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The Widow of Malabar: A Digital Edition

Mariana Starke

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The Widow of Malabar

A Digital Edition

Written by Mariana Starke

Originally published 1791. Introduction and footnotes published 2023.

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Introduction

Mariana Starke

Mariana Starke was born in 1762 to a well-off family. Her mother was one Mary Hughes and her father was Richard Starke¹. Richard Starke was an officer for the British East India Company and oversaw a number of different forts during his span with the company. Mariana Starke was the oldest of three surviving children. Her brother was born first in 1768 and her sister in 1772. Starke and her sister seemed to have a close relationship as they were educated alongside one another by their mother², and they even took up music together. It was during this time that Starke seemed to find a love for reading and language and was often in correspondence with William Hayley, a fairly well-known poet, who described the young woman as “his poetical daughter” in the 1770s³. Her parents supported Mariana’s interest in literature by subscribing her to many different books of poetry.

Starke’s early life was very comfortable. She had been given an inheritance by her grandfather and thus had a considerable amount of wealth for her young age. This seemed to allow Mariana to travel a considerable amount in the 1790s where she found herself in Italy. She ended up living for some amount of time in Italy and, even after returning to England, Starke would often go back and forth between the island and the peninsula for much of her life. She became so familiar with Italy that she ended up writing a highly successful travel guide called *Travels in Italy* that went through several editions. In the early 1800s Mariana began to travel throughout Europe and eventually penned yet another successful travel guide called *Travels on*

¹ "Mariana Starke," Orlando: Women's Writing in the British Isles from the Beginnings to the Present, Cambridge University Press, 2022, <https://orlando.cambridge.org/profiles/starma>. All information on Starke’s life and background in this introduction comes from this article unless otherwise noted.

² Anna M. Thane, “The Unconventional Miss Starke: Writer and Adventuress,” Regency Explorer, Feb. 10, 2020, <https://regency-explorer.net/starke/>.

³ Elizabeth Crawford, “Mariana Starke: First Productions,” Woman and Her Sphere, Jan. 21, 2019, <https://womanandhersphere.com/2013/01/07/mariana-starke-first-productions/>.

*the Continent*⁴. Her success was not something taken lightly though, and she was often criticized by male travel writers that seemed to believe that her work was not effective due to it being too “emotional” which was a common critique of female writers for the time⁵. Starke would continue to travel Europe until her eventual death on the road in Naples while trying to return to England in 1838.

Though Mariana Starke is noted for her plays, she was a writer of multiple styles and genres, and she appealed to mass audiences. Starke is credited with the following titles: *The Sword of Peace* (comedy), *The British Orphan* (dramatic play), *The Widow of Malabar* (tragedy), *The Poor Soldier* (long poem), *Travels in Italy* (series of travel notes), *Travels on the Continent* (series of travel notes), and *Travels in Europe between the Years 1824 and 1828 Adapted to the Use of Travellers Comprising an Historical Account of Sicily with Particular Information for Strangers in that Island* (travel guide)⁶.

Mariana Starke’s tragic play, *The Widow of Malabar*, was published on May 5th, 1790, at the Theatre Royal Covent Garden. The three-act-long play tells the story of a young widow, Indamora, who must sacrifice herself on a burning pyre in the Indian ritual of sati. Starke was inspired by French writer Antoine Marin Le Mierre, who wrote the original, *La veuve du Malabar*. While she is credited for translating Le Mierre’s play, *The Widow of Malabar* is more accurately described as a “free interpretation” of the French play⁷. After the play was published in Starke’s name, she dedicated it to Mary Champion de Crespigny on January 24th, 1791, for her dedicated support of her work and for her attending multiple public productions of the play. The author of the play’s epilogue, R.J. Starke, is also most likely Mariana Starke’s brother. *The Widow of Malabar* was extremely successful, and it went on to be produced six more times in

⁴ Benjamin Colbert, “Mariana Starke,” Mariana Starke | British Travel Writing, University of Wolverhampton, 2014, <https://btw.wlv.ac.uk/authors/1135>.

⁵ Thane, “Unconventional Miss Starke.”

⁶ Colbert, “Marianna Starke.”

⁷ Elizabeth Crawford, “Mariana Starke: With Thanks To Mrs Crespigny From ‘The Poor Soldier’, ‘The British Orphan’ And ‘The Widow of Malabar,’” *Woman and Her Sphere*, April 17, 2014, <https://womanandhersphere.com/2014/04/17/mariana-starke-with-thanks-to-mrs-crespigny-from-the-poor-soldier-the-british-orphan-and-the-widow-of-malabar/>.

multiple theatre seasons as well as reprinted seven more times. While the play's main theme revolved around Indian culture and the practice of sati, Starke never visited India; however, she was likely inspired by the culture to write her play because of her family's involvement in the East India Company.

