ALEXANDER THE GREAT.

A TRAGEDY.
INTRODUCTION TO ALEXANDER THE GREAT.

THE story of this drama is derived from Quintus Curtius, Plutarch, and Justin. The real hero is Porus rather than Alexander; and when it was first acted in 1665, mention is made of it under the former title. Racine himself writes thus:—“I have endeavoured to represent in Porus an enemy worthy of Alexander; and I may say that his character has met with a high degree of public favour, and some have even censured me for making this prince greater than Alexander. But such persons forget that in virtue of his victory Alexander is really greater than Porus, that every line of the tragedy reflects his praises, and that even the invectives of Porus and Axiana are so many tributes to the conqueror’s valour. There is perhaps in Porus something that interests us more, from the very circumstance of his misfortunes; for, as Seneca has remarked, ‘we are naturally disposed to admire nothing in the world so much as a man who can bear adversity with courage.’”
CHARACTERS.

ALEXANDER.

Porus,
Taxiles, \{ Indian Kings.

Axiana, Queen of another part of India.
Cleophila, sister of Taxiles.

Hephaestion.

Attendants of Alexander.

The scene is laid on the banks of the Hydaspes, in the camp of Taxiles.
ALEXANDER THE GREAT.

A TRAGEDY.

ACT I.

Scene 1.

TAXILES, CLEOPHILA.

CLEOPHILA.

What! go you to resist a king whose might
Seems to force Heav’n itself to take his side,
Before whose feet have fallen all the kings
Of Asia, who holds Fortune at his beck?
Open your eyes, my brother, and behold
In Alexander one who casts down thrones,
Binds kings in chains, and makes whole nations slaves;
And all the ills they have incurrd’ prevent.

TAXILES.

Would you that, stricken with so mean a fear,
I bow my head to meet his threat’ning yoke,
And hear it said by every Indian tribe,
I forged the fetters for myself and them?
Shall I leave Porus, and betray those chiefs
Met to defend the freedom of our realms,
Who without hesitation have declared
Their brave resolve to live or die like kings?
See you a single one of them so cow’d
At Alexander’s name, that he forgets
To fight, and begs to be enroll’d his slave,
As of th' acknowledg'd master of the world?
So far from being daunted at his fame,
They will attack him e'en in Victory's lap.
And would you, sister, have me crave his help
Whom I to-day am ready to withstand?

CLEOPHILA.

Nay, is it not to you this prince appeals,
Sues for your friendship, and for yours alone,
And, ready to discharge his lightning flash,
Makes secret efforts to protect your head?

TAXILES.

Why should he spare his wrath for me alone?
Of all Hydaspes arms against him, how
Have I deserved a pity that insults?
Why not to Porus make these overtures?
Doubtless he deems him too magnanimous
To heed an offer that is fraught with shame,
And, seeking virtue of less stubborn mould,
Thinks me, forsooth, more worthy of his care.

CLEOPHILA.

Say not he thinks to find in you a slave,
But deems you bravest of his enemies,
And hopes that, may he but disarm your hand,
His triumph o'er the rest will be secured.
His choice does no discredit to your name,
He offers friendship cowards may not share.
Tho' he would fain see all the world submit
To him, he wants no slave among his friends.
Ah, if his friendship can your glory soil,
You spared me not a stain of deeper dye.
You know his daily services to me,
Why did you ne'er attempt to check their course?
You see me now the mistress of his heart,
A hundred secret missives make me sure
Of his devotion, and to reach me come
His ardent sighs across two hostile camps.
Instead of urging hatred and disdain,
You oft have blamed me for severity;  
You led me on to listen to his suit,  
Ay, and perchance to love him in my turn.

TAXILES.

You have no need to blush that charms so rare  
Have forced that mighty warrior to succumb,  
Nor should it cause alarm that he whose pow'r  
Has dried Euphrates, can disarm your heart.  
But with my destiny our country's fate  
Is link'd, and it must follow as I lead;  
And tho' you fain would turn me from the task,  
I must be free to guard her liberties.  
I know how this my purpose gives you pain,  
But I, like you, follow the star of love.  
Fair Axiana's danger-darting eyes,  
Against your Alexander aim their shafts;  
Queen of all hearts, she bids her subjects arm  
For freedom, which her charms alone must bind;  
She hears with shame threats of captivity,  
Nor brooks another tyrant than herself.  
Her wrath, my sister, must command my sword,  
And I must go.

CLEOPHILA.

Ah, well, destroy yourself  
To please her; what tho' fatal the decree,  
Obey so dear a despot if you will,  
Or rather let your rival reap your bays.  
Go fight for Porus, Axiana calls,  
Secure for him the empire of her heart,  
For your best valour will not make her bend.

TAXILES.

Think you that Porus, sister—

CLEOPHILA.

Can you doubt,  
Yourself, that Axiana loves him? What!  
Can you not see how eager is her praise,
As she parades his deeds before your eyes?
Tho' others may be brave, round him alone,
Believe me, victory's pinions seem to wave;
Without his sanction vain your wisest plans,
Only with him rests India's liberty;
Had he not interposed, our walls ere now
Had sunk in ashes, he alone can stop
The conqueror's march; this charming prince she makes
Her god, and, tho' you doubt it, fain would make
Her lover!

TAXILES.
I have tried to doubt it; ah,
Be not so cruel as to blast all hope,
Nor paint a picture that I hate to see.
Nay, help me rather to be blind, confirm
My pleasing error. Pride befits the fair;
Tell me she treats all others e'en as me,
And save me from despair.

CLEOPHILA.
With my consent
Hope still, but nothing more expect from sighs
Too weak to move her. Why in battle seek
A conquest Alexander offers you
Himself? 'Tis not with him you have to cope,
But Porus, who would wrest a prize so fair.
Fame, too unjust to others' merit, vaunts
His exploits, none but his, forgets the rest;
Whate'er is done, he the sole credit claims,
And leads you like his subjects to the field.
Ah, if that title has a pleasing sound,
Why not with Greeks and Persians range yourself
Beneath a worthier lord? A hundred kings
Will share your bonds; Porus himself will come,
Yea, the whole world. But Alexander keeps
No chains for you. He leaves upon your brow
The crown a haughty rival dares disdain.
'Tis Porus and not he makes you a slave;
Be not his victim, when 'tis in your pow'r—
But look, here comes your generous rival.
TAXILES.

Ah,

My sister, how my heart beats an alarm,
And tells me, as I look, that he is loved!

CLEOPHILA.

Time presses. Fare you well. With you it lies
To be his slave, or Alexander’s friend.

Scene 2.

PORUS, TAXILES.

PORUS.

Sir, I am much deceived, or our proud foes
Will make less progress than they reckon’d on.
Impatient of delay, our gallant troops
Show resolution stamp’d upon their brows,
Strengthen each other’s hearts, and none too young
To promise to himself victorious bays.
From rank to rank the martial ardour spreads,
And eager cries have burst upon mine ears,
Complaining that they cannot prove their zeal,
But waste their vigour in an idle camp.
Shall we allow such courage to be lost?
Our wily foe knows where advantage lies;
Feeling himself still weak, to hold us back
He sends Hephaestion hither, who demands
A parley, that by idle words—

TAXILES.

’Tis fit
To hear him, Sir; we know not yet what terms
Are offer’d; Alexander may wish peace.

PORUS.

Peace! Would you then accept it at his hands?
Have we not seen him with repeated blows
Disturb the happy calm we erst enjoy'd,
And, sword in hand, enter these realms of ours,
Attacking kings who ne'er offended him?
Have we not seen him laying countries waste,
Our rivers swollen with our subjects' blood?
Yet when the gods have placed him in our pow'r,
Am I to wait until the tyrant deigns
To pardon?

**TAXILES.**

Say not Heav'n forsakes his cause;
With constant care it still defends his head
A monarch at whose nod so many states
Tremble is not a foe for kings to scorn.

**PÆRUS.**

I scorn him not, his courage I admire,
And to his prowess render due respect;
But I too am ambitious to deserve
The tribute which his merits force from me.
Let Alexander be upraised to Heav'n,
Yet will I pluck him thence, if so I may;
The altars which men's trembling hands have rear'd
To this terrestrial god, will I attack.
E'en thus did Alexander treat those kings
Whose provinces now own his greater sway:
If when he enter'd Asia he had quail'd,
Darius would not with his parting breath
Have hail'd him king.

