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*Esther, The Royal Jewess;
or,
The Death of Haman!*

An Historical Drama in Three Acts

Elizabeth Polack

Author of *Alberti; or, The Mines of Idria—Angeline; or, The Golden Chain, &c., &c.*

The only edition correctly marked, by permission from the prompter's book:

To which is added,
a description of the costume—cast of the characters
the whole of the stage business,
situations—entrances—exits—properties and directions,
as performed at the
London Theatres.

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[1835]

To John Farrell, Esq.

Sir,

Permit me to offer you a Drama which your indefatigable and liberal conduct has contributed to render more successful than my most sanguine hopes anticipated. I dedicate my *Royal Jewess* to you, as a tribute of gratitude for the attention you have bestowed on its production, and which I am proud thus publicly to acknowledge.

I would it were possible to express my thanks to your Company, as earnestly as I feel the value of their exertions.

I have the honour to be,

Sir,

Your obedient Servant,

Elizabeth Polack.

Dramatis Personae

<i>King Ahasuerus</i>	Mr. Dibdin Pitt
<i>Mordecai</i>	Mr. Cobham
<i>Haman</i>	Mr. Freer
<i>Barnazabus</i>	Mr. Forde
<i>Teresh</i>	Mr. Courtney
<i>Bigthana</i>	Mr. Rignold
<i>Muchacus</i>	Mr. Lewis
<i>Selim</i>	Mr. Garthwaite
<i>Hatach</i>	Mr. Shoard
<i>Officer</i>	Mr. Chapino
<i>Vashti</i>	Mrs. Wingrove
<i>Irene</i>	Mrs. Forde
<i>Esther</i>	Mrs. H. Lewis
<i>Priests, Guards, Attendants, &c.</i>	

Produced at the Pavilion Theatre, March 7th, 1835.

Time of Representation—2 hours 35 minutes.

Costume

Ahasuerus

Robe and train of rose-colored velvet, richly trimmed, hanging sleeves. Under garments, white tucker. Persian turban, white shoes.

<i>Haman</i>	Tunic and robe of garnet velvet. White drapery, edged with gold, Persian turban, white shoes.
<i>Muchacus</i>	White linen garments, head uncovered.
<i>Teresh and Bigthana</i>	Drab cloth tunic, scarlet drapery, trimmed with gold, turban.
<i>Mordecai</i>	Dark cloth gabardine, girdle, round black hat, dark shoes. <i>Second dress</i> —Patched dark loose wrapper, hat and shoes as before. <i>Third dress</i> —Dark wrapper, sprinkled with white tufts to appear like snow, white wig and beard. <i>Fourth dress</i> —Rich tunic and draperies, toque of scarlet and gold tissue, scarlet half boots. <i>Fifth dress</i> —An astrologer's robe, with a large hood to cover the head.
<i>Levi</i>	Dark gabardine, girdle, coloured turban, striped stockings, black shoes.
<i>Selim</i>	Close dress of dark cloth, turban.
<i>Barnazabus</i>	Blue tunic, white and gold drapery, turban, shoes.
<i>Vashti</i>	White satin petticoat, crimson satin body and train, trimmed with gold, gold tissue turban, white satin shoes.
<i>Esther</i>	A low round dress of drab cambric, trimmed round the bottom with entwined ribbon, white ..., short sleeves, toque of white muslin, striped boots. <i>Second dress</i> —Under dress of white satin, round gown, and train of net, spotted and richly trimmed with silver. A deep round cape of the same fastened on each shoulder. Persian turban of silver tissue, richly ornamented, white satin shoes, sandalled.
<i>Irene</i>	Dress and turban of pink crepe.

Act I

Scene 1

[The Grand Tent of Ahasuerus, the whole of the Stage occupied, having the appearance of a splendid Marquee, erected on golden and silver Pillars; The Draperies of white and purple. Splendid Banners, &c. A magnificent Bouquet, in the Eastern style; the Vases, Cups, &c., of the most costly appearance. The Stage as full as possible. The Curtain rises to the following Chorus.]

See great Ahasuerus stand,
Monarch of one glorious land,
He upon whose potent breath,
Hangs the doors of life or death,
Hail, mighty king!
Now one sovereign lord behold,
Clad in gems and burnish'd gold!
Radiant as the sun's bright beam,
Or the dreaded lightning's gleam!
Hail, mighty king!

[Music—Trumpets and Cymbals. A Grand Ballet, in which the Performers at intervals

salaam to the King, and present the Guests with Wine. Grand Flourish.]

Aha.

Governors of the hundred and twenty-seven provinces over which I am now king; it is my will to rule my people with mercy. Let all arise! *[All rise.]* It is my will that you obey my trusty counselor and friend, Haman: one of tried prudence, faith, and justice. Whosoever does not obey his mandate, are enemies to our royal administration. *[Flourish.]*

Ham.

Governors of the hundred and twenty-seven provinces, it is the will of our most mighty king, Ahasuerus, that none approach him while he sits upon his royal throne, unless called forth by him, on pain of death; but should he extend his golden sceptre to any who come forth uncalled, upon their touching it they are exempt from punishment. *[The Indian Chief advances and prostrates before the Throne—the King extends his Sceptre—he rises and touches it.]*

Aha.

Enough! peace be with you. *[Flourish—all drink.]* But where is my fair queen, Vashti?—bid her join our banquet! all is not well without her presence. *[Trumpet. Two Eunuchs go out.]*

Ham.

[Advancing.] Shall I again behold her? but what will it avail me—is she not his! Yes I will hope the day is not far distant, when the haughty beauty will be hurled from her throne of power; then she will no longer scorn me, nor reject my love. Yes, proud Ahasuerus! that triumph may yet be mine! *[Trumpet—Enter the Eunuchs.]* Now if she comes not, all will be in my power.

Eun.

Great king, Queen Vashti has refused to join the banquet.

Aha.

Slave! what mean't thou? Vashti refuse my command! I will not hear of it; go back, and bring me another and more fitting answer! *[Trumpet—Exit Eunuch.]* Yet I was wrong: she never disobeyed my bidding. The slave must

have mistook her words; yes, nobles, you shall behold my queen; she will soon come to grace our banquet.

Ham.

[Aside.] And if she does, my plans are crushed forever. *[Aloud.]* Mighty Ahasuerus, let this not mar your princely spirit. Our noble queen, no doubt will come, and glad our sight, as does the noonday sun. *[Trumpet.]*

[Enter Eunuch.]

Eun.

Great king, Queen Vashti still refuses; as the laws of Persia forbid her to appear before strange guests; in reverence of that law she cannot come before you.

Aha.

Now, by the Gods, this is not to be borne! What care I for the laws of Persia? My will must be her only law; that she has disobeyed; she has degraded me to my whole nation; defied me, too, and scorned my sovereign power! But she shall know that I am still a king, and deeply shall she feel my just resentment. Let the seven commissioners, expounders of the Persian laws, be ordered in my presence. *[Trumpet—a Eunuch goes out. The King takes his seat.]*

Ham.

[Aside.] His misery is my triumph! my schemes will now work well; and she who once despised, will soon be in my power! *[Trumpets heard—a grand melos.]*

[Enter Muchancus, habited as a Persian Priest. Ahasuerus descends from the Throne, and meets him.]

Muc.

Peace to the great Ahasuerus!

Aha.

Most holy man, I need your counsel: hearken to what I say, and thou bestow your judgment. To do all honour to any noble guests who now surround me, I sent to ask the presence of my queen, and was refused. I sent again, and she persisted in her disobedience. Speak, learned man, what says your law? what punishment has

she deserved?—for be it what it may, I swear by the gods, I doom her to your decision!

