dark presentiment? ABNER. Think you that with impunity you can Be just and pure? since, for so long a time The queen has hated that rare constancy Which adds, in Joad, new splendour to his office; Since, for so long, your ardour for your faith Has been construed sedition and revolt. The jealous-minded queen hates, above all, The dazzling worth of Josabet, your wife. Though Joad is the successor of the priest— The high priest, Aaron—Josabet is still The last king's sister. Mathan, besides, Mathan— Apostate priest—more vile than Athaliah, Is importuning her at every hour; Mathan, the base deserter from our altars, And persecutor of all righteous zeal. 'Tis not enough his brow's encircled with A foreign mitre; e'en his ministry This Levite lends to Baal: this temple frets him, And his impiety doth wish to crush The God he has abjured. To ruin you No snare he can devise will be unwrought. Sometimes he pities you, and frequently He even praises, and affects for you A treacherous gentleness; and by this means He deepens his malignity's dark dye. Now, to that queen he paints you terrible; Now, seeing her insatiate lust for gold, He feigns that in a place, to you but known, You hide the treasures David had amassed. At last, the sombre Athaliah's seemed For two days buried in a dark chagrin. I saw her yesterday, and watched her eye Flash on this holy place a furious glance, As if the depths of this vast edifice Concealed God's 'venger, armed to punish her. Believe me, more I think of it and less I doubt that 'tis on you her wrath's to burst; And that the cruel Athaliah will Assail our God, e'en in His sanctuary. JOAD. He who can rein the fury of the waves Knows also how to check the base one's plots: Submit with reverence to His holy will. Dear Abner, I fear God, and no one else I have to fear. I thank you, ne'ertheless, For the observant zeal with which your eyes Are open to my peril. Secretly, I see injustice galls you,—that you have Within you still the heart of Israel: Thank God for that! But are you satisfied With this unpractised virtue—secret wrath? Ah! Can that faith which acts not be sincere? Usurping all the rights of David's sway, An impious stranger, now for eight years

past, Hath weltered in the blood of Judah's kings Unpunished,—odious murderer of her sons; And now e'en raiseth her perfidious arm 'Gainst God: and you, though nourished in the camp Of Josaphat, the saintly king, are one Of the upholders of this tottering state; Who led our armies under Joram's son, And who alone revived our towns alarmed When the abrupt decease of Ochoziah Dispersed all his camp at Jehu's sight; God fear, I say you, and His word affects me! Hear, how that God rebukes you by my mouth:— "What use to vaunt your ardour for My law? By empty vows think you to honour Me? What value all your offerings to Me? Need I the blood of he-goats and of heifers? The blood of kings exclaims and is not heard: Break, break all compact with the impious! Drive out the offences from your people's midst; And then return to offer Me your victims." ABNER. Ah! what can I amongst this down-trod race? Powerless is Benjamin, and Judah droops: The day which saw their race of kings no more Extinguished all their spirits' ancient fire; E'en God, say they, withholds Himself from us: So jealous, formerly, of Hebrews' fame, He sees, unmoved, our grandeur crushed to earth, And, in the end, His mercy's wearied out: No more, for us, His terrible arm is seen To awe mankind with marvels numberless: The ark is mute, its oracles unspoken. JOAD. Yet, when was time so full of miracles? When did God show His power with more effect? Will you have always eyes that do not see A people thankless?—still your ear be struck With greatest wonders, and your heart unmoved? Must I, then, Abner, call to mind the course Of prodigies accomplished in our days? Of Israel's tyrants, the notorious shame, And God found true in all His menaces; The impious Ahab ruined, and his blood That drenched the field by homicide usurped; Jezebel slaughtered near that fatal field; That queen beneath the feet of horses crushed; The dogs in her inhuman blood quenched full, And the torn members of her hideous corpse; Of lying prophets, the confounded crew, And flames upon the altar fall'n from heaven; Elijah speaking like a potentate Unto the elements, the firmament As heated brass becoming, closed by him; The earth three years without both rain and dew; The dead

reviving at Elisha's voice? O, Abner, own in these transcendant deeds, A God such as He was throughout all time. Who knoweth, when He wills, to show His glory, His people always present in His thoughts. ABNER. But where the dignities to David promised, And e'en foretold by Solomon, his son? Alas! we hoped that from that happy race Was to descend a numerous train of kings; That over every nation, every tribe, His domination one of them should fix; Make war and tumult cease in every land, And at their feet behold all earthly kings. JOAD. Wherefore renounce the promises of heaven? ABNER. Where shall we seek that monarch, David's son? Can heaven itself repair that withered tree, Dead, even to its roots? The infant king, By Athaliah murdered in his cradle; Can those, for eight years dead, forsake the tomb? Ah! in her fury were she but deceived! If of the royal blood one drop escaped! JOAD. What would you then? ABNER. O happy day for me! O with what ardour would I own my king! Doubt you, that at his feet our eager tribes— But wherefore flatter me with these vain thoughts? The wretched heir of our triumphant kings Alone was Ochoziah, with his children; By Jehu's shafts I saw the father pierced; You, by the mother, saw the son despatched. JOAD. I say no more; but when the star of day Shall have performed a third part of his course On the horizon, come with this same zeal Again into the temple, whilst to prayers The third hour summons us, and God to you Will show, by benefactions weighty, that His word is stable, that it ne'er deceives. Depart: I must prepare for this great day, And dawn already gilds the temple's summit. ABNER. What are those favours that I cannot fathom? The illustrious Josabet approaches you: I go to mingle with the faithful band Which this day's solemn pomp enticeth forth.

Scene II.

JOAD. Princess, the time's accomplished, I must speak! You may conceal your rescued charge no longer. The guilty vauntings of Jehovah's foes, Misdeeming

against Him His silence deep, Too long of falsehood's taxed His promises: What do I say? Success imparting life Into their fury, even on our shrines Your cruel stepmother would offer up To Baal idolatrous incense. Let us show The infant monarch, whom your hands have saved, Raised in the temple 'neath the Lord's defence. He will possess the courage of our princes; His mind already mounts above his years. Before my voice explains his destiny, I go to offer him to God, by Whom Our sovereigns rule; our Levites and our priests, Immediately assembling, I to them The offspring of their princes will declare. JOSABET. Knows he his name and noble parentage? JOAD. He answers only to Eliacin, And by his mother thinks himself abandoned, To whom I have in pity served as father. JOSABET. Alas! what perils I have known him 'scape! What peril is he nigh to come to, still? JOAD. What! does your faith, already weak, shrink back? JOSABET. To your wise counsels, lord, I yield myself: For, from the day I snatched that child from death, Into your hands I've placed the care of him; Dreading the violence of my love, I have, As much as possible, e'en shunned his sight, For fear, when seeing him, some foolish grief Should bring to light my secret with my tears. But, above all, I have believed it good To consecrate three days and nights entire To tears and prayers. However, may I ask Of you to-day, What friends have you prepared To second you? Will Abner, the brave Abner, Come to defend us? Has he taken oath To show himself beside his king? JOAD. Though we can be assured of Abner's faith, He even knows not yet, we have a king. JOSABET. To whom do you confide the care of Joas? Obed or Ammon does that honour favour? The benefits showered on them by my sire— JOAD. To Athaliah they have sold themselves. JOSABET. Whom, then, do you engage against her guards? JOAD. Have I not said? Our Levites and our priests. JOSABET. I know that under your foreseeing care Their numbers are redoubled, secretly Assembled near you; that full of love For you, for Athaliah boundless hate, A solemn oath anticipating, binds Them to the son of David, when revealed; But with that noble fire with which they burn Can they, alone, avenge their

prince's cause? For such great object is their zeal sufficient? Doubt you that Athaliah, at the word First spread abroad—that Ochoziah's son Is here concealed—will fail her barbarous troop Of strangers to collect about the temple, And violate its gates? Will it suffice 'Gainst them to place your sacred ministers, Who never scattered but their victims' blood; Who, raising to the Lord their harmless hands, Can only groan and pray for our offences? Perhaps, when in their arms, Joas pierced with wounds— JOAD. Then count you God for nought who fights for us! God, who protects the orphans' innocence, And in their weakness testifies His power; God, who hates tyrants, who in Jezreel Swore Jezabel and Ahab to uproot; God, who smote Joram, husband of their daughter, And even to his son pursued their house; God, whose avenging arm, awhile withheld, Is always threatening o'er that impious race: JOSABET. And 'tis His rigid justice on those kings That throes me for my wretched brother's son. For who can say that child, at birth, was not Condemned with them—included in their guilt? That God, for David's sake, will grant him favour, And separate him from a hateful race? Alas! the horrible perplexing state, In which heaven represents itself to me, Haunts me incessantly, and frights my soul. The chambers gorged with princes massacred— Inexorable Athaliah, armed With poniard, fires her barbarous soldiery Unto the carnage, and pursues the course Of her assassinations. Left for dead, Joas strikes my sight! Methinks I still behold His nurse, distracted, throw her feeble form In vain before the murderers; and him, Extended on the earth, clasp to her breast I take him up all bloody—with my tears Bathing his visage—bring him back to life; And still in terror, or caressing me, I feel his innocent arms upon me press. Great God! let not my love be fatal to him, The precious relic of the loyal David: Brought up within Thy house to love Thy law, He knows no other father yet than Thee. About to attack a homicidal queen, If peril's aspect terrifies my faith, If flesh and blood to-day, bewildered being, Have too great part in tears I shed for him, Heir of Thy sacred promises, preserve him, And punish me alone for all my frailty! JOAD. Your griefs are crimeless, Josabet; but God

Would have us trust in His paternal care. Upon the son who fears Him He does not Call blindly in His wrath to answer for His sire's impiety. All that remain Still faithful Hebrews, will come forth to-day To make their vows anew; all that revere The race of David, Athaliah hate! Joas will affect them with his modesty, Through which appears to glow his royal blood, And our example, by His very voice The Lord supporting, will moreover speak Within His temple straight unto their hearts. Two unbelieving kings in turns have braved Him; Tis now imperative a king be raised Upon the throne, who shall avow hereafter That, to the honour of his ancestors, God caused him, by the influence of His priests, To re-ascend; and, by their hands, hath snatched Him, Joas, from the oblivion of the tomb, To light again the fire of David's ashes. Great God! if Thou foreseest that of his race Unworthy, he will stray from David's footsteps, Yea, let him be as fruit whilst growing, plucked, Or blighted in its bloom by hostile blast! But if this child, obedient to Thy rule, Is to be useful aid in Thy designs, Restore the sceptre to the rightful heir; Give into my weak hands his potent foes; Confound the councils of the cruel queen! Deign, deign, my God, on Mathan and on her To cast the spirit of vanity and falsehood, Fatal forerunner of the fall of kings! Adieu; the hour is pressing. Unto you, His sister and our son advancing, bring The daughters of the families most devout.

