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JOHN SOBIESKI

(SECOND PART)

THE SIEGE OF VIENNA

A DRAMA IN FIVE ACTS

BY

KRISTIEN OSTROWSKI

"Dignior imperio numme Austrias anne Polonus?

"Odrysius uicis his fugat, ille fugit."

ARMAND DE BÉTHUNE, Bishop of Puy, 1633.

"Les grands noms ne se font qu'en Orient."

BONAPARTE, 1799.

Represented at the Porte-Saint-Martin Theatre,
December 23, 1875.

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH BY

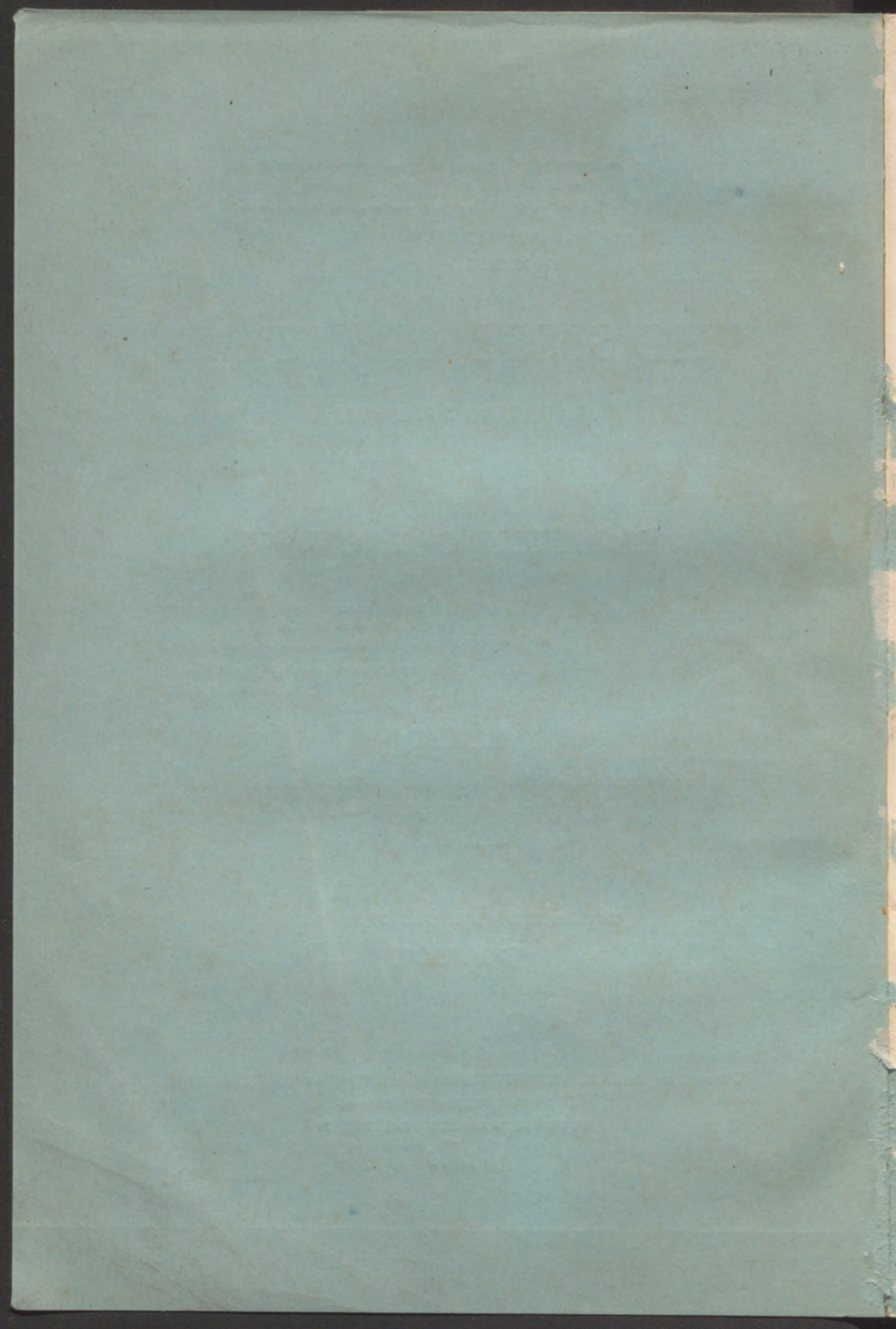
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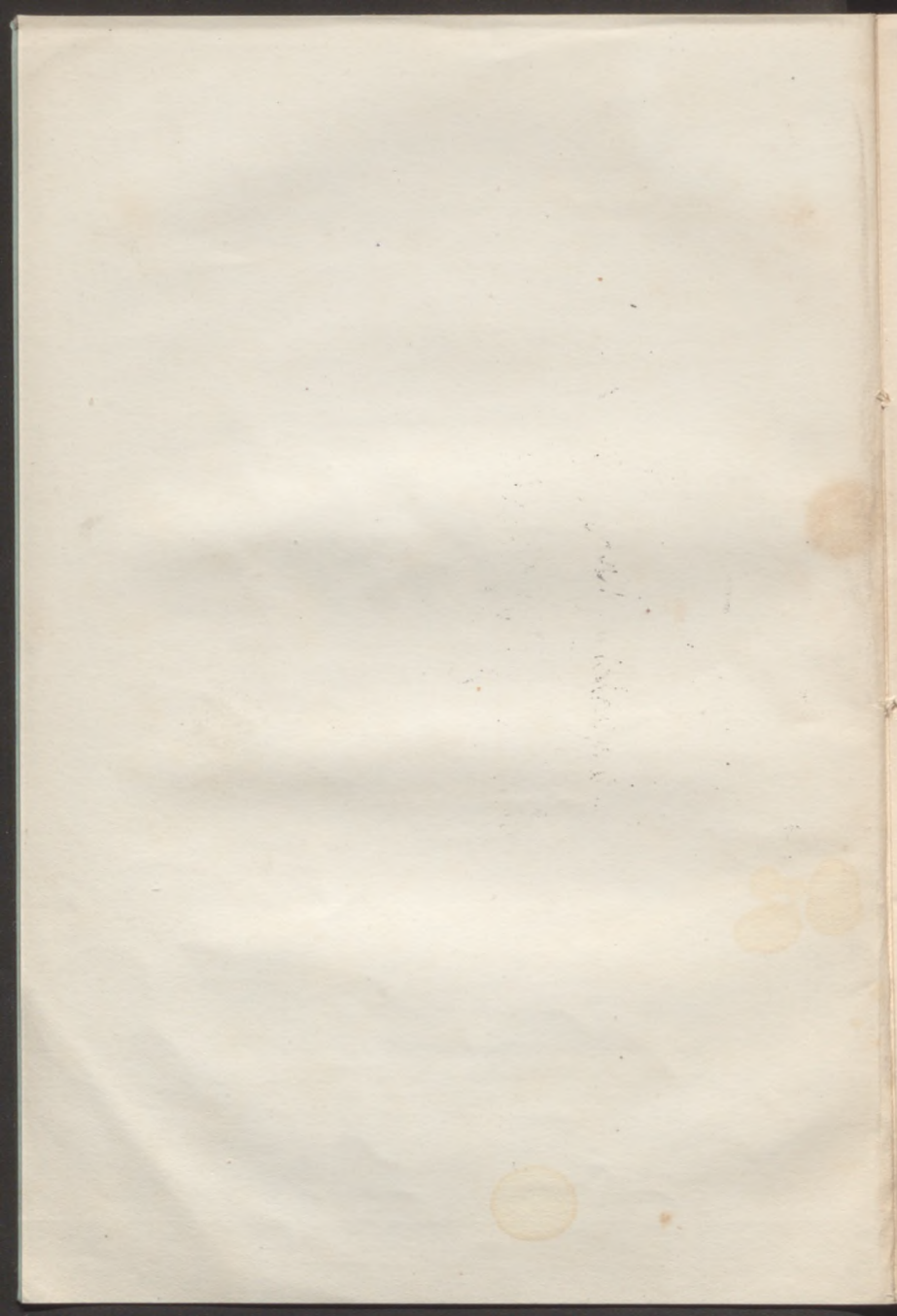
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(LEROY BROTHERS SUCCESSORS)

26, BOULEVARD DES ITALIENS, 26

1879



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THE SIEGE OF VIENNA

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DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

JOHN III SOBIESKI, King of Poland.

YAKOUB SOBIESKI, his son.

JEROME LUBOMIRSKI, Knight of Malta.

STEPHEN POTOCKI, Equerry to the King.

COUNT MALIGNY, Envoy of Louis XIV.

KARA-MUSTAPHA, Grand Vizier of the Ottoman army.

SELIM GHERAY, Khan of the Tartars.

ANCHAR, his Lieutenant.

GIAFFER, kishlar-aga (a negro).

MYRRHA, sister of the Sultan, affianced to the Vizier.

HAYDÉE, her attendant.

LEILA, an odalisk.

MAURO, a dragoman (Myrrha's father).

LEOPOLD I, Emperor of Austria.

PRINCE CHARLES DE LORRAINE, his brother-in-law.

DUKE DE CROY.

COUNT ROGER DE STAREMBERG, Governor of Vienna.

BARON COLLONITS, Grand Chancellor.

Polish Chiefs, German Princes, Prisoners, People of Vienna,
Seraglio of Mustapha, etc.

The scene is laid in the neighbourhood around Vienna, during its siege
by the Ottoman army, 1683.

JOHN SOBIESKI

OR

THE SIEGE OF VIENNA

ACT I.

THE TURKISH CAMP

Before the tent of the Vizier, facing Vienna.—In the foreground, a stone cross ; a number of christian prisoners, guarded by Tartar and Turkish soldiers, spread about the ground.—At the back, the city and the Danube, with a practicable bridge. Time, 5 a.m.

SCENE I.

ANCHAR, chief of the Tartars ; YAKOUB SOBIESKI ; STEPHEN POTOCKI ; Polish and German prisoners.

CHORUS OF MUEZZINS, on the heights.*

As darkness is chased from the skies,
And earth from its bondage is free,
The songs of the universe rise
In praise, great Mohammed, to thee ;
As, sitting enthroned on a star,
Thou spreadest thy glory afar.

CHORUS OF SULTANAS, in the Vizier's tent.

Already the angel of day
Is crowned with a garland of flowers ;
O'er thee shower beauties like spray,
Sweet Myrrha ! then waste not the hours ;
But open thine eyes to the sun—
Thy soul to the love thou hast won.

* For facility of representation, the chorus may be omitted.

Now, slave, arise!

ANCHAR

STEPHEN

My breast is scorched with thirst—
Give me some water, for the love of heaven!

ANCHAR

Drink thine own blood, vile giaour!

(He retires.)

YAKOUB, approaching the cross where Stephen has fallen.

What do I see?

A soldier of my country! Ah! that face!
That locket! Yes, I recognise thee now,
Dear Stephen!

STEPHEN, rising with difficulty.

Scalding tears have dimmed mine eyes,
And made sight doubtful—Yakoub?

YAKOUB

Yes, 'tis I,

Thy brother, in the honoured ranks of war.

STEPHEN

Thou in this pagan camp, my Prince!

YAKOUB

With thee

I come to die.

STEPHEN

Nay, rather live for me—
For vengeance. Read this order of the King.

YAKOUB

“The Camp, Warsaw.

“Dear son,—Remember that thy life is mine! I commit
“my kingdom to the care of God. Farewell! God bless thee!

“JOHN SOBIESKI, King.

Dated this fifteenth day of August, 1683.”

(A report of a cannon is heard in the distance.)

ANCHAR, approaching.

Arise, arise, it is the break of day!

(The prisoners get up. The reveille is heard.)

STEPHEN

A christian, I will die beneath this cross.

ANCHAR, threatening him.

Again!

YAKOUB

Forgive him, he is but a child!

STEPHEN, giving him a locket.

I give to thee this precious chain of hair,
A sweet memento of my mother's love.

YAKOUB

Oh, never!

STEPHEN

Yes, take it, it is my wish.

This locket holds some ashes from the tomb
Where rest my fathers, where I hoped to rest;
Spread these relics on my brow; from such earth
It must be our avengers will arise.
I yield my soul to God; my poor remains,
Poland, oh my country, I give to thee!

YAKOUB

This I swear.

STEPHEN

And now my penalty is paid,
Think thou of my sister!

YAKOUB

Heaven rest thy soul!

(Stephen expires in his arms.)

Dead!

ANCHOR

Withdraw, Prince! Bear away this body
To the burial-place of the christian dogs.

CHORUS

God smiles, and the morning awakes ;
The roses their bosoms display,
And yield with a blush, as it breaks,
To the passionate kiss of the day.
And all things are beauty and love,
For Allah is smiling above.

(The procession moves on. The sun rises. In the distance are seen the Danube and Vienna, with a breach in front of the Imperial palace.)

SCENE II.

YAKOUB, alone.

Stephen is free : to-morrow I will be.
Yonder are the victors—most worthy sons
Of that desert which follows in their train.
Where once the harvest flourished in its wealth
Are pillage, murder, fire, and new-made graves ;
Vienna is in flames ; the people lost ;
And close at hand, within the Turkish camp,
A hundred youthful forms their charms display,
Illumined by a stream of golden light.
There pleasure, pride, and wild delirium reign
O'er, prostrate to the earth, the conquered west.
Such is our future—such will Europe's be
Beneath the human deluge which is surging
On either hand. More threatening swells the flood ;
But there is one before whose steady front
The tide will break—whose is the chosen hand
To stem this eastern torrent in its course ;
'Tis thee, oh ! John Sobieski, thou, my sire

And my chief; and thine the allotted task,
 With heaven-inspired strength, to call the shades
 Of Charlemagne and Baldwin from the tomb,
 And say, like God, "Thou shalt no farther go."
 Oh! that thy victory I could but share!
 The death in honour is the birth of glory;
 But all that fate has left me upon earth
 Is now a hopeless cold obscurity,
 Lifeless existence, without name or love,
 And choice alone of slavery or exile.
 To what black past am I the offering?
 Myrrha, my benefactress, and Mauro. . .

SCENE III.

YAKOUB, MYRRHA; HAYDÉE, MAURO, in the background.

MYRRHA, approaching him.

Still alone! . . . Is it while thus a prisoner
 Within the Turkish camp thou can'st insult
 The tender interest thy youth has wrung
 From one who would be both a friend and sister?
 After long absence, is one look too much?

YAKOUB

It was thy voice that made the poignard fall
 Of Selim, and thy hand that stanch'd my blood.
 Oft have I watched thy pure and youthful brow,
 Keeping sweet vigil o'er my sleepless couch.
 My guardian angel! how can I repay
 Thy gentle care? This flower, so much beloved,
 Reared mid the clash of arms, I offer thee.

MYRRHA, accepting it.

The flower of remembrance: charged with tears,
 Or, haply, with thy blood?

YAKOUB

A man proscribed
Learns how to suffer ; but within my heart
I bear a wound that God alone can heal.

MYRRHA

But God alone ? Yet many a time a sound,
A name, and not thy country's, has escaped
The parched exponents of thy fevered brain.
And often have I marked thee—as just now—
In spirit borne upon some floating cloud,
Bearing the echo of her own pure thoughts
Back to the bosom of some northern love.

YAKOUB

Dreams of my mother.

MYRRHA

Waiting thy return ?

YAKOUB

A mother claims our first and warmest love ;
And liberty our next !

MYRRHA

Her name ?

YAKOUB

Is Mary.

MYRRHA, offering her hand.

And that is also mine ! In my own land
By Myrrha is the Holy Virgin known.
Listen to me. In speaking of the past,
Of all my great and glorious ancestors,
My heart grows stronger and my thoughts expand.
My father, born at Athens, and a chief
Of Candia, was a witness of the fall

Of the great christian rampart of the east.
 Thence banished by the conquerors, he fled
 To Poland. It was there a royal hand
 Became the fitting meed of so much glory.
 One day, upon the famous plains of Ukraine,
 Those plains whereon the hetman John Sobieski,
 Already hero, was declared a king,
 My mother and myself were torn away
 And sold in slavery to the Sultan.
 Since then my father's destiny is blank,
 With nothing to connect us but this chain.

MAURO

Myrrha, have faith in God : a day will come
 When once again the noble Grecian girl
 Shall see her land, her father !

MYRRHA

Can it be ?

My land must be reborn ere that day come.
 But to my tale. My mother's latest breath
 Was yielded as she gave another life,
 To me a brother, to her lord a son.
 And often do I see her in my dreams
 Kneeling before the haughty Osmanide,
 Disarming by her loftiness of soul
 The arrogance that fain would smite the world.
 But the black Mustapha, the Sultan's friend
 And partner in the pleasures of his youth,
 Became Grand Vizier, and at once the heart
 Of startled Europe felt the shock of war.
 He killed my mother ; and she, dying, left
 To me this emblem of her faith, and this
 Avenging blade, the emblem of my own.

