

MATILDA: A TRAGEDY

By the AUTHOR of the EARL of WARWICK. (Jean-Francois de La  
Harpe)

## Introduction

### Background to the Play

Edward the Confessor was the last of the Anglo-Saxon kings of England, he ruled from 1042-1066. Edward died in 1066 and was succeeded by Harold Godwinson. Harold's brother Tostig Godwinson was exiled because he refused to accept his removal from office as commanded by Edward. Tostig was replaced as Earl of Northumbria by Morcar.

Later that year Harald Hardrada of Norway, who tried to claim the English crown, joined with Tostig and invaded. They landed their fleet at the mouth of the Tyne, on the far side of Northumbria closer to Scotland. The invading force defeated Earls Edwin of Mercia and Morcar of Northumbria, who were brothers, at the Battle of Fulford near York. Harold Godwinson led his army from London to Yorkshire and caught Hardrada by surprise. In the Battle of Stamford Bridge Tostig and Hardrada were killed. Godwinson then turned south to meet the Norman Invasion under William the Conqueror. Three weeks later Harold Godwinson was defeated and killed by the Normans at the Battle of Hastings.

This play seems to have taken place in Northumbria, during subsequent fighting between Norman and English forces. At one point Matilda says that her father Ranulph left her with a faithful peasant to go to William the Conqueror's aid, but in one of King Malcolm of Scotland's invasions of Northumbria, Matilda was in danger and was saved by Morcar – bringing her under his care. He had promised to return her to Ranulph, then he grew to desire her as his wife.

A popular name in the era, there is no evidence that this particular Matilda ever really lived. That being said, she is Norman and is the object of affection for two English nobles, which demonstrates the ethnic mixing involved in the Norman Conquest. William the Conqueror was related to the English monarchy, and Edward the Confessor had lived more in Normandy than he had in England. The Norman Conquest of England was a huge ethnic mixing: the invading army was a collection of Norman (French), Breton (Britons), and Flemish (Germanic) soldiers led by William the Conqueror. The Norwegians invaded as did the Scottish during this time. All told, 1066 was the year that the Welsh and Anglo-Saxons were invaded relentlessly.

### Historicity of the Characters

As noted, while Matilda herself may be fictional, other characters are historical, though sometimes out of place chronologically. In Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland* after Alice escapes the ocean of her own tears, she finds herself on a beach with assorted animals trying to get dry. *"Ahem!" said the Mouse with an important air. "Are you all ready? This is the driest thing I know. Silence all round, if you please! 'William the Conqueror, whose cause was favoured by the pope, was soon submitted to by the English, who wanted leaders, and had been of late much accustomed to usurpation and conquest.*

*Edwin and Morcar, the earls of Mercia and Northumbria--;*” The “dry” history here is from *A Short Course of History* by Havilland Chepmell published in 1862, an actual history book. It makes it even more interesting that this part was included in his book when it comes to light that Lewis Carroll is distantly related to both Morcar and Edwin.<sup>1</sup>

### Poetic Forms

This play is written in rhymed couplets of iambic pentameter, which is a type of rhythm, or meter, established by the syllables in the line. An iamb is a pair of syllables, an unstressed syllable followed by a stressed syllable (as in *a-bove*). Iambic Pentameter refers to a line with five iambs, for a total of ten syllables, making it a form of decasyllabic verse. Iambic pentameter is the most common meter in English poetry, used famously by William Shakespeare. This play is written in decasyllabic lines, however just because the average line has ten syllables doesn't mean that every line has ten syllables.

At one point, for example, Matilda closes a short speech with the words “That might destroy us all.” which is only six syllables, Bertha's response: “I know his warmth.” provides the remaining four syllables. Some editors would format in such a way as to show that both speeches belong to the same line:

**MATILDA.** “That might destroy us all.”

**BERTHA.**

“I know his warmth.”

I chose to separate the lines for ease of reading. In performance, there would of course be no difference.

### Editorial Changes

De la Harpe had the irritating habit of omitting the letter L from words like “should” and “could”. These exclusions catch the eye of the modern reader and impede the flow on the page. Since they do not affect the scansion of the line, I have cleaned up the spelling. I have corrected typographical errors and made a few other minor changes that do not affect the sense of dialogue.

### Playwright

The title page of this play reads “By the Author of the Earl of Warwick”. *The Earl of Warwick* is a tragedy written by French playwright, writer, and literary critic Jean-Francois de La Harpe. Two of his plays, *Warwick* and *Philoctetes* were adapted from Sophocles and were the only plays of his which were met with much success, even though he wrote a multitude of plays. *Warwick* is said to have been taken, without the Author's acknowledgment, and was translated and printed in 1766 and 1767 by Thomas Francklin. Francklin was an English academic, clergyman, writer, and dramatist whose greatest works consisted of translations and tragedies. *The Earl of Warwick* is attributed

to Francklin and *Matilda* is one of his translations, despite his claim (in the Dedication) to being the author.

--Aeryn Nielsen  
Mount Liberty College  
July 2020

MATILDA: A TRAGEDY. (AS IT IS PERFORMED AT THE THEATRE-ROYAL  
IN DRURY-LANE.)<sup>2</sup>

By the AUTHOR of the EARL of WARWICK.

*DEDICATION TO THE PUBLIC*<sup>3</sup>

SIR, permit me to return you my unfeigned thanks for your kind reception of this Tragedy on the stage, and to request the continuance of your favor to it in the closet. It would be the highest ingratitude in me to forget the only patron I ever had the good fortune to meet with, by whose powerful assistance I have been enabled to defeat the combined forces of envy, malice and detraction. I must at the same time fairly confess, my victory over the enemy was owing, I believe, as many other victories have been, more to the art and prowess of my Officers than to any extraordinary merit of my own. To the first in command, Miss YOUNGE, I have infinite obligations, which I shall always gratefully acknowledge, though I may never have it in my power to repay them; nor can the skill and conduct of my generals, REDDISH, SMITH and PALMER, be sufficiently admired. To your patronage and protection I most heartily and sincerely recommend them: If I have been the happy instrument of giving them a favorable opportunity of

rising in your esteem, it will give me the greatest satisfaction. You can best distinguish their merit, and you alone are able to reward it.

I am, Sir, your much obliged, And devoted humble Servant, The Author.

### **Dramatis Personae.**

MORCAR, Earl of Mercia (Mr. REDDISH)  
EDWIN, Earl of Northumberland (Mr. SMITH)  
SIWARD<sup>4</sup>, Morcar's friend (Mr. PALMER)  
OFFICERS, &c.

MATILDA, A prisoner in the camp of Morcar (Miss YOUNGE)  
BERTHA, Her friend (Miss PLATT)

### **Prologue**

Written by a FRIEND.  
Spoken by Mr. SMITH.

A Tragic Tale, from Norman William's<sup>5</sup> Age,  
Simple, and unadorn'd, attempts the Stage.  
Our silly Bard, more simple than his Tale,  
Thinks on your polish'd Manners to prevail;  
What in those barb'rous Days were counted Crimes,  
Are Slips of course in these enlighten'd Times:  
Let not your Ancestors too rude appear,  
Though firm in Friendship, and in Love sincere.  
Love then like Glory did each Heart inflame,  
Beauty was Virtue, and to win it, Fame,  
Now Lovers lose their Mistresses with Grace,  
As at New-Market they would lose a Race,  
Where, if in Hopes they seem a little cross'd,  
'Tis for the Money of the Match that's lost.  
When Tilts and Tournaments call'd forth the Brave,  
The Fame of spotless Innocence to save,  
Each gallant Knight preferr'd his Love to Life,  
For then the greatest Blessing was a Wife:  
To prove their Chastity the dauntless Fair  
Would walk through Flames, nor singe a single Hair;  
Nay, some so chaste, so cold to all Desire,  
Not only scap'd it, they put out the Fire!  
But now no Heroes die for Love's sweet Passion,

And fiery Trials are quite out of Fashion.  
Ye Sons of Frailty—you whom Rage devours,  
For you this Night the Muse exerts her Pow'rs;  
With crimson Hands, pale Cheeks, and blood-shot Eyes,  
She bids the Furies in their Terrors rise!  
In Valour's Breast their Scorpion Stings they dart,  
First fire the Brain, and then corrupt the Heart.  
But what avails all Virtue! Passion's gust,  
Like Whirlwinds, drive it from the Heart like Dust;  
When Reason dawns, well may Repentance mourn  
Love, Friendship, Duty, by the Roots up-torn.  
To sooth this fatal Vice, the Flatterer tells  
In stormy Minds how warmest Friendship dwells;  
The Tree whose sheltering Arms spread kindly round,  
If Light'ning-struck, lies blasted on the Ground;  
In vain will Merits past Indulgence claim,  
One Moment's Rashness blasts whole Years of Fame.

## ACT I

*SCENE, MORCAR's camp, and the Environs near NOTTINGHAM.<sup>6</sup> Specifically, MATILDA'S tent, with a view of the distant country.*

*[Enter MATILDA, BERTHA.]*

MATILDA.

I Thank thee, gentle Bertha, for thy goodness;  
If aught could sooth the anguish of my soul,  
Or raise it from the horrors of despair  
To hope and joy, 'twould be thy gen'rous friendship:  
But I am sunk so deep in misery,  
That comfort cannot reach me.

BERTHA.

Talk not thus,  
My sweet Matilda; innocence, like thine,  
Must be the care of all-directing heav'n.  
Already hath the interposing hand  
Of providence redeem'd thee from the rage  
Of savage war, and shelter'd thee within  
This calm asylum. Mercia's potent Earl,  
The noble Morcar, will protect thy virtues;  
And, if I err not, wishes but to share  
His conquests with thee.

MATILDA.

O my friend, oft times  
The flow'ry path that tempts our wand'ring steps  
But leads to mis'ry; what thou fondly deem'st  
My soul's best comfort, is its bitt'rest woe.  
Earl Morcar loves me. To the gen'rous mind  
The heaviest debt is that of gratitude,  
When 'tis not in our power to repay it.

BERTHA.

Oft' have I heard thee say, to him thou ow'st  
Thy honour and thy life.

MATILDA.

I told thee truth.  
Beneath my father's hospitable roof,  
I spent my earlier happier days in peace  
And safety: When the Norman conqu'ror came,  
Discord, thou know'st, soon lit her fatal torch,  
And spread destruction o'er this wretched land.  
The loyal Ranulph<sup>7</sup> flew to William's aid,  
And left me to a faithful peasant's care,  
Who liv'd, sequester'd, in the fertile plains  
Of rich Northumbria: There awhile I dwelt  
In sweet retirement, when the savage Malcolm  
Rush'd on our borders.

BERTHA.

I remember well  
The melancholy hour. Confusion rag'd  
On ev'ry side, and desolation spread  
Its terrors round us. How did'st thou escape?

MATILDA.

A crew of desp'rate ruffians seiz'd upon me,  
A helpless prey: For, O! he was not there,  
Who best could have defended his Matilda.  
Then had I fall'n a wretched sacrifice  
To brutal rage, and lawless violence,  
Had not the gen'rous Morcar interpos'd  
To save me: Tho' he join'd the guilty cause  
Of foul rebellion, yet his soul abhor'd  
Such violation. At his awful voice  
The surly ruffians left me, and retir'd.  
He bore me, half expiring in his arms,  
Back to his tent; with ev'ry kind attention  
There strove to sooth my griefs, and promis'd, soon

As fit occasion offer'd, to restore me  
To my afflicted father.

BERTHA.  
Something sure  
Was due to gen'rous Morcar for his aid,  
So timely given.

MATILDA.  
No doubt: But mark what follow'd.  
In my deliverer too soon I found  
An ardent lover, sighing at my feet.

BERTHA.  
And what is there the proudest of our sex  
Could wish for more? To be the envy'd bride  
Of noble Morcar, first of England's peers,  
In fame and fortune.

MATILDA.  
Never trust, my Bertha,  
To outward shew. 'Tis not the smiles of fortune,  
The pomp of wealth, or splendor of a court,  
Can make us happy. In the mind alone,  
Rests solid joy, and true felicity,  
Which I can never taste: For, O, my friend!  
A secret sorrow weighs upon my heart.

BERTHA.  
Then pour it in the bosom of thy friend;  
Let me partake it with thee.

MATILDA.  
Gen'rous maid!  
Know then, for nought will I conceal from thee,  
I honour Mercia's Earl, revere his virtues,  
And wish I could repay him with myself;  
But, blushing, I acknowledge it, the heart  
His vows solicit, is not mine to give.

BERTHA.  
Has then Tome happier youth—

MATILDA.  
Another time  
I'll tell thee all the story of our loves.

But, O, my Bertha! did'st thou know to whom  
My virgin faith is plighted, thou would'st say  
I am indeed unhappy.

BERTHA.  
Could Matilda  
Bestow the treasure of her heart on one  
Unworthy of her choice?

