

THEODORA:  
ACTRESS AND EMPRESS.

*An Original Historical Drama,*

IN FIVE ACTS.

BY

WATTS PHILLIPS, ESQ.,

AUTHOR OF "THE DEAD HEART,"

THE HUGUENOT CAPTAIN, CAMILLA'S HUSBAND, THE POOR  
STROLLERS, STORY OF THE '45, PAPER WINGS, UNDER THE  
THUMB, HIS LAST VICTORY, TICKET OF LEAVE,  
ETC., ETC., ETC.

"In the most abject state of her fortune and reputation, some vision, either of sleep or of fancy, had whispered to Theodora the pleasing assurance that she was destined to become the spouse of a potent monarch."—GIBBON

THOMAS HAILES LACY,  
89, STRAND, LONDON,

*Production of the New Grand Historical Drama, entitled*

**T H E O D O R A !**

With gorgeous and elaborate Scenery by Gates. Magnificent Costumes, Decorations, &c.,

Written by **WATTS PHILLIPS, Esq.**,

*The eminent Author of the "Dead Heart," &c., &c.*

Illustrative of an Era new to the Modern Stage, and replete with the most Exciting Incidents.

**On MONDAY, April 9, 1866, and During the Week,**

(Never acted), will be presented for the First Time, a New and Original Grand Historical Drama, in 5 Acts, by **WATTS PHILLIPS, Esq.**, the eminent Author of the "Dead Heart," &c., entitled—

**T H E O D O R A !**

**A C T R E S S A N D E M P R E S S .**

THEODORA.

"IN THE MOST ABJECT STATE OF HER FORTUNE AND REPUTATION, SOME VISION, EITHER OF SLEEP OR OF FANCY, HAD WHISPERED TO THEODORA THE PLEASING ASSURANCE THAT SHE WAS DESTINED TO BECOME THE SPOUSE OF A POTENT MONARCH."—Gibbon.

With New and Elaborate Scenery of the most extensive character, each Scene having been painted expressly for this play, from Authorities of the Period, by Mr. Gates, Mr. Mason, and Assistants—

Magnificent and Gorgeous Costumes by Mr. Coombs and Assistants—Costly and splendid Appointments, Decorations, &c., by Mr. A. J. Bradwell and Assistants—The New Machinery, &c., by Mr. W. Mather.—The Overture and the whole of the New and Original Music composed by Alois Schmuck—the Choruses arranged by Mr. Herring.—The Dances under the direction of Mr. Cormack—The Lime Light and Scientific Illusions by Mr. Cox—Gas Effects Mr. Hinkley.

JUSTINIAN . . . . . (Emperor of Rome) . . . . . Mr. C. BUTLER  
 CREON (a Byzantine Noble, in love with, & afterwards married to the Actress Theodora) Mr. J. BENNETT  
 PHILIP . . . . . (Son of Creon and Theodora) . . . . . Mr. JAMES FERNANDEZ  
 LEO . . . . . (An Effeminate Officer of the Emperor's Household) . . . . . Mr. HENRY HAYNES  
 HIERAX . . . . . (A Byzantine Officer, friend to Creon) . . . . . Mr. DALTON  
 ATHALARIC THE GOTH (An Officer holding high rank near the person of the Emperor) Mr. VIVIAN  
 NARSES, THE SMITH (afterwards an Armourer, finally Head Jailor of the Private Prisons) Mr. MACLEAN  
 EBAL THE NUBIAN . . . . . (Under Jailor and Headsman) . . . . . Mr. ALLBROOK  
 SILAX THE HENCHBACK . . . . . Mr. C. LLOYDS . . . . . Mr. J. SAUNDERS  
 1ST BYZANTINE NOBLE . . . . . Mr. SPRY . . . . . Mr. WARD  
 1ST OFFICER . . . . . Mr. WAKELING . . . . . Mr. CLITHERO  
 2ND OFFICER . . . . . Mr. RICHARDS  
 OFFICER OF THE IMPERIAL GUARD . . . . . Miss A. JONES  
 THEODORA (an Actress at the Circus of Constantinople, afterwards Empress of Rome) Miss A. JONES  
 MIRIAM . . . . . (a Young Jewess, formerly Mistress to Creon) . . . . . Miss G. PAUNCEFORT  
 ZILPAH . . . . . (a Jewish Slave Girl, Handmaid to Theodora) . . . . . Miss CLIFTON  
 1ST FEMALE GOATHERD . . . . . Miss FRYER . . . . . Miss SAUNDERS  
 Roman and Byzantine Nobles, Officers, &c.; Roman, Byzantine, Egyptian, and African Soldiers; Citizens of Constantinople—Male and Female; Egyptian Slave Girls, Dancing Girls, Male and Female Goatherds, Nubian Slaves, Attendants, &c., &c., by NUMEROUS AUXILIARY AID.

Time—A.D. 522—541.

Scene—CHIEFLY IN BYZANTIUM.

**ACT 1. - THE CIRCUS.  
AN OPEN PLACE IN CONSTANTINOPLE.  
THE PORTAL TO THE HOUSE OF THEODORA.—GATES.**

Boudoir of an Actress in the Sixth Century.—GATES

THEODORA.

Nineteen Years are supposed to elapse between the 1st and 2nd acts

**ACT 2. - THE CAMP.  
Encampment of the Roman Army Beneath the Walls of Carthage.**

**ACT 3. - THE EMPRESS.  
GRAND INTERIOR OF THE BYZANTINE PALACE, CONSTANTINOPLE.**

THE HALL OF THE WHITE ELEPHANTS AND THRONE OF THEODORA.—GATES

**DANCE OF SLAVE GIRLS!**

*Arranged and Produced by Mr. J. CORMACK, of the Theatre Royal Drury Lane.*

In this Scene the full extent and resources of the immense Stage of the New Surrey Theatre will be brought into requisition.

**ACT 4. - THE REVOLT.**

**THE BYZANTINE PALACE, CONSTANTINOPE.**

THE DESCENT INTO THE PRIVATE PRISONS.—GATES.

**DUNGEONS BENEATH THE BOSPHORUS.** Gates & Mason

**ACT 5. - MOTHER AND SON.**

**THE CHAMBER OF THE EMPRESS,**

IN THE PALACE TOWER OVERLOOKING CONSTANTINOPE.—Gates & Mason.

An Eminence in the Neighbourhood of Constantinople.—MASON.

**THE CAVERNS BENEATH THE PALACE OF CONSTANTINE.**—Gates.

The Secret Way! The Crypt! The Arch! The Cross!

THEODORA.

THEODORA ;  
ACTRESS AND EMPRESS.

ACT I.

THE CIRCUS.

SCENE.—*Curtain rises upon an open place in Constantinople—On the left the facade of the Church of the Holy Apostles—On the right, the ruins of a temple to Jupiter—A broken statue is lying at the base of the altar, its place being occupied by a stone cross—In the middle distance a, public fountain formed by a large lotus flower rising from its leaves out of a marble bason—In the background is seen a portion of the wall of the Great Circus or Hippodrome—and in further distance, bright against the rainless sky, the terraced Gardens of the Bosphorus—In extreme distance a view of the Golden Horn, gay with the white sails and streamers of galleys.*

MIRIAM *half reclines on the lower steps of the church, L.—she wears a Jewish costume, her arms uncovered to the shoulder, adorned with broad gold armlets—her jet black hair glittering with sequins, which are interwoven with the tresses, but not worn over the forehead like THEODORA—her pose is one of desperate abandon. As curtain rises, Egyptian SLAVE GIRLS enter, R. and L. U. E., with their pitchers on shoulders, singing as they approach fountain.*

          Come ! girls, come !  
Ere we fill our pitchers, let's chat awhile,  
          Clustering round the fountain's rim ;  
Each ripple that breaks, is a slave girl's smile,  
          Bright one moment—then all is dim.  
          Gossiping, gossiping all the day long,  
          Murmuring, murmuring all the night through ;  
          Palling at last in a cascade of song,  
          A shower of tears that the sun shines through.

*They group about fountain—with quick, graceful movement remove their pitchers from shoulder to hip and extend their arms towards the marble lotus flower.*

See ! girls, see !  
So calm, and so cool in her watery bower,  
Glancing meek 'neath diamond veil;  
With leaves unfolded our mystic flower,  
The Sun's Beloved—the lotus pale.

Worshipping, worshipping all the day long,  
Sighing, sighing all the night through ;  
Her white leaves folded, her radiance gone  
To be born again—when the sun shines through.

*They fill pitchers as CREON descends steps of Church, R.—he is dressed in the rich garb of a Byzantine noble—as he descends the last step MIMAM who has risen slowly, lays her hand upon his cloak.*

MIRIAM. Creon!

CREON. *(starting)* Miriam! *(he wrests his mantle roughly from her grasp—passes a step or two onwards, then after a moment's hesitation, turns and addresses her)* Why do you track me thus ? Where is your sense of shame that still you follow me, heedless alike of time or place, the jeers of women, and the sneers of men ?

MIRIAM. *(whose attitude is almost slave-like in its sad humility)* I see but Creon-----

CREON. *(with growing impatience)* Till it has become a byword in the month of each jibing fool that Creon walks with a double shadow.

MIRIAM. A few months since, and Miriam's presence brought sunshine to the heart of Creon—with her absence only fell the shadow.

CREON. Why vex yourself—vex me, with recollections such as these ! We cannot recall the past.

MIRIAM. *(quickly)* Would you recall it ?

CREON. No—for I have done you no wrong.

MIRIAM. *(indignantly)* No wrong?

CREON. Your father was a slave too happy to join the crowd of suitors at my door ; and when I raised you his daughter to-----

MIRIAM. *(fiercely)* Greek, you lie ! my father was a free man and no slave of yours. It is the cruel necessity your partial laws have laid upon my people that bends the Jewish head before the Christian's door *(with deep emotion)* Alas! it remained for me—for me ! to bend one head

still lower by the disgrace I brought upon his name and tribe!

CREON. Farewell, Miriam! (*he is going when by a sudden movement, she throws herself before him—her manner fiercely impassioned—CREON'S coldly disdainful.*)

MIRIAM. Stay ! Creon! it is not thus that you and I must part—I am no toy to amuse but for the hour, and then to be cast aside as worthless. I am no Greek girl to endure a wrong with drooping head, and stricken heart—her pale face growing paler beneath her tyrant's cold neglect (*he again attempts to pass, but again she lays her hand upon his mantle.*) You have known my love, Creon—beware how you arouse the bitterness of my hate!

CREON. (*laughs*) Go! you are jealous, Miriam!

MIRIAM. *I was*—but that is past. There was a time when jealousy burned within me fierce as the fire that gnaws the heart of the volcano, till the tortured mountain reddens from peak to base, and cries its agony to Heaven with a tongue of quivering flame.

CREON. (*mockingly*) And now ?

MIRIAM. I hate you, Creon ! (*she throws one arm upwards in an attitude of indignant appeal*) Holy father Abraham! be witness how much I hate this man.

CREON. Is it gold you seek ?

MIRIAM. Gold! you proffer gold to me ?

CREON. Why not ? Surely you are your father's child ?

MIRIAM. (*bitterly*) Would I had ne'er forgotten it! My father's daughter should have died ere she stooped to so low a thing as Creon.

CREON. Now by the gods!

MIRIAM. He swears by the gods! this man of yesterday, who has embraced the religion of to-day. Half atheist, half bigot—all Greek—he stands irresolute (*she points from R. to L.*) between the heathen temple and the Christian church, and faithful to neither, dares blaspheme the ancient religion of the Jew.

CREON. Woman !

MIRIAM. An outraged woman who would taste the luxury of revenge.

CREON. (*with proud disdain*) Revenge!

MIRIAM. A certain though a slow one. Your true Nemesis has feet of lead, but, when she strikes, she strikes with a hand of iron.

CREON. (*impatiently*) Let me pass !

MIRIAM, (*drawing back crosses her hands upon her bosom, and bows with a mock servility*) Room for the great patri-

oian! (as CREON *moves across stage*) A patrician who has stooped to a Jewess—and now would stoop still lower, for when did one of our ancient race become an actress in yon circus?

CREON. (*who has taken several steps past her, halts abruptly, and turns with much perturbation*) An actress! (*with forced laugh*) You speak in riddles, Miriam.

MIRIAM. To which Creon can find an answer. I know your secret! (*approaching him as she speaks*) I know your love! You start! Yes, the love you have so carefully hidden from those tinsel things you call your friends—I know it.

CREON. (*with forced calmness*) Go, you are mad!

MIRIAM. (*with a scornful exultation*) Nay, never draw your robe about you—your heart is open to me. Creon—open as a scroll—I read it, and—I triumph as I read!

CREON. This passes endurance! Woman! let go my cloak, and if again you cross my path, or stop me in the public streets, I'll have you whipped.

MIRIAM. Whipped! and this to me?

CREON. To thee, or any other who dares to threaten Creon. Begone! (*he wrenches his cloak from her grasp and thrusts her violently from him. MIRIAM staggers back, only saving herself from falling by grasping one of the pillars. She recovers herself immediately, and with a gesture of menace retreats up stage to where the SLAVE GIRLS are gathered about fountain.*)

SLAVE GIRLS. (*as they recognise her*) Miriam! Miriam! It's Miriam the Jewess! (*laughing and extending hands*) Tell us our fortunes, Miriam!

MIRIAM. (*with a savage disdain*) Toil and tears! a change of masters, and a change of whips! (*she strikes up hands, and disappears among crowd, who close in and jeer at her—at same moment HIERAX enters R. 1. E., meeting CREON, L.U. E.*)

HIERAX. Ah, Creon! what news from the circus?

CREON. I know not. I have been elsewhere.

HIERAX. Elsewhere! (*with affected astonishment*) Were I a monk I'd straight proclaim a miracle—that Creon's seat is empty when Theodora plays.

CREON. (*impatiently*) Theodora! Farewell, Hierax.

HIERAX. (*staying him, as he is about to pass*) Stay! there's fun a-foot.

CREON. What fun?

HIERAX. A riot.

CREON. A riot! *that* is no news in this turbulent city.

HIERAX. (*still restraining him*) Nay; but listen! the two great factions of the city cram the circus to-day, each wearing its distinctive colours.

CREON. (*testily and impatient*) Blue and green, (*releasing his arm*) Your news is old. (*going.*)

HIERAX. (*slyly, and with emphasis*) But Theodora-----

CREON. (*who has reached side R., turns quickly*) What of her?

HIERAX. Has promised to wear upon the stage to-day the colours of our faction.

CREON. (*anxiously, and crossing to him*) Blue?

HIERAX. While the people openly threaten to tear the daring actress to pieces if she dances in other colours than their own.

CREON. (*agitated*) Why do we loiter here ? let us go.

HIERAX. Where?

CREON. To the circus—we must stand by our faction.

HIERAX. (*laughing*) And Theodora ! (*as they are moving up stage they are met by LEO (a sort of Byzantine Dundreary)—he is gorgeously dressed—as richly, but far more dandified than CREON and HIERAX.*)

LEO. (*coming down stage hastily*) Creon and Hierax! happily met! I left the circus to seek you.

HIERAX. (L. of LEO) What has happened ?

CREON. (R. of LEO) Has Theodora danced ?

LEO. (*fanning himself effeminately with a feather fan, which is attached by small chain to wrist*) You take my breath away—I'm not Rumour with a hundred tongues to answer a hundred questions.

CREON. But Theodora ?

HIERAX. And the people ?

LEO. (*with affected shudder*) Ah! the people ! they crowded the circus till every bench groaned with its weight of rascality.

CREON. And our faction?

LEO. In the minority—as gold is more scarce than silver—silver than lead. The many-headed scowled—the patricians sneered—but all *waited* and were silent—a burst of music ! and then each eye quitting his enemy's countenance sought the stage.

CREON. } Theodora!