**TAXILES.**

Sir, had Darius known
How weak he was, he would be reigning now
Where reigns another. But his fatal pride
Was better founded than your present scorn.
The fame of Alexander had not yet
Burst like the lightning from behind the clouds;
Darius ne'er had heard his name before,
And calmly dream'd of easy victory.
He knew him soon, and all amazed beheld
His countless hosts scatter'd like chaff, himself
POBUS.
A slave she marks with anger and contempt.

TAXILES.
But think you, sir, 'tis Love that would expose
Her people and herself along with you?
Nay, tell yourself the naked truth, confess
Your guiding light is Hatred and not Love.

POBUS.
I readily will own that righteous wrath
Makes me love war as much as you love peace,
That burning with a noble fire I go
To measure swords 'gainst Alexander's pride.
The praises of his valour vex my soul,
Which long has panted for this happy day.
Ere he was on my track my spirit rose
Resentful, and in secret hated him.
With keen impatience and fierce jealousy,
I thought his near approach too long delay'd,
And drew him hither with such warm desire
As made me wish myself on Persian soil
To meet him sooner. Should he balk me now,
And seek to leave these regions, then would I
Dispute in arms his passage, and refuse
The peace he condescends to offer us.

TAXILES.
So high a spirit and so firm a heart
Augur a glorious place in History's page;
And should you sink beneath the bold attempt,
Your fall at least will thro' the world resound.
Farewell. The queen draws near. Display that zeal,
That pride which makes your merit in her eyes.
My presence would disturb your interview,
And my faint-hearted prudence raise a blush.
Scene 3.

Porus, Axiana.

Axiana.
What! Taxiles avoids me! Why is this?—

Porus.
Ah, he does well to hide from you his shame:
No longer daring to encounter risk,
How could he bear to look you in the face?
But let us leave him, madam, to his choice;
He and his sister go to pay their vows
To Alexander. Let us leave a camp
Where Taxiles, with incense in his hand,
Awaits his sovereign.

Axiana.

But what says he, Sir?

Porus.

Betrays too much. Already does this slave
Boast of the bondage he would have me share.

Axiana.

Be not so passionate, and let me try
To stop him. Tho' discouraged, his warm sighs
Assure me of his love. Howe'er that be,
Let me try speech with him again, nor force
That purpose into action by your scorn
Which hardly can be fix'd.

Porus.

What! Doubt you that?
And will you trust a faithless lover's heart
Who to a tyrant means, this very day,
To give you up, thinking thereby to win
Your hand from him? Well, if you will, assist
Your own betrayal. He may seize the prize
I deem'd my own, but still it shall be mine
To fight and die for you; this glory mocks
His jealous efforts.

**AXIANA.**

Think you then, my love
Shall be the meed of insolence so base,
And that my heart, submitting to his sway,
Could e'er consent to be disposed of thus?
Can you impute such crime without a blush?
When have I shown him partiality?
Were I to choose 'tween Taxiles and you,
How can you think that I could hesitate?
Know I not well how his unstable soul
Is sway'd alternately by love and fear?
And were it not for me, his timid heart
Would soon be vanquish'd by his sister's wiles.
Made Alexander's captive, as you know,
She afterwards return'd to Taxiles;
But soon I found she meant to fasten him
In the same trap which had ensnared her heart.

**PORUS.**

And can you live beside her after that?
Why not abandon her to guilt and crime?
Why be so anxious now to spare a prince—

**AXIANA.**

For your sake I would win him. Shall I see
You overwhelm'd with care for our defence,
And left alone t' attack so strong a foe?
I would have Taxiles combine his arms
With yours, in spite of all his sister's plots.
Would that your zeal could spare some thought for me!
But such considerations are too mean
To move you. So that you may nobly fall,
You little care what follows, nor provide
Refuge for me from Alexander's wrath,
Or from your rival's love, who, treating me
Soon as his humble captive, will demand
My heart and hand as purchased by your blood.
Well, go, my lord, fulfil your eager wish,
Think only of the conflict, and forget
To guard your life, forget how Heav'n had smooth'd
The way that might have led to happiness.
It may be Axiana in her turn
Was well disposed to go.

But nay, depart
To lead your army, we have talk'd too long,
And you are weary of detainment here

PORUS.

Stay, Madam! see how earnest is my flame:
Order my life, and make my soul your own;
Glory, I own it, has much influence there,
But what can charms so matchless not perform?
I will forget what plans we form'd to join
Our forces to risk all against the foe;
That Porus deem'd it happiness supreme,
Alone to triumph in his rival's eyes.
I say no more. Proclaim your sovereign will;
And Fame and Hatred both shall bow to you.

AXIANA.

Fear nought; the heart which will so well obey
Is not in hands that can betray their trust:
Its glory is too much my care to wish
To stop a hero bent on victory.
Hasten your steps to meet the enemy,
But do not part yourself from your allies:
Control them gently; and with tranquil mind
Leave me to try my skill on Taxiles;
Let milder sentiments tow'rds him prevail,
I undertake to make him fight for you.

PORUS.

Well, go then, Madam, I consent with joy:
And let us see Hephæstion since we must,
But without losing hope of following close,
I wait Hephæstion—then the battle-field.
ACT II.

Scene 1.

Cleophila, Hephaestion.

Hephaestion.

Yes, while your kings together hold debate,
Until the council meets, lady, let me
Tell you what secret reasons bring me here.
I, as the friend to whom my lord confides
The flame which your eyes kindled, would to them
Reveal it, and entreat you to extend
To him the peace which he would grant your kings.
After so many sighs, what may he hope?
Your brother gives consent, yet you delay.
Why let your lover, doubtful and perplex'd,
His heart ne'er offer but with constant dread
Of your refusal? Must he at your feet
Lay all the world that's left?

Give peace? Make war?
Which shall it be? Command!

His feet will run,
By conquest or by merit to prevail.

Cleophila.

May I believe a prince of fame so high
Still keeps the memory of my feeble charms?
That he who makes Terror and Victory
His followers should condescend to sigh
For me? Such captives break their chain full soon;
To grandest projects Glory leads them on,
And Love within their breasts, hinder'd and crush'd
Is 'neath a weight of laurels soon o'erwhelmed.
So long as I his prisoner remain'd,
I might have made some slight impression there;
But, Sir, I fancy when he loosed my bonds
The hero in his turn soon burst his own.
HEPÆSTION.

Ah, had you seen him chafing at delays,
Counting the days that kept you from his sight,
Love, you would own, was urging on his steps:
He rush'd to battle but in search of you,
'Tis you who lead the conqueror of kings
Thus thro' your provinces to march in haste,
And rend, upon his way, 'neath his strong arm
All obstacles that hinder his approach.
Now on the self-same plain our banners wave
With yours; he views your ramparts from his own;
But after all his exploits, fear subdues
The victor's heart lest it should still be far
From yours. His rapid strides from land to land
Have served him nought, if you against him bar
That heart, and daily doubt his constancy
'T excuse the harshness that makes no response
To faithful vows: with weapons of distrust
Your mind—

CLEOPHILA.

Alas, how weak the best defence
Against such doubts! Our hearts we vainly vex
With reasons to suspect what most they wish.
Would your lord read the secret of my soul?
'Tis with delight I hear how much he loves;
I fear'd that time had made his passion ebb;
I fain would have his heart, and that for aye.
I will say more: When he our frontier forced,
And within Omphis took me prisoner,
When I beheld him master of the world,
To be his captive seem'd a privilege,
And far from murmuring against my fate,
Its sweetness grew with custom, I will own,
Till freedom was a memory erased,
Recovery of which I claim'd, yet fear'd.
Think how I must rejoice at his return.
But would he have me see him blood besprent?
Comes he to show himself an enemy?
Is't not for torture that he seeks me out?
HEPHAESTION.