MATILDA.  
Unworthy! No.  
I glory in my passion for the best,  
The loveliest of his sex. O! he was all  
That bounteous nature, prodigal of charms,  
Did on her choicest fav'rite e'er bestow.  
His graceful form and sweet deportment spoke  
The fairer beauties of his kindred soul,  
Where e'vry grace and ev'ry virtue shone.  
But thou wilt tremble, Bertha, when I tell thee,  
He is Earl Morcar's—brother.

BERTHA.  
Ha! his brother!  
The noble Edwin! Often have I heard  
My father—

MATILDA.  
Did Lord Edrick know him then?

BERTHA.  
He knew his virtues, and his fame in arms,  
And often would lament the dire effects  
Of civil discord, that could thus dissolve  
The ties of nature, and of brethren make  
The bitt'rest foes. If right I learn, Lord Edwin  
Is William's firmest friend, and still supports  
His royal master.

MATILDA.  
Yes, my Bertha, there  
I still find comfort: Edwin ne'er was stain'd  
As Morcar is, with foul disloyalty,  
But stands betwixt his sov'reign and the rage  
Of rebel multitudes, to guard his throne.  
If nobly fighting in his country's cause,  
My hero falls, I shall not weep alone;

The king he lov'd and honour'd, will lament him,  
And grateful England mix her tears with mine.

BERTHA.

And doth Earl Morcar know of Edwin's love?

MATILDA.

O, no! I would not for a thousand worlds  
He should suspect it, lest his fiery soul  
Should catch th' alarm, and kindle to a flame  
That might destroy us all.

BERTHA.

I know his warmth  
And vehemence of temper, unrestrain'd  
By laws, and spurning at the royal pow'r  
Which he contemns, he rules despotic here.

MATILDA.

Alas! how man from man, and brother oft  
From brother differs! Edwin's tender passion  
Is soft and gentle as the balmy breath  
Of vernal zephyrs; whilst the savage north,  
That curls the angry ocean into storms,  
Is a faint image of Earl Morcar's love:  
'Tis rage, 'tis fury all. When last we met  
He knit his angry brow, and frown'd severe  
Upon me; then, with wild distracted look,  
Bade me beware of trifling with his passion,  
He would not brook it—trembling I retir'd,  
And bath'd my couch in tears.

BERTHA.

Unhappy maid!  
But time, that softens ev'ry human woe,  
Will bring some blest event, and lighten thine.

MATILDA.

Alas! thou know'st not what it is to love.  
Haply thy tender heart hath never felt  
The tortures of that soul-bewitching passion.  
Its joys are sweet and poignant, but its pangs  
Are exquisite, as I have known too well:  
For, O! my Bertha, since the fatal hour  
When Edwin left me, never hath sweet peace,  
That us'd to dwell with all its comforts here,

'E'er deign'd to visit this afflicted breast.

BERTHA.

Too plain, alas! I read thy sorrows; grief  
Sits in sad triumph on thy faded cheek,  
And half obscures the lustre of thy beauties.

MATILDA.

Talk not of beauty, 'tis our sex's bane,  
And leads but to destruction. I abhor  
The fatal gift. O! would it had pleas'd heav'n  
To brand my homely features with the mark  
Of foul deformity, or let me pass  
Unknown, and undistinguish'd from the herd  
Of vulgar forms, save by the partial eye  
Of my lov'd Edwin; then had I been blest  
With charms unenvy'd, and a guiltless love.

BERTHA.

Where is thy Edwin now?

MATILDA.

Alas! I know not.  
'Tis now three years since last these eyes beheld  
Their dearest object. In that humble vale,  
Whence, as I told thee, Malcolm's fury drove me,  
There first we met. O! how I cherish still  
The fond remembrance! There we first exchange'd  
Our mutual vows, the day of happiness  
Was fixt; it came, and in a few short hours  
He had been made indissolubly mine,  
When fortune, envious of our happiness,  
And William's danger, call'd him to the field.

BERTHA.

And since that parting have ye never met?

MATILDA.

O never, Bertha, never but in thought.  
Imagination, kind anticipator  
Of love's pleasures, brings us oft' together.  
Oft' as I sit within my lonely tent,  
And cast my wishful eyes o'er yonder plain,  
In ev'ry passing traveller I strive  
To trace his image, hear his lovely voice  
In ev'ry sound, and fain would flatter me

Edwin still lives, still loves his lost Matilda.

BERTHA.

Who knows but fate, propitious to thy love,  
May guide him hither.

MATILDA.

Gracious heav'n forbid!  
Consider, Bertha, if the chance of war  
Should this way lead him, he must come in arms  
Against his brother: Oh! 'tis horrible  
To think on. Should they meet, and Edwin fall,  
What shall support me? And if vict'ry smiles  
Upon my love, how dear will be the purchase  
By Morcar's blood! Then must I lose my friend,  
My guardian, my protector—ev'ry way  
Matilda must be wretched.

BERTHA.

Is there ought  
In Bertha's pow'r?

MATILDA.

Wilt thou dispatch, my friend,  
Some trusty messenger with these?—Away.  
[MATILDA gives BERTHA letters.]  
I'll meet thee in my tent—farewell.

[Exit BERTHA]

MATILDA.

Mean time  
One hope remains, the gen'rous Siward—he  
Might save me still. His sympathetic heart  
Can feel for the afflicted.—I have heard,  
(Such is the magic pow'r of sacred friendship)  
When the impetuous Morcar scatters fear  
And terror round him, he, and he alone  
Can stem the rapid torrent of his passion,  
And bend him, tho' reluctant, to his will;  
And see, in happy hour, he comes this way.  
Now fortune, be propitious! if there be,  
As I have heard, an eloquence in grief,  
And those can most persuade, who are most wretched,  
I shall not pass unpitied.

*[Enter SIWARD.]*

SIWARD.

Ha! in tears,  
Matilda! What new grief, what cruel foe  
To innocence and beauty, thus could vex  
Thy gentle spirit?

MATILDA.

Canst thou ask the cause,  
When thou behold'st me still in shameful bonds,  
A wretched captive, friendless and forlorn,  
Without one ray of hope to sooth my sorrows.

SIWARD.

Can she, whose beauteous form, and fair demeanor,  
Charm ev'ry eye, and conquer ev'ry heart,  
Can she be wretched? can she want a friend,  
Whom Siward honours, and whom Morcar loves?  
O! if thou knew'st with what unceasing ardor,  
What unexampled tenderness and truth,  
He doats upon thee, sure thou might'st be wrought  
At least to pity.

MATILDA.

Urge no more, my Lord,  
Th' ungrateful subject; but too well I know  
How much thy friend deserves, how much, alas,  
I owe him!—If it be Earl Morcar's wish  
To make me happy, why am I detain'd  
A pris'ner here: Spight of his solemn promise  
He would restore me to my royal master,  
Or send me back to the desiring arms  
Of the afflicted Ranulph, who in tears  
Of bitt'rest anguish, mourns his long-lost daughter?  
Surely, my Lord, it ill becomes a soldier  
To forfeit thus his honor and his word.

SIWARD.

I own it; yet the cause pleads strongly for him.  
If by thy own too pow'rful charms misled,  
He deviates from the paths of rigid honour,  
Matilda might forgive. Thou know'st he lives  
But in thy smiles; his love-enchanted soul  
Hangs on those beauties he would wish to keep  
For ever in his sight.

MATILDA.

Indulgent heav'n  
Keep me for ever from it! O, my Lord!  
If e'er thy heart with gen'rous pity glow'd  
For the distress'd; if e'er thy honest zeal  
Could boast an influence o'er the man you love;  
O! now exert thy pow'r, assist, direct,  
And save thy friend from ruin and Matilda.  
There are, my Lord, who most offend, where most  
They wish to please. Such often is the fate  
Of thy unhappy friend, when he pours forth  
His ardent soul in vows of tend'ring passion;  
'Tis with such rude and boisterous violence  
As suits but ill the hero or the lover.

SIWARD.

I know his weakness, know his follies all,  
And feel 'em but too well: He loves with transport,  
And hates with fury. Warm'd with fierce desire,  
Or strong resentment, his impetuous soul  
Is hurried on, 'till reason quits her seat,  
And passion takes the loosely-flowing rein;  
Then all is rage, confusion, and despair.  
And yet, when cool reflection hath remov'd  
The veil of error, he will weep his faults  
With such a sweet contrition, as would melt  
The hardest heart to pity and forgiveness.  
O! he has virtues that may well atone  
For all his venial rashness, that deserve  
A sov'reign's love, and claim a nation's praise;  
Virtues that merit happiness and thee.  
Why wilt thou thus despise my noble friend?  
His birth and fortune, with the rank he bears  
Amongst the first of England's peers, will raise thee  
As far above thy sex, in wealth and pow'r,  
As now thou art in beauty.

MATILDA.

O, my Lord!  
'Tis not the pride, the luxury of life,  
The splendid robe and glitt'ring gem, that knits  
The lasting bonds of mutual happiness:  
Where manners differ, where affections jarr,  
And will not kindly mix together, where  
The sweet harmonious concord of the mind

Is wanting, all is misery and woe.

SIWARD.

By heav'n, thou plead'st thy own and virtue's cause,  
With such bewitching eloquence, the more  
Thy heart, alarm'd by diffidence, still urges  
Against this union with my friend, the more  
I wish to see him blest with worth like thine.

MATILDA.

My Lord, it must not be; for grant him all  
The fair perfections you already see,  
And I could wish to find, there is a bar  
That must for ever dis-unite us—Born  
Of Norman race, and from my earliest years  
Attach'd to William's cause; I love my king  
And wish my country's peace: That king, my Lord,  
Whom Morcar wishes to dethrone; that peace  
Which he destroys: Had he an angel's form,  
With all the virtues that adorn his sex,  
With all the riches fortune can bestow,  
I would not wed a traitor.

SIWARD.

Call not his errors by so harsh a name;  
He has been deeply wrong'd, and souls like his,  
Must feel the wounds of honour, and resent them,  
Alas! with thee I weep my country's fate,  
Nay wish, perhaps, as well to William's cause,  
And England's peace, as can the loyal daughter  
Of gallant Ranulph, and would, therefore, joy  
To see Matilda lend a gracious ear  
To Morcar's suit. Thy reconciling charms  
Might sooth his troubled soul, might heal the wounds  
Of bleeding England, and unite us all  
In one bright chain of harmony and love,  
The gallant Edwin too.

MATILDA.

Ha! what of him?  
Know'st thou that noble youth?

SIWARD.

So many years  
Have past since last we met, by diff'rent views,  
And our unhappy feuds, so long divided,

I should not recollect him; but report  
Speaks loudly of his virtues. He, no doubt,  
If yet he lives—

MATILDA.  
Yet lives!—Why, what, my Lord?

SIWARD.  
You seem much mov'd.

MATILDA.  
Forgive me, but whene'er  
This sad idea rises to my mind,  
Of brother against brother arm'd, my soul  
Recoils with horror.

SIWARD.  
'Tis a dreadful thought:  
Would I could heal that cruel breach! but then  
Thou might'st do much, the task is left for thee.

MATILDA.  
For me? Alas! it is not in my pow'r.

SIWARD.  
In thine, and thine alone. O think, Matilda!  
How great thy glory, and how great thy praise,  
To be the blessed instrument of peace;  
The band of union 'twixt contending brothers.  
Thou see'st them now like two descending floods,  
Whose rapid torrents meeting, half o'erwhelm  
The neighb'ring plains: Thy gentle voice might still  
The angry waves, and bid their waters flow  
In one united stream, to bless the land.

MATILDA.  
That flatt'ring thought beams comfort on my soul,  
Amidst my sorrows; bear me witness, heav'n!  
Could poor Matilda be the happy means  
Of reconcilment: Could these eyes behold  
The noble youths embracing, and embrac'd  
In the firm cords of amity and love.  
O! it would make me ample recompence  
For all my griefs, nor would I more complain,  
But rest me in the silent grave, well pleas'd  
To think, at last, I had not liv'd in vain.

SIWARD.

Cherish that virtuous thought, illustrious maid,  
And let me hope my friend may still be happy.

MATILDA.

I wish it from my soul: But see, my Lord,  
Earl Morcar comes this way, with hasty steps,  
Across the lawn. I must retire: Farewell!  
You'll not forget my humble suit.

SIWARD.

O! no,  
I will do all that loveliest innocence  
And worth, like thine, deserve. Farewell: Mean time  
Remember, Siward's ev'ry wish, the bliss  
Of Morcar, Edwin's life, the public peace,  
And England's welfare, all depend—on thee.

*[Exit MATILDA]*

SIWARD.

There's no alternative but this; my friend  
Must quit Matilda, or desert the cause  
We've rashly promis'd to support—Perhaps  
The last were best—both shall be try'd—he comes.

*[Enter MORCAR.]*

MORCAR.

O, Siward! was not that  
The fair Matilda, whom you parted from?

SIWARD.

It was.

MORCAR.

What says she? the dear, cruel maid!  
Is she still deaf? inexorable still?