HIERAX. }

LEO. Just so, Theodora ! (*animating*) With a bound as light as an antelope's she stood before us—at first a murmur greeted her—a murmur spreading like a ripple

—then it ceased—and, hushed to silence by her beauty, both factions sat and gazed till other dancers moved upon the scene—then a shout burst forth—a wild applause as her fine limbs moving with sudden gleams, she threaded the wildering mazes of the dance.

CREON. What then ?

LEO. Snatching iron: some one's hand a mist-like veil—our faction's emblem of ethereal blue—she wound it lightly round her restless form.

CREON. }  
and } Ha!

HIERAX.

LEO. No enchanter's wand could have worked a change more quickly—rough hands were raised, and clenched in menace—rough throats vented foul breath in curses. The prefect turned pale and fled, while I scenting a riot rushed out (*relapsing into his coxcombical drawl, and fanning himself*) breathless, as you see, in search of you !

CREON. (*impetuously*) And you believe that danger really menaces Theo— (*checking himself*) our faction?

LEO. (*drawing*) They were breaking up the benches when I came away. The storm is growing—growing (*all but LEO start as a loud shout, but as at a distance is heard from behind*) and there it bursts! (*The shout or roar is repeated, CREON and HIERAX feel for their sword hilts. The SLAVE GIRLS at back leaving their pitchers come hurriedly down stage exclaiming "A riot! a riot."*)

LEO. (*lazily fanning himself*) I shouldn't wonder if they keep their word, and tear her to pieces.

CREON. (*with burst of passion and unsheathing sword*) They shall tear my heart out first! (*As CREON unsheathes sword, HIERAX does the same, a disorderly crowd surges upon stage, its members brandishing arms of all kinds, and instruments of their trades. They range themselves—an order in their disorder—on either side of the stage with much threatening gesticulation.*)

NARSES. (*a. smith, with bare arms and wielding a ponderous hammer*) She is coming ! She is coming! (*looting up stage with a grim laugh, while, the mob crane their necks also as look hi g off*) She flies before them like the spray of a wave before the breath of a hurricane ! She may queen it in the theatre, but we are masters here (*flourishing his hammer*) Death to the actress !

MOB. Death to Theodora!

NARSES. Death to the daughter of Acacius the charioteer ! (*As he swings up his heavy hammer THEODORA rushes on at*

*back pursued by another portion of MOB, men and women. She is dressed after the fashion of the actresses in the Byzantine circus—a dress of fantasy more Syrian than Greek—Her hair glittering with ornaments that fall over without concealing the forehead—The face itself is framed, so to speak, by the ear ornaments which descend broad and glittering to her shoulders—The arms bare from the shoulders, and like the legs adorned with ornaments—The bosom covered with luminous stones—A cestus glitters round her waist, from which drop deep festoons of emeralds and pearls)*

THEODORA. *(with a half savage fierceness, and pausing in centre)* What have I done that you pursue me thus ?

NARSES. *(advancing)* Done! by Jupiter ! *(crossing himself)* I mean by blessed Saint Hilarian, what have you not done, traitress ? *(half turning to mob)* Answer my masters and my mistresses, shall this butterfly of the circus insult our order and her own ?

MOB. Down with her!

WOMEN. Tear her to pieces!

THEODORA. *(quailing as they surge in around her)* Mercy! mercy ! I am a woman! To forget my sex is to disgrace your own!

ALL. Death to Theodora.

NARSES, *(brutally)* Death! *(he has raised his hammer over the crouching woman when it is wrenched from his grasp, and himself dashed back by CREON, who stands c, his hand now grasping the smith's hammer, his arm half supporting the shrinking form of THEODORA.)*

CREON. Back ! back ! to your cellars and your cells ye knaves ! Go, hammer iron, or cobble shoes. And you—*(to women)* home, and while ye chatter spin!

NARSES. 'Tis Creon! *(to MOB.)* These nobles grow proud upon our spoils. They would rob us ever of revenge.

MOB. *(closing in)* Death to Creon !

THEODORA. *(supplicatingly and cowering close to CREON)* Mercy ! mercy ! for him ! for me !

LEO. *(who has mounted on edge of fountain dominating scene)* Ask mercy for them! See! *(pointing with fan)* the broom that will sweep the streets clean!

NARSES. *(recoiling)* The soldiery! *(The crowd divides in alarm, and rolls back on either side giving passage to a party of the Imperial Guard (the dreaded Roman Stationaries) glittering in steel and gold from casque to leg-piece—They advance with the quick, steady step of discipline, between Theodora, Creon and the mob, then wheel round sharply and sink upon one knee, presenting their spear-points to the mob)*

*that recoils, and is retreating confusedly as scene closes—Theodora still clinging to Creon, who, wielding the smith's hammer, stands erect in centre.—TABLEAU.*

SCENE II—*A sort of Entrance Hall (Byzantine fashion) to the house of Theodora—Door in flat R.—Rose coloured curtain behind, gilt lattice-work—A view of Constantinople and the Bosphorus in good perspective.*

MIRIAM. *(enter R. with a sort of rush, pauses at the side, leaning against a pillar, and bending down her head as listening)* The tumult increases ! but before a line of spear points these pedling knaves are only brave in numbers *(coming a little down stage, still as looking off)*. Theodora is saved ! and the help was in time ! *(she crosses to the trellis door)* Zilpah ! Zilpah ! *(shaking trellis impatiently, and still glancing uneasily over her shoulder)* Open girl ! open ! It is I—  
I—Miriam, *(the curtain behind trellis is lifted, and a young Jewess appears—a slave girl.)*

ZILPAH. Miriam ! *(opening door hastily)* Miriam ! and is in the house of Theodora !

MIRIAM. *(who has again moved down the stage with a gesture of authority)* Creon accompanies Theodora ! *(bitterly)* I would provide for his reception.

ZILPAH. *(alarmed)* Creon !

MIRIAM. Is he then so rare a visitor ? but yesterday you told me otherwise----

ZILPAH. And told the truth—Creon's visit is sure as the rising of the moon—but like the moon he only comes by night.

MIRIAM. *(with an emotion she endeavours to stifle)* By night ! and she ! she receives him ?

ZILPAH. Ever in my presence, and with a studied courtesy, a half disdainful politeness which stings the proud patrician at times almost into madness. I have seen him after a some seemingly jesting, but yet firm repulse, rush from her presence with his face all a-flame, and his pale lips full of muttered curses and vows that he would never see her more.

MIRIAM. I see—I see ; she plays with him as anglers play with the fish—knowing that the barbed hook has sunk too deep to be removed. Well has she been called the queen of all allurements, and tempers her fire with snow, *(to ZILPAH)* Tell me when he parts thus, returns he soon ?

ZILPAH. Within the hour.

MIRIAM. And she repulses him again ?

ZILPAH. No—meets him with sweet excuses, vows she cannot, must not see him—that Love—and then she hides behind her hands her blushes—is a too treacherous guide, and though she fears not Creon she dare not trust her heart, and with a myriad other honied words she shows him to the door again.

MIRIAM. (*bitterly*) Here is a woman I need not shame to call a rival! A face of smiles, a heart of ice, a will of adamant—the *last* however I must prove. 'Tis a strange chance—chance ! (*with a short self-deriding laugh*) That is the fool's excuse for folly—and what we call chance is but the raw material which Time places in our hands to be fashioned into what form we please. Yes, I am your shadow, Creon, a lengthening shadow that will fall at last o'er you and her. (*turning sharply on ZILPAH*) Who placed you here ?

ZILPAH. (*submissively*) Miriam.

MIRIAM. (*crossing to her*) For what purpose think you? (*ZILPAH is silent*) That you should be my slave as well as hers—for this I promised you sufficient gold to purchase the freedom you covet (*she tears off from her neck a collar of gold ornaments*) Take it, I pay beyond the bargain ! (*as ZILPAH is about to speak*) Be silent and obey !

ZILPAH. (*who is examining the ornaments with childish delight*) In all things ?

MIRIAM. (*motioning towards the door*) Conceal me somewhere.

ZILPAH. (*with return of alarm*) But if-----

MIRIAM. Anywhere—so that I can hear and see without being heard or seen. Quick ! the tumult increases, and Creon with his new love will be here ere you can call back the colour to your cheeks, or the falsehood to your lips (*she is about to enter house, when a hoarse threatening murmur, as of an advancing crowd, causes her to pause, and with her hand upon Zilpah's arm, to glance off the stage*) See where they come! Protected as yet by the soldiery, while the baffled mob gathers like a thundercloud in the rear (*with a gesture of passion, and advancing some steps*) How she clings to him—the white-faced sorceress! While he encircles her pliant waist with that arm which but a few brief months ago as fondly encircled mine! It is your ruin, you embrace Creon ! your ruin ! and I laugh as you press it to your heart. Come----- (*she again lays her hand upon ZILPAH'S arm, and almost forces the latter—still examining with an almost childish delight the ornament*

*which she has placed round her neck—into the house. As door closes there are shouts as of a Mob coming nearer and nearer which continue until*

SCENE III.—*An Actress's boudoir in the sixth century.*

*It is furnished with every kind of semi-Asiatic luxury—A voluptuous softness in the decorations—Broad-leaved and delicate palms intermingled with flowers—A pile of tiger skins form a sort of couch upon the floor—Door at back R. concealed by tapestry—Two thirds of the stage at back opens out upon a terrace with descent to an inner court as in Moorish houses—small fountain in centre—The gates of this court are visible to audience—above them are seen domes and roof tops as of a street.*

*The gates which are open, are hastily clashed to, and CREON half supporting THEODORA ascends steps at back.—He has thrown his rich mantle around THEODORA who clings to him.*

CREON. *(pausing on terrace)* The soldiers drive back the mob, and your servants have closed the gates.

THEODORA. *(imploringly)* Oh, do not leave me! do not leave me yet!

CREON. *(with much tenderness as they come down stage)* Were Creon's heart Creon's only counsellor he would never—never leave you *(endeavouring to take her hand she draws back)* Theodora! Theodora! how often must I repeat and repeat in vain, I love you!

THEODORA. In mercy! this is no time for such words. The cry of those men, those fiends, has left its echo in my ears. I think I still see them! their eyes of fury and their upraised arms—upraised against my life!

CREON. *(soothingly)* The danger's past.

THEODORA. But who can say how soon it may return? The storm has only lulled to gain a fresh access of fury.

CREON. Listen then! Nay, you must listen, for time presses, and I have much to urge. To-morrow, by the Emperor's command, I leave for my government at Pentapolis. That departure shall take place to-day if you will consent to leave this ungrateful city, and accompany me to my new home! *(he approaches THEODORA as he speaks, but she draws back)* Say that you will share that home, and in less than an hour's time my galleys will unfurl their white wings, and a hundred sturdy rowers have placed you beyond the reach of danger.

THEODORA. (*in a low voice*) There is too wide a gulf between us.

CREON. A gulf ?

THEODORA. So wide, that Love alone can bridge it over.

CREON. (*impetuously*) You doubt my love ? Fly with me, and all the wealth of Pentapolis shall be at your disposal. The citizens shall unlock their well filled coffers, and each man's life and fortune shall be held at your sovereign will. You shall be as a queen—as a queen! and Creon, the humblest of your slaves, will worship at your feet! (*sinking at her feet*)

THEODORA. (*raising her head proudly, yet still with tenderness*) I have a higher ambition.

CREON. (*rising*) Higher ! and I offer you Pentapolis !

THEODORA. (*with a soft coquetry turns towards him with extended hands. At the same moment, the tapestry is parted R. door and MIRIAM appears listening*) Place your hands in mine, Creon, and say that you have loved no other woman ?

CREON. (*after a momentary hesitation*) I never loved till now ! (*she places her hands in his*)

MIRIAM, (*staggers slightly, and places her hand upon her breast with gesture of sudden pain*) Oh, my heart, my heart!

THEODORA. (*withdrawing hands*) You love me—save me, then!

CREON. From what ?

THEODORA. (*sadly*) I am an actress—a fragile toy which rude hands applaud one moment to break the next—a gossamer thing, tossed hither and thither by the people's breath, (*with change of manner, and quick, imploring gesture*) Save me, Creon!

CREON. Again I ask, from what ?

THEODORA. Myself. I would be Creon's wife!

CREON. (*recoiling*) My wife ? You jest, Theodora!

THEODORA. (*with intense bitterness*) You see how wide the gulf between us.

CREON. Reflect!

THEODORA. We meet no more—farewell, Creon ! (*turning away, as she does so, the tapestry again closes over MIRIAM*)

CREON. To remain in this city is madness—it is death ! Theodora, come with me!

THEODORA. No.

CREON. (*hesitating, then desperately*) I cannot go without you ! I will save you—yes, I will save you, despite your, self! (*he throws his arms around her*)

THEODORA. (*struggling*) Release me! release me! or  
(*she snatches CREON'S dagger from its sheath*)

CREON. (*releasing her*) Beware! the point is poisoned—a  
scratch is death.

THEODORA. (*resting point upon her breast*) A step nearer,  
and that death is mine.

MIRIAM. (*reappearing from between tapestry folds—aside*)  
Well played!

CREON. (*moving to L.*) Farewell, Theodora !

THEODORA. Farewell! (*the dagger drops from her grasp,*  
*and she covers her face with her hands.*)

CREON. (*springing towards her*) You weep !

MIRIAM. (*aside*) Tears! Woman's best weapon—and  
far more treacherous than the poisoned steel. Weep on!

CREON. (*is about to approach THEODORA, but with a passion-*  
*ate gesture she waves him off*) Farewell! (*he exits L. 3 E.*)

THEODORA. Gone ! gone! and I am left alone—alone  
with my fears, and my ambition ! What a fate is mine !  
Conscious of strength were opportunity but given to realise  
what are now but dreams—yet condemned like the tanned  
galley-slave to sit chained to the servile bench, and toil  
for others' pleasure ! (*casting herself upon the couch of tiger*  
*skins with a cry*) Oh, that I could lift—but for a moment  
—a corner of that dark veil that shrouds the future and  
know what Fate has in store for the daughter of Acacius !

MIRIAM. (*who during this speech has advanced to foot of*  
*couch on which THEODORA has thrown herself in an agony of*  
*despair*) Fate! a weak mind accepts the fate allotted to it.  
A strong mind makes its own.

THEODORA. (*half rising—and supporting herself upon one*  
*arm gazes at the Jewess with half alarmed surprise*) You  
are Miriam the Jewess ? (*MIRIAM folds her hands across*  
*her bosom and bows,—THEODORA slowly rising, her eyes still*  
*fixed wonderingly on the intruder*) How came you here ?

MIRIAM. It matters not, if I have the power to perform  
your wish.

THEODORA. My wish ! (*eagerly*) Can you read the future ?

MIRIAM. I should not be the first of my race who has  
done so.

THEODORA. (*whose eagerness increases as the other's manner*  
*becomes more cold, and statuesque*) Speak then my future,  
Miriam!

MIRIAM. I have said—the strong mind makes its own.  
You love beauty, and art—the art of the Actress less wisely  
used might make you great.

THEODORA. Great!

MIRIAM. You are already known as the queen of the Circus. There is an old saying that the Circus and Constantinople are one.

THEODORA. What is it that you hint at ?

MIRIAM. Nothing—I but lift a corner of the veil, (*moving a little up stage.*)

THEODORA. Stay! I command—(*with change of tone*) I entreat you ! (*MIRIAM turns and coldly regards her*) Your words are as a strong wine, and (*clasping her forehead*) my brain reels beneath them. While you speak I feel as one who treads some rocky path, and sees before her a shadow vast and grand, yet dim, and indistinct—a mountain in a mist!

MIRIAM. (*coming quickly down stage*) But one upon whose towering summit Hope has placed a dazzling prize. By your side walks Destiny—above you shine the stars-----

THEODORA. (*recoiling*) But below me roars the torrent—beside me yawns the precipice !