Scene III.

JOSABET, ZACHARIAH, SALOMITH, THE CHOIR. JOSABET. Dear Zachariah, go, without delay; Accompany your noble father's steps. Daughters of Levi, young and faithful band, Whom now the Lord hath chosen for their zeal, That come so frequently to share my sighs: Children, my only joy in my long griefs, Those flowers upon your heads, and in your hands Those garlands were appropriate, formerly, At our great festivals; but now, alas! In these opprobious and afflicting times, What offering so comely as our tears? I hear, already, hear the sacred trumpet, And soon

the temple will be open to us. Whilst I prepare myself for the occasion, Sing to the Lord, whom you have come to seek.

Scene IV.

THE CHOIR. All the Choir sing. Let all adore our God; the universe Is full of His magnificence! Let all invoke Him ever: His empire was before the birth of time; Sing, and proclaim His benefactions. One voice alone. In vain unrighteous violence hath imposed Silence upon the people praising Him: His name shall never perish. Day unto day proclaims His glory and His power: The universe is full of His magnificence: Sing, and proclaim His benefactions. All the Choir. The universe is full of His magnificence: Sing, and proclaim His benefactions. One voice alone. He gives to flowers their lovely hues, He brings the fruits to birth and ripens them; To these He portions, with judicious care, The heat of day and coolness of the night: The fields receiving them, return The gifts with usury. Another. He bids the sun to animate His works, And light's the power of His own hands; But still His holy law, His spotless law Is richest blessing God has given mankind. Another. O, Mount of Sinai, keep eternally In our remembrance the illustrious day, When on thy flaming summit, in a cloud, Densely enveloped, God into the eye Of mortals caused to shine A beamlet of His glory. O tell me why those lightnings and those flames The floods of vapour, rumblings in the air, The trumpetings, and thunder: Came He to overturn The order of the elements? Came He to shake the earth Upon its old foundations? Another. He came to witness to the Hebrew children His holy precepts' everlasting light; He came to bid that happy people love Him With a love eternal. All the Choir. O law divine, delightful law! O justice, tenderness supreme! What satisfaction, sweetness overflowing, To pledge unto that God our love and faith! One voice alone. He freed our fathers from a cruel yoke; While in the desert, with delicious food He nourished them: He gives to us His law, He gives Himself; and for such

benefits He orders us to love Him. The Choir. O justice, tenderness supreme! The same voice. For them He closed the waters of the sea, And from an arid rock made fountains gush; He gives to us His law, He gives Himself; And for such benefits He orders us to love Him. The Choir. O law divine, delightful law! What satisfaction, sweetness overflowing, To pledge unto that God our love and faith! Another voice alone. O you, who only know a servile fear, Ingrates, can not a God so good delight you? Is it so difficult unto your hearts, So painful, then, to love Him? The bondsman dreads the tyrant's violence, But love's the portion of a child: You wish that God should load you with His blessings, Without returning Him your love! All the Choir. O law divine, delightful law! O justice, tenderness supreme! What satisfaction, sweetness overflowing, To pledge unto that God our love and faith!

ACT SECOND,—Scene I. and II.

JOSABET, SALOMITH, THE CHOIR. JOSABET. That is enough, my daughters, cease your chanting: Tis time to mingle in the public prayers. Our hour is come; Let us go celebrate This glorious day, and, in our turn, appear Before the Lord. What do I see! my son! What is the cause that hastens your return? Where run you thus, all pale and out of breath? ZACHARIAH. O, my mother! JOSABET. Well! what! ZACHARIAH. The temple is profaned! JOSABET. How?— ZACHARIAH. And by the Lord the temple is abandoned. JOSABET. I tremble; hasten to enlighten me. ZACHARIAH. My sire, the high priest, having offered up, According to the law, the sacred bread Of the new harvest, to the God that fosters Mankind, appearing still with gory hands Fresh from the reeking entrails of the victim; Close to his side the young Eliacin Assisting, like myself, in linen vests; The priests, meanwhile, with sacrificial blood Besprinkling the assembly and the altar; A murmur indistinct arose; at once The astonished people turn aside their glance,— A woman—can I name her and not curse?— A woman—It was Athaliah's self! JOSABET. Heavens!

ZACHARIAH. In one of the church courts, reserved for men, This haughty woman enters, with proud mien, And even prepares to overpass the bounds Of the enclosure sacred, which alone Is open to the Levites. Terrified The people fled in every way. My father— Ah! what resentment kindled in his eye! Moses to Pharoah seemed less formidable: Queen! go! said he, and quit this awful place, From which thy sex and vices banish thee: Dost thou come here to brave the majesty Of the Eternal God? At which the queen, Casting on him infuriated glance, Her mouth was opening, doubtless, to blaspheme: I know not if the angel of the Heavens Appearing showed to her a flaming sword; But instantly her tongue and lips were frozen, And all her over-boldness was abashed; As if her eyes were awe-struck, they were fixed; And, above all, Eliacin appeared To amaze her. JOSABET. What! Has Eliacin been seen by her? ZACHARIAH. We both of us beheld that cruel queen, Who with an equal horror struck our hearts: But very soon the priests surrounded us— They caused us to withdraw. Of all the rest I'm ignorant, and I returned to tell You of this woeful uproar. JOSABET. She came, no doubt, to tear him from our arms; Her fury came to seek him at the altar! Perhaps, the object of so many tears Is at this moment—God, who seest my grief, Do Thou remember David! SALOMITH. What is the reason of your flooding tears? ZACHARIAH. Ah! Is Eliacin's life in danger? SALOMITH. Has he attracted Athaliah's rage? ZACHARIAH. What! does she fear a child without support, And fatherless? JOSABET. Ah! here she is. Come, let us go: we must Avoid her.

Scenes III and IV.

ATHALIAH, AGAR, ABNER, SUITE OF ATHALIAH. AGAR. Why, Madam, do you linger in this place? Here all the objects wound and anger you. Unto the priest, who dwells within it, leave This temple, flee this tumult, and go calm Your agitated spirit in your palace. ATHALIAH. No, no, I cannot: my perplexity And weakness

thou behold'st. Give my commands That Mathan instantly must hasten hither. Happy if I can find, by his assistance, The peace I seek—that's always shunning me! ATHALIAH, ABNER, SUITE OF ATHALIAH. ABNER. Your pardon, Madam, if I dare defend him: Joad's zeal should not have struck you with surprise: Such is the eternal order of the God We serve: His temple and His altar He, Himself, forbade to us; to Aaron's sons Alone, His sacrifices were committed; He marked the Levites' office and their place, And, above all, to their posterity forbade All intercourse with other gods. Indeed, both wife and mother of our kings, Are you in this respect a stranger to us? Do you not know our laws? Must I to-day— Here is your Mathan; I will take my leave. ATHALIAH. Abner, your presence here is requisite. No more of Joad's rash violence; of all That heap of superstition, which bars out All other nations from your sanctuary; A subject more momentous stirs my fears. I know, from infancy brought up to arms, That Abner has a noble heart; that he Can render, when necessity demands, His duty to his God, and what he owes Unto his queen. Remain.

Scene V.

