

**GODFREY
THOMAS**

THE PRINCE OF
PARTHIA

Thomas Godfrey
The Prince of Parthia

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Godfrey T.

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Thomas Godfrey

The Prince of Parthia A Tragedy

THOMAS GODFREY, Jr

(1736-1763)

Thomas Godfrey, Jr., was born in Philadelphia, on December 4, 1736, the son of a man who himself won fame as an inventor of the Quadrant. Godfrey, Senior, was a friend of Benjamin Franklin, the two probably having been drawn together by their common interest in science. When Godfrey, Senior, died, December, 1749, it was Franklin who wrote his obituary notice.¹

Young Godfrey was a student at the College or Academy of Philadelphia, and when his education was completed, he became apprenticed to a watch-maker, remaining in that profession until 1758. As a student at the Academy, he came under the special influence of Dr. William Smith, the first Principal or Provost of that institution,² and it was Dr. Smith who not only obtained for Godfrey a lieutenancy with the Pennsylvania troops in 1758, which sent him in the expedition against Fort Duquesne, but who, likewise, as the Editor of *The American Magazine*, was only too glad to accept and publish some of Godfrey's poetical effusions.

That the young man was popular, and that he associated with some of the most promising figures of the time, will be seen from the fact that, although he was only twenty-seven when he died, he was counted among the friends of Benjamin West and John Green, both portrait painters, of Francis Hopkinson, who was a student at the College of Philadelphia, and of Nathaniel Evans, a young minister whose loyalty found outlet after Godfrey's death in the Memorial Edition of Godfrey's works. Evans himself wrote poems and dialogues. In his confirmation of the fact that, as a poet, Godfrey was regarded favourably by the Philadelphians of the time, he quotes from the diary of one Miss Sarah Eve, who referred to him as "our poet."

Godfrey's reputation, as a young man with musical talents and a decided taste for painting, has come down to us. Certain it is that, during all of this time of varied occupation as a watch-maker and a soldier, he must have been courting the poetic Muse. There are some who speculate, without authority, on his having been a theatre-goer, and having become inspired as a playwright by the work of the American Company, in Philadelphia; especially by the good work of Douglass. Because of insufficient evidence, that is a question which remains unproven. Nevertheless, it is certain, from an extant letter written by Godfrey on November 17, 1759, and quoted by Seilhamer, that he must have had his attention turned to playwriting as a special art. He says to his correspondent, writing from North Carolina:

By the last vessel from this place, I sent you the copy of a tragedy I finished here, and desired your interest in bringing it on the stage; I have not yet heard of the vessel's safe arrival, and believe if she is safe it will be too late for the company now in Philadelphia. [Meaning, of course, Douglass's company.]

¹ A notice appeared in the *Pennsylvania Gazette*, December 19, 1749. See Scharf and Westcott's "History of Philadelphia" for references to Godfrey, Sr. Therein is given a picture of his house in Germantown, Pa. Barlow mentions him in his "Columbiad." A monument to his memory was erected in Laurel Hill Cemetery, Philadelphia, 1843. Note that David Rittenhouse, an American dramatist who translated, from the German, "Lucy Sampson; or, The Unhappy Heiress" (1789), was likewise a mathematical genius.

² Accounts of Dr. Smith are to be found in Henry Simpson's "Eminent Philadelphians"; Scharf & Westcott's "History of Philadelphia," ii, 1126. Dr. Smith's "Life and Correspondence," by Horace Wemyss Smith, was issued in 2 vols., 1879.

There are two facts to be noted in this communication: first, that it was written from North Carolina, where, in 1759, Godfrey had gone on some plantation business – probably as factor; and second, that it must have been penned with the idea of immediate production by the actors in Philadelphia. According to Seilhamer, Godfrey remained in North Carolina for three years. He did not write the entire manuscript of "The Prince of Parthia" while living in the South but, as he definitely states in his letter, finished it soon after his arrival.