SIWARD.

You must not think of her.

MORCAR.

What say'st thou, Siward?  
Not think of her!

SIWARD.

No. Root her from thy heart,  
And gaze no more. I blush to see my friend  
So lost to honour: Is it for a man,  
On whom the fate of England may depend,  
To quit the dang'rous post, where duty calls,  
And all the bus'ness of the war, to sigh  
And whine in corners for a captive woman?  
Resume the hero, Morcar, and subdue  
This idle passion.

MORCAR.

Talk not thus of love,  
The great refiner of the human heart,  
The source of all that's great, of all that's good;  
Of joy, of pleasure—If it be a weakness,  
It is a weakness which the best have felt:  
I would not wish to be a stranger to it.

SIWARD.

Let me entreat thee, if thou valuest life,  
Or fame, or honour, quit Matilda.

MORCAR.

Yes:  
I thank you for your council. 'Tis th'advice  
Of cold unfeeling wisdom, kindly meant  
To make me prudent, and to leave me wretched:  
But thus it is, that proud exulting health  
Is ever ready to prescribe a cure  
For pain and sickness which it never knew.

SIWARD.

There too thou err'st; for I have known its joys  
And sorrows too. In early life I lost  
The partner of my soul. E'er since that hour  
I bade adieu to love, and taught my soul  
To offer her devotions at the shrine  
Of sacred friendship; there my vows are paid:  
Morcar best knows the idol of my worship.

MORCAR.

I know and love thee for it: But O! my friend,  
I cannot force this tyrant from my breast;  
E'en now I feel her here, she sits enthron'd

Within the foldings of my heart, and he  
Who tears her thence must draw the life-blood from me.  
My morning slumbers, and my midnight dreams,  
Are haunted by Matilda.

SIWARD.  
To be thus  
The slave of one that scorns thee, O! 'tis base,  
Mean, and unworthy of thee.

MORCAR.  
I will bear  
That scorn no longer: Thou hast rous'd me, Siward;  
I will enjoy the glorious prize; she's mine,  
By right of conquest mine. I will assert  
A victor's claim, and force her to be happy.

SIWARD.  
That must not be. It ill becomes the man  
Who takes up arms against a tyrant's pow'r,  
T'adopt a tyrant's maxims; force and love  
Are terms that never can be reconcil'd.  
You will not, must not do it.

MORCAR.  
Must not! who  
Shall dare oppose me?

SIWARD.  
Honour, conscience, love,  
The sense of shame, your virtue, and your friend.  
Whilst I have life, or pow'r, I will not see  
Matilda wrong'd.

MORCAR.  
You are her champion then  
It seems, her favour'd, happy friend, perhaps  
Her fond admirer too. I'll-fated Morcar!  
I see it but too well. I'm lost, abandon'd;  
Alike betray'd by friendship and by love.  
I thank you, Sir, you have perform'd your office,  
And merit your reward.

SIWARD.  
Unkind reproach!  
Did I for this desert my Sov'reign's cause,

My peaceful home, and all its joys, to serve  
Ungrateful Morcar? Why did I rebel?  
The haughty William never injur'd me.  
For thee alone I fought, for thee I conquer'd;  
And, but for thee, long since I had employ'd  
My gallant soldiers to a nobler purpose,  
Than loit'ring thus in idle camp to hear  
A love-sick tale, and sooth a mad man's phrenzy,

MORCAR.

You could? Away, and leave me then: With-draw  
Your boasted aid, and bid Northumbria's sons  
Bend to the tyrant's yoke, whilst I alone  
Defend the cause of freedom, and my country.  
Here let us part. Remove your loiterers,  
And join th'usurper.

SIWARD.

Mark the diff'rence now  
Betwixt blind passion and undaunted friendship:  
You are impatient of the keen reproof,  
Because you merit: I can bear it all,  
Because I've not deserv'd it.

*[Enter an OFFICER.]*

OFFICER.

Good my Lords  
Forgive this rough intrusion, but the danger  
I trust, will plead my pardon. As I watch'd  
From yonder tow'r, a dusky cloud appear'd,  
As if from distant troops advancing, soon  
I saw their armour glitter in the sun;  
With rapid motion they approach'd; each moment  
We must expect them here.

SIWARD.

Why, let 'em come,  
Already I have order'd fit disposal  
Of all our little force. Away, good Osmond,  
Be silent and be ready.

*[Exit OFFICER]*

Now, my friend,  
Thou art as welcome to thy Siward's breast,  
As dear as ever.—When the man I love,  
Walks in the paths of error, I reprove him

With honest freedom; but when danger comes  
Upon him, I forget his faults, and flee  
With all a lover's ardour to his rescue;  
His sorrows and his wants alone remember'd,  
And all his follies buried in oblivion.

MORCAR.

Thou hast disarm'd me now. This pierces more  
Than all the bitter poison of reproach,  
Which thou hast pour'd upon me. O! 'twas treason  
Against the sacred majesty of friendship,  
To doubt thy honour, or suspect thy virtue.  
Thou wilt forgive: But when the wounded mind  
Is torn with passion, ev'ry touch is pain;  
You should not probe so deeply.

SIWARD.

'Twas my duty.  
But come, no more of that. The foe advances.  
If we succeed, as my prophetic soul  
Foretells we shall—I have some comfort for you—  
If not, we'll borrow courage from despair,  
And die like men. Thou stand'st upon the rock.  
Of danger, and the yawning precipice  
Opens before us; I will snatch thee from it,  
Or leap the gulph, and perish with my friend.

*The End of the First Act.*

## ACT II

*SCENE, a Fortress belonging to MORCAR.*

*[EDWIN alone and in chains.]*

EDWIN.

IT is the will of heav'n, and must be done.  
The hard-fought field is lost, and here I am  
A pris'ner in my brother's camp: alas!  
That fortune thus should guide me to a foe  
Whom most I wish'd to shun! We little thought  
The troops by Morcar led, had this way bent  
Their ill-directed course: but providence  
Hath so ordain'd, perhaps, to heal the wounds  
Of civil discord. O! unhappy Edwin,  
For what art thou reserv'd? No matter what.

Since fate depriv'd me of my dear Matilda,  
Whom I for three long years have sought in vain;  
Life hath been irksome to me: this, perchance,  
May end it—For, who knows if nature yet  
May live within the conqu'ror's breast, to plead  
A brother's pardon Yet he knows me not,  
But soon he must—Ha! who comes here? Earl Siward!—  
The second in command, to whom, o'erpower'd  
By circling foes, and fainting with my wounds,  
I yielded up my sword. If fame say true,  
He bears a mind too great to look with scorn  
On the oppress'd, or triumph o'er misfortune.

*[Enter SIWARD.]*

SIWARD.

Stranger, whoe'er thou art, be comforted;  
Thy fate hath thrown thee into noble hands,  
Who know thy merit. May I ask thy name?

EDWIN.

I am a poor abandon'd wretch, the sport  
Of fortune; one whose least affliction is  
To be a captive, and from ev'ry eye  
Would wish to hide the story of my fate:  
Too soon my name and sorrows will be known.

SIWARD.

Respect is ever due to misery:  
I will not urge thee further; all I hope,  
That gen'rous pity could afford to sooth  
Calamity like thine, by my command,  
Hath been extended to thee. Here awhile  
You must remain a pris'ner, but e'er long  
I hope to greet thee by a fairer name,  
And rank thee as our friend.

EDWIN.

Your gen'rous orders  
Have been obey'd, and I acknowledge it  
With grateful heart. May I not ask the fate  
Of him who fought so nobly by my side,  
That brave old man.

SIWARD.

The gallant Ranulph—

EDWIN.  
Yes;  
My fellow captive.

SIWARD.  
He is safe and free.

EDWIN.  
Ha! free! Thank heav'n!

SIWARD.  
The gen'rous Morcar, urg'd  
By my entreaties, pardon'd and releas'd him,  
Tho' much our soldiers murmur'd, and demanded  
His life and your's; a sacrifice, they said,  
Due to the manes of their slaughter'd friends;  
But mercy has prevail'd.

EDWIN.  
What e'er becomes  
Of an unhappy wanderer, like me,  
For your kind treatment of the aged Ranulph,  
Accept my thanks; it was a precious boon;  
Morcar may find me not unworthy of it.  
To day I am his captive, but to-morrow  
May see me his deliverer: for know  
My royal master, the victorious William,  
With eagle swiftness, soon will follow me  
With twenty times your force. As this shall prove  
Or true, or false, so deal with me; remember  
I warn'd you of it.

SIWARD.  
And remember thou  
That I with joy receive the welcome news:  
Welcome to me, for I am William's friend.

EDWIN.  
Thou can'st not then be mine, or England's foe:  
With such a heart as thine, so nobly form'd  
To feel for the afflicted, satisfy'd,  
For thou seem'st, of William's royal right,  
What could engage thee in this foul revolt,  
This base rebellion?

SIWARD.

What but the great bond  
Of kindred souls, inviolable friendship!  
The only solid bliss on this side heav'n,  
That doubles all the joys of human life,  
And, by dividing, lessens ev'ry woe.

EDWIN.

Who knows but this day's sad event may prove  
The happy means to heal a nation's wounds,  
And sooth our jarring factions into peace?

SIWARD.

Had Morcar thought with me, long since that end  
Had been obtain'd; but Morcar is—

EDWIN.

Inexorable.  
So I have heard, and therefore little hope  
To change his nature. O! could he be wrought  
To sweet oblivion of his wrongs; to bury  
His deep resentment: Mine should be the task,  
A task, heav'n knows, I would with joy perform,  
To reconcile offended majesty:  
To soften all his errors, plead his pardon,  
And give my sov'reign one brave soldier more.

SIWARD.

When next we meet I trust it shall be so:  
Mean time, let me prepare him for the change;  
Retire a while—e'er long we'll send for thee,  
For ev'ry moment I expect him here:  
Thy freedom and thy happiness shall be  
My first concern, for thou hast well deserv'd it.

EDWIN.

Farewell. Be quick in your resolves; the time  
Requires it; and be wise e'er 'tis too late.

[Exit EDWIN]

SIWARD.

I hope we shall. This well-tim'd victory,  
If rightly us'd, may smooth our way to peace.  
Now, Morcar, all thy happiness depends  
Upon thyself alone. Now, friendship, raise

Thy pow'rful voice, and force him to be happy.  
He will, he must—he comes—

*[Enter MORCAR.]*

SIWARD.  
My conqu'ror, welcome!

MORCAR.  
Thrice welcome to my arms, my noble Siward;  
At length we meet in joy, the day is ours;  
Thanks to thy friendly aid.

SIWARD.  
We must not boast;  
'Twas hardly purchas'd, and has cost us dear:  
You follow'd 'em too close.

MORCAR.  
I own 'twas rash;  
My youthful ardor urg'd the keen pursuit  
Too far; and but for thee I had been lost.  
In war, thy arm protects me, and in peace,  
Thy councils guide. O! how shall I return  
Thy goodness? Thou wer't born to save thy friend.

SIWARD.  
Away. I'll not be thank'd. I've done my duty,  
And if thou think'st thyself indebted for it,  
Repay me not with flatt'ry, but with love.  
E'er since my soul with thine, congenial met  
In social bands, and mark'd thee for her own,  
Thy int'rest and thy happiness have been  
My first ambition; and when thou art blest  
With all thy soul can wish for, Siward then,  
And then alone, will have his full reward.

MORCAR.  
O, unexampled faithfulness and truth!  
But say, my Siward, is our loss so great?

SIWARD.  
The flow'r of half our troops. But 'tis not now  
A time to weep, for I have glorious tidings,  
That much import thy happiness.

MORCAR.

Ha! what?

SIWARD.

Know that amongst our captives I have ta'en  
A noble prize, will make us full amends  
For ev'ry loss—the gallant Ranulph.

MORCAR.

Ha!

Matilda's father! then I'm satisfy'd.  
The wily chief! by heav'n he shall repay me  
For her unkindness: Give him to my rage,  
To my resentment, to my injur'd love.  
Where is he, Siward?

SIWARD.

I have set him free,

MORCAR.

Ha! free! Thy ill-tim'd metey hath betray'd  
Our cause. The tyrant would have ransom'd him  
With half his kingdom.

SIWARD.

Still thy rapid passions  
O'erpow'r thy reason. What if it should serve  
A better purpose; smooth thy paths to bliss,  
And gain Matilda for thee!

MORCAR.

O, my friend!

My Siward, do not flatter me: By heav'n,  
Her kind consent would give my ravish'd soul  
More true and heart-felt happiness than could  
A thousand vict'ries o'er the proud usurper.

SIWARD.

Know then, I gave him liberty and life  
On these conditions—That he should with-draw  
His pow'rs from William's aid, and never more  
Assist his cause; the time would come, I told him,  
That he should know to whom he ow'd the boon,  
And how he might repay it.

MORCAR.