ATHALIAH, MATHAN, ABNER, SUITE OF ATHALIAH. MATHAN. Great queen! is this a fitting place for you? What trouble agitates you—fear congeals? What do you come to seek amidst your foes? Dare you approach this temple of profaneness? Have you cast off that hatred so intense— ATHALIAH. List both of you attentively: I wish not here to call to mind the past, Nor render an account of blood that's flowed; I do not take a hasty crowd for judge; In what its violence has dared put forth, To justify me, heaven itself has cared. The great achievements of my rooted power Have made my name respected to both seas: By me Jerusalem's a calm profound; Jordan no longer sees the vagrant Arabs', Nor proud Philistines' constant ravages, Lay waste her banks, as in your sovereigns' times; The Syrian

treats me as a sister queen; At length the treacherous scourger of my house. ATHALIAH. Who was to drive his cruelty on me, Jehu, the haughty Jehu, in Samaria Is trembling; pressed by potent neighbours On every side, whom I have found the means To raise against that murderer; and I Am left the royal mistress of those lands; In peace the fruit of my sagacity Enjoying. But, some days ago, there came A sleepless trouble to arrest the course Of my prosperity. A dream (why should a dream Disquiet me?) feeds in my heart a pang That wrings it; everywhere I try to shun it; But everywhere it follows me. It was During the horror of the night profound, My mother, Jezebel, before me stood, Apparelled gorgeously, as on the day Of her decease; misfortunes had not crushed Her dignity; and even she had still That borrowed tint, with which it was her care To bloom and ornament her countenance, In order to repair the ravages Of years irreparable. 'Tremble, daughter, Thou worthy of myself,' to me she said; 'The cruel God of Judah over thee Will certainly prevail: I pity thee, My daughter, falling into His dread hands.' These fearful words completed, towards my bed Her shadow seemed to bend itself, and I Held out my arms in order to embrace it; But only found confusion horrible Of mangled bones and flesh dragged in the mud, And tatters soaked in gore, of hideous limbs, That dogs, devouring, fought for with each other. ABNER. Great God! ATHALIAH. In this disorder came before mine eyes A tender boy, in radiant robes arrayed, As one beholds the Hebrew priests attired. My sunken spirits rallied at the vision; But when recovering from my deadly trouble, His sweetness, noble air, and modesty I was admiring, all at once I felt A homicidal steel, plunged by the traitor Deep through my breast.—Of objects so diverse The strange assemblage, seems to you perhaps A work of chance; and I myself, at times, Shamed of my fears, have thought it but the effect Of sombre melancholy; but my soul, Possessed by this remembrance, in my sleep, Has twice beheld that spectre terrible: Twice my sad eyes have had upon them traced The picture of that boy always prepared To spring on me. At length, quite wearied out, With horrors that pursued me, unto Baal I went

to ask protection for my life, And at his altars look for some repose: What cannot terror do in mortal mind? An instinct forced me to the Jewish temple, And I conceived the thought to appease their God: Some offerings, I believed, would calm His rage, And make that God, whate'er He be, more gentle. Pontiff of Baal excuse my feebleness! I entered; but the sacrifices ceased, The people fled; the high-priest furiously Rushed towards me; whilst he spake, O terrible surprise! I saw that selfsame child, my menacer, Such as my frightful dream had fashioned him. I saw him; even his air, his linen garb, His gait, his eyes, his lineaments entire: It was himself. He walked beside the high-priest: But soon they caused him to avoid my sight. This is the trouble that arrests me here, And touching which I long to question both. Mathan, what does this prodigy forebode? MATHAN. This dream, and this resemblance seem to me Quite terrible. ATHALIAH. But, Abner, have you seen that fatal boy? What is he? Of what blood, and of what tribe? ABNER. Two children at the altar lend their service: The one is Joad's, his mother, Josabet; The other is unknown to me. MATHAN. But why Deliberate, Madam, must not both be seized? You know my moderation, and regard For Joad, and that I do not seek revenge For injuries; that equity alone In all my counsels is the ruling virtue. But after all, even were it his own child, Could he one moment let the culprit live? ABNER. What is the crime for which the boy is fitted? MATHAN. Heaven's shown him with a weapon in his hand. Heaven, just' and wise, does nothing fruitlessly. What do you seek for more? ABNER. But on the strength Of a mere dream urge you that we should plunge Our hands into the blood of blossoming youth? You know not yet his father, who he is. MATHAN. He stirs our fears; that comprehends the whole. If of illustrious parents he is born, The splendour of his lot must speed his doom. Should fate have ranked him in obscurity, What matters it if low-born blood be spilt? Does this slow justice appertain to kings? Their safety oft depends on prompt redress. Let us not pinch them with perplexing cares: Suspected ones are criminals to them. ABNER. Mathan, is this the language of a priest? I, trained to horrid carnage in the

field, The stern executor of royal vengeance, Must I to the unhappy lend my voice! And you, who owe to him a father's yearnings, You, minister of peace in time of wrath, Now, covering your resentment with false zeal, Are of opinion blood too lightly flows! You have commanded me to speak to you Without concealment, Madam: What is then This mighty cause of fear? A dream, a child Devoid of power, that your suspicious eye Thinks it has recognised, perhaps untruly.

ATHALIAH. I wish to think so, Abner, I may be Deluded; probably an empty dream Has too much occupied my spirit. Well, I must observe that child more narrowly; His features I must scan at leisure. Let Them both be brought before me. ABNER. I fear— ATHALIAH. What would they fail in courtesy to me? Of that strange non-compliance, what the cause? It might produce in me mistrustful thoughts. Let Josabet, or Joad, I tell you, bring them \ I can, when time requires, speak like a queen. Abner, to you I may indeed declare, Your priests have reason to be satisfied With Athaliah's kindness. Still I know That on my conduct and against my power How far they bear the license of their speech: They live, however, and their temple stands. But soon, I feel, my gentleness must end. Let Joad put bridle on his savage zeal, Nor wound me with a second outrage. Go.

Scene VI.

MATHAN. At length I have the liberty to speak; I can expose the truth to open day. Some monster's rising in that temple reared! Queen, do not wait the bursting of the cloud. Abner, attended by the high-priest Joad, Was there before the break of day: You know His passion for the offspring of their kings. And who can say that Joad does not intend, In place of them, to substitute the boy By which heaven threatens you. It may perchan Be his own son. ATHALIAH. Mine eyes are opened: I begin to see Clearly into the warnings of the heavens. I wish, however, to be free from doubt: A child is little fit to flourish thoughts, Yet one may make us judge of great designs.

I must, dear Mathan, see him—question him. But go yourself, without exciting fears, And cause my Tyrians to arm themselves.

Scene VII

JOAS, JOSABET, ATHALIAH, ZACHARIAH, ABNER, SALOMITH, TWO LEVITES, THE CHOIR, SUITE OF ATHALIAH. JOSABET (to the two Levites). You, servants of the Lord, upon those children So dear, so precious, keep a fixed regard. ABNER (to Josabet). Princess, have courage, they are in my care. ATHALIAH. O heaven! the more I look at him, the more I scrutinize—'Tis he! my faculties Again are seized with horror! Josabet Is that your son? JOSABET. Who, he, Madam? ATHALIAH. He. JOSABET. His mother I am not. This is my son. ATHALIAH (to Joas.) And you, my boy, who is your father then? Come child reply. JOSABET. Heaven till to-day— ATHALIAH. Why do you hurry to reply for him? JOSABET. From such a tender age can you expect Much information? ATHALIAH. That age is artless, its ingenuousness Does not as yet pervert the simple truth. Let him explain the whole concerning him. JOSABET. Great God, O place Thy wisdom in his mouth! ATHALIAH. What is your name? JOAS. Eliacin. ATHALIAH. Your Father? JOAS. They say I am an orphan, Cast from my birth into the arms of God, And who my parents were I never knew. ATHALIAH. Have you no parents? JOAS. They abandoned me. ATHALIAH. How? And how long ago? JOAS. At my birth. ATHALIAH. Do they, at least, not know your native country? JOAS. This temple is my country; none I know Besides— ATHALIAH. Where is it said that chance discovered you? JOAS. Among the cruel wolves, their helpless prey. ATHALIAH. Who placed you in this temple? JOAS. An unknown woman, never looked on since, Who did not say her name. ATHALIAH. But who took charge of your most early years? JOAS. Does God e'er let his children want in vain? He gives the smallest birds their nourishment, And over all His works extends His

goodness. Each day I call on Him. His care paternal Nourishes me with gifts presented at The altar. ATHALIAH. What strange event again perplexeth me? The sweetness of his voice, his youthful grace, Cause my aversion imperceptably To be succeeded—I could be inclined To pity. ABNER. Is this, then, Madam, that terrific foe '? The fraud of your false dreams is manifest: Unless 'tis sympathy that touches you, It is that fatal blow which makes you tremble. ATHALIAH (to Joas and Josabet). Are you going? JOSABET. His story you have heard: His further stay would be importunate. ATHALIAH. No, No, return. What do you every day? JOAS. Adore the Lord; they train me in His law, They teach me how to read His sacred book, And now I copy it with mine own hand. ATHALIAH. How does that law instruct you? JOAS. That love is what the Lord desires; that He Sooner or later will avenge His name, His holy name blasphemed; that He protects The timid orphan, that He breaks the proud, And punishes the murderer. ATHALIAH. I understand. But what do all the people Enclosed within that place? JOAS. They praise, and bless the Lord. ATHALIAH. And does He wish that one should always pray And meditate. JOAS. All deeds profane are banished from His temple. ATHALIAH. What are your pleasures, then? JOAS. Sometimes unto the high priest I present Either the salt or incense at the altar: I hear them sing of God's unbounded greatness, I see the sumptuous order of His rites. ATHALIAH. Alas! have you no pastimes more delightful? I pity the sad fate of one like you. Come to my palace, see my splendour there. JOAS. I! I should lose the memory of God's blessings! ATHALIAH. No. I would not constrain you to forget Him. JOAS. You do not pray to Him. ATHALIAH. But you can pray to Him. JOAS. But I should see another god invoked. ATHALIAH. I have my god to serve, and you have yours. They both are powerful gods. JOAS. Mine must be feared, for He alone is God, And yours is nothing, Madam. ATHALIAH. Pleasures, near me, will seek you out, in crowds. JOAS. The blessings of the wicked pass away, As doth a torrent ATHALIAH. The wicked! Who are they? JOSABET. Pray, Madam! excuse a child. ATHALIAH I like