There is no evidence as to why Godfrey sailed to the Island of New Providence in the last year of his life, and then returned to Wilmington, N.C. There is no definite statement as to whether he contracted fever and had a sunstroke on that expedition, or after his return home. But, nevertheless, he did contract the fever and have a sunstroke; with the result that he succumbed to his illness, and died near Wilmington, North Carolina, on August 3, 1763.³

After his death, Godfrey's friends decided among themselves that the young man was too much of a genius for them to allow his productions to remain scattered and unrecognized. Evidently, correspondence regarding this must have taken place between Dr. Smith, Nathaniel Evans, the young minister, and John Green, the portrait painter. For, in 1765, a book was published, entitled "Juvenile Poems on Various Subjects, with the Prince of Parthia," printed in Philadelphia by one Henry Miller.⁴ The volume contained a life written by Evans, a critical estimate written by Dr. Smith, of the College of Philadelphia, and an Elegy from the pen of John Green, who had been previously complimented by Godfrey in a poem entitled "A Night Piece." The whole spirit of the publication was one of friendly devotion and of firm belief in the permanency of Godfrey's position in the literary world. As was the custom of the time, the Edition was issued under the patronage of subscribers, a list being included. We know, for example, that Benjamin Franklin subscribed for twelve copies, his own private, autographed copy having been put on sale a few years ago.

As yet, no concerted effort had been made for the production of Godfrey's "The Prince of Parthia." We do not know if, during this time, the American Company had any claim on the manuscript, or whether, after Godfrey's death, it was again submitted to the theatrical people. But this much we do know, that, very hastily, the American Company, headed by David Douglass, who was playing at the Southwark Theatre in Philadelphia, decided that they would put on "The Prince of Parthia" in place of "The Disappointment; or, the Force of Credulity," a comic opera which will be noted in my introduction to John Leacock's "The Fall of British Tyranny." This musical piece had actually been put into rehearsal in 1767, when it was withdrawn. Immediately, the *Pennsylvania Journal and Weekly Advertiser* for April 23, 1767, contained an advertisement of the forthcoming production; it ran as follows:

By Authority./Never Performed before./By the American Company,/at the New Theatre, in Southwark,/On Friday, the Twenty-fourth of April, will be presented, A Tragedy written by the late ingenious/Mr. *Thomas Godfrey*, of this city, called the/Prince of Parthia./The Principal Characters by Mr. Hallam,/Mr. Douglass, Mr. Wall, Mr. Morris,/Mr. Allyn, Mr. Tomlinson, Mr. Broad/belt, Mr. Greville, Mrs. Douglass,/Mrs. Morris, Miss Wainwright, and/Miss Cheer./To which will be added, A Ballad Opera called/The Contrivances./To begin exactly at *Seven o'clock*. — *Vivant Rex & Regina*./

In the *Pennsylvania Gazette*, for the same date, appears an advertisement, without the cast of characters.

The production occurred on April 24, 1767.

³ Visitors to Wilmington, N.C., will be taken to Old St. James's Church-yard, where Godfrey lies buried.

⁴ Juvenile Poems/on/Various Subjects./With the/Prince of Parthia,/A/Tragedy,/By the Late/Mr. Thomas Godfrey, Junr./of Philadelphia./To which is prefixed,/Some Account of the Author and his Writings./Poeta nascitur non fit. Hor./Philadelphia,/Printed by Henry Miller, in Second-Street./M DCC LXV.

Seilhamer gives a probable cast of characters, although only the list of actors is given in the advertisement. Apart from this, little is known of the production: whether or not it pleased the theatre-goers of the time. We can judge, however, from the reading of the play itself, that there was little of extreme dramatic excellence in the situations, the chief claim, from the actor's point of view, being the opportunity to deliver certain very highly coloured, poetical lines modelled after the manner of the Elizabethan drama.