MIRIAM. Heard and seen only by those who tread the dizzy path in the pale companionship of Fear. What does the faint heart among those crags—the abode of the eagle is the sepulchre of the dove.

THEODORA. (*with growing excitement, and with an inspired manner*) Yes! yes ! You speak well, Miriam, and my future shall be great as my resolve ! (*walking stage with rapt and feverish excitement*) Fate hovers above the weak, fixed and terrible ; but crouches at the feet of the strong, a handmaiden and a slave !

MIRIAM. To such a spirit nought is impossible. Your foot is on the ladder—mount! the first step is already yours!

THEODORA. (*stopping in her walk, and facing MIRIAM*) The first step ?

MIRIAM. Creon ! (*a shouting is heard behind, as of a multitude approaching. THEODORA starts, and retreats down stage.*)

MIRIAM. (*extending arm, and pointing to gates*) Listen, and decide! (*she disappears behind tapestry as CREON'S voice is heard off stage, L. 3 E.*)

CREON. Theodora! Theodora! (*he enters hastily, his manner wild, his garments in disorder*) The people, strong in numbers, besiege the house, but one outlet of escape is open (*points to door*) My servants wait without, and will defend you with their lives (*shouts at back and hammering on gates.*)

VOICES. Theodora ! death to Theodora !

CREON. You hear ! (*entreatingly*) Fly with me !

THEODORA. As Creon's wife only I enter Pentapolis.  
(*noise without increases.*)

CREON. (*with passionate outburst*) As Creon's wife then!  
(*clasping her to his breast in a wild embrace*) I cannot  
go alone! (*as he urges her to side L.*) Henceforth we will  
have but one heart, but one life-----

THEODORA. (*with a burst of exultation*) And one *Ambi-*  
*tion ! (as they exeunt MIRIAM reappears tearing aside the*  
*curtains, and gazing after them, her pale face full of an evil*  
*triumph and menace. She draws the curtains behind her,*  
*and as she stands, white and breathless, grasping them—*  
*their dark crimson folds bring out her figure. At same time*  
*the gates at back are forced open, and a mob of men and*  
*women, picturesque in their costumes and savageness, led on*  
*by NARSES the smith, flood the court, and mount, with a shout,*  
*on to the terrace—Tableau, and end of act the first.*

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ACT II.

THE CAMP.

SCENE.—*The curtain rises upon a Camp scene beneath the*  
*walls of Carthage, R.—The Elephant Gate by which a*  
*flight of steps lead into the city, from this the walls*  
*entend in perspective, and the African City, with*  
*all its temples and terraces of white marble and gold,*  
*is seen glittering in the distance—the terraces are*  
*adorned with trees, &c.—Down stage several tents, that*  
*of Creon, R.; these tents are fashioned of rich stuffs-,*  
*and skins of wild animals—A semi-barbark pomp—*  
*The sea in the distance is crowded with galleys, some*  
*of which appear to be loading from the quays—In*  
*extreme distance and on the other side of the port, an*  
*assemblage of tents as forming the encampment of an*  
*army, stretch far away till it is lost in the yellow desert*  
*—As curtain rises there is a burst of warlike music*  
*followed by a loud shout, as soldiers of all kinds—the*  
*Roman glittering in steel and gold, the Greek in soft*  
*and effeminate attire, the swarthy Egyptian and negro*  
*warrior with scant costume, and heavy copper ornaments—*  
*come noisily down ; conspicuous among them are NARSES and*  
*ATHALARIC. NARSES is now a grizzled-looking elderly ruffian*  
*in battered steel cap, short coat of chain mail, with*  
*leather sleeves; legs also cased in leather, with iron greaves.*

*He carries an armourer's tool suspended from his girdle, and an axe is slung at back—ATHALARIC, a tall, fair-haired Goth wears over his cuirass, a shaggy bear-skin, the paws joined across his breast, and the head covering helmet, from which his long yellow hair descends in braids. He wears loose linen leggings cross-gartered, with strips of stained bull's hide. His only weapon is a huge mace or battle-axe, the axe being composed of bright steel blades, turning different ways.*

NARSES. Back to Constantinople ! that's the best news I've heard this many a day ; but are you sure my name's down on the list, captain ?

ATHA. Quite sure ! as smith and armourer you have charge of the prisoners, that is to say, their fetters.

NARSES. I think I'd almost wear them myself to get away from this accursed country of Africa. A desert of fire, a sky of lead, and a sun; phew ! (*pointing to negro who passes*) It almost turns one his colour to think of it.

ATHA. The booty is to be carried to the emperor's treasury, and the Vandal king will do homage at his footstool.

NARSES. *His* footstool! You mean at *hers*, Empress Theodora's.

ATHA. Ah ! she's something like a woman. By the blue eyes of Frea ! I haven't seen her like since I quitted my own northern country, and the north breeds women, as it breeds men, without equals.

NARSES. Umph ! that's your opinion.

ATHA. (*enthusiastically*) She's a born queen, your empress.

NARSES. Born queen! (*laughs—looks furtively round and draws closer to ATHALARIC*) Let me whisper a word in your ear, comrade. What think you, if I, Narses, plain smith and armourer, have seen this "born queen" dandled upon the knees of my friend, and boon companion Acacius, the bear ward, and charioteer!

ATHA. Acacius ! and who might he be ?

NARSES. (*slapping ATHALARIC on shoulder*) Her father! (*laughing as the other recoils surprised*) The father of the Empress Theodora, (*while the above conversation is in progress, the SOLDIERS have moved up stage, and a female figure muffled in a mantle has appeared from among them listening. She comes down stage slowly, and as NARSES still laughs, steps between him and ATHALARIC, dropping mantle and revealing the face of MIRIAM the Jewess, she appears*

*much older than in first act. She wears a dark crimson dress, slightly fantastic in its character—A long black lace veil or mantle, spotted with small gold stars, falls about her from a broad gold circlet, which she wears as head-dress. Her arms are bare from the shoulder)*

MIRIAM. (*contemptuously*) Is the armourer Narses tired of life, that he gives his tongue such license ?

NARSES. (*aside, and in alarm*) Miriam ! the sorceress! (*aloud, and sullenly*) I spoke no treason.

MIRIAM. Truth is often accounted such. Stay (as NARSES is *following* ATHALARIC, *who has joined group of SOLDIERS up stage, she stops him with gesture of command*) I have need of you.

NARSES. (*half returning, with evident reluctance*) I'm wanted at the Port! I accompany the Carthaginian prisoners to Constantinople.

MIRIAM. To find still heavier fetters rivetted for yourself.

NARSES. Eh ? (*coming hastily down*) Why so ?

MIRIAM. How many years is it since the great riot of the factions ?

NARSES. (*sullenly*) About nineteen.

MIRIAM. Just nineteen. Think you that Theodora the Empress has forgotten the dangers of Theodora the actress ?

NARSES. (*uneasily*) Do I think an eagle would stoop to prey upon a worm ?

MIRIAM. Obey me, and the past shall be forgotten, while the present service is rewarded.

NARSES. (*doubtfully*) Have you the power to promise this ?

MIRIAM. Look! and be satisfied! (*she extends hand; NARSES regards the ring upon her finger.*)

NARSES. (*with gesture of astonishment, and uncovering bead*) The Imperial signet!

MIRIAM. (*her tone brief and commanding*) Where is Creon ?

NARSES. (*with a servility, in strong contrast to his former rough brutality*) He keeps his tent, (*indicating tent, R.*) with his friend, the Captain Hierax.

MIRIAM. And his son, Philip—where is he ?

NARSES. (*indicating tent, U. S. L.*) Drinking a safe voyage to such of his comrades who part for Constantinople.

MIRIAM. (*after a moment's reflection, with authoritative*

*wave of the hand*) Wait for me down by the port! Be wise, and you shall thrive.

NARSES. (*inclines respectfully, and speaks aside as he goes of*) Dispute the power of the Imperial signet ? by St. Jupiter ! not I!

MIRIAM. (*who has moved a little up stage R. now stands close against the folds of CREON'S tent, her head slightly bent as listening.*)

MIRIAM. They speak of Philip! Of his son and *hers* ! That son, to whose very existence she is a stranger! That son, who shall be the instrument with which I smite two hearts ! (*coming a little down stage*) Nineteen years ! nineteen years !—ah! revenge is patient when revenge is sure!

*Voices singing in tent, L.*

He who lives well, if but to his prime,  
Wisely doubles half his time.  
If cares should rise or sorrows should frown,  
Floods of wine will wash them down !  
Floods of wine !  
Floods of wine !  
Floods of wine will wash them down !

*Noise of laughter, and clashing of goblets.*

MIRIAM. A gay leave-taking, and a useless one.

*The curtains of tent L. are drawn suddenly aside, and the interior exposed. A crowd of young officers in half armour, steel and gold, very gay, stand about table, on, which are the remnants of a banquet. PHILIP, aspect bold, frank, and youthful, in centre. They group, touch goblets, and come down stage singing—*

SONG.

Back! back ! from this land of fire and sand  
We'll joyfully steer, thus glass in hand.  
Syrens in plenty await us there,  
With lips of honey, and bosoms bare.  
Our galley's prow shall merrily dash  
To Love's soft song and the goblets clash.

*(They form in line, and, as they sing, clash goblets.)*

The old Pagan world is dead and gone,  
Venus and Bacchus alone live on!  
Venus and Bacchus !  
Venus and Bacchus!  
Venus and Bacchus alone live on!

*(They laugh, and crowd about PHILIP. MIRIAM has drawn back, so that her figure is half concealed in the folds of CREON'S tent.)*

1ST OFFICER. May this be the last goblet my lips will touch, but I pity you Philip ! forced to remain in this sun-baked land which was only made for the lion and the camel.

2ND OFFICER. He who has not seen Constantinople has seen nothing.

1ST OFFICER. The grandeur of the emperor.

2ND OFFICER. And the beauty of the empress.

PHILIP. It is we, soldiers, who have made the one, and I care not to see the other. I blush rather than rejoice to know that a woman again holds sway over Caesar and the world.

1ST OFFICER. Philip ! Philip ! have a care !

PHILIP. *(as they draw back a little from him, leaving him in the centre)* Of what ? of Theodora ? I am not so in love with life that I would purchase it by a degrading flattery. Rather than I would crawl before such a footstool I would find a home in the desert, and live upon dates and water, like some bald monk in the Thebaid.

MIRIAM. *(aside)* A brave boy ! and a foolish one !

1ST OFFICER, *(laying hand on his arm)* Hush ! think of your father, Philip !

PHILIP. *(with growing indignation)* I do ! and remember, if report speaks true, that it was through this quondam actress of the Circus my father lost his government of Pentapolis. *(his friends, in evident alarm, look at each other, and draw still further back, PHILIP changes his tone to one of light gaiety, and laughs)* Time presses, is it not so ? We will meet at the port ! *(as officers move up and off, he comes down stage)* Strange power in a name, that can make such brave men's cheeks turn pale. Thank Heaven ! my wants are few, and all those wants are satisfied, *(he is crossing to CREON'S tent when MIRIAM touches his arm.)*

MIRIAM. All ?

PHILIP. *(aside and starting)* Again that woman !

MIRIAM. You have a mother !

PHILIP. *(with feeling)* Have ? I had a mother, who died even before my infant eyes could drink in the memory of her face ! *(checking himself abruptly)* But why talk of this to you ? You have the cant of your trade, and care not what chord you jar to gain the gold piece you covet, *(he tosses*

a coin to her feet, and is passing on, when, by a rapid movement, she detains him.)

MIRIAM. Pick up your gold who will, such alms are not for me. (as PHILIP releases his sleeve, and is still passing on) Creon has lied to Philip—your mother lives!

PHILIP. (turning as one stung by a snake) Lives? (coming down) Woman!----

MIRIAM. Would you find her?

PHILIP. My mother!

MIRIAM. She awaits you!

PHILIP. Where?

MIRIAM. In Constantinople! (aside, and moving rapidly up stage, as PHILIP stands like one thunderstruck) That blow struck home. Within the hour he sails! (as she exits, the curtains of CREON'S tent are also drawn aside, and CREON and HIERAX come forth. They wear half armour, steel and gold, costumes picturesque and soldier-like. Both much older in appearance. CREON, short grizzled beard and moustache—features stern and careworn.)

CREON. (without perceiving PHILIP, who still stands D. S. L.) Farewell, old comrade! (removing hand from HIERAX'S shoulder, on which he is leaning when he enters from tent) I entrust my Philip to your care. Exile will be less hard to bear when I know that Creon's evil fortune stands no longer in the way of his son's advancement.

HIERAX. (as still without perceiving PHILIP they move up stage) That exile may yet be shortened and---

CREON. (quickly) Think not of it! The revenge of a guilty woman is implacable. To your hands, Hierax, I confide my son.

(He grasps the hand of HIERAX, who returns the pressure. HIERAX joins group at back, who salute CREON. CREON watches them move off stage, then, with a heavy sigh, turns and finds himself face to face with PHILIP, who has advanced to centre.)

CREON. (startled) Philip!

PHILIP. (with tenderness) My father!

CREON. (by an effort recovering his composure) I was about to seek you. (as they descend stage) I have much to say ere you depart.

PHILIP. Depart! whither?

CREON. To Constantinople—with the Captain Hierax.

PHILIP. Constantinople! what crime then, have I committed, that you should, banish me?

CREON. Mine has been the crime, not yours, (staying PHILIP as he is about to speak) When you know the secret

I have kept from you, it may be that the love I have guarded so selfishly will be changed to blame.

PHILIP. Blame ?

CREON. But I could not bear to lose your heart, or hear my name, even in your baby prayers, coupled with another's.

PHILIP. Another's ?

CREON. You have often questioned me of your mother, and to those questions I had but one reply.

PHILIP. That she was dead—dead, while I was yet an infant in the cradle.

CREON. Dead! but dead alone to me ! (*pauses, as over, come by emotion, then, averting face, and with an effort*) For you, Philip my son, she lives !

PHILIP. My mother ! oh ! Heaven be praised ! (*regarding his father, who stands sorrowful and motionless*) Ah! I see, you doubt that my heart can carry an equal yet a double love, (*with much tenderness*) No second image can efface the first that was stamped upon my heart—not even hers !

CREON. (*bitterly*) Hers !

PHILIP. My mother's! ah! what a magic in those soft words—my mother's!

CREON. Nineteen years ago, I, now the poor captain of a troop of mercenaries, was the governor of rich Pentapolis. With me was one who shared my honours as she ruled my heart. A woman beautiful as an angel, but as fickle and as dangerous as yonder smiling sea. I married her, though she was so far beneath me in station that in all other eyes than mine union brought dishonour !

PHILIP. Dishonour! my mother!

CREON. (*sadly*) Your mother ! (*PHILIP is again about to speak, but CREON stops him with an imploring gesture*) Soon after your birth I was summoned back to Constantinople. Your mother accompanied me. I have said that she was beautiful—beautiful and ambitious—she was seen and—my happiness was lost!

PHILIP. (*with fierce gesture*) And the man who-worked this evil-----

CREON. Was one who had the power to make and unmake laws. She had shame enough to stand between me and death. A divorce was decreed, and then your mother re-married !

PHILIP. To whom ? to whom ?

CREON. (*placing his hand on PHILIP'S arm, as he half unsheathes dagger*) To one whom, even to threaten in thought, if that thought be written on the face is death!

PHILIP. (*releasing his arm and recoiling*) His name ?

CREON. The Emperor Justinian!

PHILIP *stands with arms half uplifted as one paralysed.*  
CREON *places his hand fondly on his shoulder.*

CREON. One thing alone was wanting to her happiness.

PHILIP. (*in low voice*) And that ?

CREON. Yourself. She had robbed me of all but you—there I forestalled her.

PHILIP. (*same low voice*) How so ?