There dwells within me an Athenian soul
 That makes me dote on liberty ; that name
 So sad, so dear, which claims a kindred love
 With that we give a mother in her grave.
 I, Mohammed's sister, detested scourge !
 I destined to become the Vizier's wife,
 And live his slave, the moment that the gates
 Of proud Vienna open to the foe !
 Nay, rather would I rush into the fray,
 And falling, join my mother in the skies !

YAKOUB

I see thy blood and mine are near akin.

MYRRHA

Give me more certain proofs ! Wilt thou avenge
 My wrongs and be the saviour of thy country ?

YAKOUB

I am thy brother. I await thy bidding.

MYRRHA

Then rid thee of thy master and thy yoke !

YAKOUB

Freedom must never be the pay of crime.

MYRRHA

Would'st thou prefer that mine should be the hand
 To rend his bosom with this vengeful blade ?

YAKOUB

I follow not the trade of an assassin :
 I am a soldier. In a righteous cause,
 And in fair fight, I feel myself a man,
 Strong both in hand and heart ; but in the dark,
 To strike a foe who cannot strike again—
 Never !

MYRRHA

The injured woman begs redress ;
Man has a surer method still—he kills.

YAKOUB

But the christian pardons.

MYRRHA

E'en when a slave ?
Then all the world abandon me to fate.

YAKOUB

Excepting he who twice has saved the west
At Leopold and Chocim ; he again,
Supported by his people, will be here,
And by a strong and desperate attack
Will save us ere to-morrow's sun shall sleep.
A messenger has brought the welcome news
That yesterday he crossed the bridge of Tulu
With eighteen thousand men ; and as they waved
Their banners in the air, the Vizier's head
He promised should reward their conquering arms.
Islam once vanquished all the east will rise ;
Fair Greece, regaining honour, glory, pride,
From Marathon to Sparta will be free.

MYRRHA

The east in freedom ? Speak those words again !
Oh ! Yakoub, suddenly there seems to dawn
A future on my sight. I see, I feel
Each word that thou hast said, and at thy voice
My country rises from the tomb again.
Even though death should expiate the sin
Of an avowal that may seem too bold,
My soul is ever thine !

(Cries of "Allah" heard without.)

HAYDÉE, approaching.

'Tis Selim comes.

MYRRHA

Selim! Must I endure his hated presence!

SCENE IV.

The same. SELIM. Soldiers at the back.

SELIM, haughtily

Christians, retire!

MYRRHA

Yakoub and Mauro, stay!

SELIM

Did you hear me?

MYRRHA

Selim, from whom hast thou

Authority to issue such commands?

SELIM

Forgive my abruptness! I only saw
Before my eyes two enemies of God.

MYRRHA

Two captives, like ourselves.

(To the soldiers.)

Guard this prisoner,

I would hear him. And, Selim, I would now
Counsel thee to show thy master's sister
Some more of the respect that is her due.

SELIM, aside.

Respect!

MYRRHA

What brought thee here?

SELIM

The Vizier's firman.

From the woods of wild Moravia, in whose depths
I trusted to entrap the flying Leopold,
I have come to take part in this assault.
The hell existing there can only be
Extinguished in a stream of its own blood.
Thou shalt soon see how well I serve thy brother.

MYRRHA

Thou serve him, Selim ; thou, the worthy chief
Of such a horde, whose very name bespeaks
Discord and bondage ! Thou, John Zrini's son !
The saviour of the great Hungarian race !

SELIM

The blood of Arpad circles in my veins,
And I am now the only living hope
Of a trampled people. I bear the name
Of Selim-Gheray, the last Crimean Khan.
Assigned by fate, avenger of my country,
I bow to-day to Islam, my adopter.
The sovereign law of stern fatality
Drives me—without a murmur I obey.
See'st thou those ramparts which the crescent sways ?
Gaze on that river flowing at thy feet,
Tinted—nay, crimsoned with our choicest blood !
Ask me how many bones and trunkless heads
Strew in their ghastliness its sodden banks !
Watch through that gap upon the palace walls
Those spectres gathering to the sound of drums !
They are my long ancestral line, destroyed
By the mild humanity of Leopold,
Now hunting him with clamour to the death.
The curse they shout in uttering their names
Drowns the wild tumult of the cannon's roar.
The east has risen against him in its might ;

The sword shall smite the smiter with the sword ;
 And when misuse of power turns to tyranny,
 The sacred right of people thus enslaved
 Is to arise and cast away their chains.
 The wrath of God now hovers o'er Vienna ;
 No stone that bears a shape shall mark her place ;
 And should the absent tyrant e'er return
 To seek his city, he will seek in vain.

YAKOUB

It is then to assuage a thirst for vengeance
 That thou thy conscience and thy soul would'st blight,
 And have the dismal sins of one foul heir
 To an illustrious line of emperors
 Atoned for by the suffering guiltless people !
 Dost thou not fear lest God should interpose,
 And grave upon thy brow the seal of Cain ?
 Why not depute Tököly, the Magyar,
 To seek the mediation of my chief,
 King John Sobieski.

SELIM

He to intercede
 Between us and our tyrant ! With what aim ?
 Look at this paper which he signed at Presbourg !

YAKOUB, reading.

Eight hundred doomed to death ! others to exile !
 Can it be possible, oh ! God !

SELIM

It is !
 Thou readest there his mind, and how it leans
 At all times to the side of clemency.
 Thou knowest not that hard unbending man.
 Mercy is a flower, the growth of heaven,

And hath no root in a polluted heart.
 He just? Then every murderer is just,
 And generous every dastard upon earth.
 My father, with a wrong though noble impulse,
 Adopted him in childhood; and from man
 He onward strode to prince and emperor.
 As soon as crowned, the child became the judge;
 And with the convenient pretence of treason,
 Struck off the head that gave to him a crown.
 This sorrow killed my mother; then my Jeanne,
 My wretched sister, plunged into yon stream,
 And sank before her foul seducer's eyes.
 But why revive these tortures of my soul?
 I would the day were come that I might lead
 That monstrous scarecrow to the Seven Towers,
 And there, amid the plaudits of the crowd,
 Nail his cursed head upon the iron gates.

MYRRHA

God will not further such a will as that.

SELIM

Thy God was ever on the side of tyranny!

YAKOUB

Our reliance is on a trusty aid.

SELIM

On Leopold? Did'st thou see the miscreant fly?

YAKOUB

Were I to say my father, at his name
 Thou to the earth would'st bow thy pagan head.

SELIM

Some low-born serf; some restless vagabond,
 Like thou; some paid dependant of thy King.



YAKOUB, seizing a sword.

On my soul thou liest!

SELIM, to his attendants.

Soldiers, to my aid!

MYRRHA

Fall back! I bid you in the Vizier's name!
Give up that sword, Yakoub; and, Selim, thine!
Would'st thou degrade Honour, thy country's faith,
By striking a captive? Brother, forget it,
Nor waste thy courage upon such as he.

SELIM

This is too much! Myrrha, I bid thee heed
That what love fails in hatred may obtain.
Whate'er betide, as a Hungarian loves
So do I love, and as a Tartar, hate.

(Turning to Yakoub.)

Back to thy tribe! But, by the blood of Arpad,
I swear you giaours shall hear John Zrini's name
Shouted aloud above the battle's din.

SCENE V.

The same. ANCHAR

ANCHAR, approaching from the Vizier's tent.

Khan Selim!

SELIM

Who calls?

MAURO

Anchar, thy lieutenant.

ANCHAR, a paper in his hand.

This secret message to the German tyrant

From Staremberg, commanding in Vienna,
Into our hands has fallen.

SELIM, passing it to Mauro.

What does he say ?

MAURO, reading.

“ Not a day to lose ! ”

SELIM

A laconic message.

ANCHAR

And the reply is quicker than a sword-thrust.

MAURO

Simply “ to-morrow, ” and signed “ Grand Vizier. ”

SELIM

Is that all ?

ANCHAR

Read on !

MAURO

“ Selim must select

Some one as messenger who is a christian. ”

SELIM

His will shall be obeyed. Yakoub, come here !

YAKOUB

What is thy wish ?

SELIM

Give thanks to the great Prophet

For thy escape from my hatred and contempt !

Wilt thou be free ?

YAKOUB

Whom, I ? At what cost ?

Better death with honour than ignoble life !

SELIM

The demon pride hath o'er-much swoln thy soul ;

Subdue the haughtiness of thy Polish blood,
And answer frankly, wilt thou have thy freedom?

YAKOUB

Proceed!

SELIM

Return this message and its brief reply
To the Governor of Vienna's hands. For this
At once I will renounce all claim on thee
For ransom.

MYRRHA

Fare thee well! Remember Myrrha.
Go, be free!

YAKOUB, going.

I obey thee.

MAURO, pressing his hand.

To the Viennese
Announce the near approach of great Sobieski!
Farewell! Shortly I trust to meet again.

SCENE VI.

The same, except Yakoub.

MYRRHA, looking after him.

Tell me, Selim, why should'st thou wish his death?
I say he shall live. Hast thou yet forgotten
The two sons of the Vizier and their fate?
They loved alike his chief sultana, Fatima;
And in one day the Bosphorus received
Three nameless forms within its silent breast.
Thou, his adopted son, I bid take heed,
Or by the wise Mohammed, or Saint Stephen,

Should any harm alight on Yakoub's head,
I'll make thee answer for it with thine own.

SELIM

What, Myrrha!

MYRRHA

Not a word! Thou knowest me.
And now farewell! We meet no more until
We both shall stand before the throne of God.

SCENE VII.

SELIM, ANCHAR

SELIM

See how she goads me!

ANCHAR

With the vilest insults.

SELIM

What interest has she in this prisoner!
Dost thou know?

ANCHAR

What, has thy heart not told thee?

SELIM

No.

ANCHAR

He is her lover.

SELIM

That accursed slave?

ANCHAR

The King of Poland's son.

SELIM

Ah! Tell me more!

ANCHAR

In thy absence, chance revealed his royal birth;

I also found that secretly each night
They met beneath this cross.

SELIM, drawing his dagger.

His blood or thine !

ANCHAR

The Grand Vizier comes.

SELIM

The traitor has escaped !

ANCHAR

No ; I go with him. Say the word, he dies.

SELIM

Look at that inscription ; the words engraved
In golden characters upon that blade.

ANCHAR

“ Selim-ben-Zrini, from the mountain Emir.”

SELIM

Whomsoe'er it touches receives a wound
More mortal than the aspic's venomous bite.

ANCHAR

The Upas poison is inexorably quick.
A strange sensation presses on the brow ;
Then a wild laugh accompanies hot tears,
And the heart sinks into a stony sleep.

SELIM

Rejoin him ; thou art bearer of his firman.

ANCHAR

And of that weapon ?

SELIM

Go ! He or thou must die.

(Exit Anchar.)

SCENE VIII.

THE VIZIER KARA-MUSTAPHA; SELIM; GIAFFER;
Pachas and Suite.

THE VIZIER

Arise, Selim! Thy fame preceded thee,
And thy return predicts our early victory.
Though of a foreign race, I love thee well,
And under every phase of time and place
Demand thy counsel, as I seek it now.

SELIM

Vizier of Mohammed, my chief, my guide!
Thou knowest Leopold has left his stronghold,
And freedom owes to ignominious flight.
That tyrant, who a nation could enslave,
And trample twenty millions under foot,
I saw abjectly cringing in his chariot,
With his proud wife, about to be a mother,
Sitting unmoved and stately by his side.
Fugitives in hosts have passed the Danube,
Led by the monk, the gloomy Collonits,
Whose capture I will lavishly reward.
As 'twas thy wish for an assault, I left
The flying Leopold hidden in the woods.
Some twenty thousand of his choicest troops
Followed in my footsteps, and it rests with thee
To order their exchange or death. Let us on
At once! One blow will make Vienna thine.

THE VIZIER

But this is the great Prophet's festival.

SELIM

I came not for fêtes—'twas fighting brought me here.

THE VIZIER

The Sultan is my master, thou obeyest me !

SELM

To throw away an hour is almost treason.

THE VIZIER

Repress these haughty outbursts ; they offend me.

SELM

Dismiss these people !

THE VIZIER

Giaffer, withdraw awhile !

(The pachas and attendants retire.)

SCENE IX.

THE VIZIER, SELM

THE VIZIER

Now we are alone.

SELM

I ask for thy forgiveness

For a heart perhaps too truthful, too sincere.

Three months have passed away, as well thou knowest,

Since Allah willed that on Vienna's fall

Rome should alike be his. An open breach

Makes defence useless, and the place our own,

Yet rests Vienna as when first we came.

Burning with hatred, the believers stand

Three hundred thousand, in resistless force,

Waiting the signal to attack, in vain.

'Tis time such trifling ended ; let us win,

And afterwards our triumph celebrate.

More than a century has passed away

Since Solyman the Great, beneath these walls,
Prepared his legions for the sack of Rome.
But Charles the Fifth meanwhile aroused the west,
And marched against him. Dazzled by his glory,
Solyman fell back, yielding without a blow.
Let his example warn thee, for to-day,
In place of Charles the Fifth, King John the Third
Stands in the path, invincible and firm.
Remember that this lion of the north,
This whirlwind of the desert, may o'erwhelm thee,
And thy death-sentence would succeed defeat.

THE VIZIER

Selim, thou ravest ! That old northern lion,
Bent with the weight of years and reputation,
Will never dream again of leading armies.
Besides, the ten years' truce is unexpired.

SELIM

That ends to-morrow, and then he will be here.
Wilt thou awaken to this peril, or invite
Misfortune to befall thee ?

THE VIZIER

Let it fall

On those who dare defy me ! Read this paper.
The Servians and Lombardians have been bribed
To open to my troops the city gates.
To-morrow will behold, without a blow,
The brightest jewel in the Austrian crown
Fall into our hands. Candia had for chiefs
Beaufort and Lascaris, and seemed impregnable,
Yet we won it ; for gold has always been
A surer conqueror than fire and sword.
I would that thou could'st read my inmost soul !

How much it craves for Paris, and for Spain,
 Decked in the beauty of unsullied skies ;
 For Rome, with the freshness of eternal spring,
 Her gardens nourished by the flowing Tiber,
 To lull me into stupor with their charms !
 As life ends I should feel that I had lived
 If I could plant an independent throne
 In Italy ; one whose gigantic basis
 Should stretch unfettered far into the west ;
 If I could found an empire which should reach
 From Moussoul to the Ebro's very mouth,
 O'er which our ancestors at one time reigned !
 Such have my meditations been on nights
 When sleep has proved unfaithful to my eyes ;
 Such is my aim in leading the mixed host
 Of twenty different nations, little known,
 But goaded on by terror to the conquest
 Of the old west, whose princes are no more
 The shepherds of their people, but the wolves.
 Thou knowest now the yearnings of my soul.
 What is Vienna to the mighty will
 Of one who aims at making Europe his ;
 Who, risen from the yoke which long has curbed him,
 Craves in his turn to dominate the world ?
 Still, I need support—the aid of some warm heart,
 Of some strong fiery spirit such as thine.

SELIM

I am a Zrini ! What is thy desire ?

THE VIZIER

Help me in my love, and thou shalt be a king.

SELIM, *aside*.

His love !

THE VIZIER

Ah yes ; for soon the bloody crown
 From Hapsburg's head shall, with loud curses, roll
 To the feet of Tököly. It shall be thine !
 I will crown thee, but thou must lend thy arm.
 The Sultan will support us with the gold
 Wrung from tyrants, and Stamboul shall be his.
 Stamboul his, Belgrade thine, and mine the world !
 What thinkest thou ?

SELIM

All powerful is Allah !
 I will prove worthy of my name and race.
 I offer thee my blood, and may the spirit
 Of Ishmael light thee and direct thy thoughts !

THE VIZIER

What would'st thou, Giaffer ?

(Music is heard in the Vizier's tent.)

SCENE X.

The same ; GIAFFER ; HAYDÉE

GIAFFER

Myrrha, thy betrothed
 Is waiting to receive the nuptial ring.

THE VIZIER

Say that her wishes and commands are one.

(To Selim.)

(Exit Haydée.)

Write to thy hero, to that valiant King,
 And say one thousand ounces of his gold

Shall freedom give to twenty thousand prisoners.
 His weeping country and his children's love
 Should touch his heart more strongly than his pride ;
 But if he still determines to attack,
 He does so at the peril of his life,
 And in return shall find us soon at Warsaw.
 Thy hand, my son ! Some moments now to love,
 And in the evening I will wait thy coming.

(Exit with Glaffer and suite.)

SCENE XI.

SELIM, alone.

Gold, when he should conquer—Myrrha, too, his wife ?
 Never ! Where will this jealous fury lead me ?
 I reason vainly 'gainst its burning thrall ;
 I would be free, yet dare not take the step !
 Shall I, at the cost of blood, of faith, of soul,
 Earn in exchange a base and treacherous name ;
 See my shame draggled at his chariot wheels,
 And my beloved in a rival's arms ?
 Never will I give Vienna to his hands !
 I will hasten after Anchar, and this night
 May haply see him crushed beneath my feet.
 What sound is that ? The Muezzins' droning chant,
 The peaceful music of a wedding chorus,
 Instead of the wrathful clarion of war.
 Let us then strike ! The death cry of the battle
 Is to my ears a fitter sound than these.
 He shook me by the hand ; he called me son,
 At which I shuddered ; but 'tis over now—
 There rests despair, and death without revenge.
 My father, pardon !