In the publication of "The Prince of Parthia," we have the first printed American tragedy in existence, and in its production we have one of only two plays, written by Americans, and presented on the stage before the Revolution. The other play is George Cockings's "The Conquest of Canada; or, The Siege of Quebec," printed for the author in 1766, and presented in Philadelphia in 1773. We note, in Dr. F. W. Atkinson's estimable Bibliography of American Plays in his possession, that Cockings later described himself as "Camillo Querno, Poet Laureate to Congress."

The interest in the early history of the American drama, which has become evident within recent years, and nowhere more evident than among the student body in our American colleges, induced the Zelosophic Literary Society, encouraged by the University of Pennsylvania, to revive "The Prince of Parthia," which was written by one of their alumni. The production was consummated on March 26, 1915. Even though we have no statement as to the actual manner in which the Douglass Company presented the play originally, we are given every evidence, by those who witnessed the revival, that the play, while containing many excellences, was not of a dramatic character according to modern ideas of stage effectiveness.

The only portrait of Godfrey known to have been in existence was that painted by Benjamin West, in his earlier years. It is interesting to note that in commemoration of the one hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the original production of this play, Dr. Archibald Henderson, of the University of North Carolina, issued an *édition de luxe* of "The Prince of Parthia," with an extended introduction, historical, biographical and critical (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1917).

ADVERTISEMENT

Our Author has made Use of the *licentia poetica* in the Management of this Dramatic Piece; and deviates, in a particular or two, from what is agreed on by Historians: The Queen *Thermusa* being not the Wife of King *Artabanus*, but (according to *Tacitus*, *Strabo* and *Josephus*) of *Phraates*; *Artabanus* being the fourth King of *Parthia* after him. Such Lapses are not unprecedented among the Poets; and will the more readily admit of an Excuse, when the Voice of History is followed in the Description of Characters.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

Men		
Artabanus, King of Parthia.		
Arsaces,	}	his Sons.
Vardanes		
Gotarzes,		
Barzaphernes, Lieutenant-Generales, under Arsac.		
Lysias,	}	Officers at Court.
Phraates,		
Bethas, a Noble Captive.		
Women		
Thermusa, the Queen.		
Evanthe, belov'd by Arsaces.		
Cleone, her Confident.		
Edessa, Attendant on the Queen.		
Scene, <i>Ctesiphon</i> .		

A TRAGEDY
ACT I

Scene I. *The Temple of the Sun*

Gotarzes and Phraates

Gotarzes

He comes, Arsaces comes, my gallant Brother
(Like shining Mars in all the pomp of conquest)
Triumphant enters now our joyful gates;
Bright Victory waits on his glitt'ring car,
And shews her fav'rite to the wond'ring croud;
While Fame exulting sounds the happy name
To realms remote, and bids the world admire.
Oh! 'tis a glorious day: – let none presume
T'indulge the tear, or wear the gloom of sorrow;
This day shall shine in Ages yet to come,
And grace the Parthian story.

Phraates

Glad Ctes'phon
Pours forth her numbers, like a rolling deluge,
To meet the blooming Hero; all the ways,
On either side, as far as sight can stretch,
Are lin'd with crouds, and on the lofty walls
Innumerable multitudes are rang'd.
On ev'ry countenance impatience sate
With roving eye, before the train appear'd.
But when they saw the Darling of the Fates,
They rent the air with loud repeated shouts;
The Mother shew'd him to her infant Son,
And taught his lisping tongue to name Arsaces:
E'en aged Sires, whose sounds are scarcely heard,
By feeble strength supported, tost their caps,
And gave their murmur to the gen'ral voice.

Gotarzes

The spacious streets, which lead up to the Temple,
Are strew'd with flow'rs; each, with frantic joy,
His garland forms, and throws it in the way.
What pleasure, Phraates, must swell his bosom,
To see the prostrate nation all around him,
And know he's made them happy! to hear them
Tease the Gods, to show'r their blessings on him!
Happy Arsaces! fain I'd imitate
Thy matchless worth, and be a shining joy!