CREON. I had you conveyed away secretly into Numidia, and after giving out that you were dangerously ill, had the corpse of a slave child placed in your cradle. In this at least, she was baffled, and there was again a joy—a fiercer joy at my heart, when I heard of her kneeling, kneeling and watering with tears the tomb of a *stranger*.

PHILIP. And you would have me seek her ? Wherefore ?-----

CREON. You are young, and life at your age is an oasis full of a hopeful freshness—at mine it is a desert over which each fiery passion has left its burning trace, (*as PHILIP is about to speak*) Philip! Philip, this life of wandering is not for you—this endless strife when the soldier's cuirass is only doffed when his corpse is thrown to the vultures—or when blind, maimed, and leaning on his last support, a staff, he stretches out a palsied hand to solicit alms of the pitying passenger.

PHILIP. A soldier's life has no such terrors for me. We have fought side by side often, and if once my heart has trembled, it has been for *you*. Your fortunes shall be mine. In weal or woe we *share*.

CREON. Fate has decided otherwise. Afar off I will watch my young eaglet's upward flight. My vision grows dim, and I see all things through a mist of sorrow, *yours* shall drink in undazzled even the splendour of the sun. I have shown you the path, and you will follow it.

PHILIP. No. (*he turns away, averting his face as CREON places his hand beseechingly on his arm.*)

CREON. (*aside*) Hierax was right—there is but one way to move him. (*aloud*) Philip ! for *my* sake you will make this sacrifice.

PHILIP. For yours ?

CREON. For mine.

MIRIAM. (*appearing from among tents U. s.— speaks aside*) Well put, Creon! well put!

CREON. I would not die a banished man.

PHILIP. (*surprised*) You would return to Constantinople?

CREON. (*with flash of indignation*) I! never! (*correcting himself*) I would claim only the reversion of an unjust sentence—I would find my grave in my own land.

PHILIP. And I can accomplish this ?

CREON. In you rests my *only* hope. You will accompany Hierax. The papers (*he takes a small metal case suspended by a chain from his breast*) contained in this case will prove to—to—(*he hesitates as conquering his emotion*) your mother—that she still has a son. (*trumpets sound without.*)

CREON. (*as he places chain about PHILIP'S neck*) They are departing! (*embracing PHILIP*) It *must* be so. Farewell!—my boy!—farewell!

PHILIP. You weep !

CREON. It is nothing ! nothing! or rather it is *all*—diamond drops, Philip, that I would not exchange against the treasures of a world.

VOICES. (*singing off stage*)

Back ! back! from this land of fire and sand  
We'll joyfully steer, thus glass in hand,  
&c, &c, &c, &c.

CREON. (*as voices die away*) They are embarking come !

PHILIP. And to re-meet—when ?

CREON. (*with a forced gaiety*) When Philip has revoked Creon's banishment.

MIRIAM. (*who has come down stage R., watching them as they move slowly up. Aside*) Mine! the boy is *mine!* (*with a wild exultation*) And once more I hold the heart of Creon in my hand!

CREON. (U. S., *pointing off*) The galleys!

PHILIP. (*suddenly and recoiling*) Creon! father ! I dare not! no! I dare not!

CREON. (*coming down stage as he speaks*) Dare not!

PHILIP. (*greatly excited*) Oh, think what this woman is!

CREON. (*sternly*) Your mother and—an Empress !

PHILIP. Yes ! The Empress *Theodora* !

(*He covers his face with his hands. CREON, one hand placed on his shoulder, points u. s., where the soldiers &c. now throng, and again sounds the song as curtain descends—*)

Back ! back ! from this land of fire and sand  
We'll joyfully steer, thus glass in hand, &c, &c.

## ACT III.

## THE EMPRESS.

SCENE.—*Grand interior—Byzantine Palace, Constantinople—This scene must be of a gorgeous description—Interminable galleries, and pillars running into aerial perspective, a blending of many coloured marbles with gilt-work and Mosaic painting—In the foreground the brilliantly painted columns supported by gilded elephants, the varied perspective of the decorations arranged to give an idea of vastness—The front scene must be so managed that as the concourse and dancers retire, rich tapestries are drawn from, pillar to pillar, in order to give the front stage the isolation of an ordinary chamber. These curtains not to be more than eight or ten feet high, so that while the scene is private, the previous decor is preserved as regards effect. At back of closed scene is an entrance to a private passage beneath centre galleries. This entrance partly concealed by tapestry, has a large gong with pendant hammer, beside its ornamented arch — a throne with two seats on slightly elevated platform, R.—As curtain rises, LEO, in somewhat fantastic dress (this dress must be foppish but not absurd) and carrying a white wand, as an officer of the Imperial household, is giving directions to several servants, who, as he points with wand, are apparently chalking ground as forming dance figures.*

LEO. (to GREEKS) Form me fresh figures, here a curve and there entangled circles—such as shall guide our airy dancers' feet. Demetrius, brush away the dust! each vile particle renders the docile foot less light and apt to keep melodious measure.

(*A flourish of trumpets at back. MIRIAM enters hurriedly L. door She is in a rich but sombre costume—one which no more resembles the dress of the second act than the latter dress resembled the Hebrew girl's in the first act.*)

MIRIAM. (*crossing to LEO, who watching the servant preparing floor, is going through certain dancing steps, while he moves wand as directing them*) Do not those trumpets announce the empress's return from the thanksgiving at St. Sophia's?

LEO. The empress's, and also the emperor's thanksgiving, over they return here to witness a dance, and such a dance! (*kissing finger tips, and pirouetting*) A dance of my devising!

MIRIAM. And afterwards ?

LEO. Their Magnificences pass to the hippodrome, to receive the homage of the Carthaginian prisoners.

MIRIAM. (*staying him as he is moving up stage with same dancing step*) Yet another question-----

LEO. I pray you let it be brief. As appointed master of the ceremonies each moment of my time has its value.

MIRIAM. Is it here the empress receives the envoys from the camp!

LEO. First my dance, and *then* the reception. Everything according to its order and value, (*to Servants*) Follow me! I would see if the great gallery has been hung with Indian stuffs, and flowers spread in the empress's path as I commanded. (*He passes up stage, and off with same affected dancing step, followed by servitors.*)

MIRIAM. (*coming down stage*) I must speak with her again before she looks on Philip's face. Already the poison works. I have caused her to be informed of plots on the part of Creon and the discontented soldiery. Plots against her person and her state. To all of which she lent a ready ear, for she has outraged Creon too greatly not to fear him—always to fear him, till accident, or time shall have dug a grave between them. (*As NARSES enters, R. he crosses hastily towards him, extending both hands, and speaking in a low eager voice*) I read success in your eye! Give it me! (*as NARSES hesitates, looking furtively round, she grasps his sleeve angrily*) Surely you have it!

NARSES. It is here! (*he draws from, his vest the metal ease and chain which CREON in second act had placed around the neck of PHILIP.*)

MIRIAM. Quick! I am impatient till I hold it.

NARSES. If it costs half the trouble to hold, that it has cost me to obtain it, I can't say I envy the possessor.

MIRIAM. (*examining case with exultation*) How did you succeed after so many failures ?

NARSES. I bribed Philip's servant, a lad from Alexandria, who, while dressing his master for the grand reception of envoys, removed the bauble from his neck for a moment,—but a moment was enough to slip the counterfeit. I had prepared in its place. An excellent piece of smith's work, though I say it.

MIRIAM. The reward shall surpass your expectation. Henceforth you are attached to the private household of the empress.

NARSES. (*recoiling*) To the person of Theodora! have you forgotten.

MIRIAM. Nothing—it is she who consents to forget.

NARSES. (*going L. stage*) But my office ?

MIRIAM. Head jailor to the private prisons, (*seeing NARSES still hesitates*) It is better to turn a key on others than to have a key turned upon oneself. (*At NARSES exits L. another flourish of trumpets heard from back of stage*) She comes ! and all that might, nay would have proved Creon's tale to be true, I hold here in my hand! in mine ! (*she places the box and chain in her bosom, and comes down stage R. 1 E. The music at back grows louder and louder, and the galleries more crowded and animated. Other courtiers, male and female, range themselves on each side of the marble staircase, R. u. E. Then a party of gaily attired SOLDIERS descend scene—among them PHILIP, HIERAX, and ATHALARIC, the latter, with slight change of costume, still retains the semi-barbaric element.*)

HIERAX. (*to LEO, who comes mincing down, his manner full of affectation and importance*) And what kept you from the wars. Leo ?

LEO. The sun ! a man hasn't nourished his complexion thirty years to risk losing it in a fortnight.

PHILIP. (*laughing*) The sun! In Africa our laurels grew so quickly we never felt it.

LEO. And now Mars has come to take service in the court of Venus. A position to be envied.

PHILIP. Scarcely : a soldier should be blunt and honest. Truth in camps is seen full-faced ; she shows her profile only in a prince's antechamber!

LEO. (*aside to HIERAX*) And *this* is Creon's son ! (*significantly*) He is younger, *much* younger than I thought.

ATHA. For my part I seek fortune, and care not where I find it.

PHILIP. (*half disdainfully*) You are in the right road. The courtier is the only beggar who grows rich on mendacity.

ATHA. (*angrily*) How ?

LEO. (*interposing*) Hush! (*music again*) The emperor, and (*with enthusiasm*) the empress ! (*music continues, and, amidst a respectful murmur, THEODORA, on the right of the EMPEROR JUSTINIAN is seen descending the marble steps at back of scene. The murmur swells into a shout, then ensues a deep and respectful silence, as the emperor and empress come down stage, and seat themselves on throne, on the steps of which kneel two negro girls, clad in white and gold, holding censers full of perfume. LEO, advancing, kneels on one knee, a few steps from throne.*)

JUST. Your suit? On this great day we grant all petitions.

LEO. The humblest of your slaves solicits that your high magnificence deign to beautify with the smile of favour, a poor dance of his creation.

PHILIP. (L., *aside to HIERAX*) Is *this* the court language? Then *I* shall never learn it!

HIERAX. (*same tone, and placing hand on his arm*) Be wise, for Creon's sake!

THEODORA. (*aside to MIRIAM, who, in obedience to a gesture, has advanced so as to stand visible to audience, yet half concealed behind throne*) Which is the bold traitor you warned me of?

MIRIAM. Yonder! in conversation with the Captain Hierax.

THEODORA. (*movement of surprise*) That! that boy! (*after a pause, during which she regards PHILIP attentively*) Can treason thus wear the mask of honesty?

MIRIAM. (*coldly*) The instruments that Creon chooses are well chosen.

THEODORA. (*aside, and with a rapt expression*) Such a face might cozen Truth itself! a roble face! (*with sudden change of manner, and turning to LEO, who has risen*) We will see this entertainment you have to offer.

LEO. (*inclining*) Your slave's happiness is to obey. (*he steps back a little and motions with wand to dancers, who are now seen grouped at back, and who, at the signal, seem to float down the many staircases, and grouping in centre of stage, kneel with bent heads and hands crossed over bosom before the throne of the EMPEROR and EMPRESS.*)

PHILIP. (R., *his eye fixed on THEODORA*) And *that* is my mother! Is it possible that Falsehood can have so fair a dwelling?

MIRIAM. (*in PHILIP'S ear as the dancers incline before the throne*) Follow me.

PHILIP. (*drawing back*) Wherefore?

MIRIAM. For Creon's son to plead Creon's cause.

PHILIP. (*as they move up stage*) With whom?

MIRIAM. The Empress Theodora, (*as they disappear among crowd at side, the ballet commences—a wild voluptuous dance, half Greek half Asiatic. A combination of the quick grace of the one, with the soft and alluring warmth of the other: the dance concluded, the dancers again group before the throne and kneel, then rising with graceful reverences vanish as they came.*)

THEODORA. (*whose eyes have been seeking PHILIP*) Gone!

(to LEO, who has approached throne) The sunshine you desired, shall be golden, (she waves her hand, and LEO, with lowly obsequence, falls back as the EMPEROR rises, and offers his hand to THEODORA. The music again bursts forth as they pass up stage. THEODORA, as still searching with her eyes for PHILIP) I would that Creon had chosen another agent! (as they pass out, followed by the courtiers, &c, the curtains drop from, pillar to pillar, thus isolating scene, as indicated at commencement of act.) Music dying away in the distance. The scene has no sooner assumed the aspect of a private chamber, than the tapestry, concealing private door at back is pushed aside, and MIRIAM appears accompanied by NARSES—they are followed by EBAL, and several savage-looking Nubian slaves; the latter wear heavy copper ornaments, such as huge rings in the ears, &c.—EBAL, their chief, carrying a glittering steel axe, his assistants several coils of cord. EBAL and the three slaves, range themselves at back, and remain immovable as bronze statues, while MIRIAM and NARSES come down stage.\*

MIRIAM. (*disdainfully*) Is it for you to dispute the empress's commands ?

NARSES. (*bluntly*) When they so nearly concern myself, yes.

MIRIAM. A jailor must fulfil his office, Narses.

NARSES. Granted, as far as turning a key and rivetting a fetter goes, but when murder is thrown into the bargain, a man may be pardoned if—he raises the price.

MIRIAM. Murder ! who spoke of murder ?

NARSES. (*indicating EBAL and the Nubians*) What else do these men mean ? If men be a rightful term to apply to such children of Satan.

MIRIAM. Have you found a conscience, Narses ?

NARSES. (*laughs*) I have been to the wars, and there learnt the danger of encumbering oneself with superfluous baggage ; besides, what need I care when my confessor is a jolly monk who would wash the devil himself white, if he only supplied good liquor.

MIRIAM. You shall have enough to supply his monastery for a twelvemonth. You have my orders—stay without, (*pointing to door at back*) and there await the signal.

NARSES. Before such an argument, I can have no scruple (*up stage, and addressing EBAL, who has raised tapestry*

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NOTE.—In the make up of the coloured people in this drama, I pray the management to see that they are savage and *picturesque*, and not like *Ethiopian serenaders*.

*which conceals passage*) Good master Ebal you are the under, while I am the upper jailor, let every rank have its acknowledgments—so with or without your leave, I go first, by right of grade and colour.

*(The curtain has scarcely fallen behind the*  *when*  
THEODORA, *enters with a quick agitated step.*

MIRIAM. *(startled by her sudden appearance)* Your highness!

THEODORA. *(crossing to where she is standing, and laying her hand upon the JEWESS'S arm)* The boy ! where is this boy! Where is he ?

MIRIAM. He waits your pleasure.

THEODORA. Bid him enter, our interview must be brief, *(as MIRIAM is crossing the stage, she stops her by a gesture)* I have no reason Miriam to doubt your devotion to our person.

MIRIAM. Your highness knows that I have proved it.

THEODORA. *(speaking in absent way)* You have, and in an atmosphere where all is false, I trust alone in you. *(abruptly and turning towards MIRIAM)* Have you consulted the heavens as I bade you ?

MIRIAM. I have.

THEODORA. *(fearfully)* And found misfortune?

MIRIAM. No ! only the *menace* of misfortune ; as yet no star shines with a steadier light than thine.

THEODORA. Prom whence arises this danger ?

MIRIAM. From two things—weakness on your part, subtlety on Creon's.

THEODORA. *(eagerly)* Can the danger be averted ?

MIRIAM. It can. Have I not said the boy is *here*, *(she is moving across stage, when THEODORA, whose face and attitude express both doubt and indecision, speaks with a sort of shudder.)*

THEODORA. And the *others*, where are they?

MIRIAM. *(pointing meaningly to door by which NARSES has disappeared)* Your highness has but to strike upon that gong, and a dozen bands, remorseless as Death's, are there to work your pleasure.

THEODORA. *(gloomily)* Miriam! I sometimes think you hold commerce with Satan.

MIRIAM. *(short laugh)* It may be so. I study the human heart, *(moving across stage, she pauses, D. s. L.)* When the hammer falls for the first time on the gong, Philip is a prisoner, and when it falls a *second* time, the danger that menaces, has ceased —Philip is dead.