CHORUS OF MUEZZINS AND SULTANAS, in the tent.

Ye roses of Allah, in sweetness and love,
 Sing your festival lay ;
 Ye bright beams of glory, descend from above
 In your golden array,
 And plant on the brow of the Prophet a crown ;
 While the perfumes of beauty and youth shower down
 On Mohammed the blest.
 Ye roses of God, who to heaven belong,
 In melodious chant sing your festival song,
 Sing us sweetly to rest !

(The door opens ; Selim starts back.)

A MUEZZIN, on the threshold.

Glory to Ayesha's son !

(Cannon heard.)

SELIM

Come then, Death,

Oh, come ! To thee I give my latest sigh,
 Oh, son of Mary ! and accursed die.

(Falls at the foot of the cross in the foreground.)

ACT II.

THE BETROTHAL

In the tent of the Vizier.—Scarlet drapery, studded with golden stars.—In the distance the standards of the Sultan and the Prophet in green silk, covered with silver stars.

SCENE I.

THE VIZIER, seated on a divan ; near to him MYRRHA, veiled (in an eastern dress) ; HAYDÉE, LEILA, MAGICIANS, ITCHOGLANS, FEMALE SLAVES of the seraglio ; MAURO in the background.

LEILA

(The song of the bird)

“ Flower of spring, I love thy rosy lip,
 Thy crimson breast !
 The wintry frosts thy summer beauties nip,
 And snatch thee ere thy charms we fairly sip
 Away to rest.”

Thus sang a bird, just risen from his nest.

The flower responded : “ If my beauties last
 But one short day,
 That day is worth, howe'er it hastens past,
 A month of autumn, or of winter's blast ;
 For while we stay,
 We pass in love our scanty lives away !”

THE VIZIER

So Sadi sings, the poet of the roses :
 Short is their destiny ; born but to-day,
 And dead ere evening closes on the scene.
 Let us then hasten to enjoy the love
 That buds so tardily ;—but thy gentle soul

Has taken flight upon a genie's wing,
And seems enthralled by some celestial strain.

(He uncovers Myrrha's face.)

I revel in thy splendour, thou fairest pearl
Of all the gems that I can call my own ;
I love thy beauteous hair, thy coral lips,
Thy stately form with all its winning grace,
Reminding with each movement of the palm
That bows before the zephyrs of Golconda.
Aurora cannot match thy cheeks' fair tint,
Nor the gazelle thine eyes. Would I could call
The glittering stars from heaven's cerulean arch,
And spread the lustrous jewels at thy feet !

MYRRHA

Vizier, I am a slave !

THE VIZIER

True, till to-night !

One moment listen ! I found thee at Stamboul
Without protection and in servitude ;
To-day thou art my idol and the queen
Of all the east. Thou shalt not have a wish,
A dream, a folly, but shall be fulfilled.
My bride to-morrow, all thy wants shall be
Served on their knees by subjugated kings.
On thy pure brow, a poem in itself,
Shall rest the loveliest diamond to be found
In all the caskets of the eastern sphere !
Of silk and gold thy palace shall be made,
Excelling in magnificence the mosque
Famed for its cupolas in silver wrought.
The lute shall sound for thee, and incense rise :
What wouldst thou more ?

MYRRHA

Nothing. I am a slave !

THE VIZIER, giving her his ring.

But free to-morrow. Take this talisman !
 I swear to thee, by Solyman the Great,
 And by the holy Prophet's sacred ring,—
 Oaths which to break would risk the curse of God—
 That thine the world shall be, and I its lord !

MYRRHA

I will remember this.

THE VIZIER

I have two chiefs,
 Mohammed and the Padishah, our brother ;
 A thousand times would I renounce them both—
 The Sultan's favour and the Prophet's heaven—
 For one sweet word of hope, one smile of love.

MYRRHA

Of hope ?—a flower broken ere full blown,
 And love died in me o'er my mother's grave.

THE VIZIER

Always this cold disdain, these bitter words !
 Cans't thou have had some troublous dream like those
 With which dark Eblis has disturbed my sleep ?
 Who can explain to me these vague forebodings ?

MYRRHA

'Tis an art familiar to the Grecian slaves ;
 Tell me, I will interpret.

THE VIZIER

'Twas, as to-day,
 The fête at Stamboul. The red sun had sunk,
 And night was grappling with the dying day
 For mastery, from the far Asian mountains
 To the palaces which line the Bosphorus.
 O'er the grand mosque, upon a monster crescent,

The name Mohammed shone in burnished gold ;
 And when reflected on the triple cupola,
 It traced an aureole around the dome.
 All Stamboul seemed to be one living blaze,
 Whilst Allah's praises filled the evening air.
 Suddenly I saw, with face serene and calm,
 The prophet Issa. With one hand upraised
 To heaven, he advanced, and a soft light
 Suffused his features as he gazed around.
 The people pressed to kiss his flowing robe,
 And as he crossed the threshold bowed their knees,
 And cried, "Hosanna to the Son of Mary!"
 Then, like the sword of the archangel Gabriel,
 A lightning flash the heavens set ablaze.
 The broken crescent fell with a loud crash,
 And sunk extinguished 'neath the troubled waves.
 The earth shook, and fled the sea before God's breath—
 The raging wind, and Stamboul was in flames.
 When I looked up, an eagle with white wings,
 Like a young sun, showered cascades of fire
 From a huge brazier, and the day awoke
 To shed its lustre o'er a golden cross
 Upon the spot where lately gleamed the crescent.
 One temple stood alone ; and all the crowd,
 As with the voice of heaven, in rapture cried
 Aloud, "Hosanna to the Son of Mary!"
 A troubled dream indeed ; and still I have
 The pyre, the eagle and the burnished cross
 Ever before my eyes. I see them now !

MYRRHA

Consult the Arab arrows, or search out
 The meaning by some verse of Holy Writ !

(Reading.)

"The Prophet saith, all men on earth must die ;

"And God alone can reign omnipotent.
 "A festival accursed in blood must end!"

THE VIZIER

Lay aside the Koran! I have no fear
 For all its warnings. What do the sages say?
 "What is ordained to be will surely happen."
 None can escape the laws of destiny.
 The angel Azrael may strike us down
 By day, by night, in battle, in security,
 Or in the melting ecstasies of love.
 Death is but sleep without a care or pain!
 Let us then love! Hope is a fickle thing;
 Faith a mere reed that yields to the first breeze;
 Glory a counterfeit; friendship but a lie.
 Not one of them is worth the tiniest leaf
 That lends its fragrance to the narguilhe,
 And our best successes are but lucky crimes.
 Give me these golden wine-cups and the wine,
 Sweet mixture of the roses of the Ganges
 And the aroma of Araby the blest!
 Sing to us one of thy Athenian songs,
 Some native melody!

MYRRHA

I will obey thee.

My mother's heart has often throbb'd response
 To the vibrations of this lyre. To you,
 Unhappy sons of Homer and Tyrtæus,
 To you, my weeping sisters, will I sing.
 Listen to the music of the ancient world!

HAYDÉE, bringing the lyre.

Throw thy whole soul into those silver strings!

MYRRHA, aside to Haydée.

Hast thou seen the prisoners?

HAYDÉE, aside to Myrrha.

Yes ; and each alike
Is ready at a word to burst his shackles
And give thee joyfully his blood, his life.

MYRRHA

Would they were here ! The peril is extreme !
(She mounts upon a bronze pedestal, her hair disheveled, and commences
a prelude on the lyre. Children group around her.)

Where, oh ! my country, are the days
When from the far Ionian sea
Fair Aphrodite rose to gaze
On liberty !
Athens, awake ! Thy former braves
Have changed from warriors to slaves.
The German and Mongolian race
Thy hoary Parthenon disgrace,
And alien soldiers tramp and tread
The pathway of thy classic dead.
Oh ! Lacedemon, would that now
We could thy famed three hundred raise !
Leonidas, thy laurelled brow
Would soon be decked with greener bays !

Where'er the blood runs warm and fast,
It follows that a soul exists ;
And sleeping Greece aroused at last
Peers through the mists ;
And with awakened light bedecks
Her beauty, ripened mid its wrecks ;
And with maternal arms stretched out,
Cries, with a loud resistless shout,
" To arms ! Your venging swords unsheath ;
" My hands shall twine the conqueror's wreath
" Around your standards, when my tears
" Are staunch'd by foul barbaric gore.
" Ye are, in spite of suffering years,
" My children still, and evermore !"

MAURO, interrupting her.

Myrrha!

THE VIZIER

Disturb her not! I love to hear
The wonders of thy magic harmony;
They are to me as welcome as the music
Of the spring, blended with the perfumes fresh
From the gardens of the Bosphorus. Continue!

MYRRHA

“To arms! arise and show your sires
“That ye are no less great than they;
“Recall your latent slumbering fires
“Dying away.
“And let the thirst for vengeance still
“Your long down-trodden bosoms fill;
“And, as with lightning in your hands,
“Burn to the roots with Freedom’s brands
“Oppression’s blighting, poisonous tree.
“Then will your craven tyrants see
“That when united you are strong.
“On with the cross triumphant go,
“With liberty your battle song,
“And hurl destruction on the foe!”

MAURO

Lord! may this holy prophecy come true!

THE VIZIER

Good! Israel builds upon Messiah’s coming,
You seek a ruler of Byzantine race.
I believe it, for so it has been written—
But a joyous melody befits thy voice
Much better than the best of rebel songs.
Dost thou remember the sultana Fatima
And her sad fate? She was as young and fair
As thou, but in one hour forgot her duty.

One night upon the dark and placid stream
 Glided a noiseless skiff. The waters yawned ;
 And as they closed again, they shut from view
 One who had sinned against me and her sin.

MYRRHA, *aside*.

Murderer !

THE VIZIER

I do believe thou lovest me ;
 But shouldst thou e'er be tempted to be false,
 Upon the morrow thou shalt meet her fate.
 Enough. Now come, ye roses of great Allah ;
 No longer hide your beauty with the veil,
 But celebrate, with the song of the stars,
 Two other lights as brilliant—youth and love ;
 For Myrrha reigns to-day, to-morrow glory.

LEILA

(The song of the star)

Alone great Allah reigned in starless space,
 And oft in sadness ;
 He made the flowers of heaven his throne to grace
 And light with gladness.
 And then fair Eve, the flower of Eden, came
 The world to light,
 And gave the life it lacked until the flame
 Of love burned bright.

THE VIZIER, offering a cup of wine to Myrrha
 To our loves !

SCENE II.

The same. GIAFFER.

GIAFFER

My lord !

THE VIZIER

Giaffer, why art thou here?

GIAFFER

Beneath the cursed German city's walls
 A christian prisoner, bearer of thy firman,
 Has wounded mortally a moslem aga.

THE VIZIER

A prisoner?

GIAFFER

By Selim sent an hour ago
 To bear thy answer to Vienna.

MYRRHA, trembling as she puts down the cup.

'Tis Yakoub!

THE VIZIER

Has he escaped?

GIAFFER

No, my escort seized him
 With this dagger in his hands.

MYRRHA

Oh!

THE VIZIER

Bring him here!

SCENE III.

The same. YAKOUB, bound.

YAKOUB, perceiving Myrrha.

Myrrha!

MYRRHA, veiling herself.

Hush!

THE VIZIER

Is this the assassin?

GIAFFER

It is.

THE VIZIER, pointing to the standard.

Bow thy slave's head before that sacred emblem!

YAKOUB

I never bend my head except to God.

THE VIZIER

Choose thy own punishment: the sword or fire.

YAKOUB

It matters little.

THE VIZIER

Or wouldst thou prefer the torture,
And then be thrown to the lions for a meal?

MYRRHA

Take care!

THE VIZIER

They crave for thee, my second Daniel!

YAKOUB

My days are writ in heaven as well as thine,
King Balshazzar!

THE VIZIER

Thy name?

YAKOUB

Yakoub, son of Mary.

THE VIZIER

Thy age?

YAKOUB

Eighteen.

THE VIZIER

What may thy country

YAKOUB

I own a people who have never feared
To give a life to God for a noble death!

THE VIZIER, to Myrrha.

The slave is bold!

YAKOUB

Thy power I defy,
For never will a Pole become thy slave!

THE VIZIER

The dream! Yes, 'twas he! I give thee liberty;
Remove his irons! Many powerful princes—
Apaffi, Kantemir, Cantacuzene,
The flower of Servia, Dacia and Hungary—
Have left already the Ragusian league.
See here the sons and daughters of thy kings;
Their blood, like thine, flows with a roseate hue.
Live, then, with us, and make our causes one!
I am acting a good part; for in my hands
I hold thy fate, and for those terms will spare
Myself the pain of dooming thee to death.
Choose for thyself!

YAKOUB

I serve thee? I link my life
With traitors? I, who from my earliest breath
Received the love of freedom and of country
With my ancestral blood. Shall I debase
My name by acting such a coward's part?
But surely thou couldst ne'er have had the hope
That I could thus from all my nature stray!
Such offer might affect the Tartar Selim,
But I prefer to die; and thou shalt see
My blood can flow as richly red as thine!

THE VIZIER

Guards, approach!

MYRRHA, throwing herself at his feet.

Oh! my lord, have mercy on him!

THE VIZIER

Why those tears? Hast thou forgotten Fatima?

SCENE IV.

The same. SELIM. Soldiers.

SELIM, at the door.

Vizier, to arms!

THE VIZIER

Who hath recalled thee here,
And whence thy abject terror, this alarm?

SELIM

To arms, at once! the King, great John Sobieski,
Is with a powerful force in front of thee.

THE VIZIER

Sobieski in our front? By what strange miracle?

SELIM

I have seen myself the vanguard of his troops.
We have no choice, I tell thee, but to fight.

THE VIZIER

Thy Neustadt prisoners have escaped their tombs;
The mine is charged, let it be sprung at once!

SELIM

Not so! Rather may Azrael strike me down!
Lead the assault, let us rush upon our prey!

THE VIZIER

Stay!

SELIM, rushing towards the standard.

Advance, ye sons of Islam, young or old.

Yakoub!

YAKOUB

Yes, thy victim ; there is thy dagger.

Is Anchar killed ?

SELIM

GIAFFER

I closed his eyes myself.

I will avenge him !

SELIM

MYRRHA, throwing herself before him.

Strike me, if thou durst !

Myrrha !

THE VIZIER

MYRRHA

Hold to thy words. "Take this talisman.

"I swear to thee, by Solyman the Great,

"And by the holy Prophet's sacred ring—

"Oaths which to break would risk the curse of God—

"That thine the world shall be, and I its lord!"

SELIM

Nothing can bind the promise of the faithful
Made to an unbelieving giaour.

MYRRHA

Selim,

Another word and both of us shall die !

Thou lov'st him then ?

SELIM

MYRRHA

All captives are my brothers.

SCENE V.

The same. ANCHAR, brought in dying by soldiers.

SELIM

'Tis he! Revenge!

ANCHAR, recovering consciousness.

Where am I? and what sound
Of mourning woke me? Selim, look at me.
Some cunning fire has made my heart a hell.

THE VIZIER

Point out the assassin who has slain thee!

ANCHAR, rising.

'Tis Yakoub.

YAKOUB, showing the dagger.

Wretch, thou liest! Thou knowest well
That thy employer and accomplice, Selim,
Owns this dagger. And had I not the right
To thwart his murderous scheme? In killing thee
I have but done an act of wholesome justice.

THE VIZIER, throwing a handful of sequins.

There are a hundred sequins for thy need!

ANCHAR

Gold? Vizier, thou art jesting! for I feel
A deadly poison gnawing at my heart.

THE VIZIER, to Mauro.

This chain I offer for his life.

ANCHAR

No, no!
Beneath the holy standard I will die,

As all the faithful crave to welcome death.

(They carry him to the standard.)

My breast is in a flame ; I die with thirst !

THE VIZIER

Myrrha, pour out a little Cyprian wine

For this good man.

(Myrrha fills a cup.)

ANCHAR

To the pyre, accursed slave !

Wine ? Dost thou see my blood beneath thy feet ?

Thy death shall be as terrible as mine !

May Allah crush thee thus, infernal pagan !

(He breaks the cup.)

Vizier, have a care ! This fiend, this woman,

Is thy evil genius !

(Embracing the flag, and falling contorted with agony.)

Oh ! great Mohammed,

Give into our hands these long-promised walls !

To the breach ! to the assault ! For whom can be

These mourning chimes that sound a funeral knell ?

Alas ! the cross has won ! There, in the shade,

I see the victor—Lo ! He comes ! 'Tis he,

Thy father !

(He falls at the Vizier's feet.)

THE VIZIER

It is over.

GIAFFER

He is dead.