Muc.

Great king! thus saith the law:—should the consort of an Assyrian king refuse his just behest, she shall be put away, not be banished from the realm, and one of gentler mood be exalted to the throne.

Aha.

Is that the law? and must I banish her, my dark haired queen?—she who is lovely as the rose! graceful as the stately palm! But she defied my power—disobeyed my kingly word! The law enjoins her banishment, and if a king conform not to his country's edict, how can he claim allegiance from his subjects? Yes, though my sorrow will be unbounded, Vashti shall have her punishment.

Ham.

[Offering the King a Goblet.] Great king, let not the queen's contumacy disturb your peace; drink from the jeweled goblet; and be glad. See, mighty sovereign, how, even from India unto Ethiopia, thy slaves surround thee in mute obedience to thy royal will. Drink, great Ahasuerus, and be the past forgotten.

Aha.

You counsel wisely; I will forget the disobedient queen—yet, without her, the banquet has no charm for me, for she was lovely as is the fountain in the burning desert; and when she came before me, 'twas as the sun when first it beams upon the rising day!

Ham.

True, she is fair; but, King Ahasuerus, are not the greatest beauties in the East at your command?—if you but issued forth your royal pleasure, will not the fairest be at your devotion, from among whom you may select a fit companion for your bed and throne: and shall the sovereign of boundless power, shall the noble Ahasuerus let a woman's love lower his princely spirit, when thousands are ready to obey his mighty will?

Aha.

My sage and faithful counselor, it shall be as thy

wisdom has said—*[Takes the Goblet.]*—and in this draught of wine, I rid me of Vashti's memory for ever; even as the wind sweepeth the sand of the desert, so do I sweep her image from my soul! *[Drinks. Flourish.]* Lament, fair Vashti, trouble, imperial queen! for thou shall fall! No regal robes again shall grace thy limbs! sackcloth must now supply thy garments of gold and purple; the soft perfumes of nard and cassie must now give place to dust and ashes; the sound of viol and harp shall charm thee no more; nor shall the songs of thy Syrian maidens be heard by thee again; but the hoarse cry of the bittern, the raven's croak, the bat's terrific scream, the plaint of the lonely owl, and every hideous bird, with ominous shriek, shall scare thee into banishment!

Ham.

Oh, most just king! be mild in your intended punishment. Must the ill fated queen be banished!—may she not dwell within the city?

Aha.

What means the slave?—but that I know thou lovest me, that word had been thy last! My will is spoken, and like our law, cannot be altered. Let our vast dominions be explored—gather all the beauties, thy diligent search can find; let them be brought before me, that I may choose another and a fairer queen. Be punctual to your monarch's will, and Ahasuerus promises a king's reward. *[All form a Tableau. Scene closes on them.]*

Scene 2

[A Street. Enter Domestics, Peasants, &c. laughing and exclaiming, "Fun, fun! 'tis he! 'tis he!" Enter Levi, carrying his Box.]

Levi.

Pless my heart! pless my heart! can't a merchant travel without all dis hubbub? *[They laugh.]* You laugh at me, you all laugh! Vill you buy, and then Levi the Jew vill laugh at you!—but hush! I'll tell you my hishtory.

All.

Yes, yes, the history.

Levi.

My father is very old, and I am his son. I shells to all the corn merchants, and all the shailors. I am honesht; every pody knows me; I can laugh mit you if you buy, can *fun* you, if you *fun* me; I can *jeer*, if you *jeer* me; and here I am, ready to shell to all, and I'm called Levi the Jew.

Sel.

Come, tell us what you have got.

Levi.

Vell, I vill; here is a time measure—*[Takes a large piece of Wood with a Finger on it, like a rude Clock.]*—dis is a new invention of my own; dis counts de time—dis new dishcovery vill do away mit all your clepsydras, for vat is a clepsydra but a slave of a man watching the drops of water, and counting dem? Dis vill count itsself, and tell de measure of de time; it vill tell how long you speak; how long you kiss de pretty girl, and how long she like it. *[They all laugh.]*

Sel.

Oh, if it tell how long the girls like kissing, it will say as long as the men can do it. *[They all laugh.]*

Zai.

Come, come, you cannot say that all maidens are alike, for you know I hate your kisses, and yesterday I drove you away for trying to kiss me again.

Sel.

I know you did, my love—you drove me away, but it was when your mother was coming. *[All laugh.]*

Levi.

Put look at my goods; now here ish papyrus for de love billets; essence for de shmell; scent for de perfume, and powder for de teeth. Put here is de greatest of all; it was invented in foreign parts, and ish now in great use dere by de fine old lady, de decayed actress mit wrinkles, and de flattering old beau. It ish to make de old into de young; it ish can de enamel, or new face; it stops holes and seams, kills de crow's foot at de corner of de eye, and makes de old bag into de young damsel. *[All laugh.]*

Sel.

And are they such fools as not to despise these attempts in the vain hope to hide their defects and age?

Levi.

Pless my heart, no! they all put on false faces there; de lady's to her lover, and de lover to his lady. But come, vont you puy of me? don't you go to weddings, sometimes, mine dear?—den here's presents to give your friends. Shtop a bit, I'll set out all my goots dat you may choose for yourshelves. Come, mind dear, here's de nice little toys and rattles for de little girls and boys.

Zai.

But I have no little girls and boys to use them.

Levi.

Never mind dat; you'll haf 'em by-and-bye, vont she, eh, young man?

Sel.

Yes, yes, you're a cunning old fellow; but come, let's have a dance, now.

Levi.

Sho va vill; vere's a pretty girl to dance mit me? and I'll make her for a present any ting from my box.

Girls.

[All flocking round him.] Oh, we'll all dance with you.

Levi.

No, tank you, for if I dance mit every one of you, I canst give my box among you; den I'll have no profits on my goots. No, no, you dance by your elves, and I'll dance mit my box, for it is my best partner wherever I go! *[Lively music; they dance, and push him about; he imitates them very grotesquely, and as they dance off, the Scene closes.]*

Scene 3

[A Saloon. Enter Haman.]

Ham.

My hopes brighten, the seed of revolution is sown, and by my culture and cure, 'twill spring from the hot bed of rebellion, a healthy plant; it

shall be nurtured with the care of a skillful trainer; it shall be planted and transplanted, and as it grows, nourished with the dews of discontent, till the bright sunny rays of power ripen it into a fruitful tree—the tree of genealogy; my family tree, from which future kings must spring. My sons shall be governors, from India unto Ethiopia, the whole power must be in my hands! then shall this pusillanimous king be hurled from pomp and throne, and I remain the root and founder of true royalty. This new edict, this puerile decree that none shall approach Ahasuerus, unless the regal fool waves the golden sceptre in advance, and if disobeyed, forsooth, a head must be severed to revenge insulted monarchy! This has met with contempt from those of bold minds. My colleagues to-day report how far they have gained on the minds of men in humble spheres—for without the people, all the bright and deep machinations of political intrigue must fail. It is the common herd must strike the blow—must shake the state of kings and dynasties. Before the people, however humble, if they be but bound in unity, all rank and title must crumble into dust; be it my aim to gain that ascendancy, and my success is certain.

[Enter Bigthana and Teresh.]

Big.

Peace to thee! noble Haman!

Ham.

How is it with the people?

Ter.

Noble Haman, they are well nigh weary of the despotic reins of government.

Big.