Phraates

Hark! what a shout was that which pierc'd the skies!
It seem'd as tho' all Nature's beings join'd,
To hail thy glorious Brother.

Gotarzes

Happy Parthia!
Now proud Arabia dreads her destin'd chains,
While shame and rout disperses all her sons.
Barzaphernes pursues the fugitives,
The few whom fav'ring Night redeem'd from slaughter;
Swiftly they fled, for fear had wing'd their speed,
And made them bless the shade which saf'ty gave.

Phraates

What a bright hope is ours, when those dread pow'rs
Who rule yon heav'n, and guide the mov'ments here,
Shall call your royal Father to their joys:
In blest Arsaces ev'ry virtue meets;
He's gen'rous, brave, and wise, and good,
Has skill to act, and noble fortitude
To face bold danger, in the battle firm,
And dauntless as a Lion fronts his foe.
Yet is he sway'd by ev'ry tender passion,
Forgiving mercy, gentleness and love;

Which speak the Hero friend of humankind.

Gotarzes

And let me speak, for 'tis to him I owe
That here I stand, and breath the common air,
And 'tis my pride to tell it to the world.
One luckless day as in the eager chace
My Courser wildly bore me from the rest,
A monst'rous Leopard from a bosky fen
Rush'd forth, and foaming lash'd the ground,
And fiercely ey'd me as his destin'd quarry.
My jav'lin swift I threw, but o'er his head
It erring pass'd, and harmless in the air
Spent all its force; my falchin then I seiz'd,
Advancing to attack my ireful foe,
When furiously the savage sprung upon me,
And tore me to the ground; my treach'rous blade
Above my hand snap'd short, and left me quite
Defenceless to his rage; Arsaces then,
Hearing the din, flew like some pitying pow'r,
And quickly freed me from the Monster's paws,
Drenching his bright lance in his spotted breast.

Phraates

How diff'rent he from arrogant Vardanes?
That haughty Prince eyes with a stern contempt
All other Mortals, and with lofty mien
He treads the earth as tho' he were a God.
Nay, I believe that his ambitious soul,
Had it but pow'r to its licentious wishes,
Would dare dispute with Jove the rule of heav'n;
Like a Titanian son with giant insolence,
Match with the Gods, and wage immortal war,
'Til their red wrath should hurl him headlong down,
E'en to destruction's lowest pit of horror.

Gotarzes

Methinks he wears not that becoming joy
Which on this bright occasion gilds the court;

His brow's contracted with a gloomy frown,
Pensive he stalks along, and seems a prey
To pining discontent.

Phraates

Arsaces he dislikes,
For standing 'twixt him, and the hope of Empire;
While Envy, like a rav'nous Vulture, tears
His canker'd heart, to see your Brother's triumph.

Gotarzes

And yet Vardanes owes that hated Brother
As much as I; 'twas summer last, as we
Were bathing in Euphrates' flood, Vardanes
Proud of strength would seek the further shore;
But ere he the mid-stream gain'd, a poignant pain
Shot thro' his well-strung nerves, contracting all,
And the stiff joints refus'd their wonted aid.
Loudly he cry'd for help, Arsaces heard,
And thro' the swelling waves he rush'd to save
His drowning Brother, and gave him life,
And for the boon the Ingrate pays him hate.

Phraates

There's something in the wind, for I've observ'd
Of late he much frequents the Queen's apartment,
And fain would court her favour, wild is she
To gain revenge for fell Vonones' death,
And firm resolves the ruin of Arsaces.
Because that fill'd with filial piety,
To save his Royal Sire, he struck the bold
Presumptuous Traitor dead; nor heeds she
The hand which gave her Liberty, nay rais'd her
Again to Royalty.

Gotarzes

Ingratitude,
Thou hell-born fiend, how horrid is thy form!
The Gods sure let thee loose to scourge mankind,
And save them from an endless waste of thunder.

