

THE
FATAL ERROR,

TRAGEDY.

BY AARON W. LELAND.

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1807.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

ALCASTER, *King of Sweden.*

V. VERDE, *his Secretary, and Prime Minister.*

PHILANDER, *Son and Heir of Alcaster.*

LORD SIDNEY, *an English Nobleman.*

CORDELIO, *his Secretary.*

RINALDO, *a Swedish Courtier.*

ROLLA, *Chief of the Palace Guards.*

JAGO, *a Russian, Hireling Assassin.*

SCENE, *the Common Hall of the King's Palace.*

TIME, *the Evening.*

THE FATAL ERROR.

King Alcaster, Solus.

O FORTUNE, when thou falsely smil'st on man,
And call'st him King, thou giv'st a gaudy title
To cares and wild perplexities eternal.
Long have I reign'd over a gen'rous people ;
Alas ! few pearly drops of calm content
Have cheer'd my reign ; but now the prospect brightens.
Anticipated pleasures far excelling
The boasted triumphs of a spendid throne,
Now fire my fancy, soothe my aged heart,
Exhilarate my hopes of solid joys.
When Bright Aurora, smiling on the earth,
Shall from her casement pour the balmy light ;
Then with my court I'll hail th' auspicious morn.
Long wish'd for day in my eventful reign,
I joy at thy approach—kind be thy issue,
For strange events shall grace thy passing hours.
For then will I proclaim to all my kingdom,
That the young Lord Philander is my son,
Tho' now 'tis thought he is some stranger's orphan.
Surprize and joy shall echo thro' the empire,
Congratulations will pour in upon me

From every court that decks Europa's shores.
But now my faithful friend Valverde comes.

Enter Valverde.

Thrice welcome, at this time, noble Valverde,
It is most meet that thou should'st share my joy,
For long I've prov'd thy love and thy allegiance,
And found thee true and firm as fabled Atlas,
Which on its faithful base supports all heav'n.
Long hast thou kept my all-important secrets
Lock'd in thy breast ; but now the time draws near
When all shall be divulg'd.

Valverde. My leige, this heart ne'er stoop'd to base
deccit :

I owe my greatness to my love of virtue ;
Full many a year I've spent within this court ;
I can remember when your royal father
Sway'd with a mighty hand the Swedish scepter ;
But in my youth he nobly died in battle.

Alas. Ah ! that recital wakes a pleasing pain,
For I did love him well—but pray proceed.

Val. Then thou didst mount the throne, in all the
pride

Of conscious merit, youth, and love of glory ;
Soon thou didst wed the beauteous Angelina,
With every charm that ever grac'd a princess ;
Then pleasure smil'd, and every thought was love.

Alas. My friend Valverde, now thou drawst a
scene,

Which, like the ghost of my departed joys,
Points me to God who gave, and took away.
These blasted hopes, and quickly-withering flowers
Give me full oft a sadly-pleasing pain.

Val. Full well I call to mind that dreadful day,

Tho' twenty years have since roll'd on their circles,
 Which to Philander gave a noble birth,
 But to your queen an all-lamented grave.
 That morn we rambled down in yonder park,
 Where branching elms o'er-canopied our path :
 We there discours'd of war, and there of love,
 When from the palace rush'd an aged female,
 And to us ran. Pale horror mark'd her face,
 Chilling despair glar'd fearful in her eye,
 Trembling she stood, and then in words scarce
 human,

She bade us hasten to your Angelina,
 Who gasp'd in death—and ere she died would see us.

Alcas. O how thy story harrows up my soul.

Val. We to her chamber rush'd and saw the queen
 Struggling within the icy arms of death,
 Yet lovely was the ruin! Mighty God! a scene like
 that

Would solve in tears an adamantine heart.
 She bade all else depart, then spoke such words
 As breath'd the melting tenderness of love,
 The like of which no pen can e'er describe,
 And which no tongue can adequately tell.
 Two new-born babes she then to you presented,
 Which since are call'd Philander and Amelia :
 Then begg'd you to fulfil her last request,
 To educate the son as if a stranger,
 To keep his birth a secret from the world,
 And thus to keep him free from those temptations,
 Which often ruin promising young princes,
 Till twenty years had form'd a vig'rous mind,
 And on that day to place him on the throne.
 More she'd have said—but ah! the purple flood
 Froze round her heart—then sinking, groan'd and
 died !