No, Madam; vanquish'd by your potent charms,
He vails the terrors of his flashing sword,
He offers peace to kings whose eyes are blind,
The hand that could have crush'd them he withdraws.
He fears lest victory—too easy prize—
Might point his weapon to your brother's breast:
His courage shrinks from causing you a pang,
Nor covets laurels sprinkled with your tears.
Prosper the anxious care his love inspires;
Save him from winning sorrowful success,
And influence monarchs whom his mercy spares
T' accept a boon they owe to you alone.

CLEOPHILA.

Ah, doubt it not, my agitated soul
With just alarm is ceaselessly distress'd;
I tremble for my brother, lest his blood
Should stain the hand of enemy so dear;
But vainly I oppose his fiery zeal,
Porus and Axiana rule his soul;
A king's example and a queen's bright eyes
Rise up against me when I try to speak.
When harass'd thus, what have I not to dread!
I fear for him,—for Alexander too.
I know he has destroy'd a hundred kings
Who dared defy him; well his feats I know,
But I know Porus, under whose command
Our people have repulsed and triumph'd o'er
Scythian and Mede, and, proud of former bays,
Will follow him to victory or death.
I fear—

HEPHAESTION.

Nay, harbour not a fear so vain;
Let Porus rush whither disaster leads,
Let India in his cause arm all her States,
And let your brother only hold aloof.
But here they come.
Cleophila.

Accomplish your good work;
Your wisdom may disperse these angry clouds,
Or, if the storm must burst, be this your care,
To make it fall on other heads than ours.

Scene 2.

Porus, Taxiles, Hephæston.

Hephæston.

Ere the fierce conflict that looms threat'ningly
Adds to our many conquests all your States,
My lord is willing to suspend his stroke,
And for the last time offers terms of peace.
Your people, prepossess'd with flattering hopes,
The victor of Euphrates thought to stay:
In spite of all your squadrons scatter'd wide,
Hydaspes sees at length our standards float
Along his banks, which o'er your trenches soon
Would stand, while native blood your fields bedew'd,
Did not our hero, crown'd with other bays,
Himself the ardour of his warriors check.
He comes not hither stain'd with princely gore,
By barbarous triumph to affright these realms,
And, from your ruin reaping bright renown,
O'er your kings' tombs victorious trophies raise:
But be not ye yourselves deceived by hope
Illusive, nor provoke your own defeat.
Ere his resistless hand descends in wrath,
Delay no longer, you have done enough
Already in withholding homage due,
Such as your hearts must own his valour claims:
Welcome the firm support his arm affords,
And honour the Protector of your States.
Such is the message he is pleased to send,
Ready to drop the sword or take it up.
You know his purpose, make your choice this day,
To lose your crowns, or hold them as from him.
TAXILES.

Sir, think not that a rude and sullen pride
Forbids us such rare virtue to respect,
And that our people with presumptuous zeal
Will be your enemies in spite of you.
We render to true greatness all that’s meet;
Ye worship gods that owe to us their fanes;
Heroes who pass’d with you for mortal men
Have met with votive altars among us.
But vain would be th’ attempt to make our tribes
Change their free worship into slavery.
Trust me, tho’ glory moves them to adore,
No incense will they offer on constraint.
How many other States subdued by you
Have seen their sov’reigns bend beneath the yoke?
After all these, is it not time enough
That Alexander should look out for friends?
These captives, trembling at their master’s name,
But ill support a pow’r so newly born;
They have their eyes open to every chance
Of freedom; your dominions all are full
Of hidden foes. They weep their kings discrown’d,
In secret; and your chains, too widely stretch’d,
Grow slack; the Scythians, mutinous at heart
Already, soon will burst the bonds to which
You destine us. Try, taking for a pledge
Our friendship, whether faith no oath constrains
Can bind us. Leave a people free who know
How freely to applaud your famous deeds.
I take your master’s friendship on these terms,
And I await him as a monarch may
A hero on whose steps glory attends,
Who wins my heart, but cannot touch my throne.

PORUS.

I thought when gathering his provinces
Hydaspes saw us flocking to protect
His banks from outrage, that for task so great
There came no kings with me but such as were
The foes of tyrants, but since one is found
To lick the hand that threatens, and to court
His own disgrace, in league with Macedon,
It rests with me to speak for those whose trust
Has been betray'd by him, and in the name
Of India make reply.

Why comes he here,
The King who sends you? Do we need the aid
He offers? With what countenance can he
Presume to shelter those who have no foe
Save him alone? Ere he laid waste the world
In fury, India rested in repose,
Or if some neighbour State ruffled her calm,
She had no lack of children to defend
Her honour well. What means this fierce attack?
What barbarous deed has roused your master's wrath?
Did e'er a force of ours his realms invade,
And ravage ruthlessly those lands unknown?
So many countries, deserts, rivers lie
Between him and ourselves, as well might bar
All access. E'en on Earth's remotest verge
Can none escape the knowledge of his name
And galling chains? Strange valour must be his,
That only seeks to injure, and consumes
All that its fires approach, owning no rule
But proud disdain. He fain would make the world
One prison, all, as many as we are
Of human kind, slaves whom his foot may crush!
More lands, more kings! His sacrilegious hands
Range all men under the same iron yoke,
Already he devours us in his greed:
Of sovereigns once so many we alone
Are left to reign. What say I? We alone!
Nay, only I, in whom there yet remain
The traces of a King. But at that thought
My courage rises, and well pleased I see
This wide world shake, that by my arm alone
Its freedom may be establish'd, if at all;
And that with peace restored, all men may say:—
"Great Alexander would have tamed the world,
Had he not met on Earth's extremest bounds,
A king who broke her chains, and set her free."
HEPHAESTION.

Your resolution shows at least a heart
Valiant, but 'tis too late t' oppose the storm.
With no support but yours, this tottering globe,
As well as you yourself, must pity claim.
I will not try to hold you back, march on
Against my master, only I could wish
You knew him better, and that Fame had told
At least the half of his achievements. You
Would see—

PORUS.

What should I see, what could I learn,
To make me fall at Alexander's feet?
Persia without an effort brought beneath
His yoke? Your arms weary with shedding blood?
What glory was it to subdue a king
Nerveless, already by soft ease enthrall'd;
To quell a nation sapless and inert,
Whose golden harness made them sweat and groan,
Who made no stand, but prostrate fell in crowds,
Till corpses only block'd your master's way?
Dazed with his least exploits, all other tribes
Came humbly on their knees to beg for terms,
And, giving heed to oracles of fear,
Thought it were impious to resist a god.
But we, who conquerors scan with other eyes,
Know well that tyrants are no deities;
So that, however slaves may flatter him,
We deem the Son of Jupiter a man.
We go not forth to strew his path with flow'rs,
And everywhere he finds us arms in hand.
He sees his conquests stopp'd each step he takes;
Here does a single rock cost him more lives,
More trouble, more assaults, almost more time
Than all the strength of Persia's serried hosts.
The ease that was her ruin is to us
Hateful, our native gold did ne'er corrupt
Our courage. Only glory tempts our hearts,
The sole possession I dispute with him.
'Tis that alone—
HEPHAESTION.

Which Alexander seeks.
To lower gains his soul is loath to stoop;
No other aim led him to leave his realms,
And to the throne of Cyrus brought his steps,
Shook the firm pillars of that mighty State,
Arm’d his attack, laid victory and crowns
At his disposal. Since your pride rejects
The proffer’d pardon glory does not grudge,
Your eyes, the witnesses of his success,
Shall, this day forth, see how he fights for fame,
And, sword in hand, marches to victory.

PORUS.

Go then: and I will meet him ere he come.

Scene 3.

PORUS, TAXILES.

TAXILES.

What! so impatient! Will you then—

PORUS. Not so,

With your alliance will I meddle not.
Hephaestion, bitter only against me,
Of your submission will inform his king.
The troops of Axiana, bound to me,
Await the conflict, ranged beneath my flag,
The honour of her throne will I support,
As of my own, and you shall judge the fray.
Let not your heart however, in its zeal
For your new friends, kindle fresh flames of strife.
Scene 4.

AXIANA, PORUS, TAXILES.

AXIANA (to TAXILES).
Ah! what is this they say of you? Our foes
Make it their boast that Taxiles submits,
At least at heart, nor marches 'gainst a king
Whom he respects.