Phraates

Yet I've beheld this now so haughty Queen,
Bent with distress, and e'en by pride forsook,
When following thy Sire's triumphant car,
Her tears and ravings mov'd the senseless herd,
And pity blest their more than savage breasts,
With the short pleasure of a moment's softness.
Thy Father, conquer'd by her charms (for what
Can charm like mourning beauty), soon struck off
Her chains, and rais'd her to his bed and throne.
Adorn'd the brows of her aspiring Son,
The fierce Vonones, with the regal crown
Of rich Armenia, once the happy rule
Of Tisaphernes, her deceased Lord.

Gotarzes

And he in wasteful war return'd his thanks,
Refus'd the homage he had sworn to pay,
And spread Destruction ev'ry where around,
'Til from Arsaces' hand he met the fate
His crimes deserv'd.

Phraates

As yet your princely Brother
Has scap'd Thermusa's rage, for still residing
In peaceful times, within his Province, ne'er
Has fortune blest her with a sight of him,
On whom she'd wreck her vengeance.

Gotarzes

She has won

By spells, I think, so much on my fond father,
That he is guided by her will alone.
She rules the realm, her pleasure is a law,
All offices and favours are bestow'd,
As she directs.

Phraates

But see, the Prince, Vardanes,
Proud Lysias with him, he whose soul is harsh
With jarring discord. Nought but madding rage,
And ruffian-like revenge his breast can know,
Indeed to gain a point he'll condescend
To mask the native rancour of his heart,
And smooth his venom'd tongue with flattery.
Assiduous now he courts Vardanes' friendship,
See, how he seems to answer all his gloom,
And give him frown for frown.

Gotarzes

Let us retire,
And shun them now; I know not what it means,
But chilling horror shivers o'er my limbs,
When Lysias I behold. —

Scene II. Vardanes *and* Lysias

Lysias

That shout proclaims

[Shout.

Arsaces' near approach.

Vardanes

Peace, prithee, peace,
Wilt thou still shock me with that hated sound,
And grate harsh discord in my offended ear?
If thou art fond of echoing the name,
Join with the servile croud, and hail his triumph.

Lysias

I hail him? By our glorious shining God,
I'd sooner lose my speech, and all my days
In silence rest, conversing with my thoughts,
Than hail Arsaces.

Vardanes

Yet, again his name,
Sure there is magic in it, Parthia's drunk
And giddy with the joy; the houses' tops
With gaping spectators are throng'd, nay wild
They climb such precipices that the eye
Is dazzl'd with their daring; ev'ry wretch
Who long has been immur'd, nor dar'd enjoy
The common benefits of sun and air,
Creeps from his lurking place; e'en feeble age,
Long to the sickly couch confin'd, stalks forth,
And with infectious breath assails the Gods.
O! curse the name, the idol of their joy.

Lysias

And what's that name, that thus they should disturb
The ambient air, and weary gracious heav'n
With ceaseless bellowings? Vardanes sounds
With equal harmony, and suits as well
The loud repeated shouts of noisy joy.
Can he bid Chaos Nature's rule dissolve,
Can he deprive mankind of light and day,
And turn the Seasons from their destin'd course?
Say, can he do all this, and be a God?
If not, what is his matchless merit? What dares he,
Vardanes dares not? blush not, noble Prince,
For praise is merit's due, and I will give it;
E'en 'mid the croud which waits thy Brother's smile,
I'd loud proclaim the merit of Vardanes.

Vardanes

Forbear this warmth, your friendship urges far.
Yet know your love shall e'er retain a place
In my remembrance. There is something here —

[Pointing to his breast.]

Another time and I will give thee all;
But now, no more. —

Lysias

You may command my services,
I'm happy to obey. Of late your Brother
Delights in hind'ring my advancement,
And ev'ry boaster's rais'd above my merit,
Barzaphernes alone commands his ear,
His oracle in all.