And more, I have so won upon their confidence, that they are but waiting for a word of mine to burst their bonds of silence, and boldly to assert and claim their rights.

Ham.

All goes on well, but let us proceed with caution, and when the fire of rebellious freedom blazes forth, it must be quenched in blood—in royal blood!

Ter.

What meanest thou?

Ham.

That we must hurl the tyrant from his throne, and by his destruction, ensure our peace and safety.

Big.

Then you would have him die?

Ham.

Yes, he must perish, and my own hand shall rid us of the despotic bar to our country's welfare.

Ter.

Who would then be sovereign of these vast dominions?

Ham.

Myself, for he who frees the people from a tyrant's yoke, best knows the way to govern them. Oh, were these kingdoms mine, I'd show Assyria how a king should govern. Yes, my friends, my noble colleagues, ours must be a bold and decisive effort; a cutting down of a weak and womanlike government, a total reversion of ban laws, a probing of all ulcer or wen-like excrescences on the state. Do but mark the religious power of the rich robed priests—they absorb the wealth of our country, and for what? ecclesiastical dignity—dignity!—robbery! the robbery of the poor artisan and agriculturist to swell the unmeaning faces and pampered bodies of robed rascals, who make sanctity a mask for private plunder. This cannot, my friends, long exist—the noble power of mind will control it, and bold and daring spirits like us, wrest this wealth to—our own and the public use.

Ter.

Oh, most wise Haman! I long for the expected time. How happy will this kingdom be when you become its monarch!

Ham.

I joy to hear your praise, for were I king, I'd covet nothing but my people's love. Go now, my trusty friends; weigh well our counsel—let not the people lose their awakened spirit, bid them be ready, and as the lion of the forest lurks in

ambush, waiting its destined prey, then springs forth to destroy—so let them watch, and at the fitting moment, burst on their foes, and shout the name of freedom throughout our land.

Big.

We go, most noble Haman, to obey thy will. Peace be with thee till we meet again.

Ham.

And with you both; farewell! *[Exit Bigthana and Teresh.]*

Ham.

The lordly master-spirits of creation, however revolting to their own natures, must at times, and to swell a noble plot, have recourse to weak and shallow tools, such as these! *[Points after them.]* The architect who makes his plans, and sees the erection of his edifice before the foundation is dug, must yet employ the ignorant labourer; but the creations of his brain once erected, he despises the paltry help obtained from groveling worms. So I—my temple raised—will cast off these dull drudges, and make them as humble as the dust I tread on. *[Exit.]*

Scene 4

[The Queen's Apartment. Vashti, discovered, lying on a Couch, surrounded by her Attendants.]

CHORUS.

With fragrant spice, and scented smoke,
Frankincense purified by fire,
The balmy gods we now invoke,
With every charm the queen inspire.
Celestial rays divinely bright,
Their halo throw around her head,
To meet our king this happy night,
With transports bless the royal bed!

[Enter Eunuch.]

Eun.

The noble Haman, counselor to our mighty king, implores an audience of your majesty.

Vash.

Admit the noble Haman. *[Trumpet—Exit Eunuch.]*

[Enter Haman—Attendants retire up the Stage.]

Ham.

Hail, fair star of Persia! hail, mighty Vashti! whose beauty is dazzling as the mornings' light!

Vash.

Peace to thee, noble Haman! what says my lord, the great Ahasuerus?

Ham.

[With hesitation.] Oh, glorious queen! forgive thy slave, for sooner would I dare the burning desert's heat; sooner would I meet the fiercest beast of prey, than breathe to thy gracious ear my dread commission.

Vash.

What meanest thou? I did not fear to disobey my sovereign's mandate, nor will I dread to hear his mighty pleasure, therefore say on, and let me know the worst.

Ham.

[With affected humility.] Who dare refuse thy bidding, gracious queen: yet pause—better not hear me than the word I speak should mar thy peace; which is to me more dear than is the fountain to the weary pilgrim.

Vash.

[Haughtily.] I am thy queen, and now command thee to make known thy mission.

Ham.

Yes, royal Vashti, thou'lt ever be my sovereign, and I obey thee.

Vash.

Thine? Am I not queen of all these vast dominions—is not my majesty acknowledged throughout Persia?

Ham.

It was, and by me will ever be held sacred. In obedience to thy gracious pleasure, know that the king in anger has held communion with the learned of our laws, who have decreed that as a punishment for your disobedience, you must be banished from this land for ever.

Vash.

Banished! what! I, their sovereign!—it cannot be! the great Ahasuerus is too merciful; he cannot mean that I, his queen—who for years have shared his bed and throne, who loves him, too, as kings are seldom loved; that I shall be thrust forth—despised—degraded! doomed to horrid banishment!

Ham.

Oh, gracious queen! not for the wealth of all the glorious east, would I deceive your majesty. Now, by the gods I swear, the king has—how can I bring my tongue to utter it?—he has willed that you must quit our land.

Vash.

Oh, trusty counselor! give me your sage advice—will you not plead for me? You who are before the throne of the great Ahasuerus, on all mighty occasions, and have his royal ear? He knows your wisdom, and will graciously attend to your advice.

Ham.

The sentence is recorded and registered; but only in name, bright idol, need this banishment exist. My heart is wholly yours; my person you may command; my wealth—nay, my life shall be at your feet. Without great Syria's pale I have a tranquil and a spacious mansion; there you may repose in safety, and when the cares of state will permit, I'll fly to your lovely arms as a sweet solace from all earthly torment.

Vash.

Insolent slave! how darest thou address such language to thy queen? My guards, seize on that man! [*They turn away from her.*] How! am I not obeyed?—what means this outrage? dare you refuse to do your queen's commands?—queen, did I say?—no, no, I am no more a sovereign. How, then, can the degraded Vashti claim a sovereign's homage?—No, I am banished, driven from my native land, where once my word was law, and these, who but an hour since flew at my slightest bidding—these very slaves now turn away, as if in mockery at my fallen glory.

Ham.

Most gracious queen! there is yet one who will be true to thee, as is the light that greets the rising day.

Vash.

Thou fawning hypocrite—insidious slave! now do I see thy treacherous design, nor will I believe the great Ahasuerus bid thee send me into banishment; but I will to his royal presence, and at his feet declare thy perfidy.

Ham.

[*Very coolly.*] Stay! remember that your power here exists no longer. The disobedient wife, the banished queen must now forget she ever had a voice within these walls!—see how your slaves despise their degraded mistress; mark how they scorn thy fallen majesty! Then think not you will gain the ear of him who in the beauty of another's charms will lose all memory of the degraded Vashti.

Vash.

You would not dare refuse me to go forth?

Ham.

That trouble is needless; here you will see your fate. [*Shows her a roll of Papyrus.*]

Vash.

No! give me death; but save me from horrid banishment! Haman! you will not suffer your queen to plead to you in vain? [*He turns from her—she kneels to him.*] See, I am at your feet—I to whom all vast Assyria once paid homage! Let your guards pierce my heart; yes, let me die! and as the life blood flows from this lacerated bosom, I'll bless thee for thy mercy! [*Rises.*] Still you reject me? then all is lost! Irene! my slaves! will none save the wretched Vashti? Ha! see, see! my royal husband—he comes! yet nearer—see! he raises his sabre! Strike, great Ahasuerus, and let me die! here, at thy feet, thy queen implores thee—strike! He laughs as if in mockery at my prayer—now he ascends the throne! shall I not take my place there?—do you refuse your queen? Do not raise the sceptre in anger—[*Screams and falls.*]—Gods! he has struck me!—my brain is on fire!—madness! death! banishment! ha! ha!

ha! [*She laughs hysterically.—Music—Haman coolly folds his Arms. Tableau.*]

END OF THE FIRST ACT

Act II

Scene 1

[*A beautiful land picturesque Country, apparently in high cultivation. The Sun rising. In the distance, a flat space of brilliant verdure. A circuitous road seen. Mordecai's House on one side—close to it a rude Bench.*]

[*Enter Mordecai, from the House.*]

Mor.