TAXILES.
The word of enemies
Is hardly to be trusted; time will teach
A better knowledge.

AXIANA.
Sir, then give the lie
To this insulting rumour, and confound
Those who have uttered it. Like Porus go,
Force them to silence; let them feel your wrath,
And learn they have no deadlier foe than you.

TAXILES.
Madam, I go my army to array.
Heed less these rumours that alarm you so:
Porus performs his duty; so will I.

Scene 5.

AXIANA, PORUS.

AXIANA.
That cold and sullen brow gives me no clue,
His craven bearing looks not that of king
Marching to victory, whom I can trust.
We may not longer doubt we are betray'd:
He to his sister sacrifices name
And country. In his hatred he desires
Our downfall, and but waits the battle hour
To show it.

FORUS.

Losing him, I lose a prop
Unstable; I have known him far too well
To count on his support. These eyes have seen
His doubts, unmoved, dreading his feeble arm
Much more if raised for us. A traitor fled,
To please his sister, weakens us much less
Than cowardly resistance.

AXIANA.

Be not rash;
Your valour reckons not th' invading host;
Almost alone, hast'ning to meet his strokes,
You but oppose yourself to countless foes.

FORUS.

What! would you have me prove a traitor too,
And, out of terror, give you up for slaves?
That I should stay within my camp confined,
And, after giving challenge, shirk the fight?
Nay, Madam, I believe it not, but know
Too well that soul where glory's fire burns high.
Can I forget whose were the potent charms
That roused our princes all, and drew them on
To battle? Whose high spirit scorn'd to yield,
And none but Alexander's conqueror
Would love? That task be mine, wherefo I haste
Less to avoid his chains than merit yours.
Madam, I go, ambitious to deserve
Bondage so sweet, to conquer or to die;
And, since my sighs appeal without avail
To one whose heart glory alone can sway,
I will go forth to win a victory
That shall attach such honour to my name,
As may from love of valour lead your heart,
Perchance, to love the victor.
AXIANA.

Go, my lord.
It may be in the camp of Taxiles
There will be found men braver than himself;
To rouse them I will make a last essay,
Thereafter share your fortune in your camp.
Seek not to know the secrets of my heart;
Live, and enjoy a triumph.

PORUS.

This delay
Is needless, Madam. Why not tell me now
If my entreaties move you? Can your heart
Suffer a hapless prince, whose cruel fate
Perhaps condemns him ne'er to see again
The idol of his soul, to die without
The proud assurance of a destiny
So great?

AXIANA.

What can I say?

PORUS.

Queen of my soul,
If any tenderness you felt for me,
That heart, which gives me promise of renown
To be this day achieved, might promise more,
A little love. Can it defend itself
Against such sighs? Can it—

AXIANA.

March forth to meet
Th' invader. Victory is yours, if he
Resist no better than this heart of mine.
ACT III.

Scene 1.

AXIANA, CLEOPHILA.

AXIANA.
How is this, Madam? Am I prisoner here?
Forbidden to behold my army march
To battle? Is't with me that Taxiles
Begins his treason thus, in his own camp
Holding me captive? This then is the fruit
Of all his sighs! My humble worshipper
Become my master; and, already tired
Of my disdain, despairing of the heart
He binds the limbs!

CLEOPHILA.
Nay, but you construe ill
The just alarm of one who ne'er succumb'd
Save to your charms. View with a kinder eye
The zeal which makes your safety its concern.
While round us now two mighty armies, stirr'd
With equal ardour for the bloody fray,
Make everywhere the sparks of fury fly,
In what direction would you guide your steps?
Where could you find a shelter from the storm
But here, where all is calm and life is safe?
Like tranquil port—

AXIANA.
'Tis that tranquillity
With its degrading safety I resent.
What! When my subjects, fighting for their queen,
And led by Porus, fall upon the plain,
Sealing their faithful service with their blood,
When I can almost hear their dying cries,
They prate to me of peace, and in his camp
Your brother keeps a posture of repose
Amid the tumult, and insults my grief,
Directing my sad eyes to sights of joy!

CLEOPHILA.

Would you then, Madam, that my brother's love
Should leave in danger's jaws a life so dear?
He knows too well the hazard—

AXIANA.

And to turn
My steps therefrom, this generous lover makes
His camp my prison; whilst his rival risks
Life for my sake, his valour is content
To act the gaoler!

CLEOPHILA.

Happy Porus! How
The shortest absence from him tries you sore
With such impatience that you needs must search
The field of battle to discover him!

AXIANA.

I would do more; yea, even to the tomb
Would follow him with ardour and with pride,
Lose all my realms, and see with eyes unmoved
The victor pay therewith Cleopha
For entrance to her heart!

CLEOPHILA.

You need not go,
If you seek Porus. Soon will he be brought
Hither a captive. Let us guard for him
So fair a conquest that his love has made.

AXIANA.

Already does your heart in triumph fly
To Alexander, and his victory hail.
But, trusting to the flattering hopes of love,
Your boasts may prove a little premature;
You press your eager wishes somewhat far,
And count too soon upon your heart's desire:
Yes—

CLEOPHILA.

Now my brother comes, and we shall learn
Whose the mistake has been.

AXIANA.

No room for doubt
Longer remains; that brow so satisfied
Has the defeat of Porus written there.

Scene 2.

TAXILES, AXIANA, CLEOPHILA.

TAXILES.

Madam, had Porus been less choleric,
And follow'd the good counsel of a friend,
He might indeed have spared my present pain
In coming to announce his fate myself.

AXIANA.

Is Porus—

TAXILES.

All is over: and deceived
By valour, he is taken in the toils
Of which I warn'd him! 'Twas not that his arm,
(For to a fallen rival I'll be just,)
Fail'd to dispute the victory right well,
Making his foes pay dearly with their blood:
Glory, attracted by his brilliant feats,
'Tween him and Alexander for a while
Waver'd. But, in his anger against me,
At last he charged too hotly, and I saw
His troops disorder'd, broken, turn'd to flight,
Your soldiers routed, and his own dispersed;
Saw finally himself carried along
With them, in their endeavours to escape;
Too late of vain resentment disabused,  
He long'd for succour he refused before.

**AXIANA.**

Refused! What then? Your patriotic pride  
Waits till entreaties rouse its energies!  
Against your will you must be forced to fight,  
Else will you stir not e'en to save your realms!  
But to return to Porus—did he not  
Speak by example with commanding voice?  
Could not his risk put courage in your heart,  
The danger of your mistress, and the State  
Ready to perish? Go, you serve full well  
The master giv'n you by your sister! Do  
Whate'er her spite dictates! Treat all alike,  
And let your mistress share your rival's chains!  
So well you've work'd, your crime and his defeat  
Have placed that noble hero in my heart,  
To be adored. Ere this day ends, I wish  
To make my love and hatred manifest,  
Before your face to pledge myself to him,  
And in his presence swear immortal hate  
For you. Farewell, and love me if you will,  
Now that you know me.

**TAXILES.**

Think not that my vows  
Are faithless. Look for neither threats nor chains;  
Better does Alexander know what's due  
To queens. Allow his kindness a free scope,  
And keep a throne Porus should ne'er have placed  
In peril. At all hazards I myself  
Would wage fierce battle with the hand that touch'd  
Object so sacred.

**AXIANA.**

What! my sceptre then,  
Giv'n by a foe, must be upheld by you!  
Shall the same tyrant set me on my throne,  
Who came to drive me from it?
Kings and queens,
When fallen low before his conquering sword,
Have let his generous kindness soothe their woes.
The wife and mother of Darius see,
How like a brother does he treat the one,
Like son the other!

AXIANA.
Nay, I cannot sell
My friendship, flatter tyrants, owe my crown
To pity. Persia's women are too weak
For me to copy. Think you I will haunt
My victor's court, follow him thro' the world,
And boast how light the chains he makes me wear?
If he gives crowns, let him give ours to you,
And deck you, if he will, with borrow'd plumes;
Nor Porus, nor myself, will grudge you these,
And you will be a slave much more than we.
I hope that Alexander's pride, ere long,
Vex'd that your crime should stain his victory,
Will by your execution clear himself.
Knaves such as you oft play the traitor twice.
Let not his present favours dazzle you;
Look you how Bessus suffer'd, faithless found.
Farewell.