The angel Azrael has taken flight ;

His soul is in the skies.

THE VIZIER

Women, retire!

And see thou that the honours of a martyr
Be rendered to this true believer! Go!

(They bear away the body of Anchar, followed by Sellm. — Haydée withdraws with the women.)

SCENE VI.

The same. COUNT MALIGNY.

MALIGNY

Vizier, for thee.

THE VIZIER

A letter! and from whom?

MALIGNY

From King Louis the Great.

THE VIZIER, reading.

“The young Sobieski,

“Our godson, sent to Vienna by his father,

“Is a prisoner of thine.” Oh! day of Allah!

Oh! happy day! 'tis he!

MALIGNY, aside to Yakoub, giving him a paper.

For thee alone.

(Yakoub places the paper in his bosom.)

THE VIZIER

“If he still live, I, Louis, for the ransom

“Of this boy, will give the half of Austria.”

For a most christian king that is not much.

I will outbid his offer by my own.

This exchange accomplished, I would propose

At Rome to meet him on the Tiber's banks.

MALIGNY

If Europe wishes, all the east is free.

THE VIZIER

Europe may be his, but the east is mine.

MALIGNY

The world is God's. What shall I tell my king?

THE VIZIER

To come himself to listen to my answer.

MALIGNY

The conqueror of Rocroy is not the man
To heed a single moment such a bidding.

THE VIZIER

Speak to me of Paris, for I hope one day,
When I have triumphed o'er the king, thy master,
To dwell there. By the voice of my diviners,
Allah assures me that it shall be so.

MALIGNY

A Saracenic chief invading France?
Thy predecessors tried it. On the plains
Of Tours their bones lie, by the vultures stripped.
And such will be thy mercenaries' fate
Should they but dare our cities to approach.
Our generous soil, so profuse of heroes,
Gives willingly asylum to the vanquished,
But to all murderers a ready grave.
Give up thy captive, my offers are sincere;
If not, prepare to meet us with thy foes!

THE VIZIER, crushing a flower.

Take to thy king, great Louis, that fleur-de-lis!

(Throwing it on the ground.)

MALIGNY, retiring.

We shall meet again!

SCENE VII.

The same, except MALIGNY.

THE VIZIER

By heaven! every wish
Of mine is now fulfilled. Secure that man!
Yakoub, thou wilt be reconducted hence
To the German camp, in order to point out
This royal child, for Allah wills his death.

YAKOUB

Pagan, thou may'st kill me, but insult me not!

THE VIZIER

At the lions' feast one guest is still required.

MYRRHA

Hold! 'Tis my will that he be free and live.

THE VIZIER

Diviner, take those arrows; I would know
What is the decree of fate!

THE DIVINER

Fate decrees,
"Steel for steel, blood for blood, and death for death."

THE VIZIER, rising.

Death to all giaours!

MYRRHA

Kill me, then, barbarian,
For I, too, am a christian!

THE VIZIER

Child, thy mind
By some strange fascination is disturbed.
Art thou not the sister of Mohammed ?

MYRRHA

I am Myrrha Lasearis, and I bear
For thy Sultan but loathing and contempt.
It was thy cruel jewess of Naplouse,
Who, in her jealous hatred, caused the death
By poison of my mother. Thinkest thou
That I, daughter of the Ukraine and of Greece,
Could e'er be reconciled to such a crime ?
Strike ! since by death alone I can be free ;
With a Polish spirit will I wait the blow.
Fool, did'st thou ever dream that I could live
The accomplice of my mother's murderer ?
Strike ! Let my death increase thy hideous guilt !

THE VIZIER

Ah ! I will crush thee yet ! Giaffer, avenge me !

YAKOUB

Let my blood suffice, for it is my king's.

THE VIZIER

Thou his son ?

YAKOUB

I declare it.

THE VIZIER

Thanks, great Allah !
I have within my power his race, his people,
And himself. I would exchange thee readily
Wert thou a simple soldier's son ; but thou
Belongest to a hero, and thy life

Is a perpetual menace to our peace.
By what token can'st thou be recognised ?

YAKOUB

By my courage.

THE VIZIER

Yakoub has his sire's heart ;
But amongst you there are thousands who pretend
To be descendants of the Jagellons.

YAKOUB

Then look at this device !

(He exposes a white eagle on his breast.)

THE VIZIER

A cowering eagle !

YAKOUB

Thou liest ! for behold him without blemish !

(The march of Sobieski is heard in the distance.)

Dost thou hear those trumpets ?

THE VIZIER

It is the storm.

YAKOUB

Not so. They are the clarions of the victor
Calling the combatants. See how his wing
Hath swept away the shelter of thy tent !

(A gust of wind tears open the back of the tent, showing the summits of the mountains in the distance.)

Look through the quivering gap and thou wilt see
The Polish soldiers on the far horizon—
Those giants of Chocim, those grand hussars—
Moving in masses, like a silver wave

Illumined by the sun! Thou knowest them well.
 Oft has my sire declared that heaven itself,
 If shaken on its base and sinking down,
 Upon their lances' points could be upheld.
 That standard red and white, 'tis ours; 'tis he,
 The eagle of great Boleslas, at last
 Swooping upon you in a thunder-clap.

THE VIZIER

Children of the Prophet, on to Vienna!

ALL

On to Vienna!

(The Vizier moves towards the standard; a flash of lightning strikes it at his feet.)

YAKOUB

Ah! it is now too late;
 Thou, like that standard, shalt be smitten down!
 Thou tremblest, Vizier! I understand thy fears—
 Thy conqueror is before thee. I would give
 My life's blood for a weapon! In his name,
 I defy you all! Now am I his son?

THE VIZIER

I believe thou art. Mussulmans, be ready
 For the battle!

(He gives to Mauro a sheet of paper bearing his signature.)

Write as follows! "In the names
 "Of Osman and Mohammed, I address thee,
 "King John Sobieski. If we can be friends,
 "I will to-morrow render to thy hands
 "Twenty thousand prisoners. Should'st thou refuse,
 "Their heads alone I will send back to thee
 "In the shape of ammunition from our guns!
 "Answer by thy son! Kara-Mustapha, Vizier."

God omnipotent!

MYRRHA

THE VIZIER

This festival will end,
As thou hast said, in blood.

(To Glaffer.)

Take him this sword
In token of my friendship!

(He tests it, and it breaks.)

Here is another.

This one appears to me of finer temper.
Thus will I shatter your assembled kings;
And to-morrow we will say, "Order now reigns
"Throughout Vienna." Go!

YAKOUB

Yes, it will reign,
According to your desert views—in slavery.

THE VIZIER

A gibbet will subdue that uncouth valour!
Recall Maligny!

(Maligny is brought in by Selim.)

To John Sobieski's camp,
Convey this missive. Thou must hold thyself
Accountable to me for him.

YAKOUB

Forsooth!
I am able to answer for myself!

THE VIZIER

To the ramparts all! Selim, in an hour
I shall expect to see thee back again!

(Selim goes out. Yakoub in passing near Myrrha gives her Maligny's letter.)

SCENE VIII.

THE VIZIER, MYRRHA.

THE VIZIER

It is thy will that Yakoub shall not die ;
 He shall live then, and I will acquiesce
 In all thy generous wishes may demand.
 Thou pitiest these giaours, whom I hate—
 But I will restrain myself in victory,
 And for a proper ransom quickly hope
 To give him back into his father's hands.
 Master of the world, to thy love I yield,
 But thou must make concession in return,
 And when the first bright star shall pierce the skies,
 Thyself assume the crown and veil of Fatima.

MYRRHA

Never!

THE VIZIER

If Yakoub returns not in an hour,
 The christian camp, already undermined,
 Shall in the air be blown. And if the king
 To-morrow shall be tempted to reprisals,
 I will add his son's head to that nuptial ring !

(He goes out. The cannonade is heard.)

SCENE IX.

MYRRHA, alone, reading the letter.

Follow thy accursed fate! What do I see?
 Our plans applauded by the King of France?
 Yakoub shall live, my love misled me not,

And my heart told me of his high descent.
 How noble and how proud he seemed to-day,
 When with his arms stretched out he made them start
 At the very mention of his father's name !
 I envy him, I love him, I will save him,
 Son of Sobieski ! at whatever cost,
 Whether it be of honour or of life.
 Die out my love as perishes the flower
 Too early gathered in the opening dawn,
 Before its lover, the enraptured sun,
 Its perfume can inhale upon the breeze.
 Let me prove worthy of him ! 'tis for him
 That I will die, albeit he loves me not.
 To my task ! I have had enough of tears !

SCENE X.

MYRRHA, MAURO, PRISONERS.

MAURO

Here are the prisoners.

MYRRHA

My brothers, welcome

The fulfilment of our vengeance is at hand,
 Our friends of Paros, Cyprus, and of Crete,
 Wait but the signal prearranged to rise,
 And wake the echoes with a song of freedom !
 France supports us ; swear you will follow me !

PRISONERS

We swear !

MYRRHA

Let but this day behold us free,
 Our brutal masters with their camp shall perish.

A PRISONER

Where shall we find weapons ?

MYRRHA

In our tyrants' hands.

A PRISONER

Let us act as one, and the day is ours.

MAURO

For victory I rest my hope in God !

MYRRHA

Yakoub shall be saved ; I will go at once,
And tell his father that all christian Greece
Is anxiously imploring him for aid.
To arms !

(They go out.)

This ring will pass me to his presence.

MAURO, *aside*.

Her feelings would betray her—so I rest
A stranger still to my beloved child.
This sacrifice I make to thee, my country,
And to thy greatness, but to-morrow's sun
Shall flash upon thee in thy ancient splendour !

(Exit.)

SCENE XI.

MYRRHA, *alone*.

My heart is filled with ecstasy unspeakable ;
The soul of a whole nation lives within me.
At last I feel free !—Mustapha must die.
At the same moment, ready to our aid
And rushing on his panic-stricken army,
Our heroes shall efface it from the earth.

Thus, in one day will I destroy the schemes
 Of tyrants, and avenge me of the deaths
 Of ancestors, of mother, and of country—
 Will be the means of saving those I love—
 Give Yakoub to his father—and then die.
 Aid my labours, ye children of the Piasts,
 And stifle in my breast, ye sons of glory,
 My slavish terrors and my woman's love !
 To thee, oh ! sacred liberty, I give
 My heart, my soul ; to thee, my cradle Athens,
 I give my blood ; and to Illissus' shores,
 I offer up the life God gave to me.
 They come ! I see them gliding on the banks,
 Our saviours who have talked to me in dreams.
 They strike the earth, it opens and I see
 An avenging race awaking to my call.
 A martyred people, armed but with their chains,
 Destroy their oppressors. All glory be
 To the sons of Greece ! And thou, proud Vizier,
 Shalt fall beneath my hand, and falling, see
 Two glorious nations fetterless and free !

(She rushes into the Vizier's apartment.)

SCENE XII.

(FOR GRAND REPRESENTATIONS.)

On the heights of the Kahleberg before Vienna.—Vineyards on the slopes, intersected by ravines.

The King JOHN SOBIESKI, advancing with his army ; the Grand Hetman STANISLAS IABLONOWSKI, JEROME LUBOMIRSKI, the Duc DE CROY, POLISH and GERMAN CHIEFS ; the escort of the King, HUSSARS with eagles' wings upon their shoulders ; in the distance the cannonade of the siege.

JOHN, on horseback.

My friends, your chargers sink with weariness :

Twenty-eight days with scarce a halt ! Our march
 Has been a rough one, as your damaged baggage
 Scattered along the road will testify.
 In the Turkish camp to-morrow you shall rest.
 Enclosed by Selim with a wall of fire,
 For two long months Vienna has awaited us.
 Let us push forward to relieve her now !
 Send an express this instant to Lorraine.
 Count Lubomirski, I will follow quickly ;
 For I must be the first to drink of the stream
 That flows before the sad and widowed city.

(Jerome departs. To the Grand Hotman.)

Stanislas, those passes must be cleared in front.
 Turks in a vineyard ! what would Allah say !

DE CROY

'Tis Buda's Pacha with his janizaries.

JOHN

There is the cure, my children, for our wrongs !
 A grand seraglio, decked in silk and velvet !
 Let us show these pagans we are still the same—
 The soldiers of Chocim ! The crescent rides
 Triumphant o'er Saint Stephen's christian church.
 'Twas planted there by Solyman the Great
 To save the temple from the moslem guns.
 Upon that leaning tower we will replace
 The golden crescent by a nobler sign,
 The pure white eagle of our race. Advance !
 Before to-night I will embrace my son ;
 For when I swear to win, the fight is won.

(The army resumes its march.)

ACT III.

THE CAMP OF CHARLES OF LORRAINE

A wooded hill.—On the right, the chapel of Saint Leopold with a picture of the Madonna.—On the left, a partial view of the city and the ramparts.—A bridge across the Danube.—In the distance, the Turkish camp and the tent of the Vizier.

SCENE I.

CHARLES OF LORRAINE, JEROME LUBOMIRSKI.

CHARLES

That illustrious hero hastens to our aid
With the envoys of the Empire and of Rome?

JEROME

I saw him at the passage of the bridge
In front of Tuln. He gave me this reply
In answer to your note of yesterday.
“Go to Charles the Fifth, and tell him I am here;
“Vienna calls me and I come at once,
“Without delay.”

CHARLES

Then is Vienna saved.
Montjoie and Saint Denis! He could not send
A happier message by a better hand.

JEROME

A flattering speech well worthy of thyself,
Charles of Lorraine, nephew of the Emperor!

CHARLES

The queen, his consort then was not averse
To his departure?

JEROME

The country and the court
 Declare themselves in turn for France and Louis,
 And for Leopold, issue of Charlemagne.
 One day the legates from Germany and Rome
 Knelt at the hesitating monarch's feet.
 "King," said count Walstein, "support the Emperor!"
 "Protect the christians!" cried the Ephesian bishop.
 The King at once convened the Polish diet,
 And assembling an army, said, "'Tis there,
 "Beneath Vienna's walls, that glory lies."
 He marched, and he is here! The sobbing queen
 Handed him his arms; and he, all joyfulness,
 Wondered at her tears. "I will weep," she said,
 "With thy second son, too young to go with thee,
 "At the Redeemer's feet when thou art gone."

CHARLES

Wife worthy of a king! Her soul, indeed,
 Is great! When will he come?

JEROME

He comes to-night

With an advanced guard of some sixteen squadrons.

CHARLES

The love of battle has with eagle's wings
 The soldiers' feet equipped. Great God, such men,
 Such warriors in the world are rare enough!
 Their mother, Poland, in all things prolific,
 Endows them with her iron, salt and grain,
 With valiant hearts, proud spirits, and strong arms.
 And what a chief is theirs! What power of mind!
 What energy! To make so few short days
 Suffice to march from Cracow to Vienna,

Where the first news awaits him of his son,
And that, perhaps, the tidings of his death.

JEROME

The most heroic heart we always find
Most stricken down with grief. To save his son
He willingly would give his own right hand.
Three times has Poland purchased with her blood
The cross's safety and the crescent's fall!

CHARLES

For which we are the debtor. But the camp
Is stirring on the river's banks.

JEROME

That voice
Is like a cry of triumph!

CHARLES

Again, again.

JEROME

And here is Poland's King!

SCENE II.

The same. JOHN SOBIESKI, MALIGNY, German princes.

JOHN

Health to Godfrey's son!

CHARLES

I salute thee, King Sobieski, for thy name,
Thrice honoured, brings into my heart more joy
Than did the sight of Solyman the Great
To my predecessor Godfrey.

JOHN

Have good faith,
 Duke Charles! The hetman Iablonowski comes
 To-night; but I this morning hastened on
 In order to prepare for victory.
 Dost thou grudge my coming?

CHARLES

Rivals hitherto
 In glory, that which Louis took from me
 Will John Sobieski's might again restore.
 Under such a master I am proud to serve.

JEROME

Count Maligny.

JOHN

Ambassador of France,
 To see thee here is better than a hope:
 It makes victory assured.

MALIGNY

They know at Paris
 Thou art her lover.

JOHN

Already has she two—
 Condé and Turenne.

MALIGNY

Lovers of a mistress
 Who deceives them.

JOHN

What hope have I?

MALIGNY, handing him a diploma.

My King
 Proves her fidelity by offering thee
 Through me the order of the Holy Spirit.

JOHN

Ah! 'tis indeed an order to possess!
 And nobly given; anon I will reply.
 My grandsire, dying captive, left to me
 The duty to avenge him. I will do it!
 But among these knights who warmly welcome me
 I seek for one in vain. Is Yakoub wounded?
 Jerome, Prince Charles—you do not answer me.
 It is your King commands. Tell him I am here.
 Dishonoured? Oh! great God! it cannot be,
 He is my son! He is dead—tell me how
 And where!

JEROME

Thy son is prisoner. Punish me
 And be merciless!

JOHN

My son a prisoner? Wretch!
 My Yakoub, and before thine eyes? The son
 I charged thee with; but thou shalt answer for him.

JEROME

Sire!