Alcas. Blest be the mem'ry of my Angelina ;
 May drooping willows stand in weeping order,
 And angels vigils keep around her tomb.
 Yes, well have I obey'd her last behest :
 I bribed all, that knew I had a son,
 To swear a daughter only crown'd my love.
 My son was deem'd some unknown stranger's orphan ;
 Yet he receiv'd a noble education.
 I've bred Amelia as my only heiress.
 Tomorrow is the birth-day of my son ;
 Tomorrow I'll proclaim his royal birth,
 And place my kingly crown upon his head.
 Philander thinks some peasant was his father,
 And yet his tow'ring soul is bent on views
 Lofty as heav'n : Ambition fires his soul,
 And love of glory prompts his every wish.
 To fit him for the honors of my crown,
 I've rais'd him in the state, I've deck'd his name
 With the bright laurel of a Gen'ral's title.
 But all his high commissions end this night ;
 This night I've talk'd with him, and made him think
 That on tomorrow I will him abandon,
 Naked and pennyless, to the wide world,
 That his promotion may be unexpected,
 And burst upon him when he thinks he's lost,
 Like sun-beams darting through a black'ning tempest.
Val. My prince, I greatly fear a mighty evil ;
 In such a soul, where bold ambition reigns,
 A softer passion ever finds admission.
 I greatly fear his unknown sister's charms
 In flame his soul with love's enchanting fire.
 Have you ne'er mark'd when in Amelia's presence,
 Philander's haughty soul would melt in softness,
 And admiration swallow up the hero ?
 My lord, think of his proud, impatient spirit :
 How will he rave, to find she is his sister !

Alcas. Long, O Valverde, have I fear'd that evil,
 But hop'd to find my base suspicion groundless :
 But horrid confirmation thou dost bring.
 O should that wild Philander love his sister,
 How should I curse the day I kept his birth
 A secret from himself, and thus expos'd him.
 But now I'll hasten to my dear Amelia,
 And all my wrath and curse denounce against her,
 If she e'er gives her hand or heart to him.
 But still I can't reveal that he's her brother,
 Before tomorrow's sun lights up the day. [Exit.

Valverde, Solus.

Some dark event my gloomy mind presages.
 But yonder comes Philander—I'll away. [Exit.

SCENE II.

Enter Philander, Solus.

Yes, by-yon glorious orb of night, I swear,
 I'll never tamely suffer this dishonor.
 I'll rack invention to avert the blow,
 And still retain my offices and honors.
 And if stern fate ordains that I must fall,
 That hour of shame I'll make my hour of death.
 What ! shall I meanly let this king Alcaster
 Tread me in the dust, like a poor writhing worm !
 Curse on my humble birth, curse on my fortune.
 Why was I born with this ambitious soul,
 And yet dependant on Alcaster's favor ?
 Why has he bred me here as if a prince ?
 And why on me bestow'd the highest honors ?
 Why has he grac'd me with a Gen'ral's name,
 And sooth'd my haughty soul with brilliant triumphs ?
 And now when twenty years I've spent in court,

Why does he strip me of my glorious laurels ?
 I fear some myst'ry in this black design :
 I fear some curs'd mischance may have discover'd
 To king Alcaster that I love the Princess.
 'Tis said that women never keep a secret,
 And I'll believe it true if this be known ;
 For I ne'er spoke of love but to Amelia.
 If she's betrayed me, then I'm damn'd indeed.
 But I'm a wretch, for doubting once her truth,
 I know her true as Heav'n's own rectitude,
 I'll swear she's constant as the king of day ;
 Her faith is sacred as the vestal fire.
 She vow'd, when death remov'd her royal father,
 That on me she'd bestow her hand and crown.
 And this will gratify my ruling passions,
 Ambition, and the love I bear Amelia.
 Yet why should king Alcaster thus address me ?
 My offices and honors end this night ;
 He seem'd to speak as though he would discard me.
 Beware Alcaster how thou triest to crush me,
 Lest with thy blood I stain my path to empire.
 I've sent to Lord Rinaldo here to meet me :
 He's a great fav'rite with the common people,
 By him I'll know my fame throughout the nation,
 How it would please to see me wield the scepter,
 By this strong arm, which now Alcaster holds.