Scene 3.

CLEOPHILA, TAXILES.

CLEOPHILA.
You may indulge her in this fury:
Time and the Conqueror's pleasure will conspire
For your success. Her rage, say what she may,
Will not for long refuse to mount a throne.
The master of her fortunes, you will be
Lord of her heart. But tell me, have you seen
The Victor? For what treatment may we look
From him? What said he?
TAXILES.

Sister, I have seen
Your Alexander. Such a youthful grace
Met my first glance, as seem'd to falsify
The number of his feats; my thoughts, I own,
Dared not connect such great renown with one
So young; but on that brow heroic pride
Was stamp'd; his fiery eye and noble port
Told me 'twas Alexander, for his face
Infallibly proclaims how great his soul;
And, with a presence that supports his claims,
His eye is no less potent to command
Than is his arm. His glory dazzled me,
Fresh from the field; and in his smile I read
Success. On seeing me, his pride forgot,
He made his goodness evident instead.
The triumph of the victor could not hide
The lover's tenderness. "Return," he said,
"Prepare your sister's lovely eyes to see
A conqueror who lays his victory
And heart before her feet."

He follows close.

No more. I leave you mistress of your fate,
To you entrust the conduct of my own.

CLEOPHILA.

If I have pow'r, you shall keep yours intact.
All shall obey you, if the Conqueror's ear
Be mine.

TAXILES.

I go then. See, he comes himself.

Scene 4.

ALEXANDER, TAXILES, CLEOPHILA, HEPHAESTION.

ALEXANDER.

Go, my Hephæston. Porus must be found;
Take him alive, and spare the vanquish'd all.
Scene 5.

Alexander, Taxiles, Cleophila.

Alexander (to Taxiles).
Is it then true, Sir, a misguided queen
Prefers the valour of a headstrong king
To you? But fear him not, his realms are yours;
You have a prize to offer that may sway
Her passion. Sovereign of two kingdoms, hers
Is in your hands. Go, with your vows present
Three crowns.

Taxiles.
You are too generous. 'Tis too much.

Alexander.
At leisure you may thank me for my care.
Go where Love calls you now; nay, linger not;
And let the palm of victory crown your flame.

Scene 6.

Alexander, Cleophila.

Alexander.
Madam, his love shall have my firm support.
May I have nought, who can do all for him?
So lavish of the fruits of victory
Tow'rd him, shall I have nothing for myself,
But barren fame? Sceptres restored or giv'n
Into your hands, friends crown'd with mine own bays,
The honours I have won rain'd on their heads,
All show to other conquests I aspire.
Did I not promise you my strong right arm
Should soon to your sweet presence bring me nigh?
Forget not, Madam, that you promised then
To me a place within your heart. I come,
The pow'r of Love has fought on my behalf,
And Victory has herself redeem'd my word.
Then all around you see subdued, 'tis time
To yield yourself. Say, would your heart withdraw
He pledge it gave? Can it alone escape
He Conqueror of to-day, who seeks but that?

CLEOPHILA.

"I know that heart is not so stern as to remain
Invincible, when all else owns your will.
Pay due honour to the glorious strength
That holds a hundred nations at your feet.
To conquer India was your easiest task;
The firmest courage you inspire with dread,
And, when you will, your kindness in its turn
Will touch with gratitude the hardest hearts.
But ah, my lord, that valour and that grace
Oft wake within me trouble and alarm;
I fear lest you, contented to have gain'd
My heart, should leave it in distress to pine,
That, heedless of the passion you aroused,
Your soul should scorn conquest so lightly won.
Love lasts not long with heroes like yourself,
But glory ever has transporting charms;
And, 'mid your amorous sighs, it well may be
To conquer still is all that you desire.

ALEXANDER.

How little can you know the ardent love
That wings those sighs with which I turn to you!
At other times, I own, amidst my troops,
My heart has panted only for renown;
Peoples and kings, subdued beneath my sway,
Alone seem'd worthy objects of concern.
Persia's fair dames, presented to my sight,
No better than her kings could vanquish me;
My heart, arm'd with disdain against their shafts,
Refused to render homage to their charms;
Invincible, 'twas glory it adored;
To Love insensible, it deem'd its loss
Felicity, till your dear tyrant eyes
Inflicted a new wound within my heart.
The pride of victory is its aim no more,
But glad it is to boast its own defeat;
Blest if your eyes, melting in tenderness,
Own in their turn the conquest they have won!
Why will you always doubt their victory,
Always reproach me with my warrior bays,
As tho' the pleasing fetters you impose
Were form'd to bind none but ignoble souls?
On strange new exploits I am bent, to show
The pow'r of Love on Alexander's heart.
This arm of mine, pledged to your service now,
Has to maintain your honour with my own;
The trump of Fame shall tell in martial notes
Of nations to our world as yet unknown,
And there to you shall altars rise, where none
Are raised by savage hands to gods themselves.

CLEOPHILA.

Yes, thither Victory will follow you,
Your captive, but I have my doubts if Love
Will do the same. So many seas between
May wash my image from your memory.
When Ocean bears you on his stormy waves,
The whole world vanquish'd,—when that day arrives,
When you shall see all monarchs at your knees
Lie prostrate, and Earth, trembling, hold her peace
Before you, will you think how a young Queen
Unceasingly regrets you, in the heart
Of her far distant realms, and calls to mind
How sweetly you assured her of your love?

ALEXANDER.

What! Think you then that, cruel to myself
I can abandon here so rare a prize
Of beauty? Or will you yourself refuse
The throne of Asia that I offer you?
CLEOPHILA.

My lord, you know that on my brother’s will
My own depends.

ALEXANDER.

Ah! if my happiness
Is in his hands, all India, to his nod
Submissive, soon for me shall intercede.

CLEOPHILA.

My love for him is free from selfish taint.
Soothe, I implore you, an offended Queen;
Nor let a rival who this day has braved
Your anger, prove more fortunate than he.

ALEXANDER.

A noble rival Porus was, indeed;
Never such valour won my high regard.
I saw him where the battle raged; we met;
Nor shunn’d he that encounter; each one sought
The other. And so fierce a rivalry
Our quarrel would have soon decided, when
Some troops that came between us made our strokes
Fall indiscriminate amongst the throng.

Scene 7.

ALEXANDER, CLEOPHILA, HEPHAESTION.

ALEXANDER.

Well, have they brought that rash, misguided Prince?

HEPHAESTION.

All places have been search’d, but all as yet
In vain, look as they may; his flight or death
Conceals the captive monarch from their eyes.
But in their flight a remnant of his troops,
Surrounded, stay’d further pursuit awhile,
And seem disposed to sell their lives full dear.
ALEXANDER.

Disarm but do not drive them to despair.
Our task must be to bend this stubborn Queen,
And thereby, Madam, for my passion win
Your brother's favour, and since on his peace
My own depends, let us make that secure.

ACT IV.

Scene I.

AXIANA.

Am I to hear these shouts of victory
For ever ringing glory to my foes,
Reproach to me? And may I not, at least,
Hold solitary converse with my woes?
Incessantly pursued by one I hate,
I care not for my life, try what they may
To make me love it; while close watch they keep.
But, Porus, ne'er believe I can be stopp'd
From following thee. Doubtless thy heart refused
T' outlive thy star: vain all their arm'd pursuit,
Thine efforts would thy presence have betray'd,
So they must look for thee amongst the dead.
Alas, when thou didst leave me, and thy love
Flooded thine heart, these ills that crush me now
Seem'd then foreseen; when into mine thine eyes
Gazed fondly, and besought to know thy place
Within my heart. Of failure on the field
Thou didst not reck; 'twas love that caused thy fear.
Why did I hide with many a subterfuge
A secret which to know not vex'd thy peace?
How oft thine eyes, making resistance weak,
Almost compelled my silence to give way!
How oft, responsive to thy strong desire
E'en in thy presence heartfelt sighs escaped!
But still I sought to doubt thy victory;
As Glory's incense to myself explain'd
Those sighs; and fancied that nought else I loved.
Forgive! to-day I feel I loved but thee!
As many a time before, I own it now,
Glory possess'd my soul, but I refrain'd
From telling, as I ought, that it was thou
Didst fix my homage. Her I learn'd to know
Thro' seeing thee, and, ardent as I was,
Seen in another should have loved her less.
But, ah, what boots it to vent useless sighs
Thou canst no longer hear, lost in the void?
'Tis time my soul, descending to the tomb,
Should pledge the love for which thou long didst yearn
In vain, and, as a seal of faithfulness,
Show that this heart cannot survive its loss.
Canst thou suppose that I could wish to live
The Conqueror's captive, to whose will thy death
Delivers us? I know he means to come
To speak with me; and, giving back my throne,
Thinks to console me, thinks my hatred quell'd
May serve for trophy of his clemency.
Ay, let him come, and he shall see me die
A monarch to the last, worthy of thee!