At the time that *The Widow of Malabar* was written, London was the biggest city in Europe, and theater was a growing art form of entertainment for all⁸. New theaters were being built and many theater companies were started due to the boom in interest. There were many innovations, both technological and cultural, that occurred because of all of the new interest in the theater. What we would know today as set designs rose to popularity in Britain in the eighteenth century, which gave the appearance of a three-dimensional space. Another technological innovation was the addition of a curtain to hide set changes. Cultural shifts also began to take hold as more and more women became successful playwrights and even wrote some empowering plays about women, and Starke stands as a great example of such a feat. In her early days as an author Starke would even participate in her plays dressed in male clothes, something that was not uncommon but still drew ire from some audience members⁹. The theater was also a place where all members of society would come together, who might not have been together in another context, such as members of different economic statuses. Men and women alike enjoyed partaking in watching plays. Audience participation was another important part of going to the theater, as they would cheer for actors and characters that they liked and would boo the ones they disliked, adding to the overall cultural experience. This cultural phenomenon and the growing popularity of attending the theater for all members of society contributed to the great success of Starke and *The Widow of Malabar*.

⁸ Andrew Dickinson, "An introduction to 18th-century British theatre," British Library, 21 June 2018, www.bl.uk/restoration-18th-century-literature/articles/18th-century-british-theatre. All information in this paragraph on the London theater comes from this article unless otherwise noted.

⁹ Thane, "Unconventional Miss Starke."

Shifting British Imperial Attitudes Toward India

At the time of *The Widow of Malabar's* conception, the East India Trading Company's exploits in India had been long-established, and had not only placed the country under duress, but shifting British attitudes on the influence of Indian culture on the British, particularly on British merchants in India, called into question to what extent British colonial rule should continue in India. Unlike other territories that the British Empire had colonized, India was a well-established nation. They had a system of government, laws, and customs that didn't work well with the "white man's burden" approach to establishing control over India. Indeed, antiquated ideas of empire that included extending British law to settlers and natives failed in the conquest of India¹⁰. But this obstacle created a new kind of colonial imperialism. The British officers of the East India Trading Company, a private mercantile enterprise, overcame this obstacle by integrating themselves into the hierarchy of Indian culture, but also imposed their own unchecked rule and law tyrannically and ruthlessly, with the power of the British military at their disposal¹¹.

The East India Company had been operating for nearly two hundred years by the time Edmund Burke began to speak out about how Britain ought to govern India¹². In his famous parliamentary speech, he calls the treatment and exploitation of India's population by both the British government and the East India Company "an abuse of great atrocity"¹³. Burke's parliamentary speech in December 1783 centered on the proposal of legislation that would limit the East India Company's ability to function as its own governmental state in India while stripping the company of its tyrannical power and re-subjecting its affairs to British law. Burke's speech in support of The East India Bill warned Parliament of the dangers in viewing India as "a

¹⁰ Robert Travers, *Ideology and Empire in Eighteenth-Century India: The British in Bengal* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 3.

¹¹ Tillman W. Nechtman, *Nabobs: Empire and Identity in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2013), 6-7.

¹² Travers, *Ideology and Empire*, 2.

¹³ Edmund Burke, *The Portable Edmund Burke*, ed. Isaac Krammick (New York: Penguin, 1999), 370.

land of perpetual surplus” and proposed that in order to preserve Imperial interests in the land, the British government and the East India Company should merge, with the East India Company serving as an arm of the British government - and no longer a private company - in order to reframe colonial power to include both governmental authority *and* the material power of mercantilism.¹⁴ However, the bill was defeated.

From 1786 to 1794, Burke would use his same arguments to eventually impeach Warren Hastings, the governor-general of Bengal, who possessed an opposing idea regarding British colonialism and imperialism. While Hastings based his ideas on absolute power and conquest, Burke advocated for the rights of the colonized. But both of these opposing views revealed a flawed ideology when it came to British imperialism as a whole, particularly in how it related to the treatment and subjugation of the people of India. Burke’s rhetoric always seemed to “turn obsessively to inventories of both the colonized and the abuses perpetrated on it by the East India company”¹⁵. It framed India’s ancient history, religions, caste systems, and groups as inventory impossible to catalog, and when coupled with its geography, India appeared difficult, if not impossible, for the British to govern given these factors and Britain’s distance from the subcontinent. Burke also described India with a vague exoticism, highlighting the subcontinent’s barbarity that not only reinforced the need for British colonists to advance Indian society, but effectively *othered* India’s people while simultaneously placing them in a category as deserving of British sympathies¹⁶.

Burke’s rhetoric reflected what would eventually become Britain’s collective imperialist view on “Indian sublime” - where sympathy became both the “dynamic of alienation” between the British and the people of India and the justification for continuation of imperial colonization and control of the subcontinent¹⁷.