Blest be the power who caused the welcome morning to illumine the earth! How bright is the glorious sun, which shines as warmly on the captive Jew as on the monarch of Assyria. What if the nations scoff, deride, and hate us? there still is *One* who hears the Jew's lament; and the gifts of beauteous nature are sent for our enjoyment as well as theirs. Then will I not repine; for, even in captivity, the Jew may be content. Am I not permitted, in this land of infidels, to worship Him whose law was given to his chosen people? Am I not happy, too, when I behold my niece, the lovely Esther? she, who from her earliest childhood cheered my solitary dwelling, and has been to me, child, friend, and kindred! [*Lively Music.*]

[*Enter Esther, from the House.*]

Est.

Peace to thee, my revered uncle.

Mor.

[*Embracing her.*] May he who blessed our fathers bless my loved Esther! Thy sight is welcome to me as is the balmy fragrance of the myrrh. I well remember—when, before thy parents' died, they gave thee to my protection—I swore to cherish thee as my own daughter, and well thou hast repaid me for my care.

Est.

My generous uncle! I have no words to speak

my gratitude. To me you have been father—guardian—friend: say, how can I repay your kind, parental love?

Mor.

You owe no thanks to me. If I have made you happy, there is an inward voice that whispers like an approving counselor to my heart that I have done my duty. But let me remind thee, Esther—when I am gathered to my fathers, and thou art left alone in the land of infidels, let no persuasion shake thy settled faith: be true to *Him* who has chosen us for his people.

Est.

We shall not long be captives, or my dream has deceived me.

Mor.

Esther, I charge thee let not nightly visions delude thy senses; but raise thy mind on high before you go to rest, that no vain dreams may trouble thee again. But let me hear what has thus wondered thee.

Est.

Methought I sat on the throne of state, while shouts of "Hail, Esther, Queen of Persia!" echoed through the hall.

Mor.

[*Interrupting her.*] No more, I charge thee! What! thou my niece—a Jewish maiden—seated beside the infidel! Begone—I'll hear no more!

Est.

I do entreat you let me tell the rest. Scarce had those sounds been heard, when, in a burst of melody, I heard—"Hail, Queen Esther! who has saved her people!"

Mor.

'Twas but an illusion of the brain, and will be best forgotten. [*Aside.*] Yet should it be verified! But I will not encourage such a thought, lest it should mar her present happiness. [*Soft music. At this period, in the extreme back, a procession (Figures) is seen nearing, who increase as they approach in the circuitous road, or entrances of the Stage, till at last the Persons engaged in the Scene appear.*]

See! the guard of the proud Ahasuerus approach. Perhaps some new edict from the haughty king. They come nearer. Esther, retire.

Est.

[Seeing them.] My dream! my dream!

[Pointing.] Uncle, this realizes my vision! Yes, in my sleep I saw yonder procession plain as I now behold it. I entreat you let me remain.

Mor.

Indeed! Now do I marvel at thy words.

Yes—stay then, and hear what may occur. *[By this time the Procession has reached the Stage. Enter with it a Herald and Eunuch.]*

Her.

[To Eunuch.] Is this the place we were directed to?

Eun.

It is; and yonder stands the maiden whom we seek.

Her.

[Advancing.] Are you named Mordecai?

Mor.

I am: and more, with pride I tell thee, I am a Jew.

Her.

This maiden is your niece—of whose beauty much has been heard.

Mor.

She is—but who are thou that put these questions to me?

Her.

I bear the royal mandate of King Ahasuerus, to seek all the beauties within his vast dominions, that from among them he may choose a queen. Your niece must be conducted to the palace with the rest.

Mor.

What said the slave? Esther! she whom I reared from infancy—the only hope of my declining years—she to become slave to an infidel? Never! Sooner would I see her die before me.

[Crosses to him.] Go back, and tell the haughty king, that the degraded Jew will lose his life, but will not sell his honour.

Her.

Not so; it is our gracious monarch's will that she who finds favour in his sight shall be crowned queen of Persia.

Est.

[Aside to Mordecai.] "Esther—who has saved her people!" Such were the words. My dream will now be realized. Let me depart, and obey the great Ahasuerus. I'll hazard all; misery—danger—yes, even death—to make my people free!

Mor.

Yes, yes—the dream. When I think of that I am irresolute.

Her.

My time is short—is the maiden ready?

Est.

I am. I beg you will allow me to speak privately to my uncle before we part, lest we should never meet again. *[Falls on Mordecai's Neck. Herald, &c. retire to the back.]* Yes, Heaven has willed it so; and now, farewell to my long-cherished home—to you, my loved protector, who have been my only earthly friend.

Mor.

[Struggling with his feelings.] Can this be Esther? She, whom I fondly hoped would have cheered my last hours, and closed my eyes in death! And can she leave me for the vain pomp and splendour of a throne?

Est.

Fear not for me, nor think I care for the proud monarch's glory. Uncle, I pray you let me obey the king.

Mor.

It is the only sacrifice I can make, and if it is to save my people, I will not shrink to do it. Now hear my last injunction. Let not the splendour of a court make thee forget *Him* who gave the law. Remember thy captive nation, and pray for their deliverance.

Est.

If I forget thee, oh my chosen people, and do not cherish and preserve thy memory, and pray for thy peace and welfare, then may my tongue refuse to frame the strains of harmony—may I never more know peace, and may my life be passed in grief and sorrow!

Mor.

[Falls on her Neck, and speaks in broken accents.] Enough—I know thy truth. But if thou art not happy—should proud Ahasuerus not honour thee as his lawful queen—return to thy peaceful home, to him who vowed to love and cherish thee; and let the haughty monarch see the Jews can suffer death, but not dishonour. Now take my blessing, and obey thy king.
[Plaintive Music—he blesses her.]

Her.

My time has expired—we must depart. *[Music. Mordecai embraces her—after an affectionate farewell she goes out with the Herald, &c. in procession, and cross as they came on. Mordecai, completely overpowered, sinks on the Bench.]*

Mor.

[Recovering.] What wild delirium is this? can she have left me—alone—solitary? Yes, she is gone, and life to me will now be scarcely worth retaining. But I will follow her, even to the palace of Ahasuerus, and watch at the gates to catch a glimpse of my beloved Esther. I will obtain the disguise of a mendicant—for were I known they would turn me from the palace gates, as if the Jew had not the feelings of humanity. Oh that the time were on me when the poor Jew shall be raised from this state of slavery, and rank in common with his fellow men!

Levi.

[Without.] Who'll puy my goots? who'll puy my goots? *[Levi enters.]* Ah, Mr. Mordecai, mine goot friend, how do you do? Don't you vant some of mine goots to-day? How is de beautiful Esther? I've some pretty trinkets for her. She don't vant my enamel—no, no hers is the real enamel—no false for her. Vy, you don't shpeak—vat's da matter mit you, eh?

Mor.

Leave me.

Levi.

By mine vort, den, vat's dat? Oh, Mr. Mordecai, you don't mean to treat honesht Levi so, I'm sure.

Mor.

My good fellow, pardon me. I did not see you.

Levi.