Scene 2.

Alexander, Axiana.

Axiana.

Well, Sire! and do you find some secret joy
In seeing tears your arms have forced to flow?
Or is it that you grudge me, in my fall,
Freedom to weep, alone with misery?

Alexander.

Your grief shall be as free as it is just:
Madam, you mourn a Prince magnanimous.
I was his foe, but need not therefore blame
The tears devoted to the hero's death.
Ere to her borders India saw me come,
His brilliant virtues made him known to me,
Conspicuous among Earth's greatest kings;
I knew—

AXIANA.

Why came you then with fierce attack?
What led you from the world's remotest bounds
In search of virtue to make war thereon?
Can signal merit burst upon your sight,
And only move your pride to persecute?

ALEXANDER.

Yes, I sought Porus; but, whate'er be said,
I did not seek in order to destroy.
I own that, burning with ambitious fire,
I was attracted hither by his fame,
And but to hear he was invincible
Made my heart eager for fresh enterprise.
Whilst I was dreaming that on me alone,
For many a gallant fight, all eyes were set,
I saw the valour of this warrior spread,
Till Fame between us held her balance poised.
When from his arm increasing terrors flew,
India to me seem'd to present a field
Deserving my best efforts, for I tired
Of kings too feeble to resist, and heard
With joy of such a brave and gallant foe
To whet my courage. So I came to seek
Glory and danger. Far did he surpass
All I had heard, and Victory, before
So constant, almost left my side to join
Your ranks. The least success was hardly won;
And Porus, when he lost a battle, saw
His glory grow yet greater in defeat,
A fall so noble but exalts his fame,
Not to have fought would vex his spirit more.

AXIANA.

Alas! that he, in patriotic zeal,
Felt bound to cast away all care for life;
For, harass'd and betray'd on every side,
Headlong he charged a multitude of foes.
But were it true his warlike ardour fired
Your soul, and show'd an open path to fame,
Why with unworthy weapons did you fight?
Were you obliged with cunning to oppose
Courage; to wait upon another's will
For his defeat, and mar your fair renown?
Triumph; but be assured that in his heart
Already Taxiles disputes with you
The conqueror's glorious name, and with some show
Of justice; but for him, the traitor boasts,
You would have won no bays. This soothes my smart,
To see your glory shared by such as he.

ALEXANDER.

Your passion vainly strives to smirch my fame,
I ne'er was known to steal a victory;
And none can say that I subdue my foes
Not with the sword, but guile and stratagem,
The coward's arts. Outnumber'd everywhere,
Yet never have I deign'd to hide myself,
Or owe my triumph to an ambuscade;
But in the light of day I fight and win.
With genuine grief I mourn your country's fate;
I would have spared your princes a defeat.
Had they but follow'd my advice and wish,
I would have saved them, or have fought them both.
Believe me.

AXIANA.

Yes, you are invincible:
Is't not enough that all is in your pow'r?
Why must you cast so many kings in chains?
Make with impunity the whole world groan?
What had so many captured cities done?
Why is Hydaspes cumber'd with our dead?
What have I done to cause the overthrow
Of him who could alone attract my eye?
Did he invade your borders, deluge Greece
With blood? What nations have been roused by us
To rage and opposition against you?
Your glory we admired, we grudged it not.
Charm'd with each other, with our thrones content,
We look'd to find a happier lot than yours:
The only conquest Porus wish'd to win
Was o'er a heart that might have own'd him lord
This day. Were his the only blood you shed,
That crime your only title to reproach,
Would it not mar your happiness to feel
You came so far to snap so fair a tie
Between our hearts? Nay, flatter not your soul,
You are a tyrant, nothing else.

**ALEXANDER.**

I see
Your purpose, Madam; to provoke my wrath
To rise against you with outrageous taunts.
You hope, perchance, my kindness, tried too far,
May violate its former character.
But, if your virtue could exert no spell,
The conqueror is disarm'd to your attack;
Compassion moves me, e'en against your will,
And I respect you in your deep distress.
It is this trouble that distorts your sight,
So that a hateful tyrant I appear:
Else would you own, the glory of my arms
Has not been always stain'd with blood and tears,
And you would see—

**AXIANA.**

Can I help seeing them,
Those virtues which embitter my despair?
Have I not seen your triumphs everywhere
Free from the insolence that stings the brave?
Scythians and Persians see I not well pleased
To bear your yoke, and vaunt your clemency,
Eager to guard your person, and supplant
Your people in a charge so coveted?
But what does it avail the heart you wound
Everywhere else to hear your goodness praised?
Can you expect my hatred to be soothed,
Because the hand that tortures me is kiss'd
By others? Can the kings that you have help'd,
Nations content to serve you, give me back
Porus? No, Sire; my hatred is increased
By others' love, e'en tho' myself compell'd
To admiration; Earth's united voice
Shall not dictate to me, tho' none be found
To share my hatred.

ALEXANDER.

I excuse the wrath
That springs from love, yet well may be surprised.
If common rumour has reported right,
Porus no special favour won from you.
Wavering in choice 'tween Taxiles and him;
Whilst he yet lived, your heart refused to speak,
But, when he can no longer hear your voice,
Now, for the first time, you declare for him!
Think you that, conscious of your new-born flame,
E'en in the tomb he claims it for himself?
Load not yourself with unavailing grief,
Cares more important summon you elsewhere.
Sufficient tribute to his memory
Your tears have paid. Reign, with fresh lustre shine,
And, to your stricken heart restoring peace,
Strengthen your realms, sore shaken by his fall;
Choose them a master from so many kings:
Deeper in love than ever, Taxiles—

AXIANA.

The traitor!

ALEXANDER.

Prithee take a milder tone;
He bears no stain of treason against you,
Lord of his own dominions, he resolved
To shield them from the thunderbolt of war;
No oath, no duty bound him to leap down
Into the gulf where Porus chose to plunge.
Think, it is Alexander, he himself,
That cares t' advance your lover's happiness;
Think how, united by so just a choice,
Indus shall with Hydaspes own your sway.
All shall be easy, when your interests
Are my concern and closely joined with those
Of Taxiles.

He comes. I do not wish
My presence to embarrass him. His voice
Will best explain what, utter'd by my lips,
Seems to offend. Lovers like solitude:
I'll not disturb it.

\textit{Scene 3.}

\textbf{Axiana, Taxiles.}

\textbf{Axiana.}

Mighty King, draw near,
Great Monarch of the Indus; you have had
Your praise sung here, and I have been rebuked
For anger against one who, it is said,
Would please me if he could, whose love is warm'd
By my cold treatment; I am urged forsooth
To love you in return. Know you the task
Which I would set you,—how to touch my heart?
And are you ready—

\textbf{Taxiles.}

Madam, only prove
What pow'r so sweet a hope has o'er my heart.
What must I do?

\textbf{Axiana.}

He who would win my love
Must be in love with glory, as am I,
Interpret vows into fine feats of arms,
And hate, as I do, Alexander's name;
Into the midst of terrors he must march
Fearless; must fight and conquer, or be slain.
Compare yourself with Porus, and decide
Which of the two is worthier of me.
Yes, Sir, my heart, that seem'd to be in doubt,
Knew well the difference between a King
And a base slave. I loved him, and I love.
Since jealous Fate forbids him to enjoy
The sweet confession, I have chosen you
As witness. Ever shall my tears revive
His memory, and you shall see me place
My only pleasure left in telling you
Of him.