That was kind,  
Indeed, my Siward, that was like a friend.  
O! thou reviv'st my drooping heart; but tell me  
Did my Matilda, let me call her mine,  
Did she acknowledge, did she thank thee for it?

SIWARD.

O! I assum'd no merit; but to thee,  
And to thy gen'rous, unexampled love  
Did I attribute all. She sigh'd, and wept,  
Pour'd forth a thousand blessings on thy head—

MORCAR.

And do'st thou think, my Siward, that one ray  
Of hope remains?

SIWARD.

The clouds already vanish,  
The prospect brightens round thee; haste and seize  
The lucky moment. When the gen'rous mind  
Is sooth'd by obligation, soon it opens  
To the mild dictates of humanity,  
And softens into sympathy and love.

MORCAR.

O, Siward! could'st thou teach me but to win  
That lovely maid—

SIWARD.

The task is half perform'd  
Already, and my friend shall soon be bless'd.  
One thing, and one alone, remains to fix  
Her doubtful heart, if yet a doubt remains.

MORCAR.

O! name it, Siward; if 'tis in the pow'r  
Of wealth to purchase, or of victory  
In the fair field of glory to acquire,  
It shall not long be wanting.

SIWARD.

It requires  
No price, but such as Morcar well can pay;  
No vict'ry, but the vict'ry o'er thyself,  
And thy own passions—Give up thy resentment,  
Make peace with William, and Matilda's thine.

MORCAR.

Matilda mine! and must I purchase her  
At the dear price of honour? with the loss  
Of all my soul holds dear, my country's welfare?  
My word—

SIWARD.

Away! whilst prudence warranted  
Our honest zeal, I was the first to aid  
Thy just revenge; but valour ill-advis'd,  
And ill-exerted in a hopeless cause,  
Degen'rate into rashness. You mistake  
The pride of honour, for the pride of virtue.

MORCAR.

And would'st thou have me bend beneath the yoke  
Of ignominious slav'ry, quit the cause  
Of heav'n-born freedom, and betray my friends?

SIWARD.

I'd have thee just and happy—We have been  
Successful, let us now be generous,  
Whilst we have something to bestow; nor wait  
'Till fickle fortune from our brows shall tear  
The blasted wreath, and leave us nought to give.  
Too long already have we sacrific'd  
At proud ambition's altar, to revenge;  
Now let us offer at the shrine of peace,  
And sacrifice—

MORCAR.

To love, and to Matilda;  
It shall be so—the struggle's past—away,  
My Siward, haste, and tell her, I obey;  
Her laws, her king, her master shall be mine;  
I have no will but her's, and in her eyes  
Will read my duty—Yet a moment stay,  
What will my brave companions of the war,  
My fellow soldiers say? Will they approve  
This unexpected change?

SIWARD.

I know them firm  
In their obedience, and resolv'd to act  
As you command—But I will see 'em strait,

And urge such pow'rful reasons as may best  
Secure them to our purpose. Fare thee well.

MORCAR.

Siward, thy kind anticipating care  
Prevents my ev'ry wish—But say, my friend,  
Where is the gallant chief whom we subdu'd,  
Who fought so hardly, and so nobly fell?

SIWARD.

In yonder tent, a wretched pris'ner still,  
He counts the tedious hours; a heavy gloom  
Sits on his brow, as if some deep-felt sorrow  
Oppress'd his noble mind—We must release him.

MORCAR.

Thou know'st, my Siward, thrice we had o'erpow'r'd  
His troops, and thrice his single valour turn'd  
The fortune of the day: Since first I trod  
The paths of glory, ne'er did I behold  
Such deeds of valour wrought by mortal hand;  
I almost envy'd, tho' I conquer'd him.  
He wore his beaver up, nor could I trace  
His features, but he bears a noble form:  
Know'st thou his quality or name?

SIWARD.

Not yet;  
He seems industrious to conceal them both  
From ev'ry eye.

MORCAR.

Some deity protects him,  
As its peculiar care, for as I rais'd  
My sword against him, whether the soft passion  
That triumphs o'er me, had unmann'd my soul,  
I know not; but, bereft of all its pow'r,  
My nerveless arm dropp'd ineffectual down,  
And let him 'scape me.

SIWARD.

'Tis most true, I saw  
And wonder'd at it. When you lest the field,  
With desp'rate rage he rush'd intrepid on,  
And seem'd to court his fate, till circling foes  
Compell'd him to resign, and yield his sword.

MORCAR.

Away. I burn with ardor to forgive,  
To free, and to embrace him: fly, my Siward.  
Let him approach, he could not wish to meet  
In happier hour, the master of his fate,  
For now, methinks, I could be reconcil'd  
To ev'ry foe. Away, my Siward, haste  
And send him to me.

SIWARD.

Treat him like a friend,  
He may be useful. Such distinguish'd merit  
Must have its influence, he commands, no doubt,  
The royal ear, and may procure such terms  
As William may with honour yield, and we  
Without a blush accept.

*[Exit SIWARD]*

MORCAR.

Farewel. And now  
How stands the great account? Can I acquit  
Myself, or shall I be condemn'd before  
Thy great tribunal, all-repaying justice?  
But fair Matilda wipes out ev'ry stain,  
'Tis she commands me to forgive, and she  
Must be obey'd; I'm not the first apostate  
From honour's cause the tyrant love has made.  
My friend too urg'd the change—

*[Guards bring in EDWIN chained.]*

He's here—Strike off  
Those ignominious chains—he has deserv'd  
A better fate.

*[Guards unchain him.]*

Stranger, who e'er thou art,

*[turning to EDWIN.]*

Thy gallant bearing in th' unequal conflict,  
For we had twice thy numbers, hath endear'd  
A soldier to a soldier. Vulgar minds  
To their own party, and the narrow limits  
Of partial friendship, meanly may confine  
Their admiration; but the brave will see,  
And seeing, praise the virtues of a foe.

EDWIN.

*[aside.]*

O, pow'rful nature, how thou work'st within me!

MORCAR.

Still silent! still conceal'd! perchance thou fear'st,  
Knowing thy rank and name, I might recal  
My promis'd pardon; but be confident,  
For by that sacred honour, which I hold  
Dearer than life, I promise here to free,  
And to protect thee; did'st thou hide from me  
My deadliest foe: Should William's self appear  
Before me, he who hath so deeply wrong'd me,  
So long oppos'd: Nay, should I hear the voice  
Of that advent'rous, rash, misguided youth,  
Whom yet I cannot hate—my cruel brother,  
I could forgive him.

EDWIN.

*[discovering himself.]*

Then—behold him here.

MORCAR.

Edwin! Amazement! By what wond'rous means,  
Mysterious providence, do'st thou unfold  
Thy secret purposes? I little thought  
When last we met, what heav'n-protected victim  
Escap'd my sword.

EDWIN.

With horror I recall  
The dreadful circumstance. Throughout the battle  
I knew, and carefully avoided thee.

MORCAR.

O, Edwin! how, on this propitious day,  
Have vict'ry, fame and friendship, fortune, love  
And nature, all conspir'd to make me blest!  
We have been foes too long—Of that no more.  
My Edwin, welcome! Once more to thy arms  
Receive a brother.

EDWIN.

Yet a moment stay:  
By nature touch'd the same accordant string  
That vibrates on thy heart now beats on mine;  
But honour, and the duty which I owe

The best of kings, restrains the fond embrace  
I wish to share, and bids me ask, if yet  
In Morcar I behold my sov'reign's foe.  
If it be so, take back thy proffer'd freedom,  
Take back my forfeit life: I would not wish  
To be indebted for it to—a traitor.

MORCAR.

Perhaps I may deserve a better name;  
Perhaps I may be chang'd.

EDWIN.

I hope thou art;  
For this I came, for this I yielded to thee,  
To tell thee William's strength is ev'ry hour  
Increasing: if thou mean'st to make thy peace,  
Now is the crisis—

MORCAR.

Edwin stop, nor urge  
Such mean unworthy motives as alone  
Could thwart my purpose. Morcar cannot fear,  
But Morcar can be gen'rous: for know,  
Before I saw thee here I had resolv'd  
To sheath my sword and be the conqu'ror's friend;  
For O! there is a cause—

EDWIN.

Whate'er the cause,  
Th' effect is glorious. Now thou art again  
My brother. Here, let us once more unite  
The long-dissever'd cord.

*[They embrace.]*

MORCAR.

And never more  
May blind resentment, faction, party, rage,  
Envy, or jealous fear, dissolve the tie!  
And now, my Edwin, blushing, I confess,  
Not to thy tender care for Morcar's safety,  
To friendship's council, or to reason's voice,  
Owe we this wish'd for change. A female hand  
Directs and wills it.

EDWIN.

Ha! a woman!

MORCAR.

Yes,  
If such I ought to call that form divine,  
Which triumphs here, who rules my ev'ry thought,  
My ev'ry action guides. In yonder tent  
A beauteous captive dwells, who hath enslav'd  
Her conqu'ror: She demands the sacrifice;  
She would not give her hand to William's foe,  
And therefore, only, Morcar is his friend.

EDWIN.

I could have wish'd that this important change  
Were to the hero, not the lover, due.

MORCAR.

I am above deceit, and own my weakness;  
But thou shalt see her—Yes, my Edwin, thou  
Shalt bear the welcome tidings to my love.  
Thy presence will bear witness to the change;  
Thy freedom, and the joyful news thou bring'st  
Of our blest union will confirm it to her.  
Wilt thou, my Edwin—

EDWIN.

Do not ask me what  
I must refuse. I would do much to serve  
A friend and brother; but a task of joy  
Ill suits a soul oppress'd with griefs like mine.  
O! I could tell thee—but 'twould be unkind,  
When thou art ent'ring on the paths of bliss,  
To stop thee with my melancholy tale.

MORCAR.

What e'er thy griefs, I pity, and hereafter  
May find the means to lessen, or remove them;  
Mean time this tender office may divert  
Thy sorrows; nay, if thou deny'st me, Edwin,  
I shall not think our union is sincere.

EDWIN.

Then be it so.

MORCAR.

I'll send a trusty slave

That shall conduct thee to her. Soon I mean  
To follow thee—away—begone and prosper.  
But, O, my brother! if thou hast a heart  
That is not steel'd with stoic apathy  
Against the magic of all-conqu'ring love,  
Beware of beauty's pow'r; for she has charms  
Would melt the frozen breast of hoary age,  
Or draw the lonely hermit from his cell  
To gaze upon her.

EDWIN.

Know, thy fears are vain;  
For long, long since, by honor's sacred ties,  
United to the lovliest of her sex,  
Edwin, like Morcar, is to one alone  
Devoted, and my heart is fix'd as thine.

MORCAR.

Then I am blest. Thy sympathetic soul,  
With warmer feelings, shall express my passion,  
Wak'd by the fond remembrance of thy own.  
Go then, thy kind returning friendship prove,  
Go, plead with all the eloquence of love;  
And as thou do'st thy brother's anguish tell,  
Still on thy lips may soft persuasion dwell!  
Urge my fond suit with energy divine,  
Nor cease till thou hast made the lovely captive mine.

*The End of the Second Act.*

### ACT III

*SCENE, MATILDA's Tent, with a distant view of the Camp.*

*[Enter MATILDA, BERTHA.]*

MATILDA.

O, Bertha! I have had such frightful dreams,  
They harrow'd up my soul.

BERTHA.

It is the work  
Of busy fancy in thy troubled mind;  
Give it no heed.

MATILDA.

O! it was more, much more  
Than fancy ever form'd; 'twas real all;  
It haunts me still, and ev'ry circumstance  
Is now before me; but I'll tell thee all.  
Scarce had I clos'd my eyes, to seek that rest  
Which long had been a stranger, when methought  
Alone I wander'd thro' a mazy wood,  
Beset with thorns and briars on ev'ry side;  
The mournful image of my wretched state:  
When, from a winding walk, the beauteous form  
Of my lov'd Edwin, seem'd to glide across,  
And ran with haste to meet me: But, behold!  
A tyger rush'd between, and seiz'd upon him:  
I shriek'd aloud.

BERTHA.  
'Twas terrible.

MATILDA.  
But mark  
What follow'd; for a gleam of light broke in,  
And sav'd me from despair: When 'cross the glade  
A gen'rous lyon, as with pity mov'd  
At the unequal conflict, darted forth  
And sprung with vengeance on the spotted beast,  
Who turn'd with fury on his nat'ral foe,  
And loos'd my Edwin; he escap'd, and fled:  
I wak'd in agonies.

BERTHA.  
Be comforted;  
The dream presages good: Some gen'rous friend  
Shall save him from the perils of the war,  
And give him to thy longing arms again.

MATILDA.  
O, never, never!

*[Enter an OFFICER.]*

OFFICER.  
Noble lady, one  
From William's camp, by Morcar's orders sent,  
Would crave a minute's conference, and says  
He bears some news that may be welcome.

MATILDA.

Ha!