Vardanes

I hate Arsaces,
Tho' he's my Mother's son, and churchmen say
There's something sacred in the name of Brother.
My soul endures him not, and he's the bane
Of all my hopes of greatness. Like the sun
He rules the day, and like the night's pale Queen,
My fainter beams are lost when he appears.
And this because he came into the world,
A moon or two before me: What's the diff'rence,
That he alone should shine in Empire's seat?
I am not apt to trumpet forth my praise,
Or highly name myself, but this I'll speak,
To him in ought, I'm not the least inferior.
Ambition, glorious fever! mark of Kings,
Gave me immortal thirst and rule of Empire.
Why lag'd my tardy soul, why droop'd the wing,
Nor forward springing, shot before his speed
To seize the prize? – 'Twas Empire – Oh! 'twas Empire —

Lysias

Yet, I must think that of superior mould
Your soul was form'd, fit for a heav'nly state,
And left reluctant its sublime abode,
And painfully obey'd the dread command,
When Jove's controuling fate forc'd it below.
His soul was earthly, and it downward mov'd,
Swift as to the center of attraction.

Vardanes

It might be so – But I've another cause
To hate this Brother, ev'ry way my rival;
In love as well as glory he's above me;
I dote on fair Evanthe, but the charmer
Disdains my ardent suit, like a miser
He treasures up her beauties to himself:
Thus is he form'd to give me torture ever. —
But hark, they've reach'd the Temple,
Didst thou observe the croud, their eagerness,
Each put the next aside to catch a look,
Himself was elbow'd out? – Curse, curse their zeal —

Lysias

Stupid folly!

Vardanes

I'll tell thee, Lysias,
This many-headed monster multitude,
Unsteady is as giddy fortune's wheel,
As woman fickle, varying as the wind;
To-day they this way course, the next they veer,
And shift another point, the next another.

Lysias

Curiosity's another name for man,
The blazing meteor streaming thro' the air
Commands our wonder, and admiring eyes,
With eager gaze we trace the lucent path,
'Til spent at length it shrinks to native nothing.
While the bright stars which ever steady glow,
Unheeded shine, and bless the world below.

Scene III. Queen *and* Edessa

Queen

Oh! give me way, the haughty victor comes,
Surrounded by adoring multitudes;
On swelling tides of praise to heav'n they raise him;
To deck their idol, they rob the glorious beings
Of their splendour.

Edessa

My royal Lady,
Chace hence these passions.

Queen

Peace, forever peace,
Have I not cause to hate this homicide?
'Twas by his cursed hand Vonones fell,
Yet fell not as became his gallant spirit,
Not by the warlike arm of chief renown'd,
But by a youth, ye Gods, a beardless stripling,
Stab'd by his dastard falchin from behind;
For well I know he fear'd to meet Vonones,
As princely warriors meet with open daring,
But shrunk amidst his guards, and gave him death,
When faint with wounds, and weary with the fight.

Edessa

With anguish I have heard his hapless fate,
And mourn'd in silence for the gallant Prince.

Queen

Soft is thy nature, but, alas! Edessa,
Thy heart's a stranger to a mother's sorrows,
To see the pride of all her wishes blasted;
Thy fancy cannot paint the storm of grief,
Despair and anguish, which my breast has known.
Oh! show'r, ye Gods, your torments on Arsaces,
Curs'd be the morn which dawn'd upon his birth.

Edessa

Yet, I intreat —

Queen

Away! for I will curse —
Oh! may he never know a father's fondness,
Or know it to his sorrow, may his hopes
Of joy be cut like mine, and his short life
Be one continu'd tempest; if he lives,
Let him be curs'd with jealousy and fear,
And vex't with anguish of neglecting scorn;
May tort'ring hope present the flowing cup,
Then hasty snatch it from his eager thirst,
And when he dies base treach'ry be the means.

Edessa

Oh! calm your spirits.