JOHN

Oh! pardon me! The business of war
 Cannot extinguish in the human heart,
 In high and low alike, the tender instinct
 Which a man bears for a beloved son,
 The hope of his own blood!

JEROME

Let all of mine—

JOHN

Be still! and let my soul in silence weep!

CHARLES

Let us go!

JOHN

No, stay ; who can blame these tears ?
 They will not weaken a good soldier's zeal.
 Let us regard the safety of the state,
 And think of victory ! Tell me how he died.
 Was he worthy of his country, and of us ?
 Tell me, I implore thee ! Oh ! tell me all !

JEROME

'Twas at the fight at Presbourg. Flag in hand,
 While showing us the way to Neustadt camp,
 He wounded fell, struck by the Tartar missiles.

JOHN

In the breast ?

CHARLES

Yes, sire.

JOHN

Thank God ! The villains !
 And Stephen ? Thou art silent ! Living God !
 And there was no one there to save my child !
 What can I tell the queen !

JEROME

Thy work accomplished,
 Peace will follow ; and freed, he will return
 Laden with glory. All our leaders know
 How well he fought, and I believe him still
 A prisoner.

JOHN

'Tis false ! Thou knowest him not !
 He would die rather than become a slave !
 Charles, thou can'st assure me that he bravely died,
 As did my brother Mark and Zolkiewski.
 Three generations to avenge—alone !

Think of thy glory!

CHARLES

JOHN

A vain delusion!

JEROME

Of his brother Alexander!

JOHN

And think, too,

Of his mother! Ah, it is blood we need!

His death has made no change; and I will weep

For him when I shall have avenged his loss!

Let us now be calm; and beneath those walls

To-morrow he shall have a noble funeral.

Go, Jerome, to the council with the chiefs;

And thou, Prince, tell me of Vienna's state!

SCENE III.

JOHN SOBIESKI, CHARLES OF LORRAINE.

CHARLES

A message of ill-omen has arrived

This moment from the hardly-pressed besieged.

It speaks of their distress. Count Staremberg

Has sent it by a trusty dragoman.

JOHN

It is!

CHARLES

“Not a day to lose.”

JOHN

His spirit fails.

Reply to Staremberg: “Fear no reverse!”

Continue!

CHARLES

“Hunger and disease have thinned
“Our ranks more than the constant fusillade ;
“And greater trouble still : The city gates
“This night will be delivered by the Servians
“To the enemy’s hands. An exploded mine
“Will make an easy passage for the victors.
“Vienna stands at bay at last, not knowing
“If a to-morrow will be hers or not.”

JOHN

And the army ?

CHARLES.

Oh, that is worst of all !
The Empire’s only hope is in a force
Of twenty thousand men, benumbed by fear
Since the flight of their dastard Emperor.
Duty calls them ; but so depressed are they
By fright, that easier far would be the task
To cultivate the oak amid the sands
That border on the Nile, than to restore
To hearts so disaffected by despair
The courage sufficient to be conquerors.

JOHN

And Mustapha ?

CHARLES

There is his camp, all gold
And silk, its pagan splendour spreading out
Almost at our feet. Instead of plunder
Preferring a good ransom, the miscreant waits
For traitors to perform his easy work.
The thunderbolt will strike from unarmed hands.
Such is the state of things about Vienna.

JOHN

I shall gain small honour in defeating him.
 In Leopold's absence I am responsible,
 And we will act at once. Their line is weak
 In the centre : I will attack it there,
 Break it, and seize the wild boar in his lair.

CHARLES

Will it succeed ?

JOHN

Great God ! it is assured.
 A leader, furnished with three hundred squadrons,
 To leave us unmolested to approach,
 And post an army in his very face,
 Already is a beaten man. Is it true,
 His camp is in disorder ? What do they say ?

SCENE IV.

The same. JEROME, COLLONITS.

COLLONITS

King John Sobieski ?

JEROME

It is he.

COLLONITS

I crave

One word. I thought he had upon the front
 Of his cuirass the royal eagle chased.

JEROME

His armour is of brass. 'Tis underneath
 That beats the eagle's heart.

COLLONITS, presenting a sealed letter.

Sovereign august. . .

JOHN

August without an empire.

COLLONITS, reading.

“Having learned
 “That King Sobieski has at length united
 “His army with that of our nephew Charles,
 “Herewith we entrust him with the chief command
 “Of all the force that is assembled there.
 “In the names of the Emperors of Rome
 “And of Byzantium, Leopold, by God’s grace.”

JEROME

Or Satan’s.

JOHN

To-night look out for an eclipse!

COLLONITS

In the Apocalypse Saint John predicts it.

JOHN

Tell the emperor that to-morrow’s sun,
 In the camp of the Turks before Vienna,
 Shall salute him when he wakes. Admit the chiefs.

SCENE V.

The same. MALIGNY, GERMAN PRINCES, COUNCIL.

CHARLES

Sire, the representatives of the Empire
 And the provinces are now before you.

JOHN, to the generals.

Kings and princes, I salute you heartily!
Never since the days of your famed ancestors,
The crusaders, have so many glorious names
Assembled in one camp. To my good sword
The emperor has confided his just cause,
And in your aid he will not be deceived.
Having placed the Danube between myself
And Europe, I have sworn, as becomes a king,
To conquer or to die. Be ready all
To fight to-morrow at the break of day.

A GERMAN PRINCE

Twenty-four thousand men, however good,
Against ten times that number have no chance.
Let us the promised reinforcements wait!

JOHN

After we have won we will count the dead.

ANOTHER PRINCE

But our people are sinking from fatigue.

JOHN

To-morrow's fight will give us all fresh spirits.

FIRST PRINCE

But so wide a breach will supply no foothold.

JOHN

With pagan corpses we will fill it up.

SECOND PRINCE

But no place can stand more than two months' siege.

JOHN

Yet, with God's help, one day will make it safe.

FIRST PRINCE

But...

JOHN

But—at every step I am beset.
 I have not come so far but to remain,
 Either with or without you, as you will.
 Light up your watch-fires mid those ancient larches,
 To tell Vienna we have come to aid her
 With our Polish eagles; and let the grace
 Of courage be rekindled in your hearts.
 By this sign,

(Laying his hand on his sword.)

I say you shall be conquerors!

COLLONITS

Ah, sire!

JOHN

At Warsaw I have left my sceptre.
 All I ask here is to be called your chief,
 But on your knees as though I were your King,
 Swear to obey me on this sword!

THE GERMAN PRINCES, bowing.

We swear!

JOHN

May God record your oaths!

SCENE VI.

The same. THE DUC DE CROY.

DE CROY

The envoy, sire,
 Of the Vizier has arrived.

JOHN

He shall have

My answer openly upon this spot
Which I have expressly chosen.

COLLONITS, embarrassed.

But, sire—

JOHN

I will have it so. Bid him come!

DE CROY

He is here.

SCENE VII.

The same. SELIM; GIAFFER; Attendants. (Selim wears a bandage on his eyes which an officer removes.)

SELIM

Thanks be to fate for giving me the power
To shake the hand of our most worthy foe,
Great King Sobieski. Thou art deemed to be
Invincible by all the eastern world;
And throughout Islam thou art styled "The Brave."

JOHN

Well, what dost thou want?

SELIM

I would speak with thee.

(Pointing to Collonits.)

That man here?

JOHN

Say on! There is the Archduke Charles,

John of Saxony and Waldeck ; and all
The heads of the empire.

SELIM

Except the emperor.

JOHN

What does that matter? Let us to our task.
Here are the arbitrators in the case.

SELIM

In the Grand Vizier's name—

JOHN

Spare me the titles.

SELIM

I, Selim Khan Gheray, messenger of peace,
Offer to thee this bow-string or this sword.
It is peace or war. If thou wilt choose the last,
I will at once renew for ten more years
The truce of Chocim, which to the Romish faith
Gives of the Holy Sepulchre the charge.
Nay, more. I will engage to set at freedom
Twenty thousand sons of Issa, who are now
Prisoners in our tents, against of your gold
One thousand ounces. But should'st thou attempt
This argument to settle by the sword,
They shall die. I have done.

JOHN

On the very eve

Of battle and sure triumph, I make no terms.
Selim, thou can'st not think that, like a Jew,
I can my glory barter as 'twere gold?
I know thou can'st not think so. Say, shall I,
The conqueror of Chocim, this treaty sign?

THE PRINCES

No, no!

JOHN

So be it. Selim, dost thou see
That eagle like a snow-flake in the air?
Like a swift torrent, it will sweep you down!

SELIM

Thou see'st the foaming river at thy feet?
'Tis there I swear you all shall perish.

JOHN

Try!

SELIM

In the name of prudence, leave us to ourselves.
Courage is good, but better still is wisdom.
We are ten to one.

JOHN

But by far too few!
I have sworn; and he who strikes for liberty
But little fears the number of his foes.

SELIM

Liberty! I love it, and yet it sounds
Strangely to mingle Austria with its name.
For the first time have they been blended now,
And kill each other in a lying breath.
Call it fanaticism, its proper name,
Ingratitude, or pride, for these are more
The things pertaining to the Holy empire.
So thou hast come to save these warlike Germans?
Thou wilt wreck thyself and betray thy country.
Think of great Wallenstein before resolving;
And recollect the angry thunderbolt
Is not to be deterred by heroes' laurels.
It is not in the east, but in the north,

That thy death-star will rise. The czars, thy slaves
 At one time, will at Moscow sow the seed
 Of war and revolution in thy midst.
 Thy fiefs of Brandenburg—atrocious despots—
 Will become, though owing life itself to thee,
 The servants and assistants of those murderers.
 Leopold, again, who never is content
 With what he has, already contemplates
 A project of partition and of ruin.
 Is it not so, Collonits? And as for us,
 Fate offers to our hand a richer prize
 In Italy than all your Polish kingdom.
 Vienna is a tyrant, hence she must
 From the earth be razed. Take this safe conduct,
 Thou can'st do so with little loss of pride
 Since now thou servest slavery, not freedom.

JOHN, tearing it.

I serve but God alone! There cannot be
 A truce between us, while a single Pole
 Has power to draw a sword. Take back again
 To the Grand Vizier his insulting offers,
 And tell him, Selim, I will treat with him
 Alone in the palace of the Sultans.
 Exchange of prisoners I shall count upon,
 For it is my right. Battle you seem to dread;
 I fear, for my part, nothing but dishonour!

SELIM

Dishonour thou shalt have! A worldly pride
 Alone dictates this grandiloquous disdain.
 Thou hast thy sons, and Austria has infantas.
 Thou knowest 'twas gold that brought thy eagles here.
 Even the great Louis, thy detested rival,

Writes thee : "To his Highness," and never yet
Has styled thee "Majesty." Am I not correct ?

Thou liest !

JEROME

SELIM

Who is that man ?

JEROME

I will tell thee.

I am Lubomirski ; thou art Selim here,
But known to me as Zrini the apostate !
Whichever title thou preferest, take.

ALL

Zrini !

SELIM, drawing his scimitar.

'Tis the last time that thou shalt say it !

JEROME

Before thy death.

SELIM

Or thine.

JOHN

Stop ! Your swords can be
Employed upon the field of honour.
He is our guest ; leave me awhile with him.
All depart !

SCENE VIII.

JOHN SOBIESKI ; SELIM

JOHN

Khan Selim !

SELIM

Such is my title.

JOHN

I knew thy father well! When at the court
Of France, we swore upon a piece of gold—
Of which I have the half—eternal friendship.
Young lovers in the olden times were wont
To do the like on their betrothal day.
And I have lived to see a son of his,
Dressed in the caftan of the infidel!

SELIM

A son of liberty! Thou servest tyranny!

JOHN

A christian martyr's son for Islam dies!

SELIM

That martyr I avenge, and, I hope, justly!

JOHN

Who loves not God, can he his father love?

SELIM

God wills that crime shall be chastized by blood!

JOHN

He is Almighty; justice is His right!

SELIM

And vengeance mine.

JOHN

Dost thou know the Gospel?

SELIM, in a tone of despair.

Dost thou know slavery?

JOHN

Oh! frail and treacherous soul!

When all the West, subjects and kings alike,
As with one heart, have rallied round the Cross,
At the loud cry, "It is the will of God;"
When a new deluge, with a headlong bent,
Threatens to engulf the old Roman world;
Can it be possible at such an hour
A Zrini should be striving to bequeath
For ever the cursed name of renegade?
Shades of great Corvin and of Huniadi,
You whose existence was a long crusade
In the cause of Christ, the cause of liberty,
Look at your son who has deserted it!
Renouncing name, religion and his country,
His soul is bartered to the Asian tyrants!
Rise from thy coffin, holy, martyred Zrini;
Destroy thy scutcheon by this dastard stained!
The fate of twenty nations is at stake;
Arise and curse him for a parricide!

SELIM, his hand on his sword.

Enough, I say; by my father's blood, enough!
If thou couldst reckon up the weight of tears
Flooding in bitterness my broken heart,
Instead of cursing me thou wouldst absolve.
Ah me! Each morsel of this quivering soil
Leaves on the foot that treads it stains of blood.
It is my land! Look at that crumbling palace!
In its deep dungeons, silent as the tomb,
My father met his death from murderers' hands.
My father! With his shackled hands he blessed me.
"Avenge me," cried he, and his stainless head,
Which many a fight had spared, the axe laid low.

And for what crime, oh! heaven! this cruel fate?
 He worshipp'd God according to his heart,
 And thought that all men were brethren alike,
 Whether from Byzantium they took their faith,
 Or built their hopes upon the creed of Rome.
 Listen all around. I deeply curse the day
 That saw me thrown beneath the Vizier's foot.
 His villany disgusts me; but then I think
 Of my young sister who in slavery died,
 And of my father and his shameful death.
 They stand before me now demanding justice.
 I have sworn to avenge thee, oh! my father!
 And will not rest until revenge is mine.

JOHN

That oath appears to thee to have more weight
 Than thy baptismal vow. With God alone
 It rests to change thy will; and if thou must
 Avenge thy father,—I will avenge my son.

(Yakoub and Maligny appear in the background.)

SELIM

Look!

JOHN

Yakoub! My son!

(Selim withdraws with Maligny.)

SCENE IX.

JOHN SOBIESKI, YAKOUB

JOHN

Oh, fate! I thee defy!

'Tis thou, alive and free!

YAKOUB

Alive, but a slave.

JOHN

A slave? But who is there more free than thou?
 Thou, the son of a soldier, made a king
 By his own people? Our chief opponent now
 Proposes the exchange of all our prisoners.

YAKOUB

Of all the prisoners?

JOHN

Yes, of all.

YAKOUB

How strange!

Thou dost not know—

JOHN

What?

YAKOUB

That I must return—

JOHN

Well?

YAKOUB

Thou wilt agree?

JOHN

I have but one duty.

YAKOUB

Is it to fight?

JOHN

To-morrow.

YAKOUB

And to conquer?

JOHN

I think so, for thy sake; am I not thy father?

YAKOUB

There is a heroine, like myself a slave
Who will assist thee—she who saved my life.

JOHN

What is her name?

YAKOUB

Myrrha.

JOHN

Thy mother claims

Thy thoughts before thy mistress; think of her,
And of thy sisters, with their soft endearments
Held in our embrace, whilst upon thy brow
They lavish countless kisses in their love.

YAKOUB

My mother! 'Tis for her I dread to die!
Give her my arms the first day that you meet;
This locket also—

JOHN

Yakoub, are those tears?

YAKOUB, going.

Bless me, oh, my father!

(He throws himself at his feet.)

JOHN

Where goest thou?

YAKOUB

I promised to be ransomed in an hour.

JOHN

Or to return to die!

YAKOUB

Yes, honour claims me!

To break my word would cover me with infamy.
Read this!

JOHN, reading the letter.

From the Vizier? "If we can be friends,
"I will to-morrow render to thy hands"
"Twenty thousand prisoners. Should'st thou refuse,
"Their heads alone I will send back to thee
"In the shape of ammunition from our guns!
"Answer by thy son!" Must we fight—or fly?
Honour forbids it. What dost thou advise?

YAKOUB

To conquer!

JOHN

Nobly said, my son; but thou
I will retain, no matter what it cost.

YAKOUB, rising.

Is it for me, thy son, to mar thy glory?

JOHN

My glory may be thine; thy days are mine.

YAKOUB

They first are God's, then my nation's, then my king's.

JOHN

And my life's hope must finish in a tomb!

YAKOUB

Should I die, to avenge me is thy task.

JOHN

And must I find and lose thee in one day?

YAKOUB

Twenty thousand prisoners await my coming.

JOHN

Should'st thou return, 'tis death. What wilt thou do?

YAKOUB

Having promised, what would'st thou do, my father?

JOHN

I?

YAKOUB

Yes, thou.

JOHN, with spirit.

I should return.

YAKOUB

I knew it well!

Live for thy honour, I will die for mine.

JOHN

How?

YAKOUB

Upon the cross.

JOHN

God! this is martyrdom!

YAKOUB

Some day the fate to which I hasten now
Will make my chains immortally to shine.
A death is noble which can save a world!