Nefer mint, mine frient, never mint—de pretty Miss Esther will come and shpeak mit me.

Mor.

Begone, I say!

Levi.

Ah, now I shee—I shee mit both my eyes. You got rich, Mr. Mordecai—dat ish vy you forgets your olt frients.

Mor.

Not so, worthy man. I have lost that which is more dear to me than all the wealth of the glorious East.

Levi.

Nefer mind dat: ven you look at mine box you vill find de beautiful trinkets vat ish vort more den all in your house. Let me put dem out, den you shall choose for Miss Esther.

Mor.

No more, old man! She who was the only light that cheered my days of exile, the hope of my declining years, has left me for the vain splendour of the infidel.

Levi.

Vat's dat? Miss Esther! is she gone? Oh, I am grieved more den if I'd lost my whole box—I am, by mine vort mine goot frient. But, tell me, who is she gone mit?

Mor.

The slaves of Ahasuerus have claimed her for their monarch to behold her beauty. See, my friend, how the ill-fated Jew must bow before the infidel.

Levi.

Oh, Mr. Modecai dat ish too bad! Shtop, I'll tell you vat I'll do. I've not vone in de vorld dat I cares for but mine box, so I'll go mit you and watch about de court till ve hear vat's become of her—vat you say to dat?

Mor.

Worthy man, I accept your offer. Enter my house, refresh thyself, and we'll depart together. But we must part at the palace gates. I will appear as a mendicant; and thus I may obtain intelligence of my loved Esther. I'll deem my bondage glory, since it may one day help to free my people from this land of slavery! *[Exit into the House.]*

Levi.

Pless my heart—pless my heart, va a shange! Do beautiful Miss Esther—she vat never vanted de enamel, to go to de infidel! Put den she is a woman, and all women are de little imps of de devil! you never know dem ven you have dem—for if you've got dem you hav'n't got dem, dey frisk away like de little villa o' de visp! Oh, by mine vort I am grievet, but I vill go mit her uncle and see vat's become of her. Oh, I vill break mine heart—and I vill break mine box too—if I don't pring her back again! *[Exit into the House.]*

Scene 2

[A Saloon. Enter Haman, meeting Bigthana, Teresh, and Barnazabus.]

Ham.

My noble friends and wise colleagues, well met. Methinks I need not urge you further. I am sure you all agree with me in this great cause of freedom, and long for the time when these vultures—who have so long been feasting on the substance of our people's labour, and reveling in wealth robbed from the needy—will be unmasked before the world!

Ter.

Most noble Haman, we are resolved to be guided by the counsel, and swear to obey thy will.

Ham.

Enough—now hear me. I have a plan that will free us for ever of the tyrant's yoke. Then let us, like the towering eagle, watch our prey, then boldly spring forward, and with one blow be freed for ever!

Big.

What do thy words import?

Ham.

The vain licentious king has just selected from his chosen beauties one who will share his throne. The coronation will shortly take place: then will the pomp and mockery of state be lavished on the pampered tyrant; and in the hour of his fancied glory, in the sight of the whole court, Ahasuerus shall die!

Big.

It is indeed a bold and daring plan—but how can this be done?

Ham.

The splendour of the East will grace the new-made queen. All will be under my especial orders. Do you, my friends, mingle among the guests: let each carry a dagger beneath his garments. I myself will watch at the gates till all have departed; and when the despotic king, elated with mirthful revelry, and intoxicated with wine, fancies he reigns in proud security, be you ready, and in that moment of his ambitious glory, plunge your daggers in the tyrant's heart!

Tre.

Our prudent counselor, we are resolved to follow your commands. How much our country needs one of your prudence, wisdom, and unswerving judgment.

Ham.

You overrate my services. Trust me it only needs a firm and daring mind to crush these tyrant rulers. The blow once struck, success is sure to follow. *[To Barnazabus.]* Hence to thy station at the palace gates—we shall be there anon.

Bar.

I go, my lord. *[Exit.]*

Big.

Noble Haman, it doth surprise me that Ahasuerus so soon will fall: our plans are scarcely formed, ere we behold the dawn of freedom.

Ham.

I joy to hear you thus approve my plans. Now swear to unite all our energies in this noble cause—to destroy the tyrant in his seat of grandeur!

All.

We swear it, by the gods!

Ham.

Enough. Now to the palace, to gaze on the frail show of royalty which to-morrow will be no more. Follow me, friends, and we will again hold counsel on the great event that will ensure our people's welfare. *[Exeunt.]*

Scene 3

[Outside of the Palace of Suza. A splendid entrance by an Archway and Porch. Elevated opening, with Steps. Windows lighted. Stage Dark. Enter Mordecai, disguised as a Mendicant.]

Mor.

At length I have arrived at the seat of voluptuousness and pampered state!—Here the flattered king in the lap of indolence reposes in fever-like torpor, degrading the noble energies of human nature, reveling in all the intoxicating delight of mistaken pleasure, till by degrees the fountain of health becomes dried up, and loathsome imbecility reigns predominant. *[At this moment the sounds of revelry within.]* Yes I burst in mirth—send forth your expressions of merriment—they are but the evaporating fumes of potent draughts, which, when exhausted, will leave the seeds of mortification and decay. Oh, ye guardian powers, who ordaineth all events for some wise purpose, watch and protect my lovely Esther in that hall of Pagans!

[Enter Barnazarus, with a Torch.]

Bar.

The hour approaches when I must take my stand

under the porch, by the order of Haman. This nightly watch but ill agrees with my thoughts. My own happy home, however, will soon be revisited: in the service of Teresh I have amassed sufficient gold to bless the declining years of my affectionate mother. This Pagan abode but ill suits my early habits of life, when the pure laws of our prophets were my guide.

Mor.

[Coming forward.] I'll speak with this stranger. Hail, Persian! can you inform me who is the chosen partner of the king?

Bar.

That can I, and proud am I to tell it—'tis Esther: a lovely maiden from my own birth-place.

Mor.

[In ecstasy.] Thanks to the powers above! all is verified, and she will save her people! But did you say your birthplace? Let me see thee closer—yes, it is—I know thee well: Thy mother—providence be praised!—is well: but her declining years want the prop of thy youth, young man. She who reared thee tenderly should not, in her old age, be neglected.

Bar.

'Tis my intention to return, and bless with my care her latter years. I have denied my faith to these infidels, but my heart is still true to my own people. I am in office—with one of the prime ministers—and will aid you all in my power to see your Esther. But be cautious. Haman hates thy race: he and his colleagues will shortly pass to the palace. Hark—they come! I must to my post. *[He takes his stand on the upper end of the Porch.]*

[Enter Bigthana, Teresh, and others—they pass over to the opposite side. Haman then enters—they pass him severally in front, and bow in the Eastern style, he regarding them inquisitively. When they are off Mordecai passes him quite erect—Haman stops him.]

Ham.

What art thou, who dardest refuse the homage due to the king's high minister?

Mor.

A man!

Ham.

Thou art a stranger, then, as thou dost not conform to our custom. Where is thy country?

Mor.

I have no country—the settled land of my forefathers has been basely wrested from me and all my race.

Ham.

I see—you are a Jew.

Mor.

Yes, a Jew—and proud of the name.

Ham.

Methinks it is but a poor boon to be proud of—to have no acknowledged country—to be a wandering race—a marked people as objects for scorn.

Mor.

It is not so. We are a disjointed nation, 'tis true—but who should be the objects of scorn—the humble sufferers, or the tyrant robbers?

Ham.