Enter Rinaldo.

Welcome Rinaldo, much I joy to see thee,
 For gloomy care sits brooding on my heart,
 And dire uncertainty tortures my mind.
 From ealy childhood thou hast known me well ;
 Then tell me I conjure thee all thou know'st,
 Or of my parents, or of my extraction.

What was I call'd when here I liv'd a boy,
 Belov'd or scorn'd, neglected or caress'd,
 I burn with strong desire to know my race.

Rinaldo. Your wishes Gen'ral are to me commands,
 Gladly I'll tell you all my observations.

When war's shrill trump had wak'd the din of arms,
 And call'd our warriors to the field of mars,
 When great Altama led our valiant troops,
 To drive usurping robbers from our land :
 Then for my country's cause my arm was nerv'd,
 And with my sword I strew'd th' ensanguin'd field,
 With many a carcase of Alcaster's foes,
 And through their ranks I cut my way to fame.

When smiling peace revisited the state,
 Alcaster call'd me to his splendid court,
 And with a noble office crown'd my valor.
 When first I came you was a smooth-fac'd boy
 Of thirteen Springs, a stripling pert and proud.
 But had you been the prince of all the world,
 You had not been more splendidly attended.

Tutors of every art to form your mind ;
 Footmen and slaves to wait at your command.
 Quick of your name and race I ask'd the king,
 But doubtful answers only could obtain,
 Nor could I gain from all about the court
 The smallest knowledge of your true descent.

Phi. This answer but inflames my eager wish,
 To know the meaning of this strange concealment.
 My cruel fate withholds from me the boon,
 Which every beggar has in free supply,
 The poor possession of a father's name.
 But I'll devise some method—speak Rinaldo,
 What is my credit with the court and army ?

Rin. Most brilliant expectations have been form'd,
 Of future greatness of the young Philander.

The army hail you as their highest glory ;
 And should the king and young Amelia die,
 The army loud would hail you as their king—

Phi. Amelia die !! Speak not of that again ;
 For if I ne'er am king before she dies,
 May time grow grey, and the last trumpet sound,
 Before I rise to wield a monarch's scepter.

Rin. 'Tis source of greatest wonder to the nation,
 That king Alcaster thus should honor you,
 And still keep secret who your parents were,
 But still they laud your merit on the field,
 And the whole nation shouts your martial glory :
 But slander speaks aloud of your ambition,
 And thirst for regal honors——

Phi. The world doth injure me by saying so ;
 But now no more ; I wish to be alone ;
 You know the English Lord, the noble Sidney,
 Are he and his companion in the palace ?

Rin. They are.

Phi. Then ask Cordelio, Sidney's secretary, to
 come to me. *[Exit Rin.]*

Philander, Solus.

He says I'm thought ambitious---and with great
 truth ;

In glory is my joy, in war my pride.
 Such is my soul, that were it in my pow'r,
 I'd seize all earthly crowns, if in my course
 I rush'd through seas of blood, drawn from the breasts
 Of mothers, clasping infants in their death.
 And if the world should yield to my command,
 And earthly kingdoms I'd no more to conquer,
 I'd hurl old Satan from his burning throne,
 And govern hell !——but von Cordelio comes---
 By him I'd know Lord Sidney's fame,
 In his own native country, England. *[Enter Cordelio.]*

SCENE III.

Philander and Cordelio.

Phi. Are you the countryman of that Lord Sidney,
Who by his presence honors much our court?

Cordelio. I am his secretary.

Phi. You're honor'd much by being his companion.
By you I wish to know his fame in England.

Cor. His brilliant genius far transcends my praise ;
His gallant actions and his high descent
Conspire to raise him on the list of fame.