to see how you are training him. At length, Eliacin, you have amused me; You're, doubtless, not an ordinary child. You see I am a queen, without an heir: Cast off these garments, quit this menial trade, And all my riches I will share with you. Try the conclusion of my promises: Beside me at my table, everywhere, I promise you shall sit as my own son. JOAS. As your own son? ATHALIAH. Yes, would it please you? JOAS. Ah what a father I should leave, and for— ATHALIAH. Well! JOAS. What kind of mother! ATHALIAH. His memory's faithful; and in all he says I recognise your animus and Joad's. Behold, how here, corrupting simple youth, You both employ the peace I leave you in! Their hate and fury you already foster: Only with horror you pronounce my name To them. JOSABET. Can we conceal the history of our wrongs? All know it, and you boast of it yourself. ATHALIAH. Yes, of my righteous rage, and I am proud To avenge my parents on posterity. My father and my brother saw I slaughtered; My mother from her palace window hurled; And even in one day murdered at once— Dread sight!—more than twice twenty sons of kings: And wherefore? To avenge some nameless prophets Whom she had punished for their senseless frenzy: And I, cold queen, and daughter without love, Slave of a cowardly and frivolous folly, Shall even not return to this blind rage Insult for insult, death for every death, And shall not treat all David's progeny As Ahab's wretched remnant were by them! Where should I be to-day, had I not had A tenderness for my torn, strangled mother; And, conquering my weakness, with my hand Shedding in torrents my own people's blood, Had not repressed your plots by that fierce blow! At length, the inflexible vengeance of your God, Betwixt our houses all alliance breaks: David of me's in horror; and his sons, Though of my blood, are strangers unto me. JOSABET. In all you have succeeded. Let God see And judge. ATHALIAH. That God, a long time past, your only refuge, Of what effect will be His prophecies? Let Him produce that King, told to the nations, That Son of David, your support, your hope— But we shall meet again. Adieu, I go, Quite satisfied. I wished to see: I have seen. ABNER (to Josabet). I promised you; and I return the charge That you

committed to me.

Scenes VIII and IX.

JOAD, JOSABET, JOAS, ZACHARIAH, ABNER, SALOMITH, LEVITES, AND THE CHOIR. JOSABET (to Joad). My lord, Did you o'erhear that haughty queen? JOAD. I heard the whole, and I bewailed your anguish. To lend you aid, these Levites and myself, Were close at hand, resolved to die with you. (To Joas.) May God watch over you whose courage, child, Has just returned this noble testimony Unto His name! I recognize, dear Abner, This important service: bear in mind The hour when Joad expects you. We, whose sight This inpious, murderous woman has defiled, Whose prayers has interrupted, will return: And let immaculate blood, shed by my hands, Cleanse to the marble what her steps have touched. THE CHORUS. One of the daughters of the Choir. What star has burst upon our sight? What will that marvellous child one day become? He braveth pompous haughtiness, And will not let himself be lured By any of her dangerous baits. Another. Whilst each to Athaliah's god With incense to the altar runs, A child unfearing publishes That God alone eternal is, And speaks as once Elijah spoke Before the other Jezebel. Another. Who will reveal to us thy secret birth Dear child? Art thou some holy prophet's son? Another. And thus the lovely Samuel was seen To grow beneath the tabernacle's shadow; Become the Hebrews' hope and oracle. May'st thou like him console our race! Another sings. O blessed, a thousand times, The child that loves the Lord, Who early hearkens to His voice, Whom God, Himself, doth deign to teach! Far from the world he, nurtured, is adorned By all heaven's blessings from his birth; And the contagious company of the bad Doth alter not his innocence. All the Choir. O happy, happy is the child That God instructs and vindicates! The same voice alone. So, in a secret vale upon the banks Of a pellucid stream, Beneath the shadow of an oak, A tender lily bloometh, nature's love. Far from the world arising, 'tis adorned With all

heaven's blessings from its birth; And the contagious company of the bad Doth alter not its innocence. All the Choir. O blest, a thousand times, the child That God doth render docile to His laws. One voice alone. My God, how can a growing virtue walk Amongst so many dangers with sure step % What obstacles are found to his designs Who seeketh Thee, and wisheth innocence What enemies make war on him! Where can Thy saints conceal themselves? The evil-doers overspread the earth. Another. O David's palace, and his cherished city, Famed mount, where even God a long time dwelt, Why hast thou from the heavens drawn down His wrath? Sion, dear Sion, what sayest thou, When thou, alas! beholdst upon the throne Of thine own kings, an impious stranger sat? All the Choir. Sion, dear Sion, what sayest thou, When thou, alas! beholdst upon the throne Of thine own kings, an impious stranger sat! The same voice continues. Instead of David's pleasing strains, In which he poured his holy raptures, And blessed his God, his Father and his Lord: Sion, dear Sion, what sayest thou, When thou dost hear them laud the strangers' god, And curse the name thy princes have adored? One voice alone. How long, O Lord, and yet again how long Shall we behold the wicked rise 'gainst Thee? They come into Thy temple braving Thee: The people who adore Thee, treat as frenzied. How long, O Lord, and yet again How long Shall we behold the wicked rise 'gainst Thee? Another. Wherefore, say they, this sombre piety? Why flee the use of many joys so sweet? Your God does naught for you. Another. Come laugh and sing, exclaims this impious band; From flower to flower, from sweet to sweet, Let us give air to our desires, In the insensate future who confides? Doubtful the number of our fleeting years: Then let us haste to-day to relish life; Who knows if we shall be to-morrow? All the Choir. O let them weep, my God, and groan for fear, The miserable, who will not see The eternal splendour of Thy holy city. But we must chant, to whom Thou dost reveal Thy everlasting light; Of all Thy gifts and grandeur we must sing. One voice alone. What will remain of all their empty pleasures In which their soul is sunk? I' the dregs of dreams Whose error's recognized. At their awaking—awaking

full of horror!— Whilst at the table the just poor will taste The sweets of peace unspeakable, The hideous cup exhaustless they will drink, Which in the day of wrath thou wilt present To all the guilty race. All the Choir. O waking full of horror! O fleeting dream! O dangerous error! END OF THE SECOND ACT.

ACT III.—Scenes I. and II

MATHAN, NABAL, THE CHOIR. MATHAN. Young daughters, go, and say to Josabet That Mathan waits to speak to her in private. One of the daughters of the Choir. Mathan! O God of heaven do thou confound him. NABAL. How now? all flee, disperse without reply! MATHAN. Let us approach. ZACHARIAH, MATHAN, NABAL. ZACHARIAH. Audacious! Whither would you go? Forbear Beyond this place to make advance: it is The holy minister's divine abode. To all profane the law forbids the entrance. Of whom are you in search? My mother shuns, Upon this solemn day, the guilty sight Of foul idolatry; and prostrate now Before the Lord, would shrink from being disturbed. MATHAN. My son, her time is ours; be not alarmed; I wish to speak to your illustrious mother. I come here charged with orders from the queen.

Scene III.

MATHAN, NABAL. NABAL. The children have already their fierce pride. But what doth Athaliah seek in this? What is this tumult born of in her councils? By overbearing Joad this morn offended, And in her dreams braved by a murderous child, She went to sacrifice the high-priest Joad Unto her wrath, and in the end to place Within that temple Baal and you. You had To me already testified your joy; I hoped, on my part, for so rich a prey. What changes thus her vacillating vows? MATHAN. I have not known her, friend, for two days past. No more the queen of an enlightened spirit, Intrepid, raised beyond her timid sex, Who crushed, at first,

her wondering enemies, And knew the value of occasion lost: The pangs of vain remorse whelm this great soul: She wavers, hesitates, is in a word, A woman. I, her heart, already wrung With threats from heaven, had filled with bitterness And rancour; she, confiding to my care Her vengeance, had commanded me to bring At once her guards together: but, indeed, Whether that brat before her brought, and said To be an outcast from his parents, had Diminished the alarm of frightful dreams, Or she had seen in him some unknown charm, I found her anger reeling, undecided: She now puts off her vengeance till to-morrow. Her projects all appear to slay each other. "Some knowledge I have gained of this boy's fate," So did I say; "now of his ancestry They have begun to boast: from time to time Joad shows him to the factious, holds him up, As if another Moses, to the Jews, And lying oracles support his speech." These words did cause the blood to mount her brow: Ne'er lucky fable had such prompt effect. "Must I drag on in this uncertainty? Let us escape," said she, "this restlessness. To Josabet declare you this resolve— 'The fires are kindling, and the sword prepared, Nothing can save your temple from destruction, If hostage for your faith that child's not given.'" NABAL. Why for a boy of whom they're ignorant, That chance, perhaps, has cast into their arms, Will they behold their temple tombed in weeds? MATHAN. Ah! of all mortals known, the haughtiest! Sooner than yield a child into our hands, That Joad has consecrated to his God, He would endure the most terrific death. Besides 'tis plainly seen they love the child. If, from the queen, I heard a true report, Joad of his birth knows more than he imparts. However fatal it may be for them, I can foresee they will not give him up. On me the rest remains; and in the end I hope that fire and sword will free my eyes Of that obnoxious temple! NABAL. What can inspire in you so fierce a hate? Is it your zeal for Baal inflames you thus? As for myself, you know of Ishmael blood, I neither worship Baal nor Israel's God. MATHAN. Friend, canst thou think that I allow myself To be made blind by an unworthy zeal For a vain idol, fragile form of wood, Which, notwithstanding my support, the worms Upon its altar every day consume? Born

servant of the God that temple loves, It might be Mathan would adore Him still, If lust of greatness, thirst for dominance, Could be accommodated to His yoke. Nabal, what need repicture to thy mind The noted quarrel of myself and Joad. When I 'gainst him the censor dared dispute, My factions, struggles, waitings, my despair? Vanquished by him I chose a new career, And wed my soul entirely to the court. I by degrees approached their royal honours, And soon my voice was made an oracle. I probed their heart, and flattered their caprice; Bestrewed with flowers the precipice's brink; Serving their passions, naught to me was sacred; Measure and weight I changed as they inclined. As much as Joad's unpliant humour pained The softness of their supercilious ear, So much I pleased them with my dexterous art; Concealing from their eyes the bitter truth; Lending convenient colour to their rage; And, lavish, above all, of wretches' blood. At length, to Baal, whom she had introduced, By Athaliah was a temple reared. Jerusalem did weep to see herself Profaned: The alarmed band of Levi's race Did elevate to heaven appalling cries. Giving example to the timid Jews. Deserter from their law, myself approved The enterprise, and merited by that Baal's priesthood: and I made myself withal A terror to my rival; I put on The turban—walked his equal. Ne'ertheless I must avow, that in that glorious height The troublesome memory of the God I left Still throws into my soul a shade of dread: Tis that which strengthens and supports my fury. Happy, if on the temple my revenge Accomplishing, I can at length content Her petty spite, and lose amongst the wreck The ravage and the slaughter, my remorse, By dint of those enormities. But here Is Josabet.