Oh, no, you mistake, rash and unthinking man! 'Tis not an usurping power we possess, but a right of superiority over a fallen people. For what are ye? a groveling crew—a money-hoarding herd! too lazy for bodily exercise, and too weak in intellect to rule the state.

Mor.

Your guards are near—you can call the tools of tyranny—you may drag me to your cells of misery, if I raise my voice to vindicate my race—but, proud wretch, I shall yet live to see thy prostration.

Ham.

Weak words, from a still weaker source. I will not call my guards—fear not that: so let thy envy burst forth—perhaps 'twill ease thine heart—and when all the bodyless smoke has dispelled, 'twill only leave you, like your people, weaker by exertion, and faint, after having achieved—nothing.

Mor.

Your cool sneers shall be answered. Are we not shut out from all exercise of our talents in the state? are not even your common artisanships debarred us? and when deprived of this, our honest endeavors are called groveling, and a thirst for gold? Are we not equal to you in manly firmness? are not our women surpassing in their beauty and virtue? When were we called feeble?—was it when our nation gave laws to the world?—or was it when a few of our remaining heroes beat your countrymen in their own native land, and trampled the Amalekite blood into their parent soil?

Ham.

Mark me, Jew—and be it a lesson to thee and all thy race. Thy virulent expressions are useless now. I have observed many fools like thyself who mouth and fume about oppression, and pristine rights. Rights, forsooth! Noble exertions and superior tact are the bulwarks of national independence and grandeur. These are the rocks of public safety; and whilst they hold together, not all the empty oratory, or pretty whims of would-be rulers can shake it. Though in a moment the guards, by my order, might place thee in a dungeon, from that I have refrained. Now listen in calmness. Not only on thee, but all thy race, shall my vengeance be directed! In silence shall the decree be formed that will exterminate thee and all thy hated people!
[Scene closes on them.]

Scene 4

[A Front Chamber. Enter Mordecai and Barnazabus.]

Mor.

Explain, young man. Why this apparent mystery—why are you so anxious, and fear to be overheard?

Bar.

Because we are in the abode of treachery and guilt.

Mor.

How know you this?

Bar.

I overheard a dark conspiracy against the life of Ahasuerus—planned by that man who now basks in the sun of royal favour—the treacherous Haman!

Mor.

Ah! is it him? I marvel not that he who could insult a fallen people, should prove a traitor to his sovereign! But say, good Barnazabus, what plan can we adopt to crush this hideous project?

Bar.

The conspirators are to appear among the guests at the coronation of the queen. They will have daggers concealed beneath their garments, but the death blow will not be struck till all strangers have retired. You must come disguised among the guests: I will admit you, and at the fitting time you must point out the traitors to the king.

Mor.

It shall be so, I will unmask the plotting infidel! Yes, I may yet behold the fall of him who dared exult in our nation's misery!

Bar.

My services are wanted in the apartment of Teresh. Come with me, and we can arrange our plans.

Mor.

I trust myself to thy prudence. Let us be firm in our resolve, and Heaven will aid our cause, and crush the guilt and treachery of our foes!

[Exeunt.]

Scene 5

[Splendid Hall in the Palace of Suza. A magnificent Eastern Procession, with a Brass Band. The King and Queen in their Royal Robes—the Crown carried before them. The whole on a splendid scale. When the King and Queen reach the Throne, the following Anthem is sung].

Hail, fair Queen of Persia's land,
Nations bow at thy command;
Hark! thy praises rend the air,
While the festal rings prepare.

Hail, Esther, hail!

Like a palm, in glorious pride,
Sits our monarch by her side—
See the brilliant diadem now,
Glitter on her queenly brow,
Hail, Esther, hail!

[The Crown and Sceptre is bestowed in form on Esther. Flourish and shout. A Grand Ballet then takes place. The Seasons enter separately, and place their Offerings at the foot of the Throne. Last of all, Mordecai, disguised as Winter, with an Urn of Fire. He pays his homage—at the end of which, in a tremulous tone, he addresses the King and Queen.]

Mor.

Hail to the mighty sovereigns of Persia! I see the offerings of others at thy feet, while I have no gifts to lay before thy throne. Behold me shivering as the chill northern blast, that robs the grove of its fragrant verdure—cold and cheerless as the sweeping wind which driveth the sands of the desert—yet I can give thee counsel needful as the glowing of the noon-day sun. Will the queen Esther deign to hear me?

Aha.

What says my lovely queen—wilt thou listen to this mysterious voice?

Est.

So please, my royal lord, I will. *[Esther descends from the Throne, and advances to the front with Mordecai.]*

Mor.

Dost thou, in this hall of infidels, retain thy love for thy unhappy race?

Est.

I do, by heaven!

Mor.

[Raising his Mask.] Then take my blessing.

Est.

My uncle!

Mor.

Breathe not my name within this hall, but hear me. There is treason against the life of thy sovereign lord and husband. The conspirators

are here, on the king's right hand—they are all armed. If thou wouldst save his life, inform him quickly, and all may yet be well—away! *[Esther ascends the Throne and communes with the King. Mordecai replaces his Mask, and retires among the Guests. Music.]*

Aha.

[Rising.] Secure the gates! Let none retire, on pain of instant death—there is treason against our royal person! Guards, secure them! *[Points to the Conspirators—the Guards seize them, and pull the Daggers from under their Garments. At the discovery, Haman darts forward, and in a hurried and earnest moment exclaims—]*

Ham.

Base wretches, and traitors to our loving king and queen?

Conspirators.

Haman!

Ham.

Silence, base curs, that dare to howl at royalty! On the wheel shall your vile limbs be broken—your traitor hearts dashed in your faces—your burned ashes given to the howling hurricanes of the desert—and not a vestige shall remain of ye but your accursed memory to fright posterity!

Consp.

Remember, Ham—

Ham.

[Very violently.] Another word, and your vile tongues shall be torn from their roots! My loved sovereign—on this bright occasion of joy, let not paltry knaves like these, and their futile plot, disconcert your peace, or disturb your royal consort. To my love and zeal confide. Give this vile herd to my judgment: the terrors of the law shall be stretched to meet their damnable resolve.

Aha.

This day of joy and love shall not be interrupted by any alloy. In thy vigilance I will confidently repose; and let our priests place on record in our

chronicle the name of him who unfolded this plot.

Mor.

My liege—

Aha.

I'll hear no more to mar our royal queen's tranquillity!

Ham.

[Spiritedly.] The king demands silence! You shall be revered and honoured, but now retire.

Mor.

My royal liege—

Ham.

[Stopping him.] Away! Take those traitors to a dungeon. Away—away! *[He forces Mordecai out violently. The festivities again commence. The Act Drop falls on a Grand and Joyous Tableau.]*

END OF ACT THE SECOND

Act III

Scene 1

[A Dungeon belonging to the Palace. Bigthana, Teresh, and Conspirators, discovered, in Chains. Enter Barnazabus.]

Bar.

Haman comes, attended by guards.

[Enter Haman, with six Guards.]

Ham.