THEODORA. Dead!

MIRIAM. The impostor who calls himself your son! (*sits passes out, L. 2 E.*)

THEODORA. Who *calls* himself my son ! my son! What madness could have urged Creon to so wild a scheme—so this? *My* son ! I have wept over *his* tomb long ago—so long ago, that my eyes have almost forgotten the salt bitterness of a mother's tears. Yet each time that Memory recalls the little tomb—I could weep again! again! again ! (*with change of manner, and coming a little down stage*) Yes, Creon must be mad, to raise his puny hand against my greatness, to send this poor moth to beat its foolish life out against the splendour of a throne, (*with quick movement up stage*) Ah ! he is here!

(*The curtains are again parted down stage, and PHILIP enters. He stands diffident and respectful, his head slightly bent, as awaiting THEODORA to speak. She regards him for a moment with a haughty and menacing air, which softens into one of curiosity and compassion. She moves still further down stage, and motions him to approach. \**

THEODORA. Approach ! you are very young to have seen such service in the wars. It speaks well for your training.

PHILIP. (*advancing, and still with much respect*) I have striven to make my father's virtues mine—but too happy to fight behind his shield ! but too proud, if necessity were to die by his side !

THEODORA. (*abruptly*) Your birth-place ?

PHILIP. Pentapolis!

THEODORA. Ha! (*advancing a step and attentively regarding him.*) You are ambitious ; nay ! deny it not! Ambition is a fault pardonable in youth. You would rise at court ?

PHILIP. I would vindicate my place among men

THEODORA. To aspire is in itself great. What friends have you ?

PHILIP. But two.

THEODORA. Their names ?

PHILIP. Honesty and Desert !

THEODORA. (*smiling, but pityingly*) Foolish boy! you will find them but poor friends in such a world as this. Greatness neighbours neither.

PHILIP. False greatness may not, but true greatness cannot exist without them.

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NOTE—Every means should be used to give to the actor who represents Philip a youthful aspect. Light hair, slight blonde moustache, etc.

THEODORA. (*recoiling a step in much surprise*) And Creon sent you to Constantinople !

PHILIP. I do not understand your highness !

THEODORA. (*aside, and without heeding him*) And yet I know him crafty, (*aloud*) Speak boy ! what feeble-winged ambition urged you take service with this bold conspirator whose hopes are built upon my ruin ?

PHILIP. Creon has no such hopes! is no conspirator! He pleads through me to have removed the weary yoke of banishment. To have restored to him the privilege enjoyed by the meanest of your subjects—the privilege to die in the land that gave him birth.

THEODORA. (*ironically*) An advocate so carefully selected should hold peculiar powers if he is to annul a judgment decreed in solemn council, and approved of by the emperor, (*with change of tone into one of great hauteur*) By what right do you speak for Creon ?

PHILIP. (*raising head proudly*) By the right of nature. Strong in that right, I plead a father's cause—and plead it (*his voice falters and with deep emotion*) to a mother!

THEODORA. A mother ! (*aside*) Ah ! now Creon speaks.

PHILIP. (*with passionate emotion*) It was to look upon that mother's face, to hear, if only for once, the sound of that mother's voice that I crossed the sea, and entered for the first time, this proud city. It is for that I am now standing in your presence ! It is for that I am now kneeling at your feet! (*he kneels—she draws back—her manner surprised and agitated.*)

THEODORA. (*aside*) Strange! how such well studied words can still find an echo in my heart.

PHILIP. (*still kneeling, touches her robe as she is drawing back*) Oh, do not renounce that sacred name, which purifies the lips that utter it, and falls like a blessing on the ear !

THEODORA. (*turns with a startled expression—an expression, almost of fear*) Your proofs ?

PHILIP. This casket contains them, (*he takes the counterfeit box and, chain from neck*) It is unopened, as Creon placed it in my hands.

THEODORA. (*as she takes casket*) Rise !

PHILIP. Not till my prayer is granted.

THEODORA. (*haughtily, and with gesture of command*) I command you ! (*coldly*) it needs not such a posture to enhance your pleading.

PHILIP. (*rising*) Your highness must bear with me if my speech has not that silken smoothness which befits a princely ear, but my years have been spent amidst the

rough life of camps. I have never known the softening touch of woman's guiding hand, and it was only one little month ago I turned aside and wept in silence when mentioning my mother's name,—my father spoke of her as dead.

THEODORA. (*holding casket as yet unopened in her hand*)  
Speak on!

PHILIP. But when first he told me that my mother lived, a new life sprang up within me, and though I dared scarcely to avow it to myself—a new love.

THEODORA. (*aside and with emotion, as she gazes on PHILIP'S excited face*) I wronged Creon, the instrument was well chosen. The very witchcraft of persuasion dwells upon his tutored tongue (*aloud, as PHILIP draws back*) proceed! proceed!

PHILIP. I cannot, my heart is too full for words—I plead for Creon, and I am Creon's son.

THEODORA. (*with sudden and contemptuous coldness*) Enough ! you act your part well—the teaching has been good—and a lesson oft rehearsed runs glibly  the tongue, (*aside, as she moves a little up stage X.V.L.*) But for Miriam's warning this boy might be more than dangerous. A web of fine imposture skilfully woven, (*with a short hard laugh as she opens casket*) Now for the master spirit Creon!

PHILIP. (*watching her sadly as she draws paper from, casket, and reads*) Cold ! cold ! (*placing hand on one of the pillars*) Easier to melt this marble than touch her heart.

THEODORA. (*with a fierce triumphant laugh, and crumpling the paper in her hands, speaks aside*) This is insult! worse than insult! I seek for proof, and find only upbraiding for the past, and menace for the future (*with change of tone, and slightly throwing gaze upwards as she descends scene*) Oh ! pardon, my departed son, if Theodora's heart has quitted but for a moment thy little tomb ! (*as she crosses to where PHILIP is standing, she tears the paper into fragments, and casts them contemptuously at his feet*) There lies the scheme of Creon ! (*slightly softening tone at their eyes meet*) Is it you, poor boy, would raise it from the dust? (*checking PHILIP, as he is about to speak*) Be warned, your heart should be too young to be steeled by selfishness, or corrupted by gold. I would punish the traitorous hand, and not the passive instrument. Be wise, Philip, and trust in me! The game is played! (*pointing to fragments of paper*) and it has failed !

PHILIP. You are deceived.

THEODORA. (*with rising passion*) Boy! boy! it is you who are deceived! Creon hates me! yes, he hates me! and using you as his blind and confiding agent, would injure me—your queen!

PHILIP. (*sadly*) And mother!

THEODORA. (*impatiently, and moving a little up stage*) This folly passes endurance!

PHILIP. Your highness forgets-----

THEODORA. (*turning quickly*) Everything! but upon one condition—that you depart this city—nor, by remaining, bring down upon yourself the certain penalty of rashness.

PHILIP. (*calmly*) And that penalty?

THEODORA. (*with stern energy*) Death! death, swift and sure! struck by a hand which, though all may guess, the boldest dare not name!

PHILIP. And that hand?

THEODORA. My own! (*stretching out hand.*)

PHILIP. An assassination!

THEODORA. When Justice strikes an offender, it is called by another name,—an execution.

PHILIP. The power of life and death I know you have, yet one power is still left to me—the power to die!

THEODORA. (*walking stage, turns*) Do you threaten?

PHILIP. No! I implore.

THEODORA. (*aside and regarding his calmness with a growing agitation*) Miriam is again right. It would be folly to hesitate! (*approaching gong while she speaks*) The fanatic is the most dangerous enemy of all. (*same music as at commencement of act, begins to sound again, but as at a great distance, soft and flute-like.*)

THEODORA. (*standing erect, hut pale, and undecided close to the fatal gong*) You have demanded at my hands full justice! you shall have it. (*slightly raising curtain which conceals entrance of corridor at back*) Follow me!

PHILIP. (*advancing*) I will—blindly.

THEODORA. (*pausing with same startled uncertainty of manner*) And fearlessly?

PHILIP. (*smiling*) Blindly, and fearlessly!

THEODORA. (*as she draws aside curtain*) Pass first! (PHILIP obeys, as he passes through the archway—THEODORA raises the pendant hammer, and strikes upon the gong—before PHILIP can step back a mantle is thrown over his head by concealed men, of whom the hands and arms alone are seen—the tapestry again falls, and the tramp of heavy retreating feet, and clang of weapons is heard—THEODORA, her figure cowering into the folds of the tapestry with head bent as

*nervously listening*) The footsteps cease! he is gone! gone! (*lifting head*) This fragile reed that dared to defy the tempest of our wrath! (*moving a little from curtain*) Yes! the footsteps die away, and all is silence, (*with sudden movement of fear*) Have they killed him?—they dare not! (*coming still further down stage*) I dare not! This silence is horrible! (*with quick, frightened rush, up stage, she tears aside curtain and recoils before EBAL, whose dark figure stands in the doorway leaning on his gleaming axe—in the distance PHILIP is seen kneeling, his head still muffled in mantle—NARSES with Nubians stand around him—a gigantic Nubian with naked sword is prepared to strike—a blue light as from a hidden lamp throws a sinister gleam over this group—the more apparent from the gloom of the arched passage—THEODORA, as EBAL without speaking, touches axe*) No! (*with wild gestures of alarm*) Your lives shall answer for his! (*the curtain drops from her hand — and again conceals entrance—she turns her white face to audience.*) He shall not die! at least, not yet—not yet! (*with movement down stage, and again pausing irresolute*) Once dead! my fears die with him! I am forgetting Miriam's warning! (*coming down stage*) A lazy patience is a slow revenge! (*pointing to fragments of paper on ground*) such were the words that Creon dared to pen, and pen to me! to me! Mercy is folly and the boy must die! (*she has again moved up stage, and grasps the hammer of gong, twice she raises it, and each time hesitates*) I dare not! Creon's choice has been well made! Had my son lived—their years must have tallied to a day. (*again about to strike, she pauses with a shudder*) I dare not! No, I dare not. (*the hammer falls from her nerveless hand, and she leans, or rather falls back pale and breathless against wall—as she does so, the music, before faintly heard, grows louder—she listens at first vaguely as one in a dream—then the danger of her position seems to burst upon her, and with a stifled cry, she springs erect*) This guilt is Creon's! not mine! (*she snatches up the hammer and is about to strike—when the curtains U. s. L. are drawn swiftly aside, and LEO, with other COURTIERs, appear—at the same time, the music swells into power, and a gay procession is seen descending the staircases at back.*)

LEO. (*inclining low*) The emperor awaits your majesty!

THEODORA. (*who has allowed the hammer to fall silently beside gong, advances with a forced calmness and dignity*) We attend him! (*aside, as the courtiers make way with*

*lowly reverences*) How my heart beats ! Is it doubt or fear ?  
*(suddenly pausing, she glances round at the concealed entrance at back, and, with a stifled cry, half sigh, half groan, clutches at her breast)* It is fear! I know not why, but it is FEAR. ! *(the EMPEROR is seen descending the marble staircase, with attendants, amidst a murmur of voices and burst of joyous music.*

END OF ACT III.

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ACT IV.

THE REVOLT.

SCENE.—*Opens upon the Great Council Chamber in the Byzantine Palace—the Imperial throne, under a canopy, has only one seat, is very handsome, and is raised several steps—L. a portion of side of scene opens out upon a broad terrace from which is visible the Bosphorus, and the distant Asiatic shore—R. quite up stage but forming an angle, are arched folding doors — there should be an air of royal magnificence in the decoration. When the curtain rises JUSTINIAN is seated on throne, some of his Councillors gathered about him—others near window or on terrace. Shouts—hoarse murmurs, and the clang of arms heard as at a distance. A general confusion and panic is evident.*

1ST COURTIER. *(entering in alarm from terrace)* The revolt spreads. The eastern suburb is in flames—and they have fired the merchant's quarter.

2ND COURTIER. *(speaking from terrace)* On every side our troops give way! The traitor Creon heads the people while his associate Hierax marches on the Arsenal *(entering from terrace.)* The approaches to the palace are in the hands of the rebels, and-----*(noise as of a great tumult)* hark ! the siege commences ! *(the curtains are parted down stage, R. D. and LEO, pale breathless, his sword drawn, and his garments disordered, enters. There is a general movement, and grouping as of alarmed curiosity. LEO, at sight of the Emperor who has risen—pauses and kneels.)*

LEO. Pardon, great majesty this abrupt intrusion—but----- *(he hesitates.)*

JUSTINIAN. (*impatiently*) This is no time for ceremony. Speak, Leo ! from whence come you ?

LEO. (*at a gesture from JUSTINIAN rises*) From the Arsenal! I crept through the rebel ranks in disguise—and heard Creon propose to fire the city at each quarter.

(*General movement.*)

JUSTINIAN. Proceed!

LEO. (*hesitating*) I dare not! (*movement of impatience on part of JUSTINIAN*) All range themselves in Creon's ranks. The very factions join to support him, and the Imperial Guard now stand alone a frail barrier of steel between your majesty, and your majesty's enemies (*increased tumult without.*)

COURTIERS. (*gathering about throne*) Fly ! fly !

JUSTINIAN. (*repressing them, by a wave of the hand*) You have more misfortune still to unfold—I read it in your eye-----

LEO. May your servant speak and live ? (*gesture of JUSTINIAN*) Creon in the crowded Hippodrome has crowned Hypatius as Emperor.

JUSTINIAN. (*with passion*) 'Tis false ! you trifle with our majesty, (*restraining himself as LEO, overcome with fright, recoils, and falls again on one knee—a greater shout rises from without, and an officer of the Imperial Guard appears R. 2 E.*)

JUSTINIAN. What fresh alarm ?

OFFICER. (*advancing to throne*) Creon has forced the outer court, and threatens to fire the palace unless his son is rendered up to him.

JUSTINIAN. His son!

OFFICER. He declares him to be a prisoner in the dungeons of the palace.

JUSTINIAN. He is mad! I know of no such captive. (*tumult without.*)

COUNCILLORS, &C. (*crowding up to throne*) Fly ! fly ! your majesty, there is no safety here. (*JUSTINIAN, as overcome by their entreaty and the confusion about him, stands pale, and irresolute and is about to descend, when the great folding doors, U. S. R., are thrown open from, without, and*

THEODORA, crowned and wearing the Imperial robes, enters, attended by ATHALARIC, and a band of Goths. These latter have bare arms with steel bracelets—steel corslets, and cloaks of leopard skin. Their weapons, heavy battle axes—the double blades of the axe turning different ways—they remain drawn up without the threshold in ranks three deep—ATHALARIC alone with head uncovered, and leaning on his

*heavy mace, stands like a statue on the threshold. The startled assemblage retire backwards from steps of throne, and incline themselves respectfully as THEODORA sweeps past them, stopping only at the throne of the Emperor—before whom she bends, but only for a moment, her stately head.)*

JUSTINIAN. You are well arrived, Theodora ! We were about to seek you to share our flight.

THEODORA. Flight! (*drawing herself proudly up*) Were flight the only means of safety, I would disdain to fly.

JUSTINIAN. Theodora!

THEODORA. If you have resolved to fly, you have treasures ! you have ships! (*stretching out arm*) and the way yet lies open to the Sea. For my own part, I adhere to the maxim of antiquity, that the throne is a glorious sepulchre !

JUSTINIAN. Your Imperial Highness speaks boldly, but not well. Will words calm this vast sea of insurrection, whose waves are even now breaking against our palace gates ? (*tumult*) You hear ! the monster is eager for its prey. The danger that approaches-----

THEODORA. (*who has crossed stage towards terrace turns with a high disdain*) We must meet! Such is the counsel that should come from the lips of men!

JUSTINIAN. This is idle ! and we trifle with time. The danger you treat so lightly threatens no longer. It is here ! but one choice remains—death or exile !