Scene IV.

JOSABET, MATHAN, NABAL. MATHAN. Commissioned by the queen To calm again, and dissipate the anger, Princess, in which heaven placed so sweet a soul, Be not surprised at my addressing you. A rumour, which however I suspect To be a

fable, favouring the warnings, Which in a dream she had received, on Joad, Accused of dangerous complots, she was going To pour the floodgates of her wrath. I wish Not here to boast of services to you— I know of Joad's injustice to myself— But for offence I must return good deeds. At length, I come to speak the words of peace. Live, solemnize your feasts without distrust, She only claims a pledge of your submission: It is—I did my utmost to dissuade her— The orphan whom she says that she has seen. JOSABET. Eliacin? MATHAN. I am ashamed of her on that account: Of a vain dream she makes too much ado: But you declare yourselves her mortal foes, If not that child's resigned to me at once: The queen impatiently 'waits your reply. JOSABET. And that on her part is the peace announced. MATHAN. Can you one moment hesitate to grant it? Or is that courtesy too dear for peace? JOSABET. Could Mathan, I was wondering, stript of guile, Have overcome the injustice of his heart; And, fatal plotter of so many ills, Could he be author of a shade of good. MATHAN. Of what do you complain? Come I enraged To tear from you your offspring, Zachariah? What is this other child you love so well? In turn, this great affection marvels me. Is he to you a pearl so precious, rare? Is he a liberator trained by Heaven? Remember, your refusal would confirm A faint report that's just begun to spread. JOSABET. What report I MATHAN. That of illustrious origin's the child, Destined to some great project by your spouse. JOSABET. And by that tale, which flatters Mathan's fury— MATHAN. Princess, to think me false belongs to you. Yet still I deem that Josabet, the foe Implacable of falsehood, would resign Her own life even, were it requisite, Rather than life of insincerity Be purchased by the slightest word untrue. Then of that child's descent there is no trace? Darkness profound surrounds his origin! You know not of what parents he was born? From whose hands Joad received him to his arms? Pray speak, I listen ready to believe. Princess, unto the God you serve give glory! JOSABET. Base one, is't well you thus dare speak the name Of God, whom your own tongue bids men to curse! Could His veracity be vouched by you, You, wretched, sat upon the noxious

bench Where poison's scattered, falsehood hath the sway; You, nurtured in deceit and treachery?

Scene V.

JOAD, JOSABET, MATHAN, NABAL. JOAD. Where am I? Am I looking at Baal's priest? What, David's daughter speaking to that traitor? And will you tolerate his speech with you? Do you not fear that a profound abyss Will yawning open underneath his feet, So that its flames at once will compass you? Or that these walls will crush you fallen on him? What wants he? Wherefore comes, this enemy Of God, to taint the air we here inhale? MATHAN. This violence gives evidence of Joad. Yet he would show more prudence to respect His sovereign, and not outrage one that she Has deigned to charge with her commands. JOAD. Well, what's the ill she bids you to announce, What frightful charge may such an agent bear? MATHAN. To Josabet I have made known her will. JOAD. Then quit me, monster of iniquity, Go fill thy measure of all horrid things. God rules to join thee with the perjured race, Achitophel, Abiron, Doeg, Dathan t The dogs which tore the limbs of Jezebel, Waiting to show their fury upon thee, Already, at thy gates, demand their prey. mathan (agitated). Before this day expires—it will be seen Which of us—— He shall be forced— (To Nabal.) But, Nabal, let us go. NABAL. Where wander you? What wildering chaos is The master of your senses? That's your way.

Scene VI.

JOAD, JOSABET. JOSABET. The storm has burst! The queen, enraged, demands Eliacin. Already of his birth, and your designs They have begun to pierce the mystery: Mathan but failed to name to me his father. JOAD. To the perfidious Mathan who has told it? Has not your agitation said too much? JOSABET. I did whate'er I could to curb myself. Howe'er, believe me, peril presses, Sir; For happier

times let us reserve that child. Whilst wicked ones deliberate with each other, Before he is surrounded, torn from us, Allow me to conceal him once again; To him are open yet the doors, the gates. Shall we convey him to the wildest desert? I am prepared, I know a secret way, By which myself and he, still unperceived, The torrents of the Cedron passing over, May go into the desert, where in tears, And seeking safety, like ourselves, in flight, David escaped his rebel son's pursuit. I shall, on his account, fear wild beasts less;— But why do you not favour Jehu's aid? Perhaps good counsel I may offer you; Let us make Jehu guardian of this treasure, We could to-day conduct him to his kingdom, For short the road is leading to his court. Jehu has not a wild, relentless heart; The name of David's honoured in his eyes. Alas! is he a king so callous, cruel, Unless his mother was a Jezebel, That he would not commiserate the fate Of such a suppliant? Is not his cause The common one of kings? JOAD. Dare you propose to me such timid counsels? What can you hope in Jehu's countenance? JOSABET. Does God forbid all care and all prevision? Will not an over-confidence offend Him? Employing human means to sacred ends, Has He Himself not Jehu's arm equipt? JOAD. Jehu, on whom I see your hopes are built, Paying His gifts with thankless thoughtlessness, Jehu in peace leaves Ahab's hideous daughter; Following the course profane of Israel's kings, Of Egypt's worthless god he saves the temples; Jehu, at length, dares offer on the heights An incense rash which God can not allow: His heart's not just enough, nor pure his hands, To serve His cause—to avenge His injuries. No, No, 'tis God alone we must engage. Far from concealing, let us show the boy, And let the diadem surround his head: I even will urge on the expected hour, Before vile Mathan's complots can be formed.

Scene VII

JOAD, JOSABET, AZARIAH, THE CHOIR, AND SEVERAL LEVITES. JOAD.

Well, Azariah, is the temple closed? AZARIAH. The gates have all been made before my eyes JOAD. Your saintly troops and you alone remain? AZARIAH. Twice I have walked around the sacred courts, And all are fled; dispersed without return, Scattered in fear—a miserable crew! God by His holy tribe's no longer served:— E'er since that people Pharoah's steps escaped, An equal panic has not seized on them. JOAD. A people in performance loose, and born For slavery—bold against God alone! Let us pursue our work. But who retains These children, even in our midst? One of the daughters of the choir Alas, could we, sire, part ourselves from you? In the Lord's temple are we aliens? Around you are our fathers and our sires. Another. Ha! if to avenge the shame of Israel Our hands may not as Jael's, formerly, Have power to pierce God's impious enemies' head, Yet we at least may give our lives to Him. Whilst you are fighting for His temple stormed, We may, at least, invoke Him with our tears. JOAD. Eternal Wisdom, in Thy quarrel armed Here, then, are Thine avengers—priests and children! But Thou sustaining, who can cast us down? From death Thou canst recall us when Thou wilt! Thou strikest and Thou healest, Thou destroyest And Thou resuscitatest. We rely Not on our own deserts, but on Thy name, Invoked so frequently, and on Thy oath Sworn to the most devout of all our kings, Within this temple made Thy holy dwelling, And which the sun's duration is to last. But whence this sacred thrilling of my soul? Am I transported by the Holy Spirit? It is so: it inflames me: speaks to me: My eyes are opened, and the times obscure Unveil themselves before me! Levites, lend Your harmony of sounds, and by their swell Support my ecstacy! The Choir sing to the sound of every symphony of the instruments. O let the voice of God be heard, And to our hearts, His oracle divine, Be as the freshness of the morn Is to the tender grass in spring. JOAD. Heaven, hear my voice. Earth, lend thine ear. No more, O Jacob, say thy God doth slumber, O sinners disappear; the Lord's awake. Here the symphonies are resumed, and Joad instantly continues. How into worthless lead pure gold is changed! Who is that priest slain in the holy place? Weep, weep Jerusalem,

perfidious city, Wretched destroyer of the sacred seers; God of His love for thee divests Himself; Thy incense in His eyes is incense foul. Where do you take those children and those wives? The queen of cities God has overthrown: Her priests are captives, and her kings disowned. Temple be overthrown! Cedars cast your flames! Jerusalem, thou object of my grief, Who in one day has ravished all thy charms? O who will change, to weep thy miseries, Mine eyes to two fountains of tears? AZARIAH. O holy temple! JOSABET. O David! THE CHOIR. Restore, O God of Sion, O restore, Thy ancient benefactions in her favour. The symphonies resume, and immediately after Joad continues. What new Jerusalem arises from The desert's depths in dazzling splendour, And bears upon her brow a stamp immortal? JOAD. Sing, people of the earth, Jerusalem reborn more grand and beautiful! Whence on all sides repair to her The progeny not fostered in her bosom? Lift high, Jerusalem, lift high thy head! Look on those monarchs of thy marvellous glory: The kings of nations are before thee prostrate, Kissing the dust of thy feet: The people in thy light walk emulous. Blest, who for Sion with a holy fervour Doth feel his soul expanded! Heavens scatter your dew, and let the earth Bring forth its Saviour! JOSABET. Alas! from whence this signal benefaction? If kings from whom Messiah's to descend— JOAD. Let Josabet prepare the diadem Which David's self bore on his sacred brow. (To the Levites.) And you, attend me to the place to arm Yourselves, where is concealed from strangers' eyes That formidable heap of swords and lances, Which ever in Philistine's blood were drenched; And which triumphant David, full of years And honours, caused to be unto the God That had protected him made consecrate. Could we employ them in a nobler cause % Follow, I will myself distribute them.