Phi. If all your English nobles are like him,
St. James' court excels the court of Jove.

Cor. Sidney is call'd the flow'r of British youth ;
On him hath nature lavish'd every gift,
And varying fortune show'r'd a gay profusion.
Our English dukes and barons court his favor,
And deem his friendship an exalted honor.
Our noblest ladies vie in praising him,
And royal George is proud to call Lord Sidney
The richest gem in all his splendid court.

Phi. Full great I thought his fame, full bright his
honor ;

I thank you for this happy confirmation.

Tell him I wait his presence, if convenient.

Cor. With pleasure he'll attend you, Lord Philander,
As he maintains for you a gen'rous friendship. [*Exit.*

Philander, Solus.

Sweet heaven, a friend is thy divinest gift.
What heart so haughty as to scorn a friend.
Three months has Sidney grac'd our royal court,
In him I've found a noble, gen'rous friend.
A soul like his disdains the least dishonor,
Therefore to him I'll trust my situation.

I'll ask his counsel, tell him all my fears,
And his advice shall guide my daring purpose.

Enter Sidney.

Sidney. Cordelio told me you desired to see me.

Phi. My Lord, I would be honor'd with your converse
On bus'ness of a most eventful nature.

Sid. Since I've remain'd in king Alcaster's court,
With you I've spent much time in cordial friendship ;
Full many a jovial hour we've spent together ;
Why all this ceremony now Philander ?

Phi. Our court is proud that in it you reside.
I prize you for noble sentiments,
Therefore your confidence I would aspire to.

Sid. Then why this stately prologue to our converse,
And why this deepen'd gloom upon your brow ?
Full well I've mark'd that ever since this morning
Your countenance has seem'd quite woe-beclouded.
Ambitious souls like yours should ne'er despond,
But rush upon their troubles sword in hand.
Full well I know you haughty, and aspiring,
And for these qualities I honor you.
True English blood seems boiling in your veins.
Then quit despondence, 'tis a coward's province,
Perhaps some high-born rival tries to crush thee,
But know, a soul like thine was never made
Meanly to bear the lash of stern oppression.
Entrust yourself to me, I'll not betray you,
For in my soul I loathe a mock of friendship.

Phi. A dreaded evil checks my tow'ring hopes,
And dark suspicions rankle in my breast.

Sid. The human breast oft bleeds with fancied ills,
When real woes would pass regardless by.
Here you are basking in Alcaster's favor,
Submissive thousands wait at your command.
What grating care now blights your blooming youth ?

Phi. You doubtless know the princess, young Amelia,
The envied heiress of Alcaster's crown,
And do you deem her worthy admiration ?

Sid. The princess well deserves my highest praise,
With her I've spent some most delightful hours.
She far excells those other Swedish ladies,
Who since my coming here, have grac'd the palace.
But can it be that such a soul as thine,
Can pine in love, like an Arcadian shepherd ?
I know 'tis false ; you merely mentioned her,
To pave the way for some important secret.

Phi. You know I am an unknown stranger's son.

Sid. I know Alcaster keeps your birth a secret,
Still some dark mystery involves your fortune.
The king has deck'd you with the highest honors,
With which he ne'er would grace a peasant's son.

Phi. Now mark me well, the king has honored me,
But all my offices have now expir'd.
This night I'm left a private citizen.

Sid. Your tale creates the deepest doubts of treach'ry,

Phi. Which I can solve by damning certainty.
The king has thank'd me for my services,
But said that I might seek some other master.

Sid. Inextricable myst'ry marks your words.
It cannot be the king is such a villain.

Phi. Long I have lov'd Alcaster's peerless daughter,
With studied art I've won her gen'rous heart,
And she has promis'd me her hand and crown.
By some dire fate the king has this discover'd,
And to prevent it means to ruin me,
By driving me, an orphan, from his court.