THEODORA. (*with impetuous movement of arm, and passing a little down stage*) Peace ! peace, Justinian, know you not that exile is the death of kings ?

JUSTINIAN. (*as about to descend throne*) I would fly, Theodora-----

THEODORA. (*with passionate outburst*) Fly, then! (*illustrating her speech as it proceeds by voice and gesture*) And become that most pitiable of created things, a monarch discrowned. Live ! if such be life, to be pitied by each clay-brained serf, as you crawl a hunted fugitive through his wretched hamlet! Live ! to be stigmatised as one who, having all, yet lacked the skill to keep ! A shadow wanting substance ! one rich in many kingly gifts, yet who lacked the most king-like! (*her voice, which, as she speaks, increases in its power, rises to a grandeur of scorn*) the power to fall with dignity ! the knowledge when best to die !

JUSTINIAN. (*descending first steps of throne*) This passes patience.

THEODORA. (*drawing her figure proudly to its full height*)

For my own part, I am a queen, and accept suffering as the penalty of greatness.

JUSTINIAN. (*with anger*) Your Imperial Highness forgets!

THEODORA. (*who has advanced near throne upon the upper step of which JUSTINIAN is still standing irresolute*) That your favour made me what I am! It is that remembrance alone which gives me strength to keep you what you are. (*with a proud and regal gesture*) Above your head I hold, in my turn, the Imperial diadem, hold it with a hand unshaken by fear. Shall I withdraw that grasp? (*with a short scornful laugh*) Beware, O Caesar! the weight would crush you! (*tumult increases—shouts now plainly audible of "Creon Creon! death to the Empress! Death to Theodora!"*)

JUSTINIAN. (*as he descends steps of throne*) Listen, Theodora! They grow impatient, and their cry is blood! (*at JUSTINIAN descends from throne, THEODORA advances, and stands with one foot on the lower step.*)

THEODORA. My choice is made. Go, Justinian! safety awaits you on the Asiatic shore.

JUSTINIAN. (*imploringly*) Yet flight is easy!

THEODORA. (*with a lofty pride*) But death is easier still! (*she draws her robes about her, and slowly mounts steps of throne. She pauses on the step, and, standing erect, with one hand resting on the throne itself, turns to JUSTINIAN, LEO, and the COUNCILLORS, &c, group down stage, as awe-struck, and whisper together. Shouts again heard, as from a multitude: "Creon!—Creon!—Death to the Empress—Death to Theodora!"*) This throne which you desert shall be my tomb! This purple, your fears disgrace, shall be my shroud.

JUSTINIAN. (*moving a step down stage, then as startled by a fresh outbreak of cries,\* he pauses*) Theodora! Theodora! Death is at our gates!

THEODORA. (*with dignity of gesture, and seating herself on the throne*) Throw them wide then! and I will meet him as monarch should meet monarch—robed and crowned, (*sensation among COURTIERs, &c.—all are touched by the grandeur of her enthusiasm—There is a fierce movement among the SOLDIERs in doorway, and a clash of their weapons immediately suppressed by ATHALARIC.*)

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\* It is of importance that the drilling of these hidden mobs should be perfect.

JUSTINIAN. (*with burst of feeling*) Lion-hearted woman ! I can doubt no longer. *With you I will risk all—for without you I am nothing.*

THEODORA. (*rising*) It is now I recognise Justinian! (*she motions to ATHALARIC who has advanced a little down stage*) Retire and let your comrades know that Constantinople still holds its Emperor. (*ATHALARIC with respectful obeisance throws his heavy mace on shoulder, and steps back over threshold—the SOLDIEHS drop on one knee, and as they bend towards throne at a signal from ATHALARIC, the heavy doors swing back, and shut them, from scene—THEODOEA, as COURTIERS, &c, now full of a wild enthusiasm, draw their swords and crowd up stage*) My place is here at the footstool of my sovereign! (*she seats herself on step of throne, as JUSTINIAN resumes his seat and the COURTIERS, &c, group around. The tumult without increases as the Tableau is closed in by*

SCENE II.—*Descent into the private prisons of the Byzantine Palace. A steep flight of steps, a sort of huge winding staircase with low parapet begins from top, and continues beneath stage (this place should have a damp, gloomy look in contrast to the glitter and life of the previous scene)*

NARSES. (*calls from top*) Ebal! Ebal! (*descending slowly with a torch*) What has become of my friend of the axe and the cord ? The cold of this place makes one shudder I don't know where one is worst off—in the fighting and turmoil above, or in this ugly grave below ! Ebal ! Ebal! where can he have hidden himself? (*descending a few steps*) Ah ! there he is asleep! Well, every one to their taste, but if I were to sleep down here I should expect never to wake again. A little warmth will do him good ! (*descends a few more steps and pausing just over a sort of staircase which the low stone parapet conceals from audience—shakes out a shower of sparks from his torch—there follows a howl of pain, and the dark form of EBAL—the darker from the brightness of the copper bracelets and ear ornaments uprears itself with a bound.*)

EBAL. (*raising his axe, but lowering it suddenly as he recognises NARSES*) Do you think because a man's black he's made of iron ?

NARSES. Gently! gently ! respect your superior officer! (*rattling his bunch of keys*) witness these credentials.

EBAL. (*still sullenly, and pointing downwards*) You would see the prisons ?

NARSES. All in good time, (*he sticks torch in iron bracket which projects from wall half way up, and seats himself on low parapet, swinging one leg over carelessly, while the entire figure of EBAL is seen leaning against the wall in the full, red glare of the torch, examining the broad glittering blade of his axe. The light of the torch—the savage figures of the men and rude 'abandon' of their attitudes giving a Salvator look to the scene. NARSES, starting and looking round*) What noise is that ?

EBAL. Water dripping from the walls and roof. I can tell almost the number of drops that fall in a day. When I'm lonely I amuse myself by counting them.

NARSES. *When you are lonely!* are you ever otherwise ?

EBAL. Ah ! I see you're new to your office, (*grinding his axe slowly on ledge of parapet*) I'm rarely without company, and of the best, too. They come in, and they go out. In at the door, and out into the Bosphorus. (*laughs and grinds axe significantly.*)

NARSES. (*rising*) Stop ! you set one's teeth on edge. What hour is it ?

EBAL. How should I know ? Midday or midnight, it's the same down here. Anything fresh going on above ?

NARSES. Fresh ! there's something very like rebellion, that's all. You'll have many coming your way.

EBAL. There's space, and to spare; besides, when crowded, (*touching axe*) I make room ! Times are slack, and though I keep a sharp edge to my axe—my arm gets stiff from being idle.

NARSES. Eight comrade—'tis a squeamish age, and now a woman grows pale at a drop of what used to be poured out in buckets full on the sand of the arena. My father fought in the amphitheatre — both with javelin and buckler, and but for the foolish edict that abolished the people's games, *I*, his son would have fought there also—for 'tis better to be carving a brave man's flesh than to be wasting one's strength upon hammering steel and iron.

EBAL. Your father was a Roman—Narses the flesher—I've heard speak of him.

NARSES. Speak of him! all Rome spoke of him. He was a sight to see when the scent of blood got into his nostrils. By Mars ! I mean by blessed St. Mathew ! he had in him more of the tiger than the man, and it warms my heart as a son to speak of him.

EBAL. Did he die in the Circus ?

NAESES. Where else! what honest man with a reputation would wish, to die in his bed. I was there with my mother,

and three brothers, when he was killed after slaying three of his opponents. Even how I can hear the roar and shout of the multitude, as with the sweat of death upon his face, and the red foam on his lip he rolled his glazing; eyes round the amphitheatre until they rested on the Emperor, then tugging from his side the blade by which he had received his death wound, he waved it above his head, with a shout that was echoed back by the people, and toppled over with a crash, like a bull in the shambles. It was a proud day for us, and our mother gave us a double measure of wine from a jar that was sent her as a compliment from the Prefect's own table.

EBAL. A right good sort of woman---

NARSES. A woman from Ravenna, who, but for her sex might have herself fought with credit in the arena. I've seen her when her blood was up, and she was easily moved, split a table into splinters with a blow of her fist—fist! the blow of a cestus was nothing to it. (*removing helmet*) You see this scar—'tis deep enough to lay a finger in. Well, she did that one day with a back-handed tap, and though, fortune be praised! I've as thick a scull as most men—she laid it open as easily as if it had been a pomegranate, (*replacing helmet and wiping eyes.*) She was a mother of ten thousand.

EBAL. Did she take on much for the loss of your father ?

NABSES. (*contemptuously*) She ! within a week after she was married to Leonidas, a Geek gladiator. No! no ! comrade, ~~See~~ a woman don't go a-begging, (*a shrill whistle heard, as from, above.*)

NARSES. (*hastily, and snatching down torch*) That's the signal!

EBAL. Who do you expect?

NARSES. The Empress !

EBAL. Ah ! I understand—the boy !

NABSES. How does he bear himself ?

EBAL. Like a man. I left him sleeping calmly but an hour ago.

NAESES. Hush ! take the torch ! the Empress is here !

(*NARSES hurries up steps and disappears. There is a noise as of the falling of a chain, and the opening of a door. He reappears and descends steps. He is followed by THEODORA, who is enveloped in a mantle, a bright light falling on her figure, as from, some one holding a torch above.*)

THEODORA. (*pausing as her glance falls upon the savage figure of EBAL, who has descended, and is now seen breast*

*high holding the torch*) I have seen yon fellow before! what is he?

NARSES. The headsman.

THEODORA. *(with a shudder)* Bid him move on! he has a fearful aspect *(as they pass out of sight)*

SCENE III. *opens, and discovers the interior of a vast dungeon. Its vaulted roof supported by massive pillars, against one of which, R. 2 E. PHILIP is discovered, chained and asleep. He is reclining upon a rough stone bench, the light of an iron lamp falling upon his figure and face. In the background a flight of steps lead to a sort of gallery—there is a sound of the unlocking of a door at the end of this gallery L., and EBAL appears with torch. He is followed by THEODORA, who descends steps alone. NARSES dressing back scene by standing at end of gallery, R., with keys. The scene has a weird aspect as THEODORA, throwing aside the heavy mantle, advances slowly down stage, her figure illuminated by the light of EBAL'S torch. She pauses near the couch of the sleeper; then, after gazing upon him earnestly and almost fearfully, motions with her hand to EBAL, who inclines head, and, re-passing noiselessly along gallery, disappears with NARSES from scene.*

THEODORA. *(advancing very slowly)* And this, too, is an enemy! this boy, who comes to play the Judas with a kiss! *(attentively regarding him)* How soundly he sleeps! and yet, *(she gazes around, huddling herself together with a shudder)* this is a terrible resting-place for those who would have quiet dreams. He smiles, too, in his sleep! and what a smile! *(she retreats a step or two, passing her hand across her forehead, as overcome for the moment by some painful recollection)* It seems like a memory that brightens all the past, *(again advancing)* And yet there are lines of pain about the mouth, and thoughts that creep like shadows through the sunshine of the face, *(she sighs, and a tone of soft compassion thrills through her voice)* For you, too, the world has already begun its cruel teaching. How handsome he is! Had my son lived I could have wished him no better face. My son! my son! *(she repeats the word with a kind of rapturous but awe-struck whisper)* Would that it *could* have been! then I! No! *(with intense feeling)* There would be no longer *I* nor you, *(with an infinite tenderness, and extending her hands towards the sleeping PHILIP)* but only WE! Two beings and one

soul, *(recovering her composure by an effort, and with a half smile, as of self mockery)* It is I who am dreaming now!

PHILIP. *(moving in his sleep)* Creon ! ah! I knew you would not desert me, Creon!

THEODORA. *(a little down stage—As she listens her eye flashes—she draws herself erect, and her hard, proud manner returns)* Creon ! yes, it is this Creon, this Creon! who would emulate the Titans and war with Destiny ! But the force he would use shall be turned against him. The rock he would upheave shall fall, and in its fall crush all his schemes for ever, *(a momentary pause, as of hesitation; then, raising her head and throwing wide her arms, as scattering all doubt)* Remorse ! I know it not! Pity ! I cast it from me ! my heart is adamant, *(she extends her hand, as grasping a sceptre)* and my hand is iron ! *(with changed stern look she turns again towards PHILIP)* The revolt spreads, while Creon proclaims this scandal—this scandal that must be silenced, *(the moves rapidly some steps up stage, as about to summon some one; pauses, returns with a slower step, as drawn against her will, and by some magnetic influence to PHILIP's couch)* Yes! the imposture must be unveiled! *(with a quick triumphant movement)* Ah ! I have it! Why not strike the conspirator with his own weapon, and through Creon's agent *(indicating PHILIP)* denounce the falsehood of Creon ? This boy is too young to readily part with life, and to have lent himself to such a scheme, must be ambitious, *(with a growing exultation in face and manner)* He is mine ! either by his vanity or his fear, he is mine! *(she touches the sleeper)* Awake ! awake ! time presses ! awake!

PHILIP. *(starts, then springs to his feet)* My armour, give me a sword ! I am here, father ! *(he endeavours to move forward, hut, checked by the chain, half falls back on couch, and gazes around him in a bewildered manner)* Where am I ?

THEODORA. *(attentively watching each movement)* In the Byzantine Palace !

PHILIP, *(again staggering to his feet and speaking vaguely)* Palace ?

THEODORA. Look around you, *(watching him attentively)* Have you no fear ?

PHILIP. *(after gazing around)* No! for I am the son of Creon *(with a bitter smile)* and you are my mother *(with cold irony)* I thank you for the princely lodging you have provided for your son.

THEODORA. (*impatently*) Enough of such folly ! (*her tone softens with all the skill of the actress into one of persuasive tenderness.*) 'Tis a cruel errand—they have sent you on, poor boy! They have dazzled you with the deceitful mirage of greatness while they have concealed the stern reality.

PHILIP. How so?

THEODORA. Does this place speak no lesson ? The foundation of a palace is a prison—beneath the splendour of the throne is the darkness of the grave, (*she sighs.*)

PHILIP. (*surprised*) Are you not happy ?

THEODORA. Happy ! If it is happiness to eye every face with distrust—to start at every voice—to shrink from every hand, *then* I am happy. If it be happiness to know that each face around me wears a mask, that each nattering lip speaks a lie, and to see ever hovering about my couch that shadowy terror—the assassin's knife, *then* I am happy ! (*sinking her voice, and with a convulsive shudder*) Oh ! believe me, Philip, such are the fears that hem about a throne.

PHILIP. (*eagerly*) Resign it then !

THEODORA. (*recoiling*) Resign it! (*with bitter disdainful laugh*) Resign it! Think you that I who have sacrificed all to gain this thing could part with it so lightly ? I have tasted power ! It has been to me as blood to the cub of the tigress and awakened all the *hidden* instincts of my nature. I have tasted and ----- (*she throws her arms out with a hungry wildness.*) I crave for MORE !

PHILIP. (*sadly*) Unhappy woman !

THEODORA. (*with a rapid change of manner*) You pity me ! you will aid me, then ? you will aid me to unmask the falsehood of Creon ?

PHILIP. (*firmly*) No.

THEODORA. Around these vaults ! this tomb ! are gathered the ready instruments of my will, (*as she speaks the clang of steel and clash of weapons are heard as from, the chambers above.*) You hear?

PHILIP, (*the sounds continue*) I hear.

THEODORA. And tremble not ?

PHILIP. (*smiles*) From boyhood my cheek has flushed, not paled at the clank of steel, (*as he speaks a figure completely enveloped in a dark mantle and, carrying a naked sword, appears on gallery at back, R. to L. —pauses for a moment as attentively regarding THEODORA and PHILIP—then unperceived by either passes quickly along—descends steps and is lost in the obscurity of the dungeon.*)

THEODORA. What harm have I done you, that you join with Creon to stir up the rabble of this pampered city to revolt against our person and our throne ?