Scene VIII.

SALOMITH, THE CHOIR. SALOMITH. What fears my sisters, O what mortal

broils! All powerful God, are these the sacrifices, The first-fruits and the perfumes we This day should offer at Thy altars? One of the daughters of the Choir. What spectacle unto our timid eyes! Who could have feared we ever should behold The murderous sword, the homicidal lance Flashing within the house of peace? Another. Whence comes it that Jerusalem, Full of indifference to her God, Is silent in her present danger? Whence comes it, sisters, that for our protection Brave Abner, at the least, speaks not aloud? SALOMITH. Ah! in a court, in which prevails No other law than force and violence; In which its honours and employments are The price of blind and base obedience, Who will desire, my sister, to lift up His voice for sorrowing innocence? Another. For whom's that sacred diadem prepared In this confusion—peril violent? SALOMITH. The Lord has deigned to speak; But who can make us understand What to his prophet He has now revealed? Arms He Himself in our defence? Or does He arm to overwhelm us? All the choir sing, O promise! threatening! mysterious gloom! What evil and what good by turns foretold! How can we reconcile So much of wrath and love? One voice alone. Sion will be no more; a cruel flame Will burn up all her excellence. Another voice. O God, shield Sion; Thy eternal word She holds for her foundations. The first How all her splendour fades before my eyes. The second. I see on every side her glory radiant The first. Sion is sunk to a profound abyss. The second. Sion, whose brow is in the heavens. The first What sorrowful abasement! The second. What immortal glory! The first What wailings! The second. What songs of victory! A third. Let us cease from troubling; our God one day Will reconcile this mystery sublime! All three. Let us revere His anger; trust His love. Another. God! of a heart that loveth Thee Who can disturb the peace? Itself forgetting ever, It seeks, in all, Thy will supreme. On earth—in heaven even can there bloom Another blessing than the tranquil peace Of a heart that loveth Thee? END OF THE THIRD ACT.

ACT IV.—Scenes I and II

JOAS, JOSABET, ZACHARIAH, SALOMITH, A LEVITE, THE CHOIR. SALOMITH. With a majestic step, beside my mother, Near Zachariah, walks Eliacin. What hide they, sisters, underneath their cloaks? In short, what is that sword that's borne before them? JOSABET (to Zachariah). Place on that table, reverentially, The book redoubted of our holy law: And also you, my loved Eliacin, This diadem place near the book divine. Levites we must have there, Joad orders it, The sword of David close beside the crown. JOAS. Princess, what then is this strange spectacle? This sacred book, this diadem, this sword? I ne'er have seen example of like form, Since in His temple God accepted me. JOSABET. Soon all your doubts, my son, will be dispelled. JOAS. Why will you fit this diadem on my brow? Ah, princess! keep its glory unprofaned! Respect the memory of the king who wore it. A wretched child abandoned to the bears— JOSABET (tries on the diadem). Allow me, son, I do what I am ordered. JOAS. But from your lips I hear your sobs arise! Princess, you weep, What pity touches you? To-day presented as burnt offering Am I, as formerly was Jeptha's daughter, By my own death to appease the wrath of God? Alas! a child has nought a father may Not claim. JOSABET. Here's one will tell you of the will of Heaven; Fear nothing. Let us leave these precincts. JOAD, JOAS. (Joas running into the arms of the high-priest.)

JOAD. Well, my son? JOAS. What is it, pray, that they prepare? JOAD. 'Tis right my son I should inform you, even before all, Of God's great ends o'er you and o'er His people. Be armed with new fidelity and zeal! 'Tis time to show this ardour and this faith, Which to the bottom of your heart my cares Have cultivated; and to pay to God The debt you owe Him. Do you feel this noble And generous aspiration? JOAS. I feel prepared, if wished, to give my life. JOAD. You've oft heard read the history of our kings: My son, do you remember what strict law Must be imposed on him who takes the crown? JOAS. Thus God Himself declares that a wise king Does not rely on riches and on gold; But fears the Lord his God; and ever hath Before him His stern judgments, precepts, laws, And crusheth not his brethren with oppression.

JOAD. But of our kings, if you must copy one, Which, from your choice, my son, would you be like? JOAS. David, who full of loyal love to God, Appears the type most perfect of great kings. JOAD. Then, in their riot, you'd not imitate The faithless Joram, godless Ochoziah? JOAS. O my father! JOAD. Continue, say what you think. JOAS. Whoe'er resembles, may he die like them. (Joad prostrates himself at his feet). My father, in what state are you before me? JOAD. I render you the homage of my king. JOAS. Joas! me? JOAD. You know the signal grace by which God, foiling the designs of a bad woman, Already with her dagger in your breast, He chose, and saved you from amid the carnage. You have not yet eluded all her madness: With the same passion she has ever hungered To lose in you the last child of her son, Her cruelty is fixed to reach your death; Under your name assumed, she hunts you still. But 'neath your standard I have now arranged A people prompt to vengeance and obedience. Come, generous chiefs of sacred families, By turns be honoured by the holy priest.

Scene III.

JOAS, JOAD, AZARIAH, ISHMAEL, THREE OTHER LEVITE CHIEFS. JOAD. King, here are the avengers on your foes. Priests, here's the king that I have promised you. AZARIAH. What, is't Eliacin? ISHMAEL. What! that amiable child— JOAD. Is true inheritor of Judah's throne, Last born of tristful Ochoziah's children, Reared up, you know it, by the name of Joas. All Israel wept like you the destiny Of this sweet flower, cut down so soon, and thought That with his brother he was wrapt in death. Attacked with the perfidious steel like them: But God knowing how to turn aside the blow, Kept in his heart the life-warmth near extinct, Allowing Josabet to carry him All bleeding in her bosom, and avoid The assassin's vigilance. She having none Except myself the accomplice of her theft, Concealed the child, and reared him in the temple. JOAS. Alas! for so much love, so many blessings,

Father, how shall I e'er acquit myself? JOAD. For other times reserve this gratitude. Here then behold your king, your only hope! Till now my care has treasured him for you; You, servants of the Lord, must bear it out. Informed that Ochoziah's son still lives, The murderess, Athaliah, soon will rush, To hurry him again into the tomb. Already, without knowing him, she pants To ruin sacred ministers 'tis yours To anticipate her fury; now 'tis time To end the shameful slavery of the Jews, To avenge our princes' deaths, exalt our laws, And make our king be owned by our two tribes. The enterprize is great and dangerous; Attacking on her throne a haughty queen, Who sees a numerous camp of hardy strangers And traitorous Hebrews march beneath her standards! But God's my strength, whose interest guideth me. Think that all Israel lives within this child! Already God the avenger troubles her. Eluding whom, I have assembled you; She deems us armless here, without defence. Let us crown quickly and proclaim Joas king: Then, fearless soldiers of the new crowned prince, March and invoke the Arbiter of battles; And rousing in the people's hearts their faith, Even in her palace, seek our enemy. Then those so long in lazy slumber sunk, Beholding us advance in saintly garbs, Will haste with zeal to follow our example! A king whom in His temple God has nourished: Aaron's successor, followed by his priests, Leading the house of Levi to the combat; And in these hands, by all tribes venerated, The arms of David consecrate to God! The Lord will scatter terror on His foes. Bathe without fear in unbelievers' blood! Strike Syrian, and even Israelite! From those famed Levites do you not descend, Who, when to Nilus' god inconstant Israel Paid in the desert adoration vile, The saintly homicides of their own house, Did dedicate their hands in treacherous blood, And by that awful deed acquired for you The rank of sole presiders at the altar? But now I see you burn to follow me! Swear on this sacred volume, then, Yore all To live, to combat, and to die for him, The king, whom heaven presenteth you to-day. AZARIAH (at the end of the table, laying his hand the sacred book), Yes, swear we, for our brothers and ourselves, To establish Joas upon his father's throne; That we again will not lay

down our arms Until avenged upon his enemies: If any' violator break this vow, O may he feel, great God, Thy vengeful wrath! And may with him his children be debarred Thy heritage, as those Thou knowest no more! JOAD. And to this law, your ever present guide, Will you not, king, swear always to be true? JOAS. Can I not to that law conform myself? JOAD. Allow, my son—I still dare call you so— This tenderness, and tolerate the tears Drawn from my eyes for you with just alarms. Alas! far from the throne instructed, you Are ignorant of the enpoisoned cup; The drunkenness of unrestricted power; The voice of the enchantress flattery. Soon will they tell you that the sacred laws, Which sway the common people, bow to kings; That his own will's the sovereign's sole restraint; That all to his supreme magnificence Is to be sacrificed; that unto tears And toils his subjects are condemned; and that They must be governed by an iron sway; Who soon or late, if not subdued, subdue. And thus from snare to snare, and gulf to gulf, Fouling the lovely chasteness of your morals, At length they bring you to despise the truth By painting virtue in a frightful form; Alas! they have misled the kings most wise! Swear on this book, before these witnesses, That God shall always be your first of cares; Stern to the wicked, refuge of the good: That 'twixt the poor and you the Lord shall judge. Remember you, my son, that in this dress, Like them you were an orphan, like them, poor. JOAS (at the middle of the table, having his hand the sacred book,) I promise to obey the law ordained; God punish me if I abandon you. JOAD. Come, and anoint him with the holy oil; Josabet, appear: you now may show yourself.