Queen

Yes, I'll now be calm,
Calm as the sea when the rude waves are laid,
And nothing but a gentle swell remains;
My curse is heard, and I shall have revenge;
There's something here which tells me 'twill be so,
And peace resumes her empire o'er my breast.
Vardanes is the Minister of Vengeance;
Fir'd by ambition, he aspiring seeks
T'adorn his brows with Parthia's diadem;

I've fann'd the fire, and wrought him up to fury,
Envy shall urge him forward still to dare,
And discord be the prelude to destruction,
Then this detested race shall feel my hate.

Edessa

And doth thy hatred then extend so far,
That innocent and guilty all alike
Must feel thy dreadful vengeance?

Queen

Ah! Edessa,
Thou dost not know e'en half my mighty wrongs,
But in thy bosom I will pour my sorrows.

Edessa

With secrecy I ever have repaid
Your confidence.

Queen

I know thou hast; then hear:
The changeling King who oft has kneel'd before me,
And own'd no other pow'r, now treats me
With ill dissembl'd love mix'd with disdain.
A newer beauty rules his faithless heart,
Which only in variety is blest;
Oft have I heard him, when wrapt up in sleep,
And wanton fancy rais'd the mimic scene,
Call with unusual fondness on Evanthe,
While I have lain neglected by his side,
Except sometimes in a mistaken rapture
He'd clasp me to his bosom.

Edessa

Oh! Madam,
Let not corroding jealousy usurp
Your Royal breast, unnumber'd ills attend
The wretch who entertains that fatal guest.

Queen

Think not that I'll pursue its wand'ring fires,
No more I'll know perplexing doubts and fears,
And erring trace suspicion's endless maze,
For, ah! I doubt no more.

Edessa

Their shouts approach.

Queen

Lead me, Edessa, to some peaceful gloom,
Some silent shade far from the walks of men,
There shall the hop'd revenge my thoughts employ,
And sooth my sorrows with the coming joy.

Scene IV. *Evanthe and Cleone*

Evanthe

No, I'll not meet him now, for love delights
In the soft pleasures of the secret shade,
And shuns the noise and tumult of the croud.
How tedious are the hours which bring him
To my fond, panting heart! for oh! to those
Who live in expectation of the bliss,
Time slowly creeps, and ev'ry tardy minute
Seems mocking of their wishes. Say, Cleone,
For you beheld the triumph, 'midst his pomp,
Did he not seem to curse the empty show,
The pageant greatness, enemy to love,
Which held him from Evanthe? haste, to tell me,
And feed my greedy ear with the fond tale —
Yet, hold – for I shall weary you with questions,
And ne'er be satisfied – Beware, Cleone,
And guard your heart from Love's delusive sweets.

Cleone

Is Love an ill, that thus you caution me
To shun his pow'r?

Evanthe

The Tyrant, my Cleone,
Despotic rules, and fetters all our thoughts.
Oh! wouldst thou love, then bid adieu to peace,
Then fears will come, and jealousies intrude,
Ravage your bosom, and disturb your quiet,
E'en pleasure to excess will be a pain.
Once I was free, then my exulting heart
Was like a bird that hops from spray to spray,
And all was innocence and mirth; but, lo!
The Fowler came, and by his arts decoy'd,
And soon the Wanton cag'd. Twice fifteen times
Has Cynthia dipt her horns in beams of light,
Twice fifteen times has wasted all her brightness,

Since first I knew to love; 'twas on that day
When curs'd Vonones fell upon the plain,
The lovely Victor doubly conquer'd me.

Cleone

Forgive my boldness, Madam, if I ask
What chance first gave you to Vonones' pow'r?
Curiosity thou know'st is of our sex.

Evanthe

That is a task will wake me to new sorrows,
Yet thou attend, and I will tell thee all.
Arabia gave me birth, my father held
Great Offices at Court, and was reputed
Brave, wise and loyal, by his Prince below'd.
Oft has he led his conqu'ring troops, and forc'd
From frowning victory her awful honours.
In infancy I was his only treasure,
On me he wasted all his store of fondness.
Oh! I could tell thee of his wond'rous goodness,
His more than father's love and tenderness.
But thou wouldst jeer, and say the tale was trifling;
So did he dote upon me, for in childhood
My infant charms, and artless innocence
Blest his fond age, and won on ev'ry heart.
But, oh! from this sprung ev'ry future ill,
This fatal beauty was the source of all.