JOHN

And must I live without thee—oh, my son!

YAKOUB

Tears! Why pity me? Except with liberty,
All power is but valueless and vain.
A noble heart cares little for a throne;
And should the day arrive to see me king,
To think of the desertion and contempt—

The sole reward for all his prosperous reign—
 Would make the son blush for his father's glory.
 No! I will die without regret, though young
 And full of life; and to my country give
 A soul that time has had no power to taint.
 When thou triumphant shalt return to Poland,
 Upon her knees will she lament the son
 So worthy of a hero such as thou.
 Oh! let me go! the voice of God is calling me!

(The hour strikes in the distance.)

JOHN

To die at eighteen years with life so sweet!
 And must we part, and I applaud thy virtue
 With my torn heart rebelling all the while!
 To whom can I bequeath my glory now?
 Thou art gone, and with thee victory's reward;
 But thy father shall prove worthy of his son.
 Re-enter all!

SCENE X.

The same. CHARLES OF LORRAINE, JEROME, MALIGNY,
 DE CROY. German princes.

JEROME, throwing himself into Yakoub's arms.

Yakoub!

JOHN

The eldest son

Of thy king, his country's pride, and who would be
 A king if virtue could command a crown!
 That son prefers his honour to my peace
 And goes away to die. I cannot aid him
 Save by my disgrace. Jerome and Lorraine,

The moment my country's eagles shall be seen
 Discharge three cannon-shot by way of signal !
 Rest satisfied : I will avenge my son.

JEROME

What, 'tis thou !

YAKOUB

Hush ! look at his bitter grief !

CHARLES, kneeling.

Spare him for his country's sake !

JEROME, also kneeling.

And for his mother's !

JOHN, authoritatively.

Arise ! Call Selim !

JEROME

Come here, you renegade !

SCENE XI.

The same. SELIM, GIAFFER and attendants.

JOHN

Go to Mustapha, and tell him to prepare
 For battle at to-morrow's dawn.

SELIM

Rash man !

JOHN

Take in thy hands the ransom for our brothers,
 The thousand ounces of our gold, and give
 This sword to thy employer, he will need it.

It is not worth his while to send again.
You can go.

SELIM

But thy son?

JOHN

My son? Thou wilt
Follow him and take my blessing with thee.
'Tis thou who should'st have had the longer life;
But go and save our prisoners. I pledge my word
Not to attack till day-break. Fare thee well!

(Yakoub tears himself from his arms and goes out with Selim and
Glaffer.)

ACT IV.

SELIM—ZRINI

The same decorations

SCENE I.

JOHN SOBIESKI, alone, seated at a large table covered with maps and plans. He holds a portrait in his hands.

JOHN

To-morrow—Beloved shade inspire my thoughts !
 As the vibrations of the bow outlive
 The arrow's rapid flight, so does despair
 Whisper of hope to a desponding heart.
 My son dead ! and to-morrow my last fight !
 Oh ! fatal honour that holds me with strong hand,
 And binds me but to crush me with the chain !
 I counted on support, but I was wrong ;
 And now I nothing hope from man or fate.
 What spectre is it with foreboding hand
 Tracing before my eyes, " Thy son will die
 " As heroes die ; yet after all in vain."
 My God ! my God ! Thou wilt not suffer this,
 That, like my brother Mark, my son should die,
 And both be unavenged. Oh ! thus to think
 Of Thee is blasphemy of blackest dye !
 Should I have given up those lives for his ?
 And yet to me no other choice remained.

My Father, tell me what Thou wouldst have done?
What would the mothers of those sons have said!
He has a mother also; what will she say!
Oh! fortune, and, oh! love, ye are but phantoms!
I was happier as soldier than as king.
Why is that crown upon my brazen casque?
My soul is sick of its vain glory now,
For heavier weighs the sceptre than the sword.
Was I not his father before his king?
Since I have been vested with this power,
Day by day I have striven with my sword
To hew to shreds the many-headed fiend;
And when my good steel fails or strength declines,
The monster will awake and rise again.
Its coils are girt around Vienna now,
And quickly to the Vatican will press!
Less potent by the sword than by corruption,
It spreads its fatal venom through the world.
Will the French upon the Rhine or on the Loire
Invoke your glorious memories to their aid,
Oh! Charlemagne, and, oh! Martel! Alone
Will I to blend the western christians dare
With their northern brethren, and at one blow,
'To-morrow, from the sons of Islam wrench
Their first and noblest prey, ill-fated Greece.
The echoes of the ancient Parthenon
Shall with ennobled names again resound
Whene'er the shriek of the white eagle calls.
The tomb of the great God who made Himself
A Man must be rewon from alien hands,
And Rome secured for ever with Vienna.
I swear to do, oh! God, as Thou hast willed,
And will not rest till all has been fulfilled.

(Rising.)

Thou shalt not die inglorious, oh! my land!
 If, jealous of a people who are free,
 Monarchs conspire the balance to o'erthrow
 Of the old world and nail thee to the cross;
 If thine own children tell thee thou shalt die,
 By me, thy son Sobieski, shall thy name
 Be circled by an aureole so bright
 That when whole generations shall have passed,
 Its splendour still enduring, the whole world
 Shall read, "Oh! Christ of nations," on thy tomb.
 Thy name shall be symbolical of conquest,
 Of liberty, of honour; and when the day
 Of expiation comes, thy prostrate foes
 Shall awe-struck see thee rising from the dead,
 Like the martyred Saviour, the Living God.
 No signal yet—my son!

(He falls on a seat, clasping his head with his hands.)

SCENE II.

JOHN SOBIESKI, JEROME.

JEROME

A female slave

Demands an audience.

JOHN

With me! What is her need?

JEROME

She brings a message.

JOHN

Again? Leave us alone.

SCENE III.

JOHN SOBIESKI, MYRRHA.

MYRRHA, throwing off her veil.

Let me embrace thy knees, oh ! thou whom Greece
Awaits as keenly as the human race
Looks for the Saviour's coming.

JOHN

What brings thee here ?

MYRRHA

I come on behalf of Yakoub.

JOHN

Of my son ?

Speak low ! tell me thou hast saved him ?

MYRRHA

I love him.

JOHN, rising.

He is coming ? Shall I see him once again ?

MYRRHA

Yes, and soon I trust. "Go, my sister, go,"
He said, "and take this comfort to my father ;
"That the small price my penalty will cost
"Will make him live triumphant. Let him find
"In thee a heart that shall replace his child's !"

JOHN

Tell me thy name !

MYRRHA

I was the affianced bride
Of the Grand Vizier ; look at that ring !

JOHN, reading.

Myrrha.

MYRRHA

Struck by a sudden thought, I promised Selim
 My life, my love, if ere the close of day
 His standards were surrendered to thy hands.
 I thought to slay his chief, thinking the while
 Of my martyred mother ; but an unseen force
 Withheld my arm. This ring which I possess
 Passed me in safety to the christian camp.
 I saw thy son bearing our warriors' ransom ;
 But none would touch an atom of the gold
 To free him from his fetters. They had pride
 Sufficient not to purchase their exchange,
 Rating their honour far above their freedom.
 " Then let us march," cried Yakoub ; " follow me,
 " Ye sons of Greece ! " And straightway o'er the plains
 Our ancient hymn resounded far and wide.
 To beg thy prompt assistance I have come,
 For all would die than live without him free.

JOHN

My sword! Ah me! The signal!

MYRRHA

Why delay?

Can thy arm fail thee when the pyre is spread?
 Quick ; for each instant may decide his fate.
 Command at once thy legions to attack ;
 There is no other hope for Yakoub's life.

JOHN

My God! and must the struggle recommence?
 And all has been in vain? But who can give

To those who ne'er possessed them valiant hearts?
 I see them throwing all their arms away!
 Say, who shall lead them on?

MYRRHA

Thou!

JOHN

I cannot;

It is impossible! The brave may be
 In danger rallied, but the coward never.
 Must I await my own? Would they were here,
 My God! And must I, fettered to this spot
 By my oath, see my son perish without aid?
 "Come to me, my father!" his latest words
 Of hopeless agony, as with a sigh
 His spirit wings its flight into the skies.

MYRRHA

Push forward, and at once! What has produced
 That pallor so unworthy of thy brow?
 Art thou John Sobieski? No, I am wrong;
 And yet I see the glitter of a sword
 Beneath thy hand.

JOHN

To-morrow I will do it,
 By my soul I have sworn and by my faith!
 Were there one left who could succeed to me,
 I, as a simple soldier, with bare head
 And armourless, would dash upon the ranks
 Of the pagans, and when within his arms
 Would to my son exclaim, "Behold, here I am!
 I love thee, and have come to give the proof!"
 But, no! there is not one among them all;
 Yakoub alone, and he condemned to die.

Chief of the army, I must live to save
 The Empire! Curses on the oath I swore,
 Or rather on the honour which I pledged.
 Its cost has been a bitter one—my son.

MYRRHA

Thy honour! Is there not a voice that calls
 Louder than oaths or patriotic love,
 Bidding thee save thy son, if living still?
 Honour has never willed a child shall be
 Destroyed by its father. We all would shed
 For him the very last drop of our blood.
 But if our prayers to move thee are in vain,
 If by my tears thy soul is undisturbed,
 Think of his mother's sorrow, of the curse
 With which she will receive her son's betrayer!

JOHN

Enough!

MYRRHA

I cannot think that at the cost
 Of such a murder glory can be bought!
 Nor that a man, a father and a king,
 May sacrifice a son to save a tyrant!
 The sword hangs o'er his head, and if it fall
 The past, the future on his tomb will die.
 For such a crime there must have been a price,
 So everyone will say; and that thy son
 Was sold to bring some benefit to thee.
 What can I say to thee? His mother might
 Have urged a better pleading to thy soul,
 But I have nothing but my tears to give.
 If thou wilt come, thy son will live; if not,
 I die as well!

JOHN

Oh! God of heaven! 'tis Thou
 Who can'st alone my anguish understand,
 Thou, who hast given Thy Son to save the world!

MYRRHA, rising with bitterness.

This, then, is the great King, the glorious Hero!
 To fight he scruples, but betrays his child!
 What, then, is glory? Is it a tough armour
 That smothers all feeling in the steeled heart?
 And is that heart already cold as death?
 Farewell! I curse thee! May the demon pride
 Rack thy numbed bosom with its viper's sting!
 Thou groanest? Tell me wherefore, since thou art
 No more his father: a king can have no child,
 Nor can a murderer!

JOHN

Enough, I say!

MYRRHA

Farewell!

SCENE IV.

The same. MAURO, a sword in his hand.

MAURO

Myrrha!

MYRRHA

'Tis Mauro!

MAURO

Warned of our intent,
 The Grand Vizier has undermined the camp.
 His deadly vengeance would surround our steps

With devouring flames. Yakoub alone has checked
 The rush of the torrent ; but, without a doubt,
 Outnumbered, he will fall beneath their hands,
 But with a song of glory on his lips !

MYRRHA

That is the cry of death : art thou deaf to it,
 Or dost thou leave to me the avenging part ?
 Come, Mauro ! At this very hour thy son
 Is haply heaping curses on his father
 As he writhes upon the cross.

JOHN

I pray thee cease !
 See how I weep ; these tears call out for blood.
 Lorraine, come to me ! I must go.

MYRRHA

At last !

SCENE V.

The same. CHARLES DE LORRAINE, JEROME, DE CROY ; then
 COLONITS, the people of Vienna.

CHARLES

Sire ! the Turks are close to the ramparts' base ;
 The Azof Tartars throwing away their bows
 And arrows, with their sabres in their teeth,
 Are rushing to the breach ; on every side
 Flames burst forth ; and at latest in an hour
 The city of the Germans will be lost.

JOHN

Thus destiny relieves me from my oath ;

I now can die as it befits a king,
 With my hand sealed to my avenging sword.
 Vizier, I thank thee !

(Day draws in a little.)

COLLONITS, running in with the people.

Let us fly !

JOHN

What insult !

COLLONITS

Our cause is lost.

(A cannon-shot is heard on the right.)

JOHN

Is gained. Listen—'tis the signal.

MYRRHA

When blood pours out like a tide at the ebb,
 Hast thou but tears ?

(A second cannon-shot is heard.)

JOHN

No ! away with tears ! To arms !

(A third cannon shot, followed by cries of joy.)

Victory ! At last they come, my gallant Poles !
 Their very aspect sets my heart aglow.
 Lorraine ! See'st thou that rolling avalanche ?
 'Tis he, my Hetman, the white eagle's pride.
 To me, my comrades ! Haste, my son is there !
 We seem to live a century in a day.

(The day gradually darkens.)

How suddenly has come the night ! My eyes
 Grow dim, and nature seems to be enrobed
 In a black shroud.

(Taking out his watch.)

It is but three o'clock,
 And yet the day already seems deposed.
 Look at the broken surface of the sun,
 As if the shadow of Death's outspread wings
 Had clambered from the earth unto the stars.

COLLONITS, striking his breast.

Spare me, oh! Lord!

JEROME

I can explain! To-day
 Copernicus predicted an eclipse.

CHARLES

'Tis a day lost: our labour will be less;
 The Hetman's forces will have time to join
 With ours before a single blow is struck.

JOHN

Heaven by that sign declares on our side.
 All glory be to thee, thou giant Pole,
 For having said to earth, "In future be
 "A meek dependant of the star of day."
 The sun by thee was made the central light;
 Let us then pray that once again our eyes
 May be illumined by his glorious rays.

(Going to the entrance of the chapel.)

Oh! Thou, who from the darkness which prevailed
 Woke with one word an ocean of pure light,
 Rekindle in our hearts the sun of faith,
 That all the world, as I do, may adore!

(Selim appears in the background, wrapped in Yakoub's cloak, and followed by a Tartar soldier.)

SELIM

See that three lines of attack are formed! Go!

(The Tartar withdraws.)

MAURO

Oh! Thou God of battles, receive his prayer!

(They enter the chapel.—The distance is darkened by the eclipse, then the foreground.—A lamp burns before the altar of the Madonna.)

SCENE VI.

MYRRHA, SELIM, in the background.

MYRRHA

The light burns. I will try and pray for him;
But I am lost in fear. Is this the day
Promised to all the world, on which the dead
Shall rise again to be adjudged of God?

(The scene becomes totally obscured.)

SELIM, at the back.

Myrrha!

MYRRHA

Upon that altar are two forms—
A woman and a child. Oh! Holy Mother!
And one could almost deem the Christ alive,
So lovingly He stretches out His arms.

(On her knees.)

Blessed Virgin Mary, bright morning star;
My dearest guardian spirit, save us now!

SELIM, approaching.

Myrrha!

MYRRHA

What is it that affrights me so?
There are unseen footsteps. Is Yakoub here?

SELIM, appearing in a sudden gleam of light.

Myrrah, it is I!

MYRRHA

Selim!

SELIM

Yes, his conqueror.

The star of day his functions has renounced,
And with the sudden darkness I have come
To thee, hidden in the mantle of Yakoub.
Come! and the Danube quickly shall divide
The King and ourselves.

MYRRHA

Never!

SELIM

We are alone:

Do not excite my wrath, but list to me,

(Reading.)

"I promise Selim both my life and love,

"If, ere the close of day, into our hands

"His standards are surrendered," signed by thee.

MYRRHA

Thou liest!

SELIM, seizing her.

Listen, and heed well what I say,

Or at this very moment Yakoub dies!

At the first shot that falls within our ranks,

The mine shall swallow the whole christian camp.

MYRRHA, drawing her dagger.

Away! leave me, I say! or, by Madonna,

I will stab me to the heart.

(She breaks away from him and flies to the altar.)

SELIM

Ah! I tremble!

Forgive me! If thou diest, I will die.
Son of the Magyar people, of a martyr
Strangled beneath a tyrant's feet, I came
To Stamboul, where, my heart o'ercharged with tears
For my mourning country, I begged for succour.
I saw thee there assisting the distressed,
And thwarting the raised arm that would have smote.
Thou hadst a mien so tender and so fair
That I forgot almost my oath and mission.
In presence of thy beauty I was dazed,
And country, honour, duty, disappeared.
Myrrha! if thou couldst know the world of thoughts,
The burning and insensate hopes that press
Upon my soul! Forgotten by the Lord,
I have not known one happy day through life.
Life? a bitter mockery! a frantic dream!
What crime had I committed ere my birth?
What had I done to God for him to will
That I for lonely suffering should be born,
With power neither to live nor yet to die?
Without hope or faith, reared beneath a curse,
I hate the paltry world that dooms me thus
To exile. But one thing I love—'tis thee!

MYRRHA

I pity thee! for the decrees of fate
Divide us—both here and in eternity.
I am Myrrha Lascaris, thou art Selim
The barbarian, and the loud cry of blood,
Honour, love, must separate us always.
Hast thou forgotten that thy power was gained
By the price paid when I was sold by thee?

Thou, a bandit chief, to all laws a foe!
 The enemy of God! my brother's murderer!
 Selim, by my faith, I would rather die
 And be free as they than reign with thee!