Scenes IV. and V.

JOAS, JOAD, JOSABET, ZACHARIAH, SALOMITH, AZARIAH, ISHMAEL, THREE OTHER LEVITE CHIEFS, THE CHOIR. JOSABET (embracing Joas). O king, offspring of David! JOAS. My only mother! Come, dear Zachariah, Embrace

me. JOSABET (to Zachariah). My son, prostrate yourself before your king. JOAD (whilst they embrace.) Children, may thus your hearts be always one. JOSABET (to Joas). You know then to what source you owe your life? JOAS. And also know the hand, which, but for you, Had robbed me of it. JOSABET. I then can call you by your own name, Joas. JOAS. Joas will never cease to love you. THE CHOIR. What! is it— JOSABET. It is Joas. JOAD. Let us hear that Levite.

Scene VI.

JOAS, JOAD, JOSABET, ZACHARIAH, SALOMITH, AZARIAH, ISHMAEL, THREE OTHER LEVITE CHIEFS, A LEVITE, THE CHOIR. A LEVITE. I know not what design they have 'gainst God; But threatening boldness growls on every side: Amidst their standards they have lighted fires, And doubtless Athaliah joins her forces; Already every path for succour's closed: The sacred mount on which the temple's reared Is quite infested with fierce Tynans; Blaspheming, one of them came forth and said, "Your Abner is in chains, and cannot aid you." JOSABET (to Joas) Dear child, whom Heaven in vain reserved for me, I've done whate'er I could to rescue you: But God no longer knows your father, David. JOAD (to Josabet). What! fear you not to draw His wrath on you, And on this king so dear unto your love? Though God should tear him from your arms for ever, And will that David's house should be extinct, Are you not here upon the holy mount, Where 'gainst his innocent son the Jewish sire, Raised, without murmur, his obedient arm; And, as burnt-offering, on the altar placed The finit of his old age, leaving with God The oversight of bearing out His promise, And yielded up to Him, with his loved son, His house's hope, contained in him alone? Friends let us go. Let Ishmael to his charge, Take all the side that looks unto the east; You take the northern portion, you the west, And you the centre. Let not too much zeal, Betraying my designs, cause priest or Levite To quit his place, and charge before the time; And, finally, let all

impelled as one Keep to the death the post I have assigned them. The foe beholding us in his blind rage, As a vile herd reserved for massacre, Thinks but to meet disorder and dismay. You, Azariah, keep beside the king. (To Joas.) Come, you dear scion of a valiant race, With a new courage fill your champions; Assume the diadem before their eyes, And fall as king, at least, if fall you must. (To a Levite.) Follow him, Josabet. Give me those arms. (To the Choir.) Children, to God present your innocent tears.

Scene VII.

The Choir sing. Children of Aaron, go—depart; In never more illustrious cause Battled the zeal of your progenitors. Children of Aaron, go—depart; It is your king, your God, for whom ye fight. One voice alone. Where are those thunderbolts Thou launchest, Great God, in Thy just wrath? Art Thou no more the jealous God? Art Thou no longer the avenger? Another, Where, God of Jacob, are Thy former favours? Amid the horrors, that encompass us, Hearest Thou alone the voice Of our iniquities? Art Thou no longer the forgiving God? The Choir. Where, God of Jacob, are Thy former favours? One voice alone. It is against Thyself that in this strife The armies of the wicked aim assault. Come let us cause to cease, say they, God's festivals upon the earth; And from His tiresome yoke deliver man: Let all His saints be slaughtered; His altars overthrown; That of His name and glory No memory may be left; That neither He, nor Christ may reign o'er us. The Choir. Where are the thunderbolts Thou launchest, Great God, in Thy just wrath? Art Thou no more the jealous God? Art Thou no longer the avenger? One voice alone. Sad remnant of our kings, Dear and last bloom of such a beauteous stem, Ah! 'neath the dagger of a cruel dam Shall we, a second time, behold thee fall? Say, did an angel at thy cradle side, Beloved prince! against thy murderers Defend thee with his care; Or in the darkness of the tomb Did God re-animate thy ashes? Another. Dost Thou, great God,

impute the guilty deeds Of father and grandfather unto him? Abandon him without relenting pity? The Choir. Where, God of Jacob, are Thy former favours? Art Thou no longer the forgiving God? One of the daughters of the Choir (speaking). Dear sisters, hear you not the sound Of the fierce Tyrians' trumpet? SALOMITH. I even hear the barbarous soldiers' cries, And I shiver with horror. Come, let us fly to our refuge Under the sanctuary's shadow.

ACT V.—Scene I.

ZACHARIAH, SALOMITH, THE CHOIR. SALOMITH. Dear Zachariah, well! what have you learnt? ZACHARIAH. Redouble to the Lord your fervent prayers: Perhaps we are approaching our last hour; The order's given for the horrid conflict. SALOMITH. What is Joas doing? ZACHARIAH. He has just been crowned: On him the high-priest's poured the holy oil. O heaven, what joy was seen in every eye, Beholding him, the ransomed from the tomb! My sisters, still is seen the dagger's scar. Also his faithful nurse appeared to us, Who guarding that dear charge has had no eye To note her cares but God's and Josabet's. Our Levites wept with joy and tenderness,% And mixed their sobs with shouts of ecstacy. He, midst those transports, courteous, without pride, To one his hand, to others gave his look, And swore to govern by their frank advice, Naming them all his brothers or his sires. SALOMITH. Think you this secret's spread beyond these walls? ZACHARIAH. This secret to the temple's still confined; The band of Levi's race, distributed, Have placed themselves all silent at the doors; All are to rush together on the foe, And for the signal cry, "Long live King Joas!" My father wills that Zachariah guard The king, forbidden to expose himself. Meanwhile the queen, with poniard in her hand, Laughs at the feeble check of our brass gates. To crush them she attends the fatal engines, Breathing, in short, but blood and devastation. Some priests, my sister, at the first proposed, That in a secret cave, our fathers' dug, The precious ark at least

should be concealed. "O base insulting fear my father cried, The ark which caused so many gorgeous towers To fall, and forced the Jordan's backward course; So many times triumphant o'er the gods Of nations, must it flee at the approach Of insolent woman?" My mother, near The king, in deadly trouble, now her eye Being on the altar, and now turned on him, Silent, and sinking 'neath the weight of dread, Would have extorted tears from eyes of brass. The king from time to time embracing her Consoled her: then she said, "my sisters dear, All follow me, and if our king to-day Must perish, let one fate unite ourselves With him." SALOMITH. What rugged hand knocks with repeated blows? Why those disordered Levites put to flight? And what precaution makes them hide their arms? Is the temple stormed? ZACHARIAH. Disperse your fears, God sends us Abner.

Scene II.

ABNER, JOAD, JOSABET, ZACHARIAH, SALOMITH, TWO LEVITES, THE CHOIR. JOAD. Must I believe my eyes, Dear Abner? By what way have you been here Conducted, through a camp besieging us? 'Twas said that Ahab's sacrilegious daughter Had loaded with vile chains your generous hands. ABNER. Yes, sire, she feared my fortitude and zeal. Confining me's the least part of her rage; In horrid dungeon by her orders buried, I was expecting that the temple burnt To ashes, and not satiated yet, With many floods of slaughter, she would come, And rid me of a troublesome life, cut short The days which would a thousand times have swelled The grief of being survivor of my kings. JOAD. What miracle has brought about your pardon? ABNER. God only knows what passes in her heart. She sent for me, and with distracted air Said, "see those soldiers quite surround that temple, A vengeful fire's about to make it ashes; Thy God 'gainst mine can not defend Himself. Howe'er His priests—but they must make quick haste, On two conditions may redeem their lives— That in my power Eliacin be given, With treasures which I

know are known to them, Amassed by David, formerly your king, Intrusted to the high-priest's secret care. Go tell them at that price that they may live." JOAD. What counsel, Abner, think you we should follow? ABNER. If, in effect, 'tis true that all the gold Of David's secret treasure you preserve, And from the hands of that rapacious queen You may thereby save all that's rich and rare, Why, yield it up. Would you that foul assassins Come break the altar, burn the cherubim, And laying on our ark a violent hand, With your own blood pollute the sanctuary? JOAD. Would it become us, Abner, from kind hearts, To give to torture an unfortunate child, Whom God Himself confided to my care; And at his life's expense redeem our own? ABNER. Alas! God sees my heart. O that our God Would make the queen forget an innocent child, And that the blood of Abner would content Her cruelty, and that my death would calm The heavens that torture her! But what avails Your useless tenderness? If you all perish, Is death the less to him? And does our God Bid you to dare impossibilities? Submitting to a heartless tyrant's law, Moses, left by his mother at the Nile, Was seen almost at birth condemned to fall: But God, preserving him beyond all hope, Made e'en the tyrant tend, his infancy. Who knows God's will towards our Eliacin? And, if preparing him like destiny, He has not, the fierce murderess of our kings, Already made susceptible of pity? At least, short time ago, I saw his aspect Move her (which Josabet observed as well), I saw the tempest of her fury fall. (To Josabet.), Princess! can you be silent in this peril? What, for a boy, who is a stranger to you, Will you allow that Joad shall fruitlessly Leave you, his son, and people to be slaughtered? And that the fire devour the very place Upon the earth where God would be adored? Why, were that tender boy a precious relic Of your ancestral kings, could you do more? JOSABET (aside, to Joad). O wherefore do you not speak out, you see His tenderness for Israel's kings? JOAD. Princess 'tis not yet time. ABNER. The time's more precious, sire, than you suppose. Whilst hesitating here to answer me, Mathan, beside the queen, indignant flaming, Demands the signal, panting for the carnage. Must I entreat you at your sacred feet,