PHILIP. (*with start of surprise*) Creon in Constantinople!

THEODORA. (*rapidly, not heeding the interruption*) But you—you whose mission was to ruin, shall live to save ! The people demand Creon's son. This fickle people whom a breath can move, a word can change ! Come forth with me, Philip ; and in the face of this mad multitude, confess the cheat, and proclaim the imposture of Creon ! Come !

PHILIP. I ?

THEODORA. Philip ! Philip ! You are in the toils, and my hand alone can guide you to a path of safety.

PHILIP. What is it that you offer me ?

THEODORA. Freedom! and with it wealth and honours (*as PHILIP moves slightly back she lays her hand entreatingly on his sleeve*). Reflect unhappy boy ! You are beyond even the hope of succour! The threshold of these dungeons once crossed, but few repass ! A word will save you, and yet that word you refuse to utter!

PHILIP. I refuse.

THEODORA. (*half clinging to him, her voice rising into an agony of supplication*) You refuse—yet hope to live.

PHILIP. You have said, and said truly—I am without hope !

THEODORA. And so young! (*moving a little up stage—a terrible indecision depicted upon her face*) So young and so brave!

PHILIP. I make but one request (*as THEODORA turns towards him hopefully and quickly*) Let Creon know I died worthy to be his son !

THEODORA. (*with passionate outburst and giving way to the full violence of her character*) Creon! you do ill to remind me that it is Creon who would step between me and a throne—who would degrade that Imperial purple it is my pride to wear ! (*she calls*) Narses! Narses! (*turning with all her old dominant fierceness towards PHILIP*) Blame your own folly, insolent boy, if I leave others to enforce the commands of Theodora! (*moving a little up stage she pauses*) Reflect! (*PHILIP turns sorrowfully away*) Be it so ! (*she calls*) Narses ! (*again turning to Philip, this time with a gesture of menace*) and may Heaven judge between us two !

VOICE. (*from behind*) Between us THREE ! wicked and remorseless woman, be Heaven the judge ! (*the cloaked figure has suddenly advanced from behind pillar, and now stands, between THEODORA and PHILIP.*)

THEODORA. *(starting back as the cloak falls to the ground)*  
Creon!

PHILIP. My father!

CREON. The palace is in the hands of the people, and Theodora is Creon's prisoner.

THEODORA. Creon's!

CREON. Yes! look on me well, cruel and deceitful woman! and see if you can recognise in this worn face, in which every furrow speaks a care—in these scant and grizzled locks, aught of the Creon you once knew. Nay, do not shrink away, *(he grasps her by the arm, so as to compel her to look into his face)* I am that unjustly banished, and persecuted man—but the hunted has become the hunter, the pursued has turned upon the pursuers—the quarry has soared above the falcon, and in its turn swoops down triumphant! *(he holds his hand over her, letting it descend as a hawk that swoops. Moved as by a magnetic influence she cowers for a moment at his feet.)*

PHILIP. *(with eager gentleness)* Mother, I entreat-----

THEODORA. No! *(arising as PHILIP approaches her)* entreat me nothing! *(turning with a fierce disdain to CREON)* Work out your will, *(pointing to sword he holds in hand)* Strike, and spare not! if but one word of supplication, but one! would save my life I would not utter it to you. Go Creon! you are not victor yet, for though you may fetter these limbs—or quench the life that gives them motion—you cannot bend the head, you cannot subdue the heart!

CREON. Tempt me no further, desperate and foolish woman. Remember who, and *where* you are.

THEODORA. I do, and know that I am THEODORA!

CREON. Nor blush to know it?

THEODORA. Blush! to know that the whole of this vast world has done homage to my sway—that the sceptre of all the Caesars has been held easy as a willow wand in my hand. If that I blush it is to think that I have ever been the plaything of Creon's leisure hour—or the tool as he would have me of his ambition! *(as CREON is about to speak)* No more! Fortune has shifted her balance for a while—I grant you the power to inflict—for myself I claim the power to endure, *(she extends her wrists with proud disdain as EBAL advances at a gesture from, CREON with some light fetters in his hand—as he is about to place them on her wrists he is struck aside by PHILIP, who takes centre between THEODORA and CREON.)*

PHILIP. Creon! father! *(imploringly)* This must not be.

CREON. Must not?

PHILIP. Shall not.

CREON. (*coldly*) You forget your duty, Philip-----

PHILIP. My duty to those who gave me birth—you are my father—and (*half turning to THEODORA, he indicates her sadly, but respectfully*) have yourself dictated the duty I also owe elsewhere, (*while the scene progresses people pass along the gallery—descend and dress scene.*)

CREON. (*slightly recoiling*) You cannot love this woman!

PHILIP. The voice of Nature is the voice of Love.

CREON. Away! I cannot talk—the sight of this cruel woman drives me mad, and makes my blood a fever, (to THEODORA) Insensate fool! urge me no further, (*as THEODORA extends her hands with imploring gesture*) think of the past! and tremble!

THEODORA. (*with change of manner*) Tremble! The past! what is the past to me! I am no coward to be ever glancing over my shoulder—yet I am the wife of Caesar—and if I must look back it shall be to remember how he who first bore that glorious name confronted death—proudly veiling the agony of his noble face even while the daggers of the assassins were clashing in his side. He fell like a MAN! like a KING! and I accept the example.

CREON. I would save you; yes—I would save you, Theodora, (*after a moment's hesitation*) Follow me!

THEODORA. (*drawing back*) For what?

CREON. To proclaim to the victorious people, your son and mine. Do this! or by all that men fear in heaven, or hold dear on earth you shall not live! (*noise increases without.*) Decide and quickly—choose between life and death.

THEODORA. (*with a grand and disdainful pride*) Death! with all the torture that your malice can invent, for were I even less than what I am, I would refuse the gift of life—ay, were it life eternal—at such a price.

PHILIP. (*imploringly*) Your life! (to CREON) Father bethink you-----

THEODORA. My life! he dare not take it. Bold traitor, as he is, the glitter of the crown I wear would palsy his hand with fear.

CREON. Dare not—listen! (*noise at back increases.*)

THEODORA. To what! those fickle slaves—whose breath may shake but rarely destroys a throne, (*with scorn*) Why, it was but yesterday they crouched before the walls they now threaten—and to-morrow let but a strong hand grasp the whip they will crouch in the dust again. The

ferocity of the tiger I know them to have—but it is wedded to the cowardice of the antelope.

HARPAX. (*appearing at back on gallery*) Creon !

CREON. What news ?

HARPAX. The people murmur and call for "Creon!" while the troops prepare for a fresh assault.

CREON. I come! (*to EBAL, &C.*) secure that woman.

THEODORA. (*breaking from those who approach to hold her*) Creon ! (*she grasps his sleeve as he moves up stage*) I do not ask your pity—but reflect ere you refuse me such treatment as befits an Empress.

CREON. (*pausing in centre*) Thou ! thou an Empress—yes an Empress of the Circus—with tinsel sceptre, and diadem of straw! 'twas I—I—who raised thee from thy low condition to dare the height of greatness and may all the curses which wronged men have breathed 'gainst wicked women light on thee ! (*to EBAL*) Look to her! (*to PHILIP.*) Take this sword—a brave man's acts alone speaks for him—he plays a losing game with Fortune who idles time in words. Come!

THEODORA. (*grasping CREON'S arm and in a plaintive voice*) Creon! Creon ! do not leave me with these terrible men! do not leave me to die in darkness ! let me have light that all may see with how brave a front a woman can face her agony (*clinging to him as he still moves up stage*) At least let the victim choose her grave. I am an Empress—the Empress Theodora ! and I would have Byzantium for my urn—and a crumbling world to mix with my ashes. (*her voice rising in her desperate appeal*) Man! man! you shall not leave me here—here amidst gloom and silence—let me SEE the fate that awaits me. It is the uncertainty that is most hard to bear.

CREON. (*wresting his sleeve from her grasp—thrusts her from him with such violence that she staggers back some steps, and falls into the arms of PHILIP*) Convey her to the tower that overlooks the city—and there—till fortune decides the day—let her survey the anarchy her pride and cruelty has created, (*to PHILIP and others*) Come ! the fate of Hypatius rests upon our swords. His prize is Empire, (*he mounts stage while speaking*) Mine REVENGE. (*he points with sword to THEODORA, who makes a rapid movement up stage with an imploring gesture—but shrinks back with a frightened cry, before the levelled lances of the SOLDIERS, and is caught in the arms of PHILIP*)

PHILIP. Mother! (*THEODORA draws a little from him with*

*a look of surprise and alarm—then as a fierce shout is heard from behind—clings to him.)*

THEODORA. Save! save me, Philip! *(with an hysterical sob)* Save me from myself. *Tableau and*

END OF ACT IV.

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ACT V.

MOTHER AND SON.

SCENE FIRST. — *Interior of an apartment in one of the towers of the Byzantine Palace—a series of arches placed in a semi-circle, open out upon a flat terrace or balcony, without balustrade, from, which is seen the domes, roofs, spires, and turrets of the city of Constantinople—the interior of the tower is decorated with much luxuriance—on a table L., is placed an Imperial crown, while, lying upon the floor and half reclining upon a low ottoman, or pile of stuffs, her person clad in white, but partially shrouded by the purple robe, is*  
THEODORA—*doors side of stage covered with tapestry—the apartment is in half light—an Asiatic sky—dark blue and star-lit—a sudden flash of red light arises, which, for a moment, completely illuminates scene—these flashes continue fitfully at first, while, as from a distance and far down, arises the hoarse murmur of a great multitude. As the scene progresses the interior of the tower becomes pervaded by the fiery glow—the distinct pinnacles, domes and turrets, as seen from the open arches, change their aspects continually as representing the progress of a vast conflagration—THEODORA rising slowly totters towards the window, her step is feeble, her figure bent as by sudden decrepitude, and she leans for support upon the various articles of furniture as she passes them—arrived at the arches she pauses, leaning against one of the supports, a cluster of slender pillars—gazes down at the increasing conflagration.*

THEODORA. *(extending her hand slowly and speaking in*

*the deep voice of concentrated hate*) Burn! burn ! ungrateful and perfidious city! Could weeping save even but one of thy stately domes and palaces, I would not shed a tear ; but Creon conquers, and holds me a prisoner here, here! like some wild beast in its cage, *(turning, she begins to pace the room with the restless fierceness of a wild animal)* Oh ! I could tear ! tear ! and rend these weak limbs that lack the power to enforce my will; that constrain me to rest here while Belisarius and Athalaric with their faithful troops still rally round the Emperor, and battle like lions for the crown, *(pacing room)* A prisoner! a prisoner! and a prisoner to HIM !!! *(suddenly drawing herself erect, her face irradiated by the red light, which gradually increases)* Creon, Creon! strive as you will, leave as you may this great city a heap of smouldering ashes, and slay my adherents to a man, yet alone, a captive in this deserted tower—a woman, imprisoned and despised—my mind still soars superior to my fortune ! *(she sweeps her arm round with a gesture of superb disdain)* They have surrounded me with a circle of fire, but scorpion-like, I carry with me a sting by which I can liberate myself, *(taking from, her bosom a small dagger, she approaches table—it shall be this or—laying her hand upon the Imperial diadem, THIS ! she replaces the dagger in her bosom and moves slowly up the stage)* But for the boy I had felt its point ere now—the boy! *(her whole manner softens as she speaks)* 'Twas he who stood between me and ruffian hands ; 'twas he who shielded me from the ruffian taunts, and when one rebel bolder than the rest, would have laid his hand upon my shoulder, 'twas he who struck him to the earth, whispering, in tones audible alone to me, "Fear not, mother ! My life shall stand between you and insult." Mother! ah! I dare not think what might have been had there been aught of truth in that most sacred word, *(with short mocking laugh)* I must be going mad, I think. Even had not Miriam warned me, the imposture was too transparent, *(tumult increases)* What shouts were those ? *(moving swiftly towards window)* The fire has gained the palace, and under cover of the flames, the faithful Athalaric has made a fresh assault. They would force the gates. From every side they swarm. And, hark! the cry still is, Justinian and the Empress. How the flames leap along—how they dart and quiver, *(with fierce exulting laugh)* fire itself fights for me. *(she stands nearly out upon the flat narrow terrace, her tall white robed figure brought into strong relief by the broadening glare of the fire)* They come, they come !

my deliverers—through the very heart of the flame like a torrent—over the burning ruins—flooding the narrow streets, they come, they come; and now they burst like a billow 'gainst the tottering gates, (*the stage suddenly darkens, and she bends forward eagerly*) A murky cloud hangs like a gathering pail above them. Ah! Now it breaks, we triumph—brave Belisarius—brave Athalaric. They fire the gates—from every side they swarm, (*she laughs wildly*) The gates are forced, and I am FREE ! ! (*her voice which has risen into a scream, drops as suddenly and with bosom heaving and eyes half closed, she sinks back against column, pale, breathless, and exhausted. She recovers herself slowly, and speaks at first in lower tones as she continues to watch the fight, then with her enthusiasm her strength returns, and she accompanies each word with an expressive gesture*) They bear back the rabble with their spear points! well done, my faithful Goths—these traitorous Greeks go down before the children of the North as grass before the rush of the buffalo, (*she takes a step back, her voice and gestures full of sudden alarm*) 'Tis he ! the boy Philip ! How his face glows in the red light! his sword plays round his head like lightning, and he alone dares to face that terrible rush! (*she starts forward with a passionate gesture to the very edge of terrace*) Fool! fool! would you cross weapons with the giant Athalaric ? Back ! back ! for your life ! (*her arms which are raised drop to her side*) A brave boy ! be his mother who she may ! (*a moment of silence followed by a sharp cry on her part*) He is down! David has gone down before the glaive of Goliath! Athalaric raises his axe ! (*she sinks upon her knees, supporting herself upon one hand, the other extended almost prostrate in her frenzied eagerness*) Hold ! hold your hand I say ! man! man ! it is the Empress who commands you. Are you mad ? (*rising as she speaks*) Alas ! it is I who am mad to dream my voice could reach them from here .... Creon! yes ! it is Creon! he comes leaping over the dying and the dead ! now he bestrides the boy, and .... I have one faithful servant the less! Athalaric is dead and Philip saved ! (*a short pause*) Creon retreats, but bearing off the boy. They are down ! no, he is up again and fighting to the last—the pursuers give back and—they are gone! (*she staggers and raises her hands nearly to her forehead*) How the fire rages ! It is a city in its agony ! the atmosphere is stifling ! the walls tremble! and in the distance I hear the crash of falling roofs, (*while she speaks a dome and cluster of pinnacles which have been prominent*)

*objects in the ever changing light crumble in and go down with a crash—tongues of flame at the same time are seen to run serpent-like along balcony and up pillars of arches) The tower is in flames ! they are setting ladders to the wall! (she recoils from balcony and comes quickly down stage to table, R.) They come ! (placing her hand on the Imperial diadem) And I am no longer a lioness deprived of fangs and claws—an empress uncrowned! (she places diadem on her head and lifting the purple robe draws it proudly about her as NARSES and SOLDIERS besmirched with smoke and battle, scale five, now crumbling terrace and crowd through arches. At sight of THEODORA'S erect and stately figure, the SOLDIERS halt and draw back.)*

NARSES. *(alone advances, and uncovering head drops on one knee) Long live the Empress! (a triumphant flourish of trumpets from below—as the sound dies away THEODORA advances a few steps as about to speak, then sinks upon the couch in a swoon, NARSES springs to his feet and the SOLDIERS advance confusedly amidst the glare of the advancing fire. Tableau closed in by*

SCENE II.—*Among the rocks upon an eminence in the neighbourhood of Constantinople—A desert-looking background ; the broad red streaks of an Eastern dawn, its line cut by the dim outline of palm trees, and ruins—(The broadening of these streaks and the gradual increase of light, can be easily and most effectively managed.)*

MIRIAM and LEO enter with several SOLDIERS, hurriedly, L.