Sid. Philander, you was never made to cringe,
And bear the insults of a petty monarch.
No, let revenge inspire you with a plan,
To extricate you from his causeless fury.
Let not the common bonds of human laws

Chain down your soul to slav'ry's tugging oar.
 Throw off the ties of moral obligation,
 And soar aloft in your exalted sphere.
 Self-preservation is a law of nature,
 Be not the frightened slave of coward conscience,
 Which like a goblin, is the dread of children.
 The interest of the army all is yours,
 Then seize the crown or die a glorious death.

Phi. Your sentiments inspire my soul with ardor,
 Yes, I'm resolv'd—I'll spurn all fear away—
 This night—that hated king Alcaster dies.

Sid. Philander how wilt thou perform the deed?

Phi. At that dread hour when the pale glimmering
 moon,
 Lights up grim ghosts to walk their fabled round ;
 When the lone house-dog howls a horrid note,
 Which echoes far, a hollow, dreary sound,
 Then will I send some most abandon'd ruffian
 To stab Alcaster in his mid-night dream.

Sid. Be not too rash, a deed like this demands
 A deep design, and means of dark concealment.

Phi. Now I'm resolv'd not heav'n or earth can move me.
 But go I pray you, wait upon the princess,
 For long ere now she's heard this curs'd event,
 If I am not deceiv'd—meanwhile I here will wait for
 your return.

Exit. L. Sidney.

Philander Solus.

May hell befriend me, heav'n cannot but frown.
 But O—the king approaches——

Enter Alcaster.

Alc. General, I come to offer you my blessing ;
 Well have you serv'd the state in ev'ry office.
 Now you can rove and seek a better fortune—

[P. runs out.]

* * * * *

Alcaster Solus.

His haughty soul was near to burst in grief,
 Yet no ungrateful word escap'd his lips.
 Scarce could I well conceal a father's love,
 Beneath the mantle of dissembled hate.
 I'll hold the secret from him till tomorrow,
 Then gladly own him as my royal heir,
 And will repay the fancied grief he suffers.
 I've made my daughter swear she will not wed him,
 While I'm alive.
 Thus happily my fate runs smoothly on,
 And each event conspires to crown my hopes.
 But nature asks repose, and slumbers sweet,
 So rare on monarchs shed, shall sweetly seal
 My eyes in peace, till the blest morn arrives. [Exit.

SCENE IV.

Enter Philander, Solus.

O conscience, tyrant of the soul, what art thou?
 Art thou, as oft I've said, a fabled phantom,
 Rais'd by the bugbears of a winter's eve;
 Maintain'd by priests to keep poor fools in awe?
 Yes, such thou art, and I defy thy pow'r.
 Yes, old Alcaster, in thy sleep thou diest.
 Yet hard it is to bite the hand that feeds me:
 It hurts my soul to kill the good old man.
 O fell ambition, harsh are all thy dictates;
 But yet I do disdain to be a slave.

Enter Lord Sidney.

Most welcome, Sidney—how found you the princess?

Sid. I found the beauteous maiden drown'd in tears,

And rack'd with all the pangs of keenest woe.
 To you she sent this ill-consoling message :
 Her father has found out your mutual love,
 And made her swear by the Almighty God,
 That while her father lives, she will not wed you.

Phi. She never will ! O then I am undone ;
 So farewell heaven ! and with heav'n farewell fear—
 Farewell remorse—all good to me is lost ;—
 Murder, be thou my friend ! !

Sid. I can no longer blame your dread resolve,
 Alcaster's dark designs are now disclos'd.
 I know a fellow who is aptly suited
 To execute your vengeance on the king ;
 A ruffian, harden'd much by frequent crimes,
 Who for a purse of gold would stab his brother.
 He smiles at murder, makes a mock of hell,
 And gaily laughs at ghastly views of death.
 But prove him for yourself, I'll send him to you.

[*Exit.*

Philander, Solus.