Ye paltry knaves! men of shallow penetration! when scum like you attempt, or join in rebellion, if the object be attained, those above you reap the harvest—if it fail, ye are the marked tools for punishment and disgrace. Stand back! *[They go up.]* My mind is changed! *[To Guards.]* Guards, you may retire. Further knowledge of this vile sedition may be attained by my conferring in private with these men. *[The Guards, &c. go off at Door. Haman walks about—suddenly stops—walks again, as if in a state of great indecision—they come near]*

him—he crosses them—they intercept him again—he suddenly stops.] What! would ye have me trample on you? Out of my way! *[They retire to the upper part of the Dungeon—Haman appears to ruminate deeply.]* Decision! how godlike are thy attributes—you either make or mar. Decision, when concluded by reason and deep resolve, elevates the actions to a climax, noble or depressed; but when doubt—damning doubt—bestrides resolution, all is vapour, darkness, and dismay! the labyrinth of infamy, and, but for an energetic impulse of nature, would have fallen degraded and lost. I've saved these wretches, but whether to let them perish, or not, now remains. They are under my power, and mine alone. I'll have them kept secure, though not injured—I yet may need their aid. Barnazabus!

[Enter Barnazabus.]

Inform the guard that my pleasure is that these men may be conducted in silence to the cell in my house. *[Aside to Conspirators.]* Do not fear. I take this precaution to insure your safety. *[Haman motions them off—they exit.]* Barnazabus, come nearer. *[Haman takes his Hand.]* Young man, I have been a close observer of thy actions. Thou art shrewd, and quick of comprehension—not extravagant or riotous—never intoxicated with potent draughts—not gay in thine attire, but saving of thy revenue. Such a man I like—such a man I can trust, for you serve your own ambition by forwarding my views. Our late plot has failed. You, and I, and all, by my cunning, have escaped. This must not deter us from achieving our desire. Mark me—the king, Ahasuerus, must die. A powerful draught of poison must be obtained—nay, shrink not from me; your young mind wants but practice to shake off this weakness. I have heard of a Jew alchemist, being about the city, who deals in such ingredients—seek him out, and send him to me instantly. Away! I must now to the proclamation, that brings revenge, murder, bloodshed, and happiness to my desire! *[Music. Exeunt.]*

Scene 2

[The King's Bedchamber. A Curtain at the back. Ahasuerus discovered sleeping on a Couch. Music. Time, with his Scythe, &c., enters.]

Time.

By none controlled, by no one ruled.
King Ahasuerus—Time now shows thee
The hidden sorrows of thy people.

[The Curtain opens and discovers a Tableau of prostrate Jews, over which are Persians—some holding the Jews by the Throat, strangling them, &c., in all the attitudes of slaughter. Music.]

Time.

Behold the prostrate Jew, and for what?
To glut the passions of a wicked heart.
Prevent all this, or the wrath of Heaven
Will scorch thy aching soul with madness!

[They all disappear. Music. The Scene again becomes illuminated, and in Tableau appears Esther in mourning, with her Hair disheveled—the Sceptre and Crown at her Feet—her Hands extended towards the King. Mordecai also in supplication. A group of Jewish Priests, &c., in attitudes of solicitation.]

Behold thy queen! Let justice be administered!
Awake! awake!

[Music. The Tableau vanishes—the Clouds disperse—Time slides away. The King in strong perturbation, rushes towards where the vision appeared, with his Arms extended.]

Aha.

Esther! my queen! *[A Pause.]* Was it but the wandering of intellectual sleep? a vapour of the brain! 'Twas a sacred warning, and shall be obeyed! What ho! send for my prime minister Haman, and bring the records of my reign.

[Enter Barnazabus, with a Papyrus, on Roller—the King unfolds it.]

Bar.

[Reading.] "The royal parks, gardens, and walks of the palace to be thrown open for the public use."

Aha.

Aye, that is well: give the citizens pleasure, to

divert their mind from state affairs. Well—read on.

Bar.

[Reading.] Mordecai, a Jew, saved the King's life, and the nation from a vile plot."

Aha.

[Hastily.] I remember—and that man was neglected. Those who best serve their country too often pine and decay, whilst pensioned miscreants and lazy sinecurists roll in riches.

[Enter Haman.]

Good friend, we need thy counsel. There is a man in my dominions to whom I am much indebted —say, how shall I do him honour?

Ham.

Your pardon, my monarch—let me deliberate. *[Ahasuerus signs assent, goes up, and sits on the Couch. Haman comes forward.]*

Ham.

[In ecstasy.] 'Tis myself he means. I'll have honour done to me publicly! A parade! 'Twill catch the minds of the city, and forward my popularity. My mind's resolved! *[To Ahasuerus.]* My royal master, thus let it be. Clothe the man whom you desire to honour with your own royal apparel—mount him upon your own horse—make him a present of a gold chain, and then cause some one or other of your particular friends to march before him as a herald, and make this proclamation—that thus it shall be done to the man whom the king vouchsafes to honour!

Aha.

My noble counselor, I thank thee, and will follow your kind advice. You shall have the guidance of all. *[Haman appears delighted.]* Go, and take the horse, the apparel, and the chain, and be this honour done to Mordecai, the Jew. *[Haman appears horror-stricken.]* When he is mounted, do you, as my particular friend, march before him and proclaim—"this is the man whom the king delights to honour!" *[Exit. Haman remains in apparent stupefaction—he can scarcely articulate, but works his feelings to the climax.]*

Ham.

Do I breathe? My pulsation is quick and maddened—a hot hissing of violent agitation rings in my ears! To lead the vile wretch in triumph through our city! Damnation! to the gallows 'twere meet! I'll not be balked! Revenge, on triumphant wing, like the midnight bat, will flutter yet on his elevated gibbet! *[Exit.]*

Bar.

I marvel no longer to see a country fall, when men like yon vile traitor give counsel to their monarch. Who knows but Heaven sent me to this abode of royalty to save the king from the machinations of his enemies. I will seek Mordecai, and he shall come disguised as the alchemist who is expected to bring the drug that would deprive Persia of its king. The designs of the perfidious Haman shall be frustrated. I will arrange that Mordecai shall have an interview with the queen, and through the means of those the infidel seeks to destroy, his crimes shall be unmasked to the world! *[Exit.]*

Scene 3

[A Citron Grove. Very dark. A melancholy group of Jews, supposed to be in Sackcloth and Ashes, bearing a very dejected appearance, discovered. Mordecai enters, with a loose dark Garment thrown over him, to represent ancient mourning—his Head is covered. As he enters they all bow to him.]

Mor.

Peace to ye, sons and daughters of affliction! The vengeance of offended heaven has again descended on our happy race! the tyrant has decreed us to perish by the sword! Better would it have been if our forefathers had fallen while defending the holy temple from the usurping infidel. One effort more for my devoted nation! Heaven may deign to hear the captive's prayer, and turn aside the wrath of our enemies. If we retain our pristine faith unsullied, our supplications will be heard. I will retire awhile, and pray your voices may ascend on high. *[He retires up the Stage. The Lament is then sung.]*

RECITATIVE.

With bitter cries let Israel's sons bewail!
 Lo, o'er our lives our enemies prevail,
 And for our sins this evil is ordained,
 To punish as for holy rites profaned.
 Forsake us not! Oh, turn not from our voice!
 Deliver us—the people of thy choice!

[As it concludes, the reflection of the Sun is suddenly seen through the Grove at back and illuminates the Stage. They all prostrate themselves, then rise, and sing the following.]

CHORUS.

We're sav'd! we're sav'd! the prayer is heard,
 That frees us from the dreaded doom.
 O'er our fated heads impending,
 See his pardon now descending—
 Behold the glorious light dispels our gloom!
 We're saved, &c.

Mor.

[Rushing forward and prostrating himself.]
 Thanks! thanks! the powers above have heard
 the prayer of the humble Jew! Humility and
 self-denial cannot fail to draw the benignant
 smile of mercy on the truly suppliant heart.
 Rejoice! Go forth, and rely with firmness on
 Providence!

Omnes.