By the place saintly, closed to all but you, Dread place, where dwells the majesty of God? However hard the task on you imposed, We must but think of warding off the blow. O give me only time to breathe—to-morrow, This very night, I will arrange the means To save the temple and avenge its wrongs. But ah! I see my tears and vain discourse Are arguments too frail to change your mind: Your austere virtue will not be subdued. Well! bring me then my armour, and a sword, That at the portals of the temple, where The foe awaits me, Abner, at the least, May die in combat JOAD. I yield. You give advice which I embrace: Let us avert so many threatening ills. 'Tis true there is a treasure left by David; To my fidelity the charge was given: It was the melancholy Jews' last hope, Which from the light my vigilance concealed: But since we must expose it to our queen, I'm going to please her. Open wide our gates! Let her, accompanied by her bravest chiefs, Advance, but from our sacred altars, let Her hold at distance the unreasoning fury Of herds of strangers, and protect me from The horror of the pillage of the temple. Would a few priests and children rouse suspicion? With her arrange the number of her suite. As to that child, so feared, so terrible— Abner, I know the justness of your heart— I will explain his birth before you both: You'll hear if we should place him in her power, And you shall judge 'twixt him and Athaliah. ABNER. Ah! now, I take him under my protection. Fear nothing, I return to her who sent me.

Scene III.

JOAD, JOSABET, ZACHARIAH, SALOMITH, ISHMAEL, TWO LEVITES, THE CHOIR. JOAD. Great God! Thy hour is come, they bring Thy prey! Ishmael, listen. (Speaks low to him.) JOSABET. Mighty Master of the heavens! Re-bind on her the veil which wrapt her eyes, When rendering all her crimes abortive, Thou Conceal'dst that tender victim in my bosom! JOAD. Go, prudent Ishmael, lose not any time, Follow my grave instructions, step by step; And, above all, let everything present To

her, upon her entry and her way, The picture of a calm profound. You, children, Prepare a throne for Joas. Let him advance, Accompanied by our sacred combatants; And also cause his faithful nurse to come, Princess, and let your tears cease flowing. (To a Levite.) You, when the queen with mad presumption drunk, Has passed the threshold of the temple's doors, That she no more be able to return, Take care that instantly the warlike trumpet Shall spread a sudden consternation through The enemy's camp; then call upon the people To the support of Judah's king, and let The marvellous prodigy of Joas preserved Resound upon the ear. He comes.

Scene IV.

Joad is followed by a procession of priests and Levites', and the chorus. The high-priest arranges them round their king, and orders them to wait in concealment the expected signal. He seats Joas on the throne, and immediately after Athaliah arrives. At her approach Joad draws a curtain, by which Joas and the Levites are hid from view. JOAS, JOAD, JOSABET, ZACHARIAH, SALOMITH, AZARIAH, TROUPES OF PRIESTS AND LEVITES, THE CHOIR. JOAD. Ye saintly Levites, ministers of God, Surround this place, concealed on every side; And, leaving to my charge to guide your zeal, Wait till my voice commands you to appear. (They all conceal themselves.) King, I believe this hope's allowed your vows; You come to see your foes fall at your feet. That one, whose madness in your infancy Pursued you, now advances towards this place, With hasty step, intent to ruin you; But fear you not, think, that surrounding you, The exterminating angel, stands with us. Ascend your throne, and—but the doors are opening: Allow this screen to cover you a moment. (He draws the screen.) Princess, you are pale. JOSABET. Without becoming so Can I behold the temple filled with murderers? What! See you not that numerous escort? JOAD. I see them close the sacred temple's doors, That everything is safe.

Scene V.

(Athaliah enters, and addresses Joad.) ATHALIAH. Ah! there thou art, seducer! thou Noxious contriver of conspiracies, Who only on confusion feed'st thy hopes; Perpetual enemy of sovereign power! In the support of God thou hast reposed: Art thou yet disabused of thy vain trust? His temple and thy life he yields to me. I ought upon the altar, where thy hand Makes sacrifices, thee.—But with the price They offer me I must content myself. What thou hast promised, see to execute: That boy, that treasure must be given to me. Where are they? JOAD. Immediately thou shalt be satisfied; I am about to show them both at once. (The screen is withdrawn. Joas is seen on his throne; his nurse on her knees at his right; Azariah, with his sword in his hand, is standing at his left; and near him are Zachariah and Salomith, kneeling on the steps of the throne; several Levites armed are ranged around.) Appear, dear boy, blood worthy Israel's kings! Of our most saintly monarchs, knowst thou, queen, The inheritor? Knowst thou at least these scars Thy dagger made? Behold thy king, thy son, The son of Ochoziah! Abner, you And people recognise king Joas! ABNER. Heavens! ATHALIAH (to Joad). Perfidious wretch! JOAD. See'st thou that faithful Jewess Of whom, thou knowest well, he drew the breast? Him rescued from thy rage by Josabet, This temple hailed, where God has cared for him, Of David's treasures, see what I have left. ATHALIAH. Thy treachery, traitor, to that child will be Most fatal. Soldiers, deliver me from That odious spectre! JOAD. Guards of the living God, defend your king! (The bottom of the temple opens, and the Levites rush upon the scene from all sides.) ATHALIAH. Where am I? Treason! O, unhappy queen! With arms and enemies I am surrounded! JOAD. Thine eyes flash round in vain, escape thou canst not, On every side the Lord's encompassed thee: That God thou hast defied, into my hands Has given thee up: now render an account To Him of slaughters which have made thee drunk. ATHALIAH. What fear has petrified my worthless troops? Into what snare hast thou conducted me, Base Abner? ABNER.

Queen, God is my testimony— ATHALIAH. Hence with thy God, thou traitor, and avenge me! ABNER. On whom, on Joas, my master? ATHALIAH. He Joas? Thy king? Remember, vile one, that My armies still are holding you besieged. I hear my camp demand me with loud cries, They come to aid me, quake, rebellious crew!

Scene VI.

ISHMAEL, JOAS, JOAD, ATHALIAH, AND ALL THE OTHERS OF THE LAST SCENE. ISHMAEL (to Joad). The temple, sire, is free, the foe's no more; The stranger's army's fled, the Jewish docile; As wind disperses vapour in the air, The voice of the Almighty's chased that army. Our Levites, from the sacred porches' height, The son of Ochoziah have proclaimed Unto the people, and recited how His infancy was stolen from the sword; How Ahab's daughter's buried in the snare. At the same time the trumpet on all sides Resounded, and its blasts, blent with their shouts, Into the astonished camp disorder spread, And utter panic: (as proud Midianite Was struck by Gideon) Tyrians threw away Their arms and bucklers, and by diverse roads Scattered the first; some Hebrews next took flight; But with loud voice the rest declared for Joas; Admiring how the Lord had dealt with him. At length the people, by one spirit moved, The women, children, and old men, with joy Embraced each other, blessing God who sent, And those who tended him, celebrating Joas With hymns, the son of David come again to life! Baal in the holy city is in horror! His temple's doors are shivered Mathan's slain! ATHALIAH. God of the Jews, Thou conquerest! Yea, it is Joas, I try deceit in vain; I see where I did cause him to be struck; I own the port and mien of Ochoziah; True, all remind me of the blood I hate; David's triumphant; Ahab is destroyed. Merciless God Thou hast o'erruled the whole: Who, with an easy vengeance flattering me, Hast made me self-conflicting through the day. Now, by a child exciting my remorse; Now, dazzling me with lust of Thy rich treasures, I feared to give this temple to

destruction. Then let that son be king, Thy care, Thy work, And that to signalize his new dominion, Cause him to plunge his knife into my breast! This is his dying mother's wish towards him. What do I say? I soothe myself with hopes, That to Thy yoke unbent, tired of Thy law, Faithful to Ahab's blood received from me, In his grandfather's steps, and like his sire, The hateful heir of David will be found To abrogate Thy honour, and profane Thy temple, Venging Ahab, Jezebel, And Athaliah! JOAD. Let her at once be taken from the temple, So that its sanctity be not profaned. Go, sacred Vengers of our murdered princes, Stay, by her death, the outcry of their blood. If any rash adherent take her part, Let him be given to the sword with her.

Scene VII.

JOAS (having descended from his throne) God, who behold'st my trouble, my affliction, O turn her maledictions far from me, And never suffer their accomplishment. Sooner than Joas forget Thee, may he die! JOAD. Call forth the people, let them see their king, That in his power they may renew their faith. King, people, priests, come, full of gratitude, Confirm the covenant with Jacob's God: And, struck with sacred awe at our ill deeds, Engage ourselves anew to Him with oaths. Abner, resume your place beside your prince.

Scene VIII.

A LEVITE, JOAS, JOAD, AND ALL THE OTHERS OF THE PRECEDING SCENE. JOAD (to the Levite). Well, have they punished the temerity Of that ungodly woman? LEVITE. Her death's atoned the horrors of her life. Jerusalem, for long her fury's prey, Is freed at length from her detested yoke. JOAD. By her dread end, commensurate with her crimes, Learn, prince of Judah, never to forget, That there's a rigid Judge of kings in heaven; The orphan's Father, Sword of innocence.

FINIS.

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK ATHALIAH: A TRAGEDY ***

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