From William's camp! O, flatt'ring hope! who knows  
But he may bring some tidings of my love!  
Tidings, perhaps, I may not wish to hear.  
Perhaps he comes to speak of Edwin's death;  
Or Edwin's falshood—Be it as it may,  
I cannot be more wretched than I am.  
Conduct him hither.

*[Exit OFFICER]*

O, my flutt'ring heart!  
Look yonder! how imagination forms  
What most we wish for; see, he comes—It is,  
It is my Edwin—Save me, Bertha! O!

*[Enter EDWIN as MATILDA faints]*

EDWIN.

What do I see? Matilda here! she faints!  
Am I deserted then? abandon'd, lost,  
Betray'd by her I love? She breathes, she lives!  
But not for me—for Morcar; for my brother.

MATILDA,

*[to BERTHA.]*

Where is he? O! it was delusion all;  
The form deceiv'd me. Had it been my love,  
He would have flown with rapture to me—See  
He stands far off, and will not look upon me.

EDWIN.

I dare not.

MATILDA.

Is it thus we meet again?  
Is this the kind, the tender, faithful Edwin?

EDWIN.

Art thou Matilda? Speak; for I am lost  
In wild astonishment. It cannot be.  
In Morcar's camp! Is this the lovely captive  
That I should meet?

MATILDA.

All-seeing heav'n,  
Bear witness for me: If, from that sad hour

When last we parted, this devoted heart  
Hath ever wander'd, ever cast one thought,  
Or form'd a wish for any bliss but thee,  
Despise me, Edwin; slight me, cast me off  
To infamy and shame.

EDWIN.

I must, I must  
Believe thee; Yet, 'tis strange—when thou shalt know  
From whom I came, and what my errand here.  
Thou wilt not call me cruel or unkind,  
When I shall tell thee I am come to claim  
Another's right, O! heav'n, another's right  
To my Matilda; to request thy hand  
For Morcar.

MATILDA.

For thy brother!

EDWIN.

Yes, ev'n now  
We parted.—Here he told me I should meet  
A beauteous captive; little did I think  
It was Matilda, whom he long had woo'd;  
Whose gen'rous heart, he hop'd, would now accept  
A convert made to loyalty by love;  
She only waited for that blest event,  
With mutual ardour to return his passion.  
Can it be thus? Alas! thy presence here  
Confirms it but too well.

MATILDA.

Appearance oft,  
By strange events and causeless jealousy,  
Confounds the guilty with the innocent.  
But sure my Edwin's noble mind disdains  
To cherish low suspicion; 'tis a vice  
Abhorrent to thy nature, and Matilda  
Will never practice it on thee. True love  
Knows not distrust, or diffidence, but rests  
On its own faith secure, and hopes to meet  
The truth it merits.

EDWIN.

Can this be the voice  
Of falshood?—Can those lips?—

MATILDA.

Mistaken man!

Could'st thou e'er credit the delusive tale?  
Could'st thou believe I had so soon forgot  
My plighted faith? But since I am suspected,  
Return, and bear this answer back to Morcar.  
First say, I thank him for the choice he made  
Of thee to be the herald of his love:  
For what is there Matilda can refuse,  
That Edwin could request?

EDWIN.

O! that recalls  
A thousand tender thoughts—

MATILDA.

Go tell him too,  
What e'er I rashly promis'd but to gain  
A few short moments, to preserve my king,  
And save a father's life, I never meant  
To feign a passion which I could not feel;  
For I was destin'd to another's arms;  
To one, who now regardless of his vows  
To poor Matilda, after three long years  
Of cruel absence from her, comes at last  
To doubt her honor, and suspect her love.

EDWIN.

O! never, never. Sooner will I doubt  
The pow'rs of nature, and believe these eyes  
Can misinterpret ev'ry object here,  
Than think thee false. O! take me to thy arms  
And bury all my doubts.—Can'st thou forgive  
The jealous warmth of agonizing passion?

MATILDA.

I can; I must. But say, to what blest chance  
Am I indebted for this happy moment?

EDWIN.

The chance of war. I am a pris'ner here,  
And but for thee—

MATILDA.

When I shall tell thee all

That I have suffer'd since we parted last  
Thou wilt not blame, but pity poor Matilda.  
Mean while be calm; it is not now a time  
For idle doubts and visionary fears  
When real dangers threat. I see already,  
By thy imperfect tale, what misery  
Must soon await us, when the fiery Earl  
Shall know this strange event.

EDWIN.

And wherefore know it?  
Why not conceal our passion, till some means  
Of freedom offer?

MATILDA.

I abhor the thought.  
No, Edwin, no. The crisis of our fate  
Approaches. Never let us stain our loves  
With crooked fraud and base dissimulation.  
Hark! did'st thou hear a voice in yonder grove?  
Siward in conf'rence with the haughty Earl;  
Behold them—see—they part—and Morcar hastes,  
With quick impatient step, to know his fate.  
Now summon all thy pow'rs.

EDWIN.

I am prepar'd.  
He comes: a few short minutes will determine  
Whether Matilda plays the hypocrite,  
Or is deserving of her Edwin's love.

[Enter MORCAR.]

MORCAR.

At length I hope Matilda's satisfy'd.  
Edwin has told thee what a sacrifice  
My heart hath made. Ambition, glory, pride,  
And fierce resentment bend beneath thy pow'r,  
And yield the palm to all-subduing love.  
Yes, thou hast conquer'd. I am William's friend;  
The struggle's past. I have perform'd the task  
Assign'd, and come to claim my just reward.

MATILDA.

By virtuous acts the self-approving mind  
Is amply paid, nor seeks a recompence

From ought beside. You have redeem'd your honor,  
Turn'd to the paths of duty, and discharg'd  
The debt you owe your country, and your king:  
England and William will be grateful for it.  
What can you wish for more?

MORCAR.

There is a prize,  
More welcome far, beyond what e'er a king  
Or kingdom can bestow—thy love—

MATILDA.

My lord!

MORCAR.

If to have sav'd thee from the brutal rage  
Of pitiless ruffians; if to have renounc'd  
A victor's claim, and be myself the slave  
Of her I conquer'd; if to have releas'd  
My bitt'rest foe, because ally'd to thee;  
If, after all my cruel wrongs, t' accept  
The proud oppressor's hand, can merit ought  
I am not quite unworthy of the boon.

MATILDA.

The good and just, my lord, demand our praise,  
And gen'rous deeds will claim the tribute due,  
The debt of humble gratitude; but love,  
Love, that must mark the colour of our days  
For good or ill, for happiness or woe,  
'Tis not the gift of fortune, or of fame,  
Nor earn'd by merit, nor acquir'd by virtue.  
All the rich treasures, which, or wealth, or pow'r  
Have to bestow, can never purchase that  
Which the free heart alone itself must give.

MORCAR.

Give it with freedom then to him who most  
Hath study'd to deserve—

MATILDA.

You talk, my Lord,  
As if the right of conquest could bestow  
A right more precious, and a dearer claim;  
But know, for now 'tis time to throw aside  
The veil that long hath hid from Morcar's eyes

The secret of my soul; and say at last  
I never can be thine.

MORCAR.  
Ha! Never! O,  
Recal that word!

MATILDA.  
I must not: Edwin knows  
There is a bar of adamant between,  
That must for ever part us.

MORCAR.  
Ha! for ever!  
Distraction! can it be? Take heed, Matilda,  
I am not to be mock'd thus. O, my brother!  
Did'st thou not hear her? But astonishment  
Has clos'd thy lips in silence—Never mine!  
And wherefore not be mine?

*[Turning to MATILDA.]*

MATILDA.  
Because I am  
Another's—Well I know our hapless sex,  
So custom wills, and arbitrary man,  
Is taught in fearful silence to conceal  
The honest feelings of a tender heart:  
Else, wherefore should Matilda blush to own  
A virtuous passion for the best of men?

MORCAR.  
A virtuous passion! grant me patience, heav'n!  
I am betray'd, abandon'd, lost. Another's!  
Some fawning slave, some Norman plunderer,  
Rich with the ravish'd spoils of English valour,  
Hath snar'd her easy heart, and tortur'd mine.  
But I will drag him from his dark abode;  
Where e'er he lurks, he shall not 'scape my veng'ance.  
Thou hear'st her, Edwin.

EDWIN.  
Aye: Who would not wish  
To hear the voice of nature, and of love,  
Thus nobly pleading by the lips of truth?

MORCAR.

Amazement! Thou art link'd with the vile slave  
That hath usurp'd my right. All, all conspire  
To make me wretched.

EDWIN.

Why should Morcar think  
That lovely maid would act beneath herself,  
And make so mean a choice? Now, on my soul,  
I doubt not but the object of her love  
Hath earn'd the glorious prize, and will be found  
Deserving of it.

MORCAR.

Thou know'st him then?

EDWIN.

I do;  
Know him as brave, as noble as thyself:  
One who would scorn, howe'er the outward act  
Might seem unworthy of him, to do ought  
That should disgrace his family and name.  
A man he is of yet untainted honour,  
Of birth and valour equal to thy own,  
Though fortune frowns upon him.

MORCAR.

Now by heav'n,  
But that I know thy eyes were never blest  
With my Matilda's charms, I should suspect  
Thou hadst betray'd the sacred trust repos'd  
In thy false heart, by unsuspecting friendship,  
And wer't thyself the traitor.

EDWIN.

Think so still.  
Let fancy, ever busy to torment  
The jealous mind, alarm thee with the thought  
Of seeing him whom thou hast thus revil'd;  
Stand forth and dare the proof; suppose him here  
Before thee, ready to assert his claim,  
His prior right to all the joys that love  
And fair Matilda can bestow: Then look  
On me, and know thy rival in—thy brother.

MORCAR.

Confusion! horror! misery! O, heav'n!  
Can'st thou behold such complicated guilt,  
Such unexampled perfidy, and yet  
With hold thy vengeance? Let thy light'nings blast  
The base betrayer! O, Matilda! false,  
Deceitful, cruel woman!

MATILDA.

'Tis the lot  
Of unprotected innocence to meet  
The cruel censure, which to guilt alone  
Is due. I've not deceiv'd, I've not betray'd thee;  
And would'st thou listen to the artless tale  
I could unfold—

MORCAR.

Away! I will not hear,  
Nor see, nor think of thee. Deceitful villain!  
Was this thy kind concern for Morcar's safety?  
Was it for this that subtle Edwin came  
A willing captive? Boasted William's strength,  
And lur'd me no a base, inglorious peace?  
That, like a midnight ruffian, he might steal,  
Unseen and unsuspected on my love,  
And rob me of Matilda.

EDWIN.

I abhor  
A thought so mean; the bare suspicion stains,  
With such foul blot, my honour and my name,  
I will not deign to answer thee, My birth  
Alone might prove, to any sense but thine,  
That I disdain it: 'Tis enough to say  
I am Earl Morcar's brother.

MORCAR.

I disclaim  
All ties of nature, or of friendship with thee,  
And henceforth hold thee as my deadliest foe:  
As such I will pursue thee, slave, for know  
Thou art my pris'ner still—Who waits there? Seize  
And guard this traitor—

*[Guards enter and seize on EDWIN.]*

MATILDA,

*[kneeling to MORCAR.]*

O, my lord! if e'er  
Soft pity touch'd thy breast, if e'er thy heart  
Felt the warm glow of sympathetic grief  
For the unhappy, do not let the rage  
Of thoughtless passion urge thee to a deed,  
Of horror, which, too late, thou wilt repent.  
O, spare a guiltless brother, spare thyself  
The bitter pangs of sad remorse that soon  
Shall harrow up thy soul, when radiant truth  
Shall flash conviction on thee. O! forgive  
And pity—

EDWIN.

Rise Matilda: 'Tis beneath  
The dignity of innocence to kneel  
Before proud guilt, and supplicate a tyrant.

MATILDA,

*[rising.]*

I feel the just reproach—Forgive me, Edwin;  
Henceforth I never will disgrace thy love,  
By mean submission. Morcar, if thou hop'st  
For future peace, or pardon, set us free.

MORCAR.

I'll hear no more, convey her to her tent.

MATILDA.

Edwin, adieu! If honour, virtue, truth,  
And mutual love, protect the innocent,  
We yet shall meet in happiness—farewell!

*[Exit MATILDA guarded]*

MORCAR.

Let none have entrance there, but faithful Siward.  
Would he were here, that I might pour my sorrows  
Into his friendly bosom! O, Siward!  
Where art thou?—Ha, he comes!

*[Enter SIWARD.]*

SIWARD.

My Lord, the troops  
Flush'd with their late success, refuse all terms

Of peace with William, and cry out for war  
And vengeance—

MORCAR.

They shall have it. Now, by heav'n,  
Thou bring'st me glorious tidings—well, what more?

SIWARD.

They have discover'd that the noble pris'ner,  
Who had surrender'd, is thy brother Edwin;  
This hath alarm'd them; they suspect you both  
Of vile collusion, to betray their cause,  
And yield them to the tyrant. If, they say,  
You mean them fair, let Edwin be confin'd,  
And answer for the treason, with his life.