SELIM

Thou scornest me?

MYRRHA

I pity thee! With God
 It now remains to cleanse thee from thy sins.

SELIM

Thy God I have no faith in, and I brave
 His wrath! I love but thee! and little heed
 Mohamed, Moses, Elohim, or Christ.
 Chief of a race proscribed, I but believe
 In destiny's stern laws, which never fail;
 And having no country, I have no God.
 My hate is like the force of the simoon
 That sweeps across the desert of Sahara;
 Its one oasis, Myrrha's cherished love.
 Oh! forgive me! offer one word of hope!
 Decide my fate! and Yakoub shall be saved.
 I will forget my father's cruel end,
 And that a sister rests still unavenged—
 All for one sweet word. Myrrha, wilt thou say it?
 Awake repentance in my ruined soul,
 And give me back my Heaven, my hope, my life!

MYRRHA

I know thee, Selim, and I bid thee hence.
 Thy presence is a horror to my sight.
 Would'st thou to Mohamed a traitor prove
 To save the Emperor? Go! such treacherous thoughts
 Degrade thee more than ever in my eyes.

I love Yakoub alone, and him I love
 As deeply as my hatred is for thee.
 Again I bid thee leave me! I can die,
 But never living will I follow thee.

SELIM

Woe then to him! I hear the clash of arms,
 The mine will soon be sprung, and his last drop
 Of blood shall make atonement for my tears.
 Does no affrighted cry escape thy breast?
 The hour has come, he dies!

MYRRHA

Thou wretched murderer!

(He fires a shot, and a terrible explosion is heard.)

SELIM

Vengeance at last is mine, and God must work
 A miracle indeed to save him now.

MYRRHA, throwing herself on her knees and trying to stab herself.
 Oh! Lord, forgive me!

SELIM, snatching the dagger from her.

Thou wilt follow me!

I bid thee come!

(Myrrha falls prostrate on the altar steps.—Yakoub appears in the background, holding in his hands a flag.)

SCENE VII.

The same. YAKOUB.

(Daylight gradually returning.)

YAKOUB

Selim with her!

MYRRHA, throwing herself into his arms.

Yakoub!

SELIM, drawing his scimitar.

Be ye both accursed!

YAKOUB

From thy robbers' hands
I wrenched this standard. Now our turn has come!

SELIM, throwing himself upon him.

Die!

(His sword breaks.)

YAKOUB

Thy passion plays thee false. Continue,
If thou wilt; but procure another sword;
If not, surrender!

SELIM

Never; thou may'st strike!

YAKOUB

Misfortune seems to make thee haughtier still.
Thou art my prisoner, as I once was thine,
Only I treat thee with more tenderness.
My God teaches pardon.

SELIM, attempting to stab him.

And mine revenge.

(The dagger glances from the breast of Yakoub; Myrrha receives the blow on her arm.)

YAKOUB, running him through.

Wretch!

SELIM, staggering.

Oh! hell! In thy feeble hand, the sword
Knows not the way to penetrate the heart;
I will live, if but to assuage my hate.

YAKOUB

Angel of love, twice hast thou saved my life.
Art thou hurt?

MYRRHA

'Tis nothing.

SELIM

I will not die
Alone ; within the foldings of my shroud
Thou shalt be caught ; thou art the bride of death.

(Exit.)

A VOICE, without, from the opposite side.

Yakoub ! Yakoub !

YAKOUB

I hear my father's voice !

SCENE VIII.

YAKOUB, JOHN SOBIESKI, Soldiers.

JOHN

At last I see thee once again ! unhurt,
I trust. If thou hadst died my death had followed,
But since thou art alive, with thee I live,
And, having found thee, am myself once more.

YAKOUB, unfurling the flag.

Look at my booty !

JOHN

'Tis the holy ensign,
The green flag of the Prophet ; I envy thee

Thy capture, and will knight thee on the spot.
Prince Yakoub, kneel!

(He strikes him thrice with his sword and embraces him.)

Now let the chiefs parade
Before us, with the army they have led.

SCENE IX.

The same. JEROME, COLLONITS

JEROME, out of breath.

One moment.

JOHN

What is this?

JEROME, giving him a gold spur.

Another trophy!

JOHN

Some jewel fallen from a fairy's casket?
The Vizier's spur!

JEROME

Yes, taken in fair fight,
Together with his war-horse decked with gems;
I would not sell it for the richest crown.
'Tis thine.

JOHN

But why?

JEROME

Because I love thee well!

JOHN

I accept it!

(Giving it to an equerry.)

Present it to the queen,
And tell her that before the close of day
It shall be followed by a captive Vizier.

(The equerry withdraws.—Taking the flag.)

This ensign, Collonits, is for the Pope ;
In return, he must furnish us with guns
And ammunition ; and if, by his aid,
We are enabled to surmount the Balkans,
I myself will thank him at the Vatican.

(The Polish national air is heard without, with joyful cries.)

SCENE X.

The same. CHARLES DE LORRAINE, ROGER DE STAREMBERG,
THE GRAND HETMAN, DE CROY, MALIGNY, MAURO, HAYDEE,
Greek prisoners, German princes, Polish chiefs, the army, the people
of Vienna.

THE GREEK PRISONERS, as they enter.

O sons of Greece, arise !
Shall we much longer be
Beneath our sunny skies,
On mount, o'er plain, o'er sea,
Enslaved with drooping eyes,
Enchained with bended knee ?
O sons of Greece, arise !
To arms ! at last be free !

JOHN

Grand Hetman, I salute thee ! and will pay
To thy white eagles all the honour due.

COLLONITS

Our saviours are indeed a tattered set.

JOHN

After a march of eight and twenty days,
 Their clothes are travel stained ; but they shall be
 To-morrow clad in mussulman attire.

MAURO

Here come our Albanian troops.

STAREMBERG.

Sire, the last

Defenders of Vienna I have led
 To thee ; the rest are dead.

JOHN

Heroes, indeed !
 They shall make triumphal entry to Vienna.

(To his soldiers.)

Poles! a pitched battle is now offered you !
 The Prophet's raven will have cause to dread
 The Polish eagle, but will not escape
 If all alike will strive with heart and soul.
 Kings, princes, soldiers, hear my last commands !
 Into the Vizier's camp straightway we march ;
 But each one must remember, by the breach
 Alone Vienna must be reached. To you
 Belongs the centre, Waldeck ! To the right
 Will push the guns ; Lorraine will take the left ;
 And I, wherever needed, will be found.
 Outflank them first, and then attack the rear.

THE GRAND HETMAN

Sire, I await thy orders !

JOHN

Do thy best !

My friend, thou knowest well the task before us—
 I have to save Vienna or to fall
 For honour and for faith. Kill me if I fly,
 And I demand thy vengeance should I die.

ALL

Long live Sobieski!

JOHN

Hush! What is that noise?

(The bells in Saint Stephen's tower are heard.)

CHARLES

The swinging bells the Angelus announce;
 And all Vienna render thanks to Heaven,
 Now thou hast come to help them in their straight.

JOHN

O sun, uncover to the God of Gods!
 The twelfth day of September has returned—
 A day of fame, of glory unsurpassed.
 Upon this day Yakoub was born—my reign
 Commenced—Chocim was fought—Vienna saved.
 'Tis a fair record in our country's archives.

(The soldiers uncover and kneel down.)

MAURO, at the door of the chapel.

By my wronged people's tears, and by their blood,
 Soldiers, to all my benison I give!
 With holy instincts, like the knights of old,
 When on some sacred enterprise embarked,
 Let us to God lift up our souls, to beg
 That He to victory will point the way,
 Or lead us on to martyrdom—Amen.

THE ARMY, singing, kneeling.

Holy Mary, Queen of Heaven,
 Hear us when to thee we call,
 Praying to be saved, forgiven,
 At thy feet we humbly fall !
 Virgin ! crowned with fairest flowers,
 Wreathed around thy gentle brow,
 O defend this land of ours,
 Hasten to protect us now !
 Thou who, with a love undying,
 Watchest o'er our bitter strife,
 Beg thy Son to heed our sighing,
 Plead for us for glorious life !
 Blessed Mary ! ever living,
 Throned above the starry skies ;
 Give us light, and with the giving,
 Victory before us lies.

(Brilliant sunshine lights up the scene.)

JOHN

Brothers, behold the day ! and let it be
 Remembered that the Empire has been saved.
 To Vienna let us march !

THE ARMY

To Vienna !

JOHN, springing on his horse.

A timely coming is a battle gained ;
 Move on at once ! My son keep near to me !

(Exit.—A cannonade is heard.)

MAURO, on his knees.

The battle now is raging hand to hand.

SCENE XI.

THE BATTLE

(FOR GRAND REPRESENTATIONS.)

The same. Then SELIM, the two armies.

The ramparts are covered with soldiers, and the people of the city.—Yakoub and Jerome pursue the Spahis and drive them into the river.—Maligny orders two guns to advance.

MALIGNY, pointing to the Vizier's tent.

Aim at that golden crescent. I will give
My watch to the man who shall bring it down!

(The shot is fired and the crescent falls.)

THE ARTILLERYMAN

'Tis done.

MALIGNY, giving him his watch.

And now the bridge.

THE ARTILLERYMAN, charging the gun.

I have no wadding.

MALIGNY

Use my gloves, my wig, French papers, anything,
But quickly fire!

THE ARTILLERYMAN

The bridge gives way.

THE SPAHIS, as they fall into the river.

Allah!

(Glaffer and Selim's Tartars rush on in disorder, closely pressed by the Grand Hetman and the King's heavy hussars.—Some swim across the Danube, others are drowned.—Selim arrives last and attempts to seize Myrrha.—Yakoub brings down his horse with a pistol-shot.—Jerome is about to throw himself upon Selim.)

YAKOUB, stopping Jerome by a gesture.

Thy arms!

SELIM, breaking his sword.

There they are!

(He throws it in the river.—At the same moment the King appears pursuing the Janizaries, commanded by the Pachas of Buda and Sillis-tria.—Stopped by the river, the Janizaries throw down their arms and surrender themselves prisoners.)

MAURO, wounded.

Myrrha, darling child,

I call thee Mary, in the name of God!

Look at that portrait.

MYRRHA

'Tis my mother's face!

MAURO

Bless us, O my king; all my people bend
With me before thy knees in thankfulness.

THE ARMY, with a shout of triumph.

Victory!

JOHN, to Charles.

Let that cry to the Tiber reach.

To the white eagle, victory!

(Embracing Staremberg.)

And now

Vienna is free.

STAREMBERG

Sire, thou art great indeed!

JOHN, uncovering.

Soldiers, cease firing; now the fight is o'er,
Respect our prisoners, our foes no more!

(The two Pachas fall at his feet.)

ACT V.

MYRRHA — MARY

Before the tent of the Vizier, as in the first act.—In the front, the flags of the Empire and of the States.—Sentinels at the back.

SCENE I.

The Emperor LEOPOLD, DE CROY, COLLONITS, Officers of the Court,
then STAREMBERG.

An OFFICER

The Count Staremburg.

LEOPOLD, to the officer.

Suspend the audience!

To our impatience thou hast slowly answered ;
Glory to him, the saviour of Vienna !

STAREMBERG

In truth, a title that has been well earned
By the King of Poland. I learnt the art
Of war, when in my youth with Wallenstein ;
And once in Flanders with the Prince of Orange,
Only just failed to beat the famous Condé.
But in the age in which we live, the King
Great John Sobieski takes the lead of all,
As wisest, best, and bravest of mankind.

COLLONITS

To me the first and foremost of them all
Is the Emperor, my sovereign and master.

STAREMBERG

I spoke as a soldier, Sire.

LEOPOLD, with temper.

Give us at once

The report of your release!

COLLONITS

He is great

In strategy and tactics; but no more!

STAREMBERG

Since the day thy chariot the portal cleared
Of Schönbrunn's palace—

LEOPOLD

Let us pass all that.

STAREMBERG

What words can well describe the still fresh scare
Of those two months of anguish, when we stood
With pestilence and famine in the breach,
They calling to our conquerors, and we
Without one spark of hope within our hearts.
When on one day a trumpet from the summit
Of Saint Stephen's tower sounded the glad news
Of the arrival of the Christian flag.

At once the cry of joy was heard around,

" 'Tis he, King John Sobieski, come from God!"

As the hot lava takes its fiery course,
So rushed he from the heights, and life again
Brought to the sinking hearts that held Vienna.

The fortress guns at once reopened fire;

But fate was mute alike to either side,

When Jerome's lancers, in their massive strength,
Struck with a panic the whole Turkish left;

And the Grand Hetman, like a brazen ram,
Crushed down the Spahis as they yielded ground.
The Vizier reared aloft the Prophet's flag,
And Selim bore it onwards ; till ashamed
At their defeat, the flying Spahis turned
And rallied to the fight around their standard.
A bullet quickly brought it down, and then
'Twas seized by Prince Yakoub ; and saddest sign
Of all, the sun that moment fled the skies.
" Behold ! " cried Selim, " what the Heavens are doing ! "
As the angel Azrael, before their eyes,
King John Sobieski suddenly appeared !
They shrunk before his looks as he swept on
Like an eagle on its prey ; and with mien
Defiant and with a resistless might,
Broke at one blow the enemy's three lines.
The Vizier seized his sword, and in wild rage
Rushed with despairing courage to the fight.
In vain ! the triumph of the day remained
With John Sobieski. At his voice the day
Again lit up ; but a blood-tinted cloud
Preceded him, and followed in his steps ;
From out this shade a cry of horror rose,
As though an army in its death-gasp lay ;
Then all was still. The sun was growing cool,
And, like a reddened globe of heated steel,
Was sinking slowly, calmly, in the west,
Gilding the mountains with its dying rays.
Selim fell prostrate, death within his soul ;
And the huge flood that menaced all the world
But yesterday, was foiled upon the shield
Of the great hero, whom our sons will bless,
Whose glory countless ages will outlive !

COLLONITS, complaisantly.

So be it, if he renders unto Cæsar
That which—

DE CROY

In falling back the flood has left
Behind the usual treasures of the east ;
The chains which Asia forged for our behoof,
Thousands of orphans, and of women slain,
And cradles borne upon the river's tide.
In these arms died my son. Ah me ! if kings,
After their triumphs, would but count our tears,
They would find the cost of reigning somewhat dear.

LEOPOLD, drily.

Thou hast still a son remaining.

COLLONITS

On the tower
Of the castle great Rodolph I beheld
Crowned and with his sceptre in his hand,
Praying for thy army.

LEOPOLD

Ah ! truly so ?

COLLONITS

I swear it !

LEOPOLD

'Tis a sign of Heaven's good will.
And the Vizier ?

COLLONITS

They say he killed himself.

LEOPOLD

Peace to his soul !

COLLONITS

A Turk—an infidel!

LEOPOLD

I was wrong. Where is your great Sobieski?

COLLONITS

In the saved city with the Archduke Charles—

LEOPOLD

Ere we arrived?

COLLONITS

The people went with them
To sing a *Te Deum* at Saint Stephen's Church.

LEOPOLD

Without awaiting me? 'Tis thou who hast
Allowed this strange proceeding?

COLLONITS

Not so, Sire!

But what the people wish for must be done :
They never dreamt of asking leave of me.

LEOPOLD

This, then, is rank sedition—a revolt!
It must be suppressed.

COLLONITS

Yes, Sire.

LEOPOLD

On my life,
This mighty vassal deems himself in Warsaw!
Of his assistance we had little need
To hold our own.

COLLONITS

No, Sir.

LEOPOLD

We will make haste
To send him off.

COLLONITS

Yes, Sir.

LEOPOLD

They say that he
Delivered us from peril ; but I say
He did nothing.

COLLONITS

No, Sir.

STAREMBERG, approaching.

About to pursue
The pagan fugitives, he first demands
To have an audience with your Majesty.

LEOPOLD

With me ?

DE CROY

A grace thou scarcely can'st refuse.

LEOPOLD, to Collonits.

What thinkest thou ?

COLLONITS

This prince is the only one
Of all his race !

STAREMBERG

Thou hast well said, indeed :
The only one.

COLLONITS

But to none else but God
And to His behests does our Emperor yield.

DE CROY

In God's name the King has come.

COLLONITS

Yet there are
Certain customs and habits to observe
Which ages have acknowledged in a Court,

SCENE II.

The same. CHARLES DE LORRAINE

CHARLES, entering from the back.

What do I hear? The day that sees us saved
Witness to an outrage on our saviour?
One almost would believe the pagan foe
Were far away beyond the Bosphorus!
And yet Vienna still is wrapped in flames.
Beware of ministers who thus advise,
For they will lead thee to a throneless end!
Around such glory can such meanness cling?
If in the days to come thou wouldst avoid
The voice of History telling to all time
How Leopold the First, forgetting honour,
Grew envious of his benefactor's fame;
If thou dost dread a stigma should defile
The even current of a spotless reign,
Hear me, Sire! let this interview take place
At once, before us all, before our God.