We do! we do! *[Shouts without.]*

Bar.

[Without.] Mordecai! Mordecai!

Mor.

'Tis the voice of a friend—approach!

[Enter Barnazabus, in great haste.]

Bar.

Hail, Mordecai! I bear glad tidings!

Mor.

'Tis an earnest from Heaven of Jewish
 happiness.

Bar.

The king has sent for you, to give you public
 honour.

Mor.

Friends, follow me—and give praise for our
 deliverance! *[They repeat the joyful stanza.*
Exeunt.]

Scene 4

[A Street in Syria. A Grand Procession enters—a Mob, shouting—Haman leading a Horse, on which is Mordecai, in a Royal Robe, a Crown on his Head, and a Golden Chain round his Neck.]

Ham.

[Reads in a very sullen manner.] "That thus it
 shall be done to the man that the king
 vouchsafes to honour. *[The People shout and*
exeunt.]

Scene 5

[Splendid Hall in the Royal Palace, the whole extent of the Stage. A moveable Couch on one side. A small Banquet on the other. Cups, &c. Haman comes on cautiously.]

Ham.

The queen, I hear, is delirious—'twill suit my
 project the better. *[Takes out Poison.]* This is
 the king's jeweled cup, that none drink from but
 himself, and by his invitation. One drop of this
 liquid will not be observed at the bottom, and
 when filed with wine, he drinks, and all is mine
 own. *[He puts the Poison in Goblet, and places*
it again in its place.]

[Enter Ahasuerus, Esther, Barnazabus, &c.]

Aha.

My lovely queen! you are now more composed.
 Take my golden sceptre—it secures you from
 all danger, and assures you of my unabashed
 love. But first, to compose thy spirits, let us to
 the Temple of the Gods, and offer homage for
 your safety.

Est.

Stay, my noble spouse, and hear me. My heart
 has no homage to pay at your altars. I love you
 beyond all on earth—next my foster parent, my
 uncle—but there is a secret in my heart now to

be disclosed. Not all your idols have charms for me—not all your oracles can avert my creed—not all your engines of cruelty can make me apostate, for nature and truth is my directing star. The brightest boast of my soul is, in being of the foundation and root of all revealed good—I am, my king, a Jewess!

Aha.

Thou lovely gem of my adoration! I love thee better for this candour. Never should the feelings of the heart be perverted by religious opinion. That power omnipotent, be it what it may, never intended its laws for cruelty and oppression!

Est.

Oh, noble soul! how my heart pants to hear this liberality! Humble and lowly are our desires. We are persecuted, but wish not to be trampled under foot. Oh, my king! you require fidelity to your throne, and punish as traitors all who swerve from your laws. What is the Jew's crime?—fidelity to his Maker! for this he is pointed at—derided—scoffed! and what is noble in others are with bigoted men the Jew's curse; and though beneath the arm of power the Jew must bend, yet this cannot always be; for moral right will rise to vindicate humanity. This is the subject I wished to speak on—to save myself and countrymen from destruction.

Aha.

But who has stretched my laws so far—who has such a design on foot?

Est.

My king, there stands the man! [*Points to Haman.*] He, out of pure malice to the people, sent forth the decree. He trembles! his lip quivers! his sallow cheek would, if it dare, burst with rage! his wicked eye glances fire on me and my race! Hence, secured perverter of thy monarch's law!

Aha.

Is this my able counselor? Can it be true, Haman? Have you sought to bring contempt on my dignity? We cannot brook this villainy. My rage shall not be predominant—I'll retire to

lament thy treachery. [*All go out but Esther and Haman. Esther reclines on the Couch—Haman slowly, and in a most servile manner—approaches the Couch.*]

Ham.

Fair queen, possessing influence over all, thou hast subdued the King, and humbled me. I fear degradation, but your goodness of heart shall be my advocate. Pray for me and my sons—for my wife: solicit with thy beauty and persuasive voice, and I shall be reinstated once again in royal favour.

Est.

[*On the Couch.*] And darest thou—vile plotter against my life and all my race—darest thou ask my interposition?

Ham.

Public disgrace—the hootings of a mob—poverty—fall from office—all may be prevented by one word from thee. Like the crawling worm behold me at thy feet. Do not cast me off! I'll be as the dust of thy feet, but save me. I'll kiss thy footmark in the earth—pray for thee—watch thy breathing as the balm of Heaven—so you but grant my supplication and thy blessed favour.

[*Enter Ahasuerus and Attendants.*]

Aha.

[*In anger.*] Base mortal! reptile! deluder of the public weal! Wouldst thou attempt the virtue of my queen? [*The Guards seize Haman.*] By the gods! I'll dash thee down, rude monster, for such insult, and trample thee like the dust that licks my feet!

Bar.

Stay, my king—a word in private. [*He speaks in the King's ear, and points to the Goblet—the King appears to ascend.*]

Ham.

[*Aside.*] What are they at? Barnazabus knows all! I must be true to myself, and brave all difficulties with cunning and dark hypocrisy.

Est.

Come, no more of virulence or anger. Give me the jeweled goblet, and in wine let the past be

obliterated. [*Barnazabus gives her the Goblet—she examines it.*] This rare specimen of workmanship always attracts my admiration. 'Tis exquisite! what skill! how pleasing to behold! So does the envenomed serpent boast all the variegated and beauteous castings of colour, but a deadly venom lurks unseen, which, when touched, spreads rancour and death! Drink, noble Haman, to thy king! [*Offers the Cup.*]

Ham.

[*In consternation.*] I am heart-sick—his majesty's wrath has unnerved me! I'll home to my couch—pray excuse my refusing the honour.

Est.

Then I'll drink myself. Here's to my king! [*She raises it to her Mouth—then stops.*] What is this? the wine curdled! it seems sour! No treachery, I hope; for all here are friends. Barnazabus, call the Jew alchemist—my relation, now in our palace—he is of rare judgment, and shall pass his skill on the draught. Call him! [*Barnazabus goes to the side and beckons.*]

Ham.

All is lost! [*Mordecai enters as the Alchemist—he confronts Haman.*] I can scarcely breathe!

Est.

Behold this liquid—say, is it wholesome or drugged? Speak without fear, for here you are safe.

Mor.

None but myself can tell its potency—one drop at the bottom will distill the whole blood into frenzy, and shortly deprive the victim of life. Such a draught I lately sold in this palace to *that* man! [*Points to Haman.*]

Ham.

Liar! Base miscreant, take death! [*They stay him. Mordecai throws off his disguise.*]

Mor.

Traitor! take my life if you dare! In that disguise I sold you what you thought poison. You are

deceived, and Mordecai, the Jew, comes to hurl you to despair!

Aha.

Haman, surrender thy ring of office—[*Haman gives it.*]—which thus I bestow on Mordecai, the Jew. Go, issue thy orders through the palace. [*Exit Mordecai.*] Take this man to death! [*Haman is taken off.*]

Est.

Blessed be this hour! happy be my king! and prosperous be the Jews of every land and clime! May the sacred tree of liberty never lose a branch in contending for religious superiority; but all be free to worship as he pleases. Let that man be for ever despised who dares interfere between his fellow man and his creed. Oh, people of my own nation, may the *heart* promised home you've sighed for present you golden hours of freedom; and down to posterity may the sons of Judah in every clime celebrate this time in happy Purim! [*The Band strikes up the Chorus—Mordecai enters on Horseback, accompanied by numerous Characters—a Transparency descends with the word "PURIM!" on it—the whole form a Grand Tableau.*]

THE CURTAIN FALLS.