MORCAR.

And so he shall: They could not ask a boon  
Which Morcar would more readily bestow;  
Already their request is granted.—See  
The traitor is secur'd. All-seeing heav'n!  
Thou see'st how justice will o'ertake the wicked!

SIWARD.

What can this mean? Since last I saw my friend,  
How the fair day that shone so bright upon us,  
Is suddenly o'ercast.

MORCAR.

Alas, my Siward!  
When thou shalt know—but 'tis enough to say  
Matilda's false, and Edwin is—a villain.

SIWARD.

Amazement! can it be?

MORCAR.

It is too true;  
And I am lost for ever. O, Matilda!  
Deceitful woman!

SIWARD.

'Tis not now a time  
For idle plaints: Consult your safety: Fly  
This moment to the camp—your presence there,  
And that alone, may quell the rising storm:

Leave Edwin to my care.

MORCAR.

I go, my Siward,  
Safe in thy friendship; I entrust to thee  
My just revenge. Yon moss-grown tow'r that hangs  
O'er the deep flood—'tis under thy command—  
Place double guard—he must not 'scape—his fate  
Shall be determin'd soon. What e'er it prove,  
It cannot be more wretched than my own.

*[Exit MORCAR]*

*[Enter EDWIN, SIWARD.]*

EDWIN.

*[pointing to the guards.]*

Where is my dungeon? My conductors here  
Wait but your orders; give 'em their commission;  
For you, it seems, Sir, are to execute  
The friendly office: Do it, and be happy.

SIWARD.

Guards, set your pris'ner free—Thou little know'st  
Of Siward's soul, to think it jo'ys in ought  
That gives another pain. I've learnt too well,  
In sad affliction's hard, but wholesome school,  
The lesson of humanity.

EDWIN.

O gen'rous Siward, if thou hast a heart  
To feel for others mis'ries, pity mine,  
And poor Matilda's: She has not deserv'd  
A fate like this.

SIWARD.

Alas! it rives my soul  
To see the tender bonds of amity  
Thus torn asunder by the very means,  
I fondly thought for ever would unite them;  
And the fair structure, which my hopes had rais'd,  
Of love and friendship, in a moment shrunk  
From its weak base, and bury'd all in ruin.  
If thou can'st prove thy innocence, as yet  
I hope thou wilt, for in that noble mien  
I read a conscious pride, that would not stoop

To ought that's base—Still may I hope to heal  
These bleeding wounds, and sooth him to forgiveness.  
Mean time be free. Give me thy sacred word,  
The soldier's oath, thou wilt be found when e'er  
I call upon thee; and yon tent alone  
Shall be thy prison; free to range around,  
Far as my guard extends.

EDWIN.

Accept my thanks,  
The humble tribute of a grateful heart;  
'Tis all I have to give. The time may come  
When Edwin shall repay thee as he ought.

SIWARD.

Is there ought more, which honour, and the duty  
I owe my friend permits me to bestow,  
That thou would'st as?

EDWIN.

O, grant me to behold  
That injur'd maid, to take my last farewell;  
Then act as fate and Morcar shall determine.  
I give the pledge of safety thou requir'st,  
And will be found—speak, wilt thou listen to me?

SIWARD.

Of that we'll talk hereafter—come—within  
I'll hear thy story—Thou but know'st me yet  
As Morcar's friend; hereafter thou may'st find  
I am still more the friend—of truth and virtue.

*The End of the Third Act.*

## ACT IV

*SCENE, An Apartment belonging to SIWARD, opening to a wood.*

*[Enter EDWIN, MATILDA.]*

EDWIN.

Thanks to the noble Siward's gen'rous pity  
For the distress'd; once more we meet, Matilda,  
But only meet, alas! to mourn our fate,  
To feel each other's woes, and to be wretched.

MATILDA.

Eternal blessings wait on him who thus  
Could sweeten sorrow's bitter draught, and make  
Captivity a blessing! O, my Edwin!  
A few short moments spent with those we love,  
Is worth an age of common life.

EDWIN.

With thee  
Indeed it is; but we are on the verge  
Of a dark precipice, and ev'ry step  
Is dangerous. If Morcar should return,  
And find us here together, we are lost  
For ever; thou hast seen, and seen with horror,  
The desp'rate rage of his tumultuous soul,  
Let us avoid it, let us—

MATILDA.

What, my love?  
Thou art my guide, protector, guardian, all  
I have to boast on earth. O! teach me where  
To find some blest asylum for my woes,  
And guide my footsteps to the paths of peace.

EDWIN.

Let me entreat thee then—

MATILDA.

O, speak! thou know'st  
I have no will but thine.

EDWIN.

Then leave me, leave  
This hated roof: I have a friend within,  
Who shall conduct thee to the royal camp  
In safety; bear this signet to the king,  
He will protect thee, and whatever fate  
Decrees for me, Matilda may be happy.

MATILDA.

O! never, never: Safety dwells with thee,  
And thee alone. Without my faithful Edwin,  
The peopled city, and the crowded court,  
Would be a desert to me. No, my love,  
We will not part: The same benignant pow'r

That led thee hither, that, beyond my hopes  
Brought my lost Edwin to these arms again,  
Will still protect that virtue which it loves.

EDWIN.

Did'st thou not tell me, that this very morn  
Thou had'st determin'd, as the only means  
To shun my brother's love, on sudden flight?

MATILDA.

But then I should have fled in search of thee.

EDWIN.

Thou winning softness! how shall I reward  
Such unexampled tenderness and truth!

MATILDA.

By flying with me. Come, my love, lead on,  
I'll follow thee to dangers and to death;  
Nor perils shall affright, nor labours tire,  
When thou art with me.

EDWIN.

No: It must not be.

MATILDA.

Why? What should keep thee here?

EDWIN.

The ties of honour.

MATILDA.

And are they stronger than the bonds of love?

EDWIN.

To Siward's kind indulgence, well thou know'st,  
I owe this little interval of peace,  
This transient gleam of happiness with thee;  
And should I break my sacred word, his life  
Might answer for it; would'st thou have me thus  
Repay his kindness? No, my love; I may  
Be wretched, but I cannot be ungrateful.

MATILDA.

Must thou return then to that hateful prison  
When Morcar comes?

EDWIN.

I must. O! think when I  
Am pent within a loathsome dungeon, who  
Shall shelter then thy unprotected virtue?  
No Edwin there to succour thee: Who knows  
What brutal lust and pow'r may dare to act,  
On a deserted, beauteous, friendless woman?  
Distracting thought! A monarch's vengeance then  
Would come too late; would make me poor amends  
For my Matilda's violated charms.

MATILDA.

He cannot be so mean, so base of soul,  
Or if he should, I have a dagger here  
To save me from dishonour.

EDWIN.

What! by death?  
Dreadful alternative! O! hazard not  
Thy precious life, but seize the lucky moment  
Which fortune gives us, e'er it be too late.

MATILDA.

Urge me no more; already I have felt,  
Too deeply felt, the pangs of absence from thee;  
Another separation would be worse  
Than death, and all its terrors. No, my love;  
We are embark'd on a tumultuous sea,  
And must abide the fury of the storm.  
The waves of angry fortune may o'erwhelm  
But shall not part us: We will stem the torrent,  
Brave the proud ocean's rage, and gain the harbour  
Of peace and happiness—or sink together.

EDWIN.

Thou hast foretold the tempest, and behold  
It rushes on us.

*[Enter MORCAR and HAROLD.]*

MATILDA.

Ha! Earl Morcar here!

MORCAR.

Harold, I thank thee; thy intelligence

Was but too true.

*[turning to EDWIN.]*

Traitor! who set thee free?

They would have 'scap'd my vengeance—false Matilda!

'Tis thus I am rewarded for my love,

My ill-tim'd mercy to a thankless brother.

Back to thy dungeon, slave. Guards, drag him hence,

To prison, and to death.

*[To the soldiers.]*

EDWIN.

Or death, or life,

Are equal to me, if I must be torn

From my Matilda. But, whate'er thy purpose,

Be speedy in thy vengeance, nor delay

The cruel work; for know, thy master comes,

William approaches—to revenge my cause.

MORCAR.

But not to save thee.

EDWIN.

Then farewell, Matilda,

Perhaps forever—If we meet no more

Thou wilt remember—But I will not doubt

Thy honour, or thy love. I know thy truth.

Know thou wilt act as best becomes thy fate,

Whate'er it be, and worthy of thyself.

MATILDA.

Of thee, my Edwin, rather say of thee.

Yes; I will copy well thy bright example;

I'll not disgrace thy love with woman's weakness,

But part without a tear. I will but stay

To tell thy tyrant brother how I hate,

How I despise him, and then follow thee.

MORCAR.

I'll hear no more—begone!—away with him.

*[Exeunt guards with EDWIN.]*

For thee, Matilda—

MATILDA.

What for me remains

I know too well; thy odious love, reproach  
Unmerited, and threats which I despise.  
Thou think'st I have deceiv'd thee—think so still.  
Enjoy thy error. Thou believ'st us guilty;  
'Twill make thee happy now—Perchance to find  
Us innocent, may be thy punishment hereafter.

MORCAR.

Aye, 'twas a proof of innocence to fly,  
Thou and thy paramour together.

MATILDA.

No;  
I scorn a thought so mean. Could I have left  
My Edwin, long e'er this I might have been  
Beyond the reach of tyranny; beyond  
Thy hated pow'r; and safe beneath the wing  
Of sacred majesty, in William's care.

MORCAR.

In William's care!

MATILDA.

Thy conqueror's—for know  
The hero comes—to scatter blessings round him,  
To heal his country's wounds, chastise rebellion,  
And punish false perfidious slaves like thee.

MORCAR.

By heav'ns! she braves my wrath, insults my weakness,  
And triumphs o'er her slave.

MATILDA.

There was a time,  
When with an eye of pity, I beheld  
Thy hopeless love; when I conceal'd my passion  
For the dear idol of my heart, because  
I fear'd 'twould make thee wretched; but thy rage,  
Thy cruel treatment of a guiltless brother,  
Has cancell'd all.

MORCAR.

Then, mark me: If thou hop'st  
For Edwin's freedom, shake off this vile passion;  
Yield thy proud heart to him who best deserves it,  
And meet me at the altar—Two hours hence

I shall expect thee there—Beyond that time  
He may not live to thank thee for thy bounty.

MATILDA.

Then let him perish—glut thy tyrant soul  
With vengeance: bathe it in a brother's blood,  
All ruffian, all barbarian, as thou art,  
Thou can'st not murder his immortal fame:  
Thou can'st not rob him of Matilda's love.  
But know—when he, for whom alone this pulse  
Would wish to beat, this lazy blood to flow  
Within my veins, when he shall be no more;  
Another life shall satiate thy revenge;  
Another victim shall attend thy triumph.

MORCAR.

Thou talk'st it nobly—'tis the common trick,  
The affectation of thy sex to boast  
A fancied firmness, which ye never knew;  
But with affrighted nature thou would'st shrink  
When death approaches.

MATILDA.

Put me to the proof.  
If thou would'st punish Edwin, know he lives  
Within this breast—strike home, and pierce him there.

MORCAR.

Imperious woman! thou defy'st my pow'r,  
And let it crush thee. If thy country bleeds  
In ev'ry vein; if perjur'd Edwin falls,  
As soon he shall, a victim to my rage;  
Thou art the murd'rer; thou the paricide:  
I stand absolv'd; the guilt is all thy own.

MATILDA.

If it be guilt to suffer keen reproach,  
Pain, persecution, terror, chains and death  
For him I love, rather than stain my soul  
With foul disloyalty, I am indeed  
The guiltiest of my sex, and well deserve  
The pangs I feel.

MORCAR.

Thou'st driv'n me to the pit  
Of black despair, and I will drag thee down

To share the dreadful ruin thou hast made.

MATILDA.

I know thy savage purpose; but remember,  
The hour approaches when thou shalt repent  
This base, unmanly triumph. William comes:  
Hear that and tremble, thou unnat'ral brother;  
Nor rocks, nor caves shall hide thee from his vengeance;  
Inglorious, and unpitied, shalt thou fall,  
And after ages shall consign thy name  
To endless scorn, and infamy immortal.

*[Exit MATILDA]*

MORCAR.

Inexorable judge! I stand condemn'd,  
And shall await my doom; but not alone  
Or unreveng'd shall Morcar fall—henceforth  
I bid adieu to love, and all his train  
Of fond delusions—Vengeance! I am thine,  
And thine alone: Thou daughter of despair!  
Destructive goddess! come, possess my soul  
With all thy terrors—Yes; it shall be so.  
A few short hours are all that niggard fate  
Will deign to spare me; I'll employ 'em well,  
For I will croud into the narrow circle  
A little age of misery and horror.  
Ha! Siward here! what brought thee hither?

*[Enter SIWARD.]*

SIWARD.