Now all is hush'd as death, a solemn gloom
 Spreads dark pavillion o'er this vaulted palace.
 No sound, save now and then a distant footstep,
 Along the halls, just feebly strikes the ear :
 But night is fair if liken'd to my fate,
 And maniacs calm, if once compar'd to me.
 Now my fate trembles on its utmost verge.
 But one poor day, or seats me on a throne,
 Or locks me in a dungeon.————

Reflection—'tis a monkish, coward virtue,
 Therefore I'll none of it : the die is cast—
 This night Alcaster dies————

Then will I mount the throne——
 Then shall the fair Amelia be my bride ;
 But hark, some one draws near ;
 Ah 'tis a murd'rous footstep——
 Fellow, what art thou ?

[*Enter Jago.*

Jago. Well, as to that, I am very much whatever you want to have me be.

Phi. Why art thou armed with that dagger?

Jago. Ah, I always carry this cold dagger about me in the night, so if I meet any one too hot, I can cool him a little with it.

Phi. What would you do for a purse of guineas?

Jago. Any thing under heaven—if you think any one has a head too much, I'll cut it off for you with pleasure. I'm keen in ev'ry thing but honest deeds, in them I'm stupid as a mule.

Phi. Are you courageous when danger flashes in your face?

Jago. Yes; I have got courage enough to fight the devil under the gallows, for the body of a dead malefactor.

Phi. What if I order you to wind your way
To yonder dark and solitary church-yard,
And then descend that large sepulch'ral tomb,
Amidst terrific images of death,
Where yelling ghosts would bristle up your hair;
There wander round amidst the grizzly corpses,
Then crouch a while, until a holy priest
Comes there to weep o'er his deceased wife,
Then while he prays to rush and stab his heart;
Would'st not thou shrink?

Jago. Shrink! no; I'd run up and stab a little hole in his breast, so that his pious soul might have a quick and easy passage out to heaven.

Phi. I'm satisfied, that you're a daring, deadly villain—know you this palace?

Jago. Yes, quite well.

Phi. Do you know where the king's royal bed-chamber is?

Jago. I do.

Phi. Then mark me well—lurk secretly along,

And carefully approach the sleeping king,
Then plunge your deadly dagger in his breast,
And fifty guineas shall be your reward.

Jago. I go—I'll do it——

Phi. But stop——be sure you do immediate execution,

Before he wakes, or you'll have mighty trouble,
For still the latent fire of martial valor
Pervades his breast.

Jago. Ah, I'll take special care he is dead enough
when he wakes up I warrant ye, I'll gee him a dose of
cold iron——did you say there was a hidden fire rak'd
up in his breast? if there is, I'll rake it open, and use
this dagger for a poker. [Exit.

Phi. This is the awful crisis of my fate. [Exit.

SCENE V.

Enter Valverde, Solus.

Night's darksome scenes, and lonely solitude
Encompass me around in awful silence.

How sweetly kind is contemplation's hour,
To souls that never leave the path of virtue.

I dread the man who fears a lonesome scene,
He wanders in the tracks of vice.—

My heart is strangely press'd by omens dire,
I fear some black design is on the wing.

I saw Philander pacing yonder hall,

With steps disorder'd—the lamp did feebly shine,
A gloomy cloud had over-spread his features ;

Ah, much I fear the issue——

But yonder comes my faithful soldier Rolla. [Ent. Rol.
Rolla why wander you so late at night?

Rolla. My Lord, Valverde, all things go not well,
Some most infernal mischief threatens us.

I therefore watch to find out the event.

Val. Why these suspicions honest Rolla?

Rol. As walking secretly around the chambers,
I spied a villain lurking in the corner,
I knew him well, I knew him in the army—
Where many a time he's grac'd the whipping-post.
He is a villain much more to be dreaded,
Than armed hussars on their stamping coursers.

Val. Of what design do you so much suspect him?

Rol. O he's a crafty murd'rer, an unfeeling wretch,
He would for money stab his own dear father.
Yet he's a very coward, like death he fears me,
And if I catch him now at any crime,
I'll make his heart weep blood.

Val. If such a villain lurks within these walls,
Keep closest watch and find out his design. [Exit.

Rolla, Solus.

I'll mark the palace with a jealous eye,
As sometime since I passed near this place,
I over-heard a damning consultation.
Jago's fiend-like voice I plainly heard.
And now I'll search the palace for Jago,
And when I find him he shall tell me all,
Both his design, and who it was employ'd him,
Or by my soul, I'll tear him limb from limb. [Exit.