Cleone

'Tis often so, for beauty is a flow'r
That tempts the hand to pluck it.

Evanthe

Full three times
Has scorching summer fled from cold winter's
Ruthless blasts, as oft again has spring

In sprightly youth drest nature in her beauties,
Since bathing in Niphates'⁵ silver stream,
Attended only by one fav'rite maid;
As we were sporting on the wanton waves,
Swift from the wood a troop of horsemen rush'd,
Rudely they seiz'd, and bore me trembling off,
In vain Edessa with her shrieks assail'd
The heav'ns, for heav'n was deaf to both our pray'rs.
The wretch whose insolent embrace confin'd me
(Like thunder bursting on the guilty soul),
With curs'd Vonones' voice pour'd in my ears
A hateful tale of love; for he it seems
Had seen me at Arabia's royal court,
And took those means to force me to his arms.

Cleone

Perhaps you may gain something from the Captives
Of your lost Parents.

Evanthe

This I meant to try,
Soon as the night hides Nature in her darkness,
Veil'd in the gloom we'll steal into their prison.
But, oh! perhaps e'en now my aged Sire
May 'mongst the slain lie welt'ring on the field,
Pierc'd like a riddle through with num'rous wounds,
While parting life is quiv'ring on his lips,
He may perhaps be calling on his Evanthe.
Yes, ye great Pow'rs who boast the name of mercy,
Ye have deny'd me to his latest moments,
To all the offices of filial duty,
To bind his wounds, and wash them with my tears,
Is this, is this your mercy?

Cleone

Blame not heav'n,
For heav'n is just and kind; dear Lady, drive

⁵ The Tigris.

These black ideas from your gentle breast;
Fancy delights to torture the distress'd,
And fill the gloomy scene with shadowy ills,
Summon your reason, and you'll soon have comfort.

Evanthe

Dost thou name comfort to me, my Cleone,
Thou who know'st all my sorrows? plead no more,
'Tis reason tells me I am doubly wretched.

Cleone

But hark, the music strikes, the rites begin,
And, see, the doors are op'ning.

Evanthe

Let's retire;
My heart is now too full to meet him here,
Fly swift ye hours, till in his arms I'm prest,
And each intruding care is hush'd to rest.

Scene V

The Scene draws and discovers, in the inner part of the Temple, a large image of the Sun, with an altar before it. Around Priests and Attendants.

King, Arsaces, Vardanes, Gotarzes, Phraates, Lysias, with Bethas in chains

Hymn

Parent of Light, to thee belong
Our grateful tributary songs;
Each thankful voice to thee shall rise,
And chearful pierce the azure skies;
While in thy praise all earth combines,
And Echo in the Chorus joins.
All the gay pride of blooming May,
The Lily fair and blushing Rose,
To thee their early honours pay,
And all their heav'nly sweets disclose.
The feather'd Choir on ev'ry tree
To hail thy glorious dawn repair,
While the sweet sons of harmony
With Hallelujahs fill the air.
'Tis thou hast brac'd the Hero's arm,
And giv'n the Love of praise to warm
His bosom, as he onward flies,
And for his Country bravely dies.
Thine's victory, and from thee springs
Ambition's fire, which glows in Kings.

King [coming forward]

Thus, to the Gods our tributary songs,
And now, oh! let me welcome once again
My blooming victor to his Father's arms;
And let me thank thee for our safety: Parthia
Shall thank thee too, and give her grateful praise
To her Deliverer.

Omnes

All hail! Arsaces!

King

Thanks to my loyal friends.

Vardanes [*aside*]

Curse, curse the sound,
E'en Echo gives it back with int'rest,

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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