Pity  
For the distress'd, I knew thou wert unhappy,  
And came where duty call'd, to pour the balm  
Of friendship in, and heal thy wounded heart.

MORCAR.

O, they have pierc'd too deep; ev'n thou, my friend,  
Thou hast betray'd me: was it not unkind  
To set my pris'ner free; to let him meet  
Matilda, and conspire against my life?

SIWARD.

Impossible! by heav'n the artful story  
He told, so wrought upon my easy soul,

I thought him innocent.

MORCAR.

Hast thou not heard—

SIWARD.

From Harold only an imperfect tale,  
So strange I could not credit it.

MORCAR.

Alas!

'Tis all too true: I am the veriest slave,  
The meanest wretch that e'er was trampled on  
By an imperious woman: O, my friend!  
My Siward! I have nought on earth but thee:  
Should'st thou forsake me in this hour of terror!  
But sure thou wilt not.

SIWARD.

No: What e'er the will  
Of wayward fortune may determine for us,  
Behold me ready to partake thy fate.  
If we must sue for peace, let Siward bear  
The olive for thee: if once more we cast  
The desp'rate dye of battle, let me perish  
By Morcar's side. Come, let us on together;  
Shake off this load of unavailing sorrow,  
And seek the field; there, if we fall, we fall  
With honor: if we rise, we rise to—glory.

MORCAR.

Talk not of glory to a wretch like me,  
Bereft of ev'ry hope. There was a time  
When that enliv'ning call would have awak'd  
My active spirit, and this drooping heart  
Bounded with joy; but my Matilda's lost:  
Revenge alone—

*[Enter a messenger to SIWARD with Letters.]*

SIWARD.

From Walstcoff these;  
'Tis well—retire.

*[Exit messenger.]*

*[Reads]*

—How's this? then all is lost.

He writes me here, that William's fame in arms,  
Spite of his cruel and oppressive laws,  
Hath rais'd him friends in ev'ry part: already  
The northern rebels are dispers'd, and thousands  
Flock to the royal standard. To resist  
Were madness.

MORCAR.

And to yield were cowardice  
More shameful—

SIWARD.

What must we resolve on?

MORCAR.

Death:

The wretches only hope, the wish'd—for end  
Of ev'ry care, but I would meet him cloath'd  
In all his terrors, with his reeking spear,  
Dip't in the blood of an ungrateful mistress;  
And a false happy rival: Then, my Siward,  
Shalt thou behold me welcome the kind stroke,  
And smile in agony.

SIWARD.

Unhappy youth!

The storm beats hard upon thee; but our fate  
Will soon be fixt, for William comes to-morrow.

MORCAR.

To-morrow! ha! then something must be done,  
And quickly too. If William comes, he comes  
To triumph over us: then, my Siward, who  
Shall punish Edwin? who—shall wed Matilda?  
I cannot bear it—If thou lov'st me, Siward;  
For now I mean to try thy virtue; swear  
By all the pow'rs that wait on injur'd honor,  
What e'er my anxious soul requests of thee,  
Thou'lt not refuse it.

SIWARD.

By the hallow'd flame  
Of sacred friendship, that within this breast,  
Since the first hour I seal'd thee for my own,  
With unremitted ardor still hath glow'd,  
I will not—Speak, my Morcar, here I swear

To aid thy purpose.

MORCAR.

'Tis enough; and now  
Come near and mark me: Thou command'st the tow'r  
Where Edwin is confin'd.

SIWARD.

I do.

MORCAR.

Methinks  
It were an easy task—you understand me—  
Justice is flow, and—William comes to-morrow.  
Thy friendly hand—

SIWARD.

My lord!—

MORCAR.

Thou trembl'st—Well another time, my Siward,  
We'll talk on't—shall we not? Thou mean'st to do  
As thou hast promis'd?

SIWARD.

Certainly.

MORCAR.

Then speak,  
And do not trifle with me.

SIWARD.

Sure my lord,  
You cannot mean to—

MORCAR.

Is he not a villain?

SIWARD.

I fear he may be so.

MORCAR.

A hypocrite.

SIWARD.

He hath, perhaps, deceiv'd you, and deserves—

MORCAR.  
To perish.

SIWARD.  
No; to suffer, not to die;  
Or, if to perish, not by Morcar's hand,  
Or Siward's—O! 'tis horrible to shed  
A brother's blood—

MORCAR.  
A rival's.

SIWARD.  
Nature—

MORCAR.  
Love—

SIWARD.  
Humanity—

MORCAR.  
Matilda—

SIWARD.  
*[aside.]*  
Gracious heav'n!  
That passion thus should root up ev'ry sense  
Of good and evil in the heart of man,  
And change him to—a Monster.

MORCAR.  
Hence! away,  
And leave me—From this moment I will herd  
With the wild savage in yon leafless desert,  
Nor trust to friendship—but another hand—

SIWARD.  
*[musing.]*  
Ha! that alarms me—then it must be so;  
And yet how far—

MORCAR.  
You pause.

SIWARD.  
I am resolv'd.

MORCAR.  
On what?

SIWARD.  
To serve, to honour, to—obey you.  
Edwin shall ne'er disturb thy peace again.

MORCAR.  
O glorious instance of exalted friendship!  
My other self, my best, my dear-lov'd Siward—  
Conscience! thou busy monitor, away  
And leave me—Siward, when shall it be done?  
To night, my Siward, shall it not?

SIWARD.  
Or never.

MORCAR.  
Let me but see the proud Matilda weep;  
Let me but hear the music of her groans  
And sate my soul with vengeance—For the rest  
'Tis equal all. But tell me, Siward, say,  
How shall I know the bloody moment? What,  
Shall be the welcome signal?

SIWARD.  
When thou hear'st  
The solemn curfeu sound, conclude  
The business done—Farewell. When I return  
With tears of joy thou shalt my zeal commend,  
And own that Siward was indeed thy friend.

*The End of the Fourth Act.*

## ACT V

*SCENE, A Gothic Hall.*

*[Enter MORCAR, HAROLD.]*

MORCAR.  
Treason and foul rebellion in my camp!  
But I was born to be for ever wretched,

The sport of fortune. These base mutineers—

HAROLD.

Your presence on the battlements, my lord,  
Dispers'd 'em soon; they hang their heads in silence,  
And all is peace.

MORCAR.

*[to himself.]*

It is not so within.  
Would it were done or—

HAROLD.

What, my Lord?

MORCAR.

No matter.  
What urg'd my soldiers to rebel?

HAROLD.

'Tis thought  
The gallant captive did by secret means  
Excite them to revolt.

MORCAR.

It must be so.  
By heav'n thou mak'st me happy with the tidings:  
His head shall pay the forfeit.

HAROLD.

Whilst he lives  
We are not safe.

MORCAR.

No more we are, good Harold;  
'Tis fit he perish, is it not? What say'st thou?

HAROLD.

Prudence demands his life to save your own.

MORCAR.

O! thou hast given such comfort to my soul—

HAROLD.

My Lord—

MORCAR.

Be watchful: Bring me early notice  
Of ev'ry motion: Go.

*[Exit HAROLD]*

Or I must fall,  
Or Edwin—Hence ye visionary fears;  
Ye vain chimeras hence—It is no matter:  
Conscience I heed thee not; 'tis self-defence,  
Nature's first law, and I must stand acquitted.  
The prudent Siward seem'd to hesitate,  
As if he wish'd, but knew not how to shun  
The office. He who could behold my tortures,  
With all that cold tranquility, would ne'er  
Have ventur'd to remove them. But I've trusted  
The sword of vengeance to a safer hand.  
What ho! Who waits?

*[Enter an OFFICER.]*

That soldier whom thou saw'st  
In private conf'rence with me, is he gone  
As I directed him?

OFFICER.

My Lord, even now  
I saw him hast'ning tow'rd the tow'r,

MORCAR.

'Tis well.  
When he returns conduct him to me—Stay;  
If Siward comes this way, I'm not at leisure:  
I will not see him.

*[MORCAR starts.]*

Hark! did'st thou not hear  
The solemn curfew?

OFFICER.

No, my Lord.

MORCAR.

Not hear it!  
It shocks my soul with horror—Hark! again!  
Hollow and dreadful! Sure thy faculties  
Are all benumb'd.

OFFICER.

Indeed, I heard it not.

MORCAR.

Away, and leave me to myself.

*[Exit OFFICER]*

Methought

I heard a voice cry—stop—it is thy brother:  
We lov'd each other well; our early years  
Were spent in mutual happiness together:  
Matilda was not there—I do remember  
One day, in sportive mood, I rashly plung'd  
Into the rapid flood, which had well nigh  
O'erwhelm'd me; when the brave, the gallant Edwin,  
Rush'd in and sav'd me—Shall I, in return,  
Destroy my kind preserver? Horrid thought!  
Forbid it heav'n!

*[pauses.]*

I am myself again.

All pow'rful nature! once more I am thine.  
He shall not die—Who's there—

*[Enter an OFFICER.]*

My Oswald! fly,  
Fly to the tow'r this moment, haste and save  
My brother—Some base ruffian—

OFFICER.

If, my Lord,  
You mean the noble pris'ner there, I fear  
It is too late: This moment as I pass'd  
The citadel, I saw a mangled corse  
Drawn forth by Siward's order—

MORCAR.

Slave, thou ly'st.  
Away this moment, bring me better news  
On peril of thy life.

*[Exit OFFICER]*

Who knows but heav'n,  
In gracious pity, still may interpose  
And save me from the guilt? It is not done;  
It shall not—must not be—All's quiet yet;  
I have not heard the signal.

*[The bell tolls.]*

Hark! he's dead:  
My brother's dead—O! cover me ye shades  
Of everlasting night! Hide, if ye can,  
A murth'rer from himself. Ha! see he comes:  
His wounds are bleeding still; his angry eyes

Glare full upon me. Speak—what would'st thou have?  
Matilda shall be thine: He smiles and leaves me—

*[He pauses and recovers himself.]*

'Twas but the error of my troubled soul.  
O! guilt, guilt, guilt! *[throws himself down.]*  
Here will I lay me down,  
And end my days in bitterness and anguish.

*[Enter SIWARD.]*

Who's there? Ha! Siward here. *[rises.]*  
Speak, murth'rer, speak,  
Where is my brother? Villain, thou hast snar'd  
My soul; my honour's stain'd, my fame destroy'd,  
And my sweet peace of mind is lost forever.

SIWARD.

Matilda will restore it.

MORCAR.

Never, never.  
The price of blood! No: Could Matilda bring  
The vanquish'd world, in dow'ry with her charms,  
I would not wed her. O! could I recall  
One hasty moment, one rash, cruel act—  
But 'twas thy savage hand that—

SIWARD.

I receiv'd  
Your orders: 'Twas my duty to obey them.

MORCAR.

Where slept thy friendship then? Thou know'st despair  
And madness urg'd me to it—but for thee—  
Thy callous heart had never felt the pangs,  
The agonies of disappointed love;  
Thou did'st not know Matilda—Curs'd obedience!  
How often has thy insolence oppos'd  
Thy master and thy prince? how often dar'd  
To thwart my will, and execute thy own:  
But when I bade thee do a deed of horror,  
And shed a brother's blood—thou could'st obey me.

SIWARD.

Away! this is the trick of self-delusion,  
The common cant of hypocrites, who rail  
At others guilt, to mitigate their own?  
I've been the mean, the servile instrument

Of thy base vengeance; but thou had'st prepar'd  
Another, a low ruffian, to perform  
The bloody office; I detest thee for it,  
Despise, abhor thee.

MORCAR.

Thou wert once my friend.

SIWARD.

Henceforth I am thy foe—Thou hast destroy'd  
The best of brothers, and the best of men.

MORCAR.

Despis'd by Siward—then my cup of sorrow  
Is full, indeed—But this shall—

*[Attempts to kill himself, SIWARD wrests the sword from him.]*

Ha! disarm'd!

But coward guilt is weak as infancy;  
It was not so before I murder'd Edwin.

SIWARD.

The murd'rer's punishment should be to live,  
And shall be thine; thou know'st not half thy guilt,  
Nor half thy sorrows: I shall rend thy soul.  
Prepare thee for another deeper wound;  
And know that Edwin lov'd thee, in his hand,  
Whilst mine was lifted up for his destruction,  
I found this paper, 'tis the counterpart  
Of one he had dispatch'd to William, read it  
And tremble at thy complicated guilt.

MORCAR.

*[taking the paper.]*

What's here? He pleads my pardon with the king,  
Ascribes my frantic zeal, in Edgar's cause,  
To ill-advis'd warmth, and recommends  
His—murderer to mercy: Horrid thought!  
I am the vilest, most abandon'd slave  
That e'er disgrac'd humanity—O, Siward!  
If thou hast yet, among the dying embers  
Of our long friendship, one remaining spark  
Of kind compassion for the wretched Morcar,  
Lend me thy aid to shake off the sad load  
Of hated life that presses sore upon me.