Enter Philander, Solus.

- What horrible suspense affects my mind,
If this assassination is discovered
I'd better be in Ætna's burning caverns.
Yet why do I destroy the good old king?
He us'd to love me, often from his lips,
Has drop'd affection, sweeter to my soul,
Than honey to my taste ;—Yet here's the cause,
Or he must die, or I must be a slave,
Or he must die, or I must lose Amelia.
Ah, now infernal triumph crowns my hopes,

D

For here returns this tool of my revenge. [*Ent. Jago.*
What hast thou done ?

Jago. I've done just exactly what you ordered—in cat-like silence I lurked along to the king's bed-chamber, his majesty seemed to sleep very pleasantly, so I thought it would be a deed of charity to lengthen so fine a nap a little bit, so I suddenly stabbed him to the heart.

Phi. As you'd be safe from torture, is he dead ?

Jago. Yes that he is, if he'd the nine lives of a cat, for the black of blood his heart closely followed my dagger out, to see what I wanted, but the money, the money.

Phi. Here take it, and if e'er you do reveal
The secret that I hir'd thee to this murder,
A cruel death shall tear thy mangled limbs,
For now shall I be king. [*Exit.*

Jago, Solus.

A dear bargain this, to sell my soul for poor fifty guineas, but what then? I've sold it just so fifty times, but it don't seem to be call'd for yet. But hark friend Jago, what if the devil should call for a settlement—he has at least fifty good bonds for my appearance, then money wont buy off, that's certain—why then the long and the short of the business is the devil must make ready for me—Pluto must calculate for one more lodger—and a tough fellow he'll have of me. But stop---what if there is really a hell---I shall find broiling a serious matter----But there is no such thing----no hell---all a woman's whim---all a scare-crow. But now let me argufy this matter a little. What have I been and kill'd the king for----I dont know. But money pricks me on---but what if the executioner pricks me off now I'm on. By means of this murder, that hot-headed young lord says he shall be king---if he is, I'm

gone, for he'll do as all the great folks do, when they have climbed up, they kick down the ladder; or in plain English, he will hang me for fear I shall drop out the secret, (*enter Rolla secretly*) but if I now confess the whole, the state will burn us both at the stake—in short I've got into a tough scrape.

Rolla, suddenly seizing Jago.

What deed is this you've done, infernal scoundrell? What words are those you spoke?

Jago, [frightened.] O what do you want of me? what are you going to do?

Rol. Tell me this instant, what you've done with that dagger,

Or every bone in your body I'll break in pieces.

Jago. It was—O horror—it was a damning deed.

Rol. Speak out, or by my soul I save the hangman trouble.

Jago. I've kill'd the king!!

Rol. What say you? If you speak false you die.

Jago. I said I'd stabb'd your king Alcaster's heart.

Rol. O crime of horror! but stop—this deed Was never thy contrivance. Now tell me On your life who hired thee.

Jago. Well, I shall be hung now, and if I confess the whole, they can't hang me higher than the gallows are. So Lord Philander hir'd me—so that's the whole of it.

Rol. Philander! it cannot be.

Jago. As sure as I'm a villain, it is true.

Rol. This crime will sound to distant generations, And when you've long been dead and doom'd to woe, This crime will strike full many a heart with horror, And many a gen'rous soul will curse your mem'ry.

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE VI.

Enter Valverde and Rinaldo.

Val. O night of horror !

O Rinaldo ! have you beheld this bloodiest scene ?

Rin. I have, my lord—I mourn Alcaster's death.

Val. O, how can you be calm ? I heard an outcry,
And ran, alas ! I soon beheld the fatal cause.
I saw my dearest friend, my royal sovereign,
Welt'ring in blood, all stiff with clotted gore.
O spectacle of horror ! madding sight ! I heard his
final groan.