LEOPOLD

But how can I receive an elected prince ?

CHARLES

With open arms, and royally, since 'tis he
Who has saved the Empire.

COLLONITS

With thy assistance.

LEOPOLD

Collonits, enough ; already have we paid
Too dearly for thy service in the past,
And for the future can dispense with thee.

(To Charles.)

Cousin, thy frankness finds favour in our sight.
We will receive the King.

(Charles signs to an officer, who goes out.)

COLLONITS

This is contrary

To every precedent !

LEOPOLD, to Staremburg.

As for thee, Count Roger,
Modest and generous as thou ever art,
In praising and exalting other's fame,
Thou lovest recollection of thine own.
I adopt thy children, and make thee knight
Of the Golden Fleece.

STAREMBERG, binding his knee.

Sire—

LEOPOLD, embracing him.

And take this collar.

CRIES, without.

Long live John the Third!

LEOPOLD

Already!

COLLONITS

Yes, and all

Vienna is following at his heels.

SCENE III.

The same. JOHN SOBIESKI, YAKOUB, JEROME, MALIGNY, Polish Chiefs, German Princes, Magistrates and Citizens of Vienna.

(The people, male and female, wave palm branches, festooned with flowers, above the heads of Sobieski and the soldiers, who appear in Turkish dresses.)

JOHN, to the people.

All honour to the Emperor of Germany!

(Some moments of silence.)

Sire, before hunting from the Magyar soil
The brutal Turk, I come to render Cæsar
That which is Cæsar's due. His flags rewon,
His people wild with joy, and Vienna sends
A thousand orphans for his future care.

JEROME

What! not the salutation of a word
Even to the magistrates!

MALIGNY

Always thus
Have benefits in Austria been received,
With cold ingratitude.

(Continued silence.)

JOHN

'Tis a dumb prince.

(He raises his hand to his moustache ; Leopold, thinking he is about to salute him, removes his hat, and then angrily replaces it.)

STAREMBERG, to Sobieski.

Sire, I envy thee, I love thee, and I bless
The hand to which I owe my life, and more,
My honour ! 'Tis thou alone who, under God,
Hast rescued Christendom ; and if the sceptre
Of the world were wielded by the worthiest hand,
'Tis thou whom God would designate as King.

JOHN, raising him.

Count, God alone is great, of that be sure.
'Twas I who came, and saw, but Europe conquered.

COLLONITS

From the sons of Amalek Judea is won ;
Glory to thee, oh ! Joshua, and to thee,
Pope Innocent, the Moses of the age !

JOHN

To him alone all honour ! The Pope will see
With joy thy restoration to thy office.

(To Leopold.)

For my poor service, Sire, thou owest naught ;
My Grand Hetman, if thou wilt, shall render thee
The booty. Jerome, approach !

(A movement. Leopold makes a sign.)

STAREMBERG

A moment stay !

LEOPOLD, with bitterness.

To fitly recompense so great a work,

We would an equal service render thee.
 Hungary is now of anarchy the prey ;
 Her vassals are triumphant ; hasten there
 And re-establish order for thy children.

JOHN

Sire, I have nothing done compared with what
 Remains for me to do ; in that respect
 I know I differ with more famous kings.
 I have two sons ; but even at my death
 Saint Stephen's diadem shall ne'er be theirs ;
 'Twould be upon their brows a crown of thorns !
 Besides, in Austria, order once restored,
 To Tököly does Hungary belong.

LEOPOLD

Staremberg ! thou seest ! Well, then, if Thy Highness
 Still decline, thy son perhaps will not refuse
 To accept our friendship, which to cement
 More closely, we will keep for him the hand
 Of our daughter, the Archduchess Eleonore.

JOHN

'Tis for him to say.

YAKOUB

Such a choice as this
 Must do me honour ; but I should believe
 My people wronged if I accepted it.

LEOPOLD

Come, then, Collonits, let us go !

(After a few moments hesitation he is about to go, when Selim appears before him.)

SCENE IV.

The same. SELIM.

SELIM, leaning on a broken sword.

Sire, one moment!

Only one! If God after His own image
Has fashioned kings, He must resemble Satan.
I come to pay thee homage.

LEOPOLD

What needs this slave?

SELIM

Slave! Yes, thou speakest truly: I was born
Beneath thy reign.

DE CROY

'Tis Selim, the accursed,
The assassin of my son.

SELIM

A noble name;
Better than thine, murderer of my father!

LEOPOLD

Guards! cut him down!

SELIM

There is no need of that;

Look!

(He uncovers his breast.)

A Sobieski has forestalled your blow!
I am no longer Selim; it is Death
That speaks to you. Great Cæsar, I salute thee;
And thou, Prince Charles.

LEOPOLD

What wilt thou ?

SELIM

I have come

To beg thy mercy for the sons of Arpad,
Under thy axe reduced ; my scythe is broken
Mowing down thy race—dying I pardon thee ;
Like me, show mercy, for thy children's sake.

LEOPOLD

Never !

SELIM

Never ? It is a cruel word,
Worthy thy repute ! Be careful, or I swear—
No, I must beg now.

(He takes from his breast a paper wrapped in a torn flag.)

In the name of *God*,

Liberty, Country, three words inscribed
Upon this ragged fragment by the Ban,
Revoke that cruel edict, before which hell
Itself had paled. It is enough for vengeance
That thou hast conquered ; what more needest thou ?
Eh ! what, no indulgence ? Then justice grant
The justice of the living God ! Behold
The field of battle and the burning city ;
And listen to the distant passing bell,
Vibrating mournfully upon the air.
Uncover, for 'tis Death that sweeps along !

LEOPOLD, uncovering in fear.

Who, then, art thou ?

SELIM

I am thy prisoner.
One word, the last before death sets me free !

Thou knowest well my name. Among thy crimes
 Seek for the one the blackest and most foul,
 Among thy victims for the one most worthy
 Of thy regard, and of the filial love
 Their due who furnish nurture for the mind.
 An honest heart, a lofty soul, an arm
 Cast in a special mould to wield a sword.

(Advancing.)

His name was Zrini, and I am his son.

ALL

Zrini!

LEOPOLD, to his officers.

Protect me!

SELIM

If you take one step,
 By this hand he dies!

(With one hand he holds a poignard to Leopold's breast, and with the other seizes his two hands. The officers fall back.—To Leopold.)

Thou shalt not escape ;
 'Tis Death now shackling thee with lusty arms ;
 Death, which has had such favours at thy hands ;
 No fear of him should daunt thy bloody brow.

LEOPOLD, at his feet.

Pardon! Pardon!

SELIM

Germans, your Emperor see,
 Nero with the laurels of Tiberius crowned!
 Look at his murderous hand! 'Twas he who killed
 My father, gentle guardian of his youth.
 He was the judge, and there the headsman stands,
 And there the chaplain, that red-ribboned spectre,
 Those are the three who in their silent cell

Piously cut my honoured father's throat ;
 And, since that night, whene'er they dare to pray,
 God causes blood to trickle from their hands.
 I kill thee ? Not I !

(He lets go his hold.)

Look at this broken sword ;
 'Tis now my crutch. I throw it at thy feet.
 If thine own purple needest Magyar blood,
 Wipe it in plenty off that shattered blade !
 May'st thou live long, King Leopold, that thy brow,
 So placid and so calm, may burn and blush
 Beneath the name I give thee—murderer !
 To see thy land a desert, like my own,
 And have to beg some other John Sobieski
 For support ; to see some future day thy sons,
 Thy glory's legatees, from their dominions
 Banished, and left to History's loud curse !
 To compass this I gave a willing hand ;
 I die content—I have avenged my land.

JOHN

Sire, let mercy for once direct thy soul !
 And let a brighter future now commence—
 One of reform and justice for thy people !
 This is the dearest wish that I can give,
 The wish of one to a whole nation dear.
 If the blood of Cæsar circles in thy veins,
 Pronounce one word to prove it—amnesty !
 A dying outlaw cannot be a foe,
 Hence 'neath the judgment write the pardon.

LEOPOLD

No !

Your Highness surely cannot gravely ask
 That I should overlook the undisguised—

Nay, ostentatious spirit of revolt,
Of which that villain is the proper champion.
If, as an earnest christian, he will die,
I will try and forgive him all his sins.

SELIM

Follow thy trade, thou cruel murderous wretch,
But do not scoff at nor insult the victims !

LEOPOLD, to Collonits.

The rest is in thy hands ; carry it out.

SELIM

Take all my blood ; thou can'st not touch my soul !

(Leopold goes out with his guards. The people slowly disperse. Sentries in the background.)

SCENE V.

The same, less Leopold, Collonits, Staremberg and the Court ; then
MAURO, MYRRHA and HAYDÉE.

SELIM

He goes with a death-sentence on his lips !
My vengeance was no laggard in its work !
Thy aim was glory, but thy harvest shame !
And that is not the end ; thou wilt anon
Discover that a German never can
Become the brother of the Polish race.
To save the Empire was a stroke of genius ;
It brought to me the axe, to thee disgrace.

A GERMAN PRINCE

For us not even remnants ; not a bone
From the great banquet that we helped to spread.

A SECOND PRINCE

Let us at once abandon him to fate!

THE FIRST

He owes so much, he can but pay with outrage.

THE SECOND

For kings more solvent let us keep our valour

ALL

Let us go!

(A movement.)

JOHN, to Jerome.

By God's death, arrest those skulkers!
 'Tis always thus—the soldiers the most worthless
 Think more of pillage than of aught besides.
 When 'tis but partly done, you quit the work!
 Have you selected me to be your chief
 On purpose to entrap me, and to bring
 Dishonour on the King of Poland's name?
 It matters little. What I have begun,
 That will I finish with or without your aid.
 Thou wilt follow me, Lorraine?

CHARLES

To the world's end.

DE CROY

And I the same!

ALL

And so alike will we!

SELIM

Allah, confound this man's mysterious power!
 His voice can bring the very dead to life.

JOHN

Then all of you will follow me ?

THE GERMANS

Yes, all.

JOHN

Then to Byzantium we will march at once !
 I have marked the limit of the christian east ;
 There is no longer danger to be feared
 From the Islamite—it is nearer home.
 Yakoub, we march at break of day ; till then
 The rights that I can claim I yield to love.

(He remounts with the chiefs.)

YAKOUB

If that is Myrrha's wish—

MYRRHA

Oh ! that my heart
 Could speak ! The world has now no other joy
 Since I am thine, for ever to be with thee !
 I think I must have loved thee ere we met.
 I would live on now that my life is thine !

YAKOUB

Oh ! what is there that ails thee ?

MYRRHA

I cannot tell.

This happiness that fills my soul with ecstasy,
 Save for a dream, is too divine, too pure.
 I try to think it true, but all in vain !
 If it should prove a mockery, and thou
 Returnest singly to my mother's home,
 Take back this flower, thy precious gift of love :

Another will be thine ; but think of me
Sometimes, and may all happiness be thine !

YAKOUB

Why art thou shuddering, and why those tears ?

MYRRHA

I feel as though a vivid dart of fire
Were crashing through my breast, e'en to my soul.
God ! what suffering ! Yakoub, one kiss of love,
Perhaps the last. He's mine—for ever mine !

(She laughs convulsively.)

SELIM, approaching.

It is well.

YAKOUB

Selim !

SELIM

No, this time 'tis Death
That comes between you and demands his prey.
The blow that crushes out her life and love,
And thine embitters, couldst thou not foresee ?
Thou little knowest Selim to believe
That he would ever see her thine—oh ! fool !
Myrrha, forgive me ! 'Tis a cruel deed,
And base as cruel, to smite thee in the hour
That sees thy advent into womanhood.
Poor eastern flower, crushed before the dawn,
And lying with thy blighted love in death.
Drink of this draught ; it is the only thing
That can thy fever calm, and thou shalt live
Long after me, for one forgiving word,
One look !

MYRRHA, tenderly.

Yakoub, I love but thee !

SELIM, breaking the phial at their feet.

Then die !

MAURO, running in.

My daughter !

SELIM

Draw near, and see how hate can be
More true than all the boasted faith of love.
The heavens might now enshroud her in their folds,
But could not wrest her from the grasp of Death.
That dagger which the Emir of the mountain
Gave to me—

JOHN

Oh ! say no more !

SELIM

Is poisoned !

What dost thou say to that, King John Sobieski ?
And thou, Prince Yakoub, may'st thou have thy share
Of glory, grandeur and the best of fortune !
But I have better still—I have revenge.

MAURO, his hand on Myrrha's heart.

Dead !

SELIM, tearing off his bandages.

No longer am I Selim, but I die
John Zrini. In thee, oh ! Danube, I will seek
For my wearied body rest, and my spirit
I yield unbroken to the infinite !
People, renounce all foolish strife, and may
Ye soon be free !

(He springs into the river.)

JOHN

God ! may his words come true !

YAKOUB

Marie, I will follow thee ; oh ! wait for me !

(He attempts to throw himself on his sword.)

JOHN, restraining him.

No, thou shalt live ! In Poland's name, I take
Thee, Yakoub, to my arms ; and for her sake
Learn to prefer, above the tempting prize
Of love, a glorious name that never dies.
And, above all, whatever fate reveal,
Live for thy country, and thy country's weal !

(The flags wave over Myrrha.)



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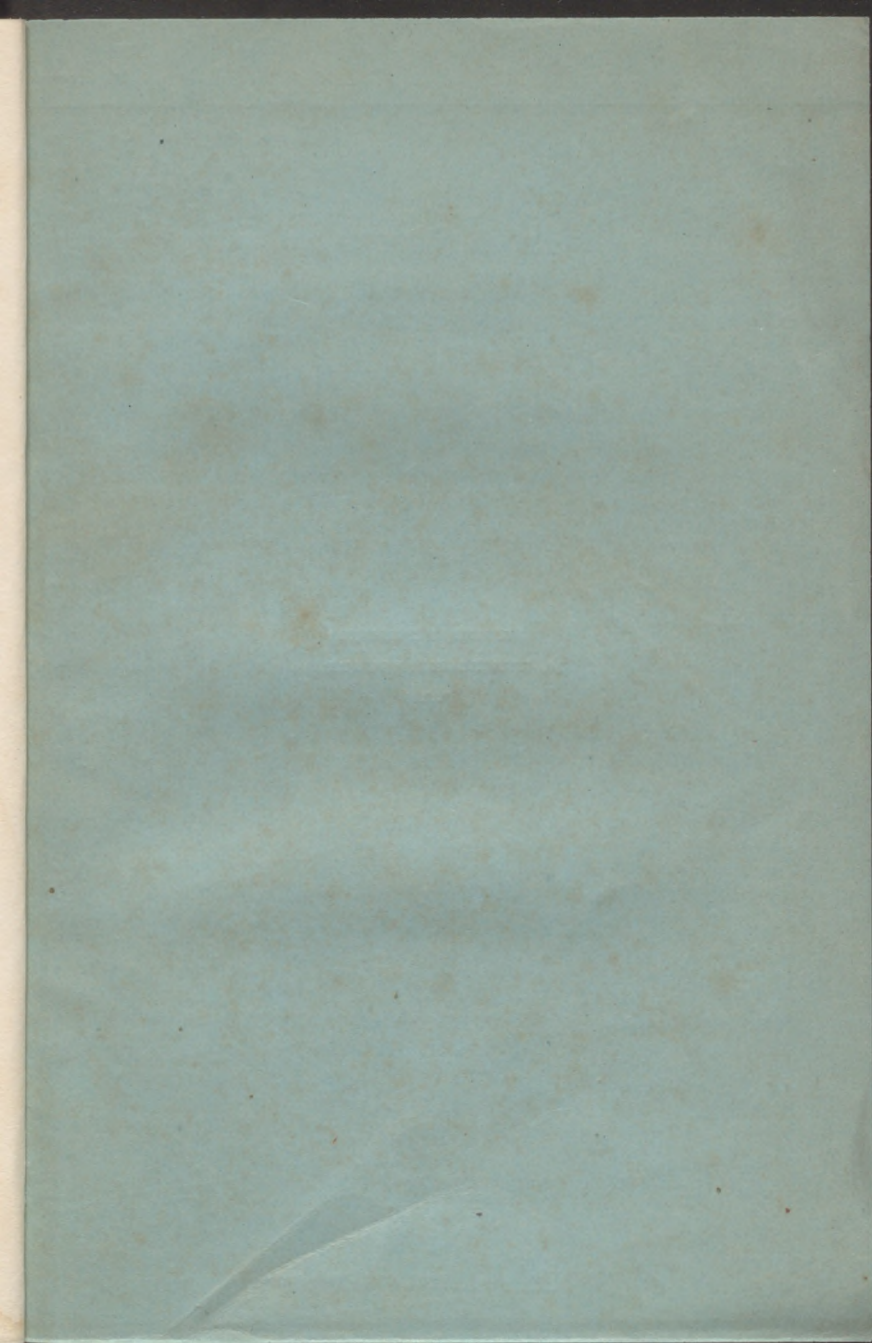
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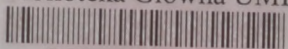


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