SIWARD.

Tho' thou'rt no longer worthy of my friendship,  
Deaf to the cries of nature, and the voice  
Of holy truth, that would have council'd thee  
To better deeds, yet hath my foolish heart  
Some pity for thee—After crimes, like these,  
There is but one way left—Say, wilt thou patient wait  
Till I return?

MORCAR.  
I will.

SIWARD.  
Remember, Morcar,  
You promis'd me—I have a draught within,  
Of wondrous pow'r, that in a moment lulls  
The tortur'd soul to sweet forgetfulness  
Of all its woes: I'll haste and bring it thee,  
'Twill give thee rest and peace.

*[Exit SIWARD]*

MORCAR.  
I hope for ever.  
But where's the lost Matilda? who shall comfort  
That dear unhappy maid, whom I have robb'd  
Of ev'ry bliss. O, save me from the sight,  
Ye pitying pow'rs!

*[Enter MATILDA.]*

She comes—distraction!

MATILDA.  
O!  
My Lord, permit—

MORCAR.  
Away—I know thee not.

MATILDA.  
Not know me! 'tis the poor distress'd Matilda,  
Who comes to ask forgiveness for the rage  
Of frantic love; the madness of despair,  
That urg'd me to such wrath and bitterness  
Of keen reproach; but pardon— *[kneels]*  
Gen'rous Morcar,

A woman's weakness: Speak and make me blest.  
Alas! he hears me not.

MORCAR.  
Matilda, rise;  
I pray thee leave me—  
[weeps]

MATILDA.  
Gracious heav'n! he weeps;  
Propitious omen! O, my Lord! those tears  
Are the soft marks of sympathizing woe,  
And seem to say, I shall not plead in vain.

MORCAR.  
Ask what thou wilt, for know, so dear I hold  
Matilda's happiness, that, here I swear  
If all the kingdoms of the peopled earth  
Were mine to give, I'd lay them at her feet:  
But much I fear they would not make her happy.

MATILDA.  
Alas! my Lord Matilda's happiness  
Is center'd all in one dear precious jewel;  
'Tis in thy keeping—Edwin—

MORCAR.  
What of him?

MATILDA.  
Is innocent.

MORCAR.  
I know it.

MATILDA.  
Just and good;  
He never meant to injure thee, indeed  
He did not.

MORCAR.  
I believe it, for his nature  
Was ever mild and gentle.

MATILDA.  
Good, my Lord,

You mock me.

MORCAR.

No, Matilda; speak, go on,  
And praise him: I could talk to thee for ever  
Of Edwin's virtues—

MATILDA.

Then thou would'st not hurt  
His precious life, thou would'st not—

MORCAR.

I would give  
A thousand worlds to save him.

MATILDA.

Would'st thou? then  
My pray'rs are heard, thou hast forgiv'n all,  
And I am happy. Speak, is Edwin free?

MORCAR.

From ev'ry care—would I were half so blest!

MATILDA.

What mean you? Ha! thy eyes are fixt with horror,  
Thy looks are wild. What hast thou done? O! speak.

MORCAR.

Matilda, if thou com'st for Edwin's life,  
It is too late—for Edwin is no more.

MATILDA.

And is my Edwin slain?

MORCAR.

Aye: Basely murder'd.  
O! 'twas the vilest, most unnat'ral deed  
That ever—

MATILDA.

Blasted be the cruel hand  
That dealt the blow! O, may his guilty heart  
Ne'er taste of balmy peace, or sweet repose!

MORCAR.

But ever, by the vulture conscience, torn;

Bleed inward, still unpity'd, till he seek  
For refuge in the grave.

MATILDA.  
Nor find it there.

MORCAR.  
'Tis well: Thy curses are accomplish'd all;  
I feel 'em here within—for know—'twas I.  
I gave the fatal order, and my friend,  
My Siward, has too faithfully perform'd it.

MATILDA.  
Siward! impossible! There dwells not then  
In human breast, or truth or virtue—O!  
Unnat'ral brother!—but I will be calm.

MORCAR.  
Alas! thy fate is happiness to mine;  
For thou art innocent.

MATILDA.  
And soon, I hope  
To be rewarded for it. O! my Edwin,  
Matilda soon shall follow thee—thou think'st  
I am unarm'd, deserted; doom'd like thee  
To hated life; but know, I have a friend,  
A bosom-friend, and prompt, as thine, to enter  
On any bloody service I command.  
*[Draws a dagger.]*

MORCAR.  
Command it then for justice, for revenge,  
Behold! my bosom rises to the blow;  
Strike here, and end a wretched murd'rer—

MATILDA.  
No;  
That were a mercy thou hast not deserv'd;  
I shall not seek revenge in Morcar's death,  
In mine thou shalt be wretched—

*[Attempts to stab herself; MORCAR lays hold of the dagger.]*

MORCAR.  
Stop, Matilda—

Stop thy rash hand, the weight of Edwin's blood  
Sits heavy on my heart. O! do not pierce it  
With added guilt.

MATILDA.

No more, I must be gone  
To meet my Edwin, who already chides  
My ling'ring steps, and beckons me away

MORCAR.

Yet hear me! O! if penitence and pray'r,  
If deep contrition, sorrow and remorse  
Could bring him back to thy desiring eyes,  
O! with what rapture would I yield him now  
To thee, Matilda—bear me witness—Ha!

[starts]

'Tis he—Look up dear injur'd maid—he comes  
To claim my promise.

MATILDA.

It is, it is my Edwin!

*[Enter SIWARD and EDWIN; EDWIN runs and embraces MATILDA.]*

MORCAR.

O unexpected bliss! what gracious hand—

SIWARD.

Behold the cordial draught I promis'd you!  
I knew thy noble nature, when the storm  
Of passion had subsided, would abhor  
A deed so impious—'Tis the only time  
That Siward ever did deceive his friend.  
Can'st thou forgive?

MORCAR.

Forgive thee! O thou art  
My guardian angel, sent by gracious heav'n  
To save me from perdition. O, my brother!  
I blush to stand before thee—wilt thou take  
From these polluted hands one precious gift?  
'Twill make thee full amends for all thy wrongs.  
Accept her, and be happy.

*[MORCAR joins the hands of EDWIN and MATILDA, then turns to SIWARD]*

That vile slave  
Whom I employ'd—

SIWARD.

I guess'd his horrid purpose,  
Watch'd ev'ry step, and as the villain aim'd  
His ponyard at the guiltless Edwin's breast,  
Turn'd sudden round, and plung'd it in his own.  
The bloody corse was dragg'd—

MORCAR.

I know the rest.  
O, Siward! from what weight of endless woe  
Hath thy blest hand preserv'd me!

EDWIN.

O, my Matilda! how shall we repay  
Our noble benefactor? Much I owe  
To gallant Siward, but to Morcar more:  
Thou gav'st me life, but my kind, gen'rous brother  
Enhanc'd the gift, and bless'd me with Matilda.

MATILDA.

*[to MORCAR.]*

Words are too poor to thank thee as I ought;  
Accept this tribute of a grateful heart,  
These tears of joy; and, O! may ev'ry curse  
My frantic grief for Edwin pour'd upon thee,  
Be chang'd to dearest blessings on thy head!

MORCAR.

Alas! thy blessings cannot reach me. Guilt  
May plead for pardon, but can never boast  
A claim to happiness: I only ask  
A late forgiveness. If a life of sorrow,  
And deep remorse, can wash my crimes away,  
Let 'em be bury'd with me in oblivion,  
And do not curse the memory of—Morcar.  
*[turning to EDWIN.]*

O, Edwin! say, can'st thou forgive the crime  
Of frantic love, of madness and despair?

EDWIN.

As in my latest hour from heav'n I hope  
Its kind indulgence for my errors past,  
Ev'n so, my brother, from my soul I pardon  
And pity thee.

MORCAR.

Then I shall die in peace.

EDWIN.

Talk not of death, my brother, thou must live  
To see our happiness complete, to hear  
My sweet Matilda pour forth all her heart  
In rap'rous thanks to thee, and to thy friend;  
And grateful Edwin bless thee for thy bounties.

MORCAR.

It must not be: I know too much already,  
Of Morcar's weakness, and Matilda's pow'r  
They are not to be trusted. No, my Edwin,  
Morcar shall never interrupt thy joys.  
Far from thy fight and from the haunts of men,  
In some deep distant solitude retir'd,  
To pious sorrow will I dedicate  
My short remains of wretched life, and strive  
To make my peace with heav'n and wrong'd Matilda.  
And if perchance in after-times some bard,  
Struck with the native horrors of my tale,  
Should bid th' historic muse record it—let him  
By my example teach a future age,  
The dire effects of loose, unbridled rage;  
Teach thoughtless men their passions to control,  
And curb the sallies of th' impetuous soul,  
Lest they experience worse than Morcar's woe,  
Nor find a Siward—to prevent the blow.

*The End of the Fifth Act.*

*EPILOGUE.*

By the AUTHOR of the TRAGEDY.

[Spoken by Miss YOUNGE.]

HA! ha! poor Creature! how you trembling stand!  
Come to the Bar, Sir, and hold up your Hand;  
You won't—by Council then you'd have it done,  
And I must plead your Cause—well, get you gone.

*[Coming forward to the Audience.]*

Now for the great Tribunal of Old Drury;  
Are you all sworn there—Gen'men of the Jury?

Good Men, and true, I hope—stay, let me see,  
Amongst you all he challenges—but three.  
Physicians, Lawyers, Parsons he admits,  
Beaux, Ladies, Courtiers, Macaronies, Cits,  
And only scratches—Critics, News-writers, and Wits.  
The Critic first we banish from our Session,  
Death is his Trade, and Damning—his Profession;  
Disqualisy'd—because, to say no further,  
Butchers are never heard in case of Murther.  
Next we disclaim th' Artificers of News,  
Who live by Fibs, and flourish by Abuse;  
They must condemn, or lose their daily Bread;  
If they don't cut, and slash—they're never read;  
Like fabled Giants here they roam for Food,  
And Fe! Fa! Fum! snuff up an Author's Blood;  
In the next Ledger hang him up to roast,  
Or tear him Piece-meal in—the Morning Post.  
To Wits we last except, and 'bove all other,  
The Hero of our Tale—a Rival Brother!  
As Rogues, just 'scap'd the Gallows, join the Shrieves,  
Turn Hangmen, and tuck up their Fellow Thieves;  
So Bards condemn'd, exert the Critic's Skill,  
And execute their Brethren of the Quill!  
If like their own, indeed, the Brat should die,  
They'll gladly join to write—its Elegy;  
But if the Child is strong, and like to live,  
That is a Crime they never can forgive.  
From such let English Juries still be free,  
Our Author here appeals to your Decree,  
The Public is—a Court of Equity.  
If he has shock'd your Taste, your Sense, or Reason,  
Or against Nature guilty been of Treason,  
Off with his Head;—but if with honest Art  
His well-meant Scenes have touch'd the feeling Heart;  
If they have rais'd your Pity, wak'd your Fears,  
Or sweetly have “beguil'd you of your Tears,”  
Let venial Errors your Indulgence claim,  
Your Voice his Triumph, your Applause his Fame.  
Speak by your Foreman—what says Goodman Pit?  
Will you condemn the Prisoner, or acquit?  
Your Verdict, Sirs, Not Guilty—if you please—  
You smile—Acquitted—hope you'll pay his Fees.

#### **END NOTES**

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<sup>1</sup> Martin Gardner, *The Annotated Alice*, Clarkson Potter, New York (1960), pp 46-7.

<sup>2</sup> Drury Lane is a street on the eastern boundary of the Covent Garden area of London. What is meant here is Theatre Royal, Drury Lane commonly known simply as Drury Lane. It is a West End Theater in Covent Garden, London, England.

<sup>3</sup> De La Harpe was French, and a writer of some success. As such, he was surely invited to perform his plays before the aristocratic court. While there is no evidence for which court he performed for – if he performed before the court at all – but it could be to the court in general that the dedication is directed, and to whoever has the most authority in the court that the “Sir,” is directed.

<sup>4</sup> In Shakespeare’s *Macbeth* Siward shows up as a leader of the English army, some ten thousand strong. He loses his son, also named Siward, in a fight against Macbeth. While this is undoubtedly not the same Siward, as the Siward in *Macbeth* dies before this play is set, it is an enjoyable addition and use of the name.

<sup>5</sup> “From Norman William’s Age” meaning William the Conqueror who was the first Norman King of England, reigning from 1066 until his death in 1087

<sup>6</sup> Likely in 1066 A.D., shortly after the Norman Invasion of England

<sup>7</sup> We have no clear context as to who “Ranulph” could be, and while we could draw several possibilities such as Ranulph de Mortimer, a Lord on the border between Wales and England who was granted his holdings by William the Conqueror; or Rainulf Drengot, a Norman adventurer turned noble who died in 1045. It is most likely that neither of these men were included in the play, but that the idea of their character was granted the same name for Matilda’s father.