Rin. True he deserves the tribute of our tears.
Yet here's the myst'ry---who could be the murd'rer.
O may stern justice overtake the traitor,
And tear him piece-meal on the quiv'ring wheel. [*Exit.*

Val. I wish, yet greatly fear to know this myst'ry—
Rolla will soon be here——— [*Rolla enters.*

O well didst thou forebode some fatal crime ;
But tell me, tho' it breaks my aged heart,
Did you find out that murd'rous villain,
And did he tell you who employ'd him ?

Rolla. Have you ne'er read, in war's terrific annals
Of fierce Bellona foaming in the blood
Of infants, writhing on the pointed steel,
While mothers tear their breasts in madden'd grief—
Of fiery earthquakes, with thund'ring vengeance
Sinking mighty cities, while shrieking beauties
Sink in shiv'ring chasms——— ?
Such tales are joy, to this which I relate,
O arm yourself with fortitude undaunted,
I found the murd'rous wretch, who kill'd the king,
And he confess'd that Lord Philander hir'd him
To stab Alcaster's heart——

Val. O God of heaven !!

[*Exit.*

Rolla, Solus.

There comes the wretch, dress'd out in gaudy
plumes,
Wearing a crown, by blood and murder gain'd. [*Exit.*

Enter Philander, Solus.

Now thrills my soul in unbecclouded pleasure,
No wish unsatisf'd, for I'm a King.
Long lov'd Amelia, soon thou'lt be my bride.
What heart could envy heav'n's much boasted joys,
Which thus finds heav'n on earth?—But stop—
This was a horrid deed obtain'd this crown—

* * * * *

No longer I'm the slave of coward conscience,
I kill'd the king because he hated me,
And I am pleased that the deed is done.
And now my heart beats high with future scenes,
Tho' solemn weeds will clothe my lovely princess,
Yet soon shall laughing pleasure dance around her,
And pensive weeds forget their mournful office.
Great Jove might envy happiness like mine.

Enter Valverde.

O what avails to dim your eyes in grief?
All men must die—it is a law of nature.
Now as you've been Alcaster's friend, be mine,
Rejoice at my advancement.

Val. Rejoice with thee! thou bloodiest murderer,
Thy crimes strike desperation to my soul.

Phi. O heav'ns, am I discover'd—

Val. Young man, attend—I come to tell a tale
Will freeze your blood, and tear your tortur'd soul!
You hir'd that wretch to kill the good Alcaster—

But that is joy to what I next relate.
 How will my words plant scorpions in your breast,
 O cruel wretch, Alcaster was thy father !!

Phi. Thou traitor, hold ! 'tis false——

Val. Nay, start not—leave me not—nor interrupt me,
 A few more words will wring your soul in torture—
 Alcaster was thy father, wretch, and O, he lov'd thee
 As never father lov'd a darling son.

But just the night before he meant to crown thee,
 O monster, thou didst stab his aged Breast !!

Phi. And can it be ? Was he my father ? if that is
 true,
 Hell had been made for me, if Lucifer had never
 sinn'd.

Val. Hush yet, and hear the climax of despair.
 Amelia was thy sister—she is dead !
 O wild distraction seize thee, for heaping woes
 On woes on all around thee——
 Soon as I told her that you was her brother,
 And that 'twas you who caus'd her father's death,
 She pierc'd her bosom with the fatal steel,
 And fell a weeping beauty—a mourning victim of
 despair and——

Phi. Hold, hold—speak not another word upon
 your life,
 For O, my heart consumes in dire despair.
 O racks and tortures are joys to this.
 O God ! I go, in settled, black despair,
 And drive the scorching bullets through my brain,
 And rush, a howling ghost, to join the wailing throng.

[*Philander rushes out.*]

Valverde, Solus.

O night of desperation ! O my heart ! burst at thy
 woes——

(*A pistol is heard.*)

Ha ! what noise is that !

Rolla runs in.

Rolla. My lord, the young Philander dies ! he's
shot himself,
He rolls in purple gore in yonder chamber.

Val. A deadlier scene ne'er wrung the pitying
breast.

Poor human nature weeps, while virtue mourns,
And dove-eye'd mercy shivers at the crimes,
Which ill-plac'd love, and dire ambition cause.

[Exeunt.]