TAXILES.

In vain my ardour seeks to warm
A soul as cold as ice. Porus has set
His deathless image there. Should I confront
Grim Death to please you, I should please you not,
Unless I perish’d, nor can—

AXIANA.

My esteem
May be regain’d; wash out in foemen’s blood
Your crime. Lo! Fortune smiles; the hero’s Shade
Gathers his scatter’d troops beneath his flag,
And seems the only pow’r that can arrest
Their flight; yours too, ashamed of your commands,
Wear on their brows wrath and repentance writ
For all to read. Add fuel to the fire
Which now consumes them; and to us restore
Our Freedom, that begins to breathe again;
Be the defender of your throne and mine,
And let not Porus wait to find an heir.
You answer nothing. By your face I see
You lack the courage for so grand a scheme;
Th’ example of a hero calls in vain;
You hug your chains. Leave me, and live a slave!

TAXILES.

This is too much! Madam, do you forget
That, if you force me to it, I may use
The Master’s tone, provoked by your contempt
Beyond endurance. All you have is mine,
And, since my homage but inflames your pride,
I shall be able—
AXIANA.

Yes, I know it well.
I am your prisoner, and you fain would make
My wishes captive too, till to your sighs
My heart responds. Good! Cast away that mask
Of irksome mildness, terrors be your aid,
Speak with the tyrant's tongue, ready to sting,
Try all you can, I cannot hate you more:
Deal not, I pray you, in mere idle threats.

Your sister comes, to prompt you in your part.
Farewell. Her counsels and my wishes tend
To the same goal, and you will help me soon
To follow Porus.

TAXILES.

Nay, but rather—

Scene 4.

TAXILES, CLEOPHILA.

CLEOPHILA.

Leave
This thankless Queen, sworn to disturb our peace
With deathless hate, who makes of your despair
Her sole delight. Forget—

TAXILES.

No, in my heart
Her image is enshrined; I worship her.
Tho' all my sighs meet ceaseless enmity,
In spite of your persuasion, her disdain,
Against my will, her must I ever love.
Nor need her wrath surprise us; you and I
Have giv'n her cause enough. Ah! but for you,
And your ill counsel which has been my curse,
I should be now, if loved not, less abhorr'd;
Ay, but for you, defended by my care,
My love with that of Porus she might weigh
In doubt; and would not that be happiness,
To make her for a moment hesitate?
I can no longer live beneath her scorn;
I must fall humbly at her cruel feet,
Or run with speed to execute her wrath,
Tho' aim'd at Alexander or at you.
I know the ardour of your mutual flame,
But 'tis too much to sacrifice my peace
For yours, forget myself to give you joy;
Nay, all must perish, may I but be blest.

CLEOPHILA.

Go then, and to the battle-field return;
Let not the flame die down that fires you now;
Why lingers this inconstant courage here?
Haste to the conflict: Porus waits for you.

TAXILES.

Is Porus living? Has he then appear'd?

CLEOPHILA.

Yes, his tremendous strokes too well attest
'Tis he. What happen'd he foresaw: his death
Being noised abroad held back the Conqueror's arm,
Too credulous. He hither comes to wake
Their slumbering valour, triumph premature
To check, and, doubt it not, with love and rage
Inflamed, to seize his mistress, or be slain
Before her eyes. Nay more, seduced by her,
Your camp breaks out in murmurs, well prepared
To follow Porus. Go, like a generous swain,
Succour your rival loved so tenderly!
Farewell.

Scene 5.

TAXILES.

Ha! Bent upon my ruin, Fate
Calls back my dangerous rival from the grave.
Again shall he behold those eyes whose tears
Mourn'd him; and dead preferr'd him yet to me.  
'Tis more than I can bear! Let me but see  
What Fortune offers, and with whom shall rest  
The glorious prize; nor will I idly watch  
The issue from afar, in feeble wrath.

ACT V.

Scene 1.

ALEXANDER, CLEOPHILA.

ALEXANDER.

What! Fear'd you Porus after his defeat,  
My victory imperfect in your eyes?  
No, no; my captive could not me escape.  
Trapp'd by my orders, taken in the toils,  
Dread him no longer; rather pity him.

CLEOPHILA.

I fear him most, when most he pity claims.  
Brave as he was, the fame he won in war  
Troubled my mind far less than does his fall.  
While at his back a mighty army march'd,  
Their exploits and his own alarm'd me not,  
But now, unfortunate, a King discrown'd,  
Henceforth he will be ranged among your friends.

ALEXANDER.

No right has Porus now to such a place;  
For Alexander's hatred he has sought  
Too far. He knows how loath I was to strike,  
But when I did, 'twas with as fierce a hate  
As he could wish. A warning shall he be  
To all the world. On him must I avenge  
The ills that war has wrought, to prevent which  
Was in his pow'r. 'Tis his own act that brings
Its punishment. Twice conquer'd, and by you
Hated—

CLEOPHILA.

I cannot say I hate him, Sire;
And were I free to hearken to the voice
Of his misfortunes that appeal to me,
I'd tell you he was greatest of our princes;
His arm was long the stay of all our States;
He wish'd, perhaps, in marching against you,
To show at least that he deserved to fall
Under no stroke but yours, that the same field
Might bring renown to both, and link his name
With Alexander's. But such warm defence
Would wound my brother, and destroy his hopes.
So long as Porus lives, what can he be?
Ruin must needs be his, and mine as well
It may be; for his love, obtaining nought,
Will hold me guilty, fit for punishment.
E'en now your heart is fluttering for new flights
Of conquest thro' the world. When I shall see
The Ganges roll his flood 'tween you and him,
Who will restrain my brother's unjust wrath?
My lonely soul will languish, far from you.
Alas! Should he condemn my sighs to cease,
What would become of this poor heart of mine,
The Conqueror to whom I gave it gone?

ALEXANDER.

Madam, enough; if you have giv'n your heart,
'Tis mine, command your brother as he will,
To guard more safely than those vanquish'd lands
Which I have kept only to offer you.
One conquest more; then, dearest, I return,
Thenceforth my sole ambition to be king
Over your soul, and yet myself obey,
Placing within your hands my destiny,
And all mankind's. Ready to bear my yoke,
The Mallian awaits me, at the verge
Of ocean, where I need but show myself
As conqueror of the world and of your heart,
When the proud element—

CLEOPHILA.

What! War on war?
Seek you for subjects e'en beyond the Earth?
And lands to their inhabitants unknown,
Must they bear witness to your brilliant deeds?
What foes do you expect 'neath skies so rude?
They will oppose you with their desert wastes,
Sunless and solitary, where Nature's self
Seems to expire. And there, perchance, may Fate
In ambush lie to seize you, venting thus
The secret envy that has tried in vain
To cloud your grand career, resolved at least
That dumb Forgetfulness shall dig your grave.
Must you drag, then, the remnants of a host
That twenty times has perish'd, twenty times
Has been renew'd? A hundred battle-fields
Have swallow'd half the troops you lately led;
Those that survive claim pity, and their groans—

ALEXANDER.

I have but to prepare them for their march,
And they will follow me with hearts revived,
Howe'er they murmur in an idle camp,
And count their wounds; soon they will blame them-

And beg me to expose them to fresh blows.
Let me meanwhile support your brother's suit:
His rival can no longer cross his love.
Have I not spoken? And again I say—

CLEOPHILA.

Here comes the Queen, my lord.
Scene 2.

ALEXANDER, AXIANA, CLEOPHILA.

ALEXANDER.

Well; Porus lives.
Madam, it seems that Heav'n has heard your prayers,
And giv'n him back to you.

AXIANA.

Nay, rather say,
Takes him for ever from me. Nor can hope
Allay my present pain. His death before
Was doubtful, now 'tis sure. He dares the worst,
To see me once again, or give me help,
Helpless himself, alone against a host.
In vain his gallant efforts caused alarm
At first; in vain a few brave warriors, nerved
By his bold courage, scared the victor's camp.
He must succumb, and valiant to the last,
Fall on the heaps of slain that bar his way.
Oh, could I only, making my escape,
Show myself there, and die before his eyes!
But Taxiles, the traitor, holds me fast,
And goes himself meanwhile to feast his eyes
Upon his rival's blood, and see him lie
Low in the arms of Death, if so he dare
To meet him.