MIRIAM. It was near here I lost them ; among those ruins, *(pointing R.)*

LEO. They cannot have gone far, the horse that Creon rode, we found dead in the plain. He must have taken to these rocks for shelter, you are sure the boy was wounded ?

MIRIAM. *(moving up stage) Sure.*

LEO. A brave fight the old lion made for his whelp, I can tell you—a very brave fight. I had an idea of crossing steel with him myself.

MIRIAM. *(who is moving about as searching, turns contemptuously) You! you cross steel with Creon, were you mad ?*

LEO. No ! that's just what I was not; so when I saw Athalaric go down, without the slightest possibility of his getting up again, I thought better of it. It was by the Emperor's own command, I joined in the pursuit, *(sound of merry girlish voices off R.)* What noise is that? Are these sterile places inhabited ?

MIRIAM. By goatherds only, a hardy and simple race, who take as little heed of what is passing in yon furnace of a city, as though they herded their goats in the furthest deserts of Arabia.

LEO. They are coining up the path.

MIRIAM. To welcome the first beams of the rising sun, it is a custom they have.

LEO. (*alarmed*) Are they pagans ?

MIRIAM. (*carelessly*) Possibly! Though they eat, drink, sleep and quarrel pretty much the same as you Christians do. (*soft flute music as accompaniment*) Listen ! they are beginning their matin hymn.

*A woman's voice sings off stage, L.*

Sound ! softly, sweetly sound,  
A welcome to the morn,  
The rose-lipp'd light,  
That chasing night,  
Proclaims the day new born!

*Chorus of fresh girlish voices.*

Sound ! softly, sweetly sound,  
A welcome to the morn!

MIRIAM. (*touching LEO on the arm*) They come this way. Lead off your men behind that mass of rock, (*pointing off R. u. E.*) I will question these people, and try what magic gold has, even upon those who scarcely know its use, or how to spend it. Quick ! they are here.

(*As LEO and SOLDIERS exeunt R.—A troop of GIRLS, goatherds, enter joyously R. 1 E., and without perceiving MIRIAM, who draws back in the shadow of the rocks.*)

1ST GIRL. (*mounting on fragment of rock as looking down, upon plain*) What keeps these laggards ?

2ND GIRL. (*peering down path*) I see Hippo and Paul, and dumb Silax, the hunchback.—(*bells.*)

1ST GIRL. And now I hear the bells, but faintly, faintly. (*waving her naked arms as beckoning, she sings*)

#### SONG.

Herdsmen slumb'ring 'neath the rocks,  
Hither, hither, lead your flocks,  
From ruin grey and mossy cell,  
Comes the sound of goatherd's bell.

Hark ! hark! how silvery clear,  
 Now they chime upon the ear,  
 On each side the chorus swells,  
 List! the music of their bells !  
 List ! the music of their bells!

*(Goat bells heard in the distance, L., and rough voices take up the first chorus.)*

*(GOATHERDS, rough primitive-looking fellows, crowd in L. ; they mingle with the GIRLS, and turn towards the gradually broadening lines of dawn. The same flute-like music as before, with silvery bell accompaniment.)*

1ST GIRL. *(sings)*

Sound! softly, sweetly sound,  
 A welcome to the morn,  
 The rose-lipp'd light,  
 That chasing night  
 Proclaims the day new born!

*(Chorus of men and women's voices.)*

Sound ! softly, sweetly sound,  
 A welcome to the morn.

MIRIAM. *(who has advanced among them as song ceases)* Which of you would gain a handful of gold pieces.

1ST GIRL. *(leaning on arm of GOATHERD)* A handful of gold pieces. Why Hippo that would buy cheese and milk for a twelvemonth.

HIPPO. *(laughing)* With a trinket in the bargain, *(to MIRIAM)* And what's the service ?

MIRIAM. Two fugitives are known to be hidden among these rocks—they have claimed the hospitality of the plains and-----

HIPPO. *(hastily)* Come! brothers! *(all moving off but SILAX the hunchback who stands far back)* Such gold would scorch our fingers, *(they pass out, R. 1 E. and the sound of the silvery goat bells are heard, as descending rocks. The whole scene has brightened into day.)*

MIRIAM. *(with bitter laugh)* Honesty also is a native of the rocks! so bright a light should have a shadow—ha! *(the hunchback who has approached her, touches her arm, and points to purse she holds in her hand)* You know the hiding place! *(he nods)* And will lead me there, *(he draws back and points to purse)* Take it all! *(he clutches it, and moving*

to L.U.E. beckons her to follow him—MIRIAM as she passes out) I see man's selfishness is a weed that grows everywhere ! go on fellow ! I owe you much—you have confirmed me in a creed. *(Exeunt, L. U. E.)*

SCENE THIRD.—*A picturesque assemblage of ruins—grand, and desolate. The country stretches far away till in the extreme distance is seen a panorama of Constantinople and the Golden Horn—the sea is glittering in the rays of the rising sun—beneath the ruins yawns the gloomy interior of a vast cavern—its roof supported on rough hewn pillars, cutting the stage in two with its rugged arch—the sun illuminates first the distant sea, and then the ruins—its rays, penetrating through the fissures in the roof of the cavern, falls upon a rude cross built up of fragments of rock, and an altar formed of rough stones—at the foot of which PHILIP is lying upon a couch formed of broken branches—while near him, on some loose stones which have become detached from the altar, CREON is seated—his head bowed over his clasped hands—his eyes rivetted on the face of his son—and his whole attitude one of extreme sorrow—PHILIP is sleeping uneasily and it is apparent that he has been severely wounded—the group is so touched by the descending sun rays, as to be brought out with telling effect from the gloom of the cavern—At back, a flight of rude steps wind up-wards—the entrance above concealed by brushwood, R.*

CREON. He wakes ! *(leaning forward, and looking eagerly into his face)* No ! Will nothing rouse him ? Philip ! Philip ! my son !

PHILIP. *(raising his head with smile)* Father!

CREON. How is it with you now ? *(kneeling beside him and raising his head)* There, does that ease you? Do you suffer still ?

PHILIP. No. *(suddenly, and laying his hand on CREON'S arm)* What is this veil between us—it grows darker and darker—a film is settling over my eyes. The same dread unconsciousness which hovers between sleep and death. *(half raising himself on his arm with a low cry)* I am dying, and the world is fading from me as a shadow.

CREON.*(with burst of emotion)* Philip! my poor Philip !  
*(a trumpet sounds at a distance.)*

PHILIP. *(with a sudden, and feverish energy)* Fly! Fly! father! I should sleep better could I know you beyond the reach of danger. Fly! they come ! *(trumpet sounds)*

*again*) Those who thirst alike for the blood of father and son! (CREON *who has lifted PHILIP'S head now sustains him in a sitting posture, giving him drink from a gourd of water, while he does so the hunchback SILAX emerges from the ruins, gazes about him for a moment, then Crosses R., and moves aside brushwood from the mouth of passage to cavern—this done, he beckons to MIRIAM who appears beneath a broken archway—PHILIP, with sudden earnestness*) The darkness gathers! father what time is it?

CREON. Morning.

PHILIP. Morning! no ! it is *night!* (*he falls back as overcome by sudden faintness—as he does so, MIRIAM is seen to enter the passage to the cavern, while SILAX drawing money from pouch, and counting it in his hand glides back and disappears among the ruins.*)

CREON. (*who has lent over PHILIP*) Philip !

PHILIP. (*recovering strength by an effort, and with a wild look*) Hush! (*grasping his father's arm, and bending forward, head as listening*) did you not hear a rustling in the grass ?

CREON. (*soothingly*) Nothing, my boy ; nothing.

PHILIP. (*with a shudder*) The rustling as of a snake that comes creeping, creeping on us in our sleep, (*he again sinks back, and as CREON bends over him bathing his forehead, MIRIAM appears at foot of steps in cavern.*)

MIRIAM. The boy was right, the snake is here, (*she advances so as to stand at PHILIP'S feet*) Do you know me, Creon ?

CREON. Miriam.

MIRIAM. Your shadow, as once you termed me, and termed me truly; I am Creon's shadow, tracking him throughout the day, leaving only when the darkness comes.

CREON. (*wearily*) The debt is paid! What have you more to ask ?

MIRIAM. For years I have watched and waited, for long years fostering my hate, and ripening my vengeance.

CREON. (*in same low, weary voice, his eyes still rivitted on PHILIP'S deathlike face*) I have wronged you—grievously wronged you ; but why avenge yourself on *him* ?

MIRIAM. (*bitter laugh*) How else should *I* strike at Creon, but through Creon's heart ?

CREON. (*with calm dignity and slight wave of hand*) Go, poor woman ; I pity thee.

MIRIAM. Pity!

*(The loud ringing blast of a trumpet is heard, and, the back of the ruins, &c, above is suddenly peopled with soldiers. They part asunder to give passage to THEODORA who descends from her litter, and, conducted by SILAX, and attended by NARSES, enters cavern—the two former resting above.)*

MIRIAM. *(aside, and stepping back into the gloom)* She is here ! the cup of my vengeance is full to overflowing, and they shall drain it to the dregs.

CREON. *(who has risen at the blast of trumpets, advance! a step or two up stage so as to face THEODORA as with a quick step almost with a rush, she advances towards PHILIP.)*

CREON. *(sternly)* Theodora! and here!

THEODORA. *(slightly recoiling, then with cold dignity)* I am here to claim back the gift you sent me—the boy ! *(with start and change of manner)* He is wounded !

CREON. *(in a low deep whisper)* To the death, *(she is about to pass him, when with quick movement, he seizes her by the wrist)* Stay, unnatural woman, your power, so boundless upon earth, ends at the grave.

THEODORA. *(with a cry, a gasp of fear)* Dead ?

CREON. As yet his spirit hovers between this world and the next, *(still grasping her wrist, he holds her back as again she would pass him)* She-wolf ! No, the wolf that battles for her cubs, the tawny lioness that turns and turns again to save her bleeding whelps, have no kindred with you, for beneath their shaggy hides still beats the mother's heart, *(he thrusts her disdainfully from him.)*

THEODORA. Mother ? you lie ; you know you lie—he lies. Oh, how he lies, this Creon! *(then with a change of manner into one of almost abject entreaty)* Say, say that you have lied, and I forgive you all.

CREON. *(pointing to the granite cross)* By yon blessed symbol, I swear 'tis true.

THEODORA. *(aghast and as shrinking from his stern, cold gaze)* No, no, no ! He is not my son. I will believe nothing, *(with a convulsive shudder)* I dare not—do you hear me, Creon ? I dare not believe ! *(again her voice changes into the very agony of feeling)* And yet it is the doubt—the doubt—the doubt that kills ! *(she raises her hands and presses them to her forehead.)*

MIRIAM. *(advancing)* Doubt then no longer, *(with bitter and triumphant irony)* Empress, there lies your son.

*(THEODORA recoils in wonderment, while CREON, cold and stern, steps back apace, and rests his hand upon the altar, on which is lying his helmet and sword.)*

THEODORA. (*in a low voice as to herself*) What new sorcery is this ?

MIRIAM. The sorcery of Hate.

THEODORA. (*as one amazed or in a dream*) Hate! what harm have I ever done to you ?

MIRIAM. The greatest! You supplanted me in the heart of the man I loved.

THEODORA. (*with a bewildered air and speaking as in pain*) This is a dream.

MIRIAM. No ! (*with bitterness*) You are but awakening to the reality.

THEODORA. Your proofs ! What proof have I of this ?

MIRIAM. (*holding out small packet*) You will find more than sufficient in these papers, entrusted by Creon to Philip. (CREON starts and again advances some paces.—MIRIAM, as THEODORA takes papers) They were stolen.

CREON. Stolen!

MIRIAM. (*calmly*) By my orders.

THEODORA. (*breathlessly*) And the papers I received ?

MIRIAM. Were forged by me.

CREON. Great heaven!

THEODORA. Wretch! and do you hope to escape my vengeance ? (*with gesture of passionate menace*) Tremble !

MIRIAM. (*with cold disdain*) Tremble! and before *thee* ! the woman whose ambition I strengthened, whose path to greatness I smoothed! (*she gathers her mantle about her as she speaks and takes a step back*) What is this mighty difference between us ? In love I was your equal but I am your superior in hate. (MIRIAM moves up stage, and seats herself in the shadow, calm and motionless as the rock itself.)

THEODORA. (*to CREON with gestures of wild entreaty*) Let me pass.

CREON. (*staying her*) No.

THEODORA. (*clasping hands*) I supplicate.

CREON. No.

THEODORA. (*fiercely*) I command!

CREON. Woman ! woman ! trouble me no more ; living you denied him, and at such a time I would have no sharer in my grief.

THEODORA. He is not dead. I tell you Creon, he is not dead—he has swooned, that is all. Let me speak to him, and you will see. Ah ! you will see how a word of mine will call him back to life, (*endeavouring to release her wrist from CREON'S grasp*) He moved ! I swear to you he moved. It is air he wants, (*sinking on knees at CREON'S feet*) Strike

me, spurn me, trample me in the dust, but do not keep me from my son ! I say my son ! my SON !! !

PHILIP. *{partially raising himself and in a faint voice}* Mother!

THEODORA, *(as one electrified springs to her feet with a wild joyous cry)* You hear him ? he calls me ! me! his mother!

PHILIP. *(still more faintly)* Mother!

THEODORA. *(wrenching her wrist from CREON'S uncertain grasp)* Ah ! not all the world could stay me now ! *(she rushes past him, and throws herself on her knees beside PHILIP, who raises himself but with much difficulty—THEODORA, half supporting him)* Philip!

PHILIP. *(with a smile of much sweetness)* At last! It would have been hard to have died without a mother's blessing—and—you have come.

THEODORA. Do not talk thus—you will live—you must live, Philip *(while speaking she wipes the damp from his forehead tenderly.)*

PHILIP. *Must!* alas! *(he raises himself still more, half embracing her, and looking in her face)* Do you not see that I am dying ?

THEODORA. Dying ! *(springing to her feet)* dying for want of succour! help! help! some one ! *(as she speaks, LEO, who, with Soldiers has entered the cavern, advances—during the continuation and conclusion of scene, Soldiers group both above and below, and by their rich, accoutrements, and artistic attitudes dress scene to form the tableau.)*

LEO. I arrest the traitors—Philip and Creon !

THEODORA. *(turning upon him fiercely)* By whose order?

LEO. *(presenting paper)* The Emperor's.

THEODORA. *(snatching paper and tearing it)* Death alone is monarch here! *(scattering fragments upon ground)* Begone ! or----- *(pointing to MIRIAM, who has risen, but still stands dim and shadowy in the distance)* secure that woman there ! *(she turns, and again sinks on her knees beside PHILIP, looks in his face, then gazes wildly around)* Why are you all so silent ? Speak some of you, or I shall go mad! awaken him for mercy's sake! *(her voice rises into an agony of supplication)* What! will you let him die and all for a little painstaking ?

PHILIP. *(faintly)* My father! Where is Creon ?

CREON. *(who stands near PHILIP'S head)* I am here, Philip *(placing his hand with a sad calmness upon the naked sword on altar)* They shall not part us even in death!

PHILIP, (*very faintly almost in a whisper*) And my mother! where is she?

THEODORA. Here! (*clasping him*) Your heart is beating against mine! I can count its pulsations one by one (*she clasps him tighter to her bosom with a sort of fierce affection*) It beats! it beats! it-----! (*she utters a loud thrilling cry*) He is gone!!! and-----(*rising*) Miserable woman that I am. I have killed him!

CREON. No!

THEODORA. (*bursting from him as he would sustain her*) Pardon! Pardon! my Son!!! (*she throws herself upon body of PHILIP—CREON one hand still upon the naked sword on the altar bending over her.*) Tableau and

CURTAIN.