ALEXANDER.

Madam, by my care his life
Is saved; and soon shall his return content
Your heart's desire. You shall see him.

AXIANA.

What!
Can your care reach to him, and shall the arm
That crush'd him be his stay, the conqueror's hand
Give safety? Yet, what wonder is too great,
Issuing from such a source? I call to mind
How that you said you hold the vanquish’d foe
A foe no longer, and that Porus was
Never your foe at all; that glory arm’d
Yourself and him alike, him prompt to try
His courage against yours, you to attack
But not destroy.

ALEXANDER.
The scorn that braved my wrath
Doubtless deserves a conqueror more severe;
His pride in falling seems to gather strength,
But I have ceased to be his enemy,
And cast off hatred when I drop that name.
Of his reward shall Taxiles be judge,
To ruin or to spare, as seems him best.
In short it is to him you must appeal.

AXIANA.
What! go and beg for mercy at his feet!
Sent to make proof how kind is Taxiles!
If Porus must solicit such support,
Surely your hatred has decreed his death:
’Twas his destruction after all you sought.
How easily a generous soul is duped!
Too credulous and ready to forget,
Virtues in you I praised which were not yours.
Arm yourself then, my lord, with cruelty,
As a mere butcher end your grand career!
And, having raised so many fallen foes,
Destroy the one whom most you sought to spare.

ALEXANDER.
Strange love for Porus yours, that will not stoop
To save his life, but scorns my proffer’d boon,
And brands me as a jealous hypocrite!
Well, if he dies, accuse yourself alone.
I see him coming, and shall learn his will;
His judgment Porus shall himself pronounce.
Scene 3.

PORUS, ALEXANDER, AXXIANA, CLEOPHILA, HEPHAESTION, ALEXANDER'S GUARDS.

ALEXANDER.
Well, Porus, so your pride has borne its fruit! Where is the fair success that lured you on? Your soaring spirit is at last cast down. Offended majesty a victim claims: Nothing can save you.

Yet will I once more Offer a pardon many times refused. This queen rebels against my clemency, Thinks constancy more precious than your life; Would have you die without a moment’s doubt, So long as to the tomb you bear the name Of her true lover. Pay not such a price For boast so vain. Live, and let Taxiles Be happy.

PORUS.

Taxiles!

ALEXANDER.

Yes.

PORUS.

I approve Your care so well bestow’d. What he has done For you deserves no less. 'Twas he that snatch’d Victory from me, gave you his sister, sold His honour, me betray’d. What can you do One service out of all to recompense? But I already have forestall’d your care; Go, see him die upon the battle field.

ALEXANDER.

Taxiles!
CLEOPHILA.

What is this?

HEPHAESTION.

Yes, Sire, he’s dead,
Having himself tempted the stroke of Fate.
Porus, tho’ vanquish’d, still surrender scorn’d,
And seem’d attacker rather than attack’d.
His soldiers, fallen, wounded to the death,
Shelter’d him with their bodies where they lay;
And there, as if within a fort enclosed,
’Gainst our whole host he bravely stood at bay,
And with an arm that fear and slaughter dealt,
Our boldest warriors foiling, held his post.
I meant to spare him; his fast failing strength
Would soon have placed his life within my pow’r,
When to the fatal field rush’d Taxiles:
“Let be,” he cried, “I claim this captive mine.
Porus, your hour is come, and death is sure,
Perish, or yield the Queen to me.”

He spoke,
And Porus, at that voice rekindling rage,
Lifted an arm wearied with many a blow,
While with his eye he sought him, proud and calm:
“Is that the faithless Taxiles I hear,
That traitor to his country,” he exclaim’d,
“T’his mistress, and to me? Come, coward, come!
Yes, Axiana’s yours, my prize I yield,—
But your stout arm must take my life as well!
Approach!”

Thereat th’enfuriate rivals rush’d
To deadly conflict. We, as best we could,
To their encounter all our force opposed.
But Porus carves a passage thro’ our ranks,
Meets Taxiles, and with a single thrust
Pierces his heart; then, satisfied, his sword
Surrenders.

CLEOPHILA.

For my brother I must weep;
On me, my lord, your arms with all their weight
Have fallen. Vainly sought he your support;
Alas, your glory has but wrought his death.
Can Alexander's friendship help him now?
But will you see him to the grave descend
All unavenged, while his assassin boasts
Before his sister's eyes and yours, my lord?

AXIANA.

Let Alexander to her tears attend.
She has my sympathy, for with good cause
She mourns a brother, whom she strove in vain
To save, by making him a coward first.
It was not Porus who attack'd, 'twas he,
The traitor, that confronted his just wrath.
Why in the battle's tumult did he mix?
Came he to snatch him from the conqueror's grasp?
Nay, but when all was lost to overwhelm
A king who from his victors won respect?
But why deprive you of a pretext, urged
So plausibly? Her brother has been slain
By Porus; 'tis enough; with generous blood
Appease his ghost, and so avenge yourself.
But I too share his crime. Yes, Porus, yes,
My heart is yours, as Alexander knows;
Your rival knew it to his cost; from you
Alone I kept it. The last joy I feel
Is to declare it to yourself.

PORUS.

'Tis time
That Alexander should be satisfied.
Fear Porus, who tho' vanquish'd yet could do
As you have heard, who, by your troops hemm'd in,
Revenged defeat, whose name can raise fresh foes,
And wake from sleep a hundred fetter'd kings;
Quench in my blood these dangerous sparks of war.
Then go, and safely conquer all the earth
That's left. But think not that a heart like mine
Can thank a conqueror, and forego its rights.
Speak, and, without expecting me to soil
My honour, let us see how you can use
Your victory.

ALEXANDER.

Is that proud spirit still
Unbroken, Porus? And will your last breath
Be spent in threat'ning words? Victory herself
Must fear such pride; your name is still worth more
Than armies; I must take security.
Tell me then how to treat you.

PORUS.

Like a king.

ALEXANDER.

Well, like a king's then shall your treatment be;
I will not leave my victory incomplete;
'Tis your own wish, nor will you raise complaint.
Porous, reign on; I give you back your crown;
And, with my friendship, Axiana take;
To welcome bonds I thus condemn you both.
Live both, and reign; alone of many kings,
Far as the Ganges' banks your rule extend.

(to CLEOPHILA.)

Such treatment, Madam, may surprise you; but
'Tis thus that Alexander wreaks revenge.
I love you, and my heart, touch'd by your sighs,
With your displeasure would not weigh the lives
Of thousands. But a gallant warrior's death,
Disarm'd and captive, would yourself offend:
Porous would triumph in a bold contempt
For all my harshness, and to th' grave descend
Victorious. Let me end as I began,
And bring you generosity unstain'd
As my best gift. Let Porus take his crown
Restored by me; and you yourself shall reign
O'er all the world besides. Grace well the throne
With goodness as with beauty; make your sway
Noble as well as brilliant from the first;
And let a sister's anger be forgot.
AXIANA.
Yes, Madam, reign; and suffer me t' esteem
The greatness of the Hero who has giv'n
His heart to you. Love him, and see the world
Adore him; prize so sweet a privilege.

PORUS.
Sire, until now, the dread of all mankind
Forced me t' admire the fortune of your arms:
But 'mid the widespread terror I could see
In you no virtues that surpass'd my own.
I bow submissive now, and own myself
Vanquish'd by one whose magnanimity
Equals his valour. Go, subdue the world
To your obedience; it shall see me lend
Support to all your exploits; I am yours,
And will do all I can to give to it
So great a master.

CLEOPHILA.
What can heart so sad
As mine say to my lord? Shall I repine
Because to Porus Alexander deigns
Both life and sceptre to restore? He knows
What best becomes his glory. Press me not
For furthur speech; in silence let me weep.

ALEXANDER.
Yes, Madam, I too mourn a faithful friend;
And fervent sorrow finds relief in sighs;
A splendid tomb shall tell a future age
Of my remembrance and of your regret.