¹⁴ Sara Suleri, *The Rhetoric English India* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2011), 25.

¹⁵ Suleri, *Rhetoric of English India*, 30.

¹⁶ Travers, *Ideology and Empire*, 7.

¹⁷ Suleri, *Rhetoric of English India*, 38.

Sati

The main conflict of *The Widow of Malabar* is that one of the main characters, Indamora, has become a widow and is making her way to throw herself on her husband's funeral pyre by the traditional act of sati¹⁸. This act of Indamora committing sati requires some explanation. "The exact origin of the Sati is unknown, but scholars say that it emerged for two reasons[:] first, for the upper-class funerals; it added more grandeur ... Second[,] to keep the women safe from the enemy invading their territory."¹⁹ The name of the practice, "sati" (or "suttee") comes from the Hindu Goddess Sati, who committed the first recorded act of *sati*. It is also a Sanskrit word meaning "faithful wife" and "chaste"²⁰. The practice of sati was a duty held by a newly-made widow where she would engulf herself in the flames of the funeral pyre of her dead husband. This practice was held in high importance among the upper and royal caste families because it was believed that if a widow would voluntarily do this then it would bring "glory for herself and her family."²¹ The practice of sati and its usage had been controversial up until the early to mid 1800's when it was finally banned.

Sati was a controversial topic between Britain and India, and it was eventually banned by the British. Lata Mani makes clear in her book *Contentious Traditions: The Debate on Sati in Colonial India*, British views on banning sati: "Official fear of the consequences of prohibiting sati was tied to their analysis of sati as a religious practice and to their view of religion as a fundamental and structuring principle of Indian society."²² She explains that the link to Hinduism

¹⁸ Sati: "A practice followed within some Hindu communities, in which a woman kills herself as an act of piety or devotion soon after the death of her husband, typically by immolation on her husband's funeral pyre; an example or instance of this ritual. Frequently in **to commit sati**" (OED)

¹⁹ Mohammed Shamsuddin, "A Brief Historical Background of Sati Tradition in India," *Din ve Felsefe Arařtırmaları* 3, no. 5 (2020): 49.

²⁰ Wendy Doniger, "suttee," *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 8 Sep. 2022 (<https://www.britannica.com/topic/suttee>).

²¹ Shamsuddin, "Brief Historical Background," 49.

²² Lata Mani, *Contentious Traditions: The Debate on Sati in Colonial India* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 20.

made it hard to outlaw sati, since it was argued to be part of the Hindu religion by Brahmins.²³ In spite of this, on December 4, 1829 sati was banned.²⁴ Mani also explains that anyone found participating in sati could even have been charged with up to the death sentence.²⁵ However, Mani also brings up the Indian Penal Code of 1860 which describes sati as “voluntary culpable homicide by consent.”²⁶ This framing created a loophole allowing sati to continue under the Indian Penal Code so long as “a person above 12 years of age ‘suffers death or takes the risk of death by his own choice.’”²⁷ For some added context, the age of consent defined by the Indian Penal Code was ten years old.²⁸ At the time of *The Widow of Malabar*, which was published in 1791, sati was still legal in India and practiced.

Sati was a sign of ultimate devotion and obedience from a woman to her husband, originating in upper class society and then moving throughout the country. Ancient Hinduism believed in the assumption of an eternal togetherness in marriage²⁹ that continued into the next life; thus, the woman who joined her husband in death was the most devoted and loving wife to her husband. If a woman was to commit sati, she was being a good wife and keeping herself chaste and obedient to her husband. The performance of sati gave rise to myths in the western world that Hindu women were forbidden from remarrying by religious law³⁰ when this was not the case. The majority of widows chose to eventually remarry rather than die on the pyre with their husband’s body³¹ until sati became an expected and forced practice before it was abolished.

²³ Mani, *Contentious Traditions*, 16-17.

²⁴ Mani, *Contentious Traditions*, 24.

²⁵ Mani, *Contentious Traditions*, 24.

²⁶ Mani, *Contentious Traditions*, 25.

²⁷ Mani, *Contentious Traditions*, 25.

²⁸ Amita Pitre and Lakshmi Lingam, “Age of Consent: Challenges and Contradictions of Sexual Violence Laws in India,” *Sexual and Reproductive Health Matters* 29, no. 2 (22 February 2021): Section 2. <https://doi.org/10.1080/26410397.2021.1878656>.

²⁹ Werner Menski, “Sati: A Review Article,” *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London* 61, no. 1 (1998): 79. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3107292.79>.

³⁰ Menski, “Sati: A Review Article,” 76.

³¹ Menski, “Sati: A Review Article,” 76.

There were a few different opinions regarding the practice of sati in European culture. Pompa Banerjee states, "European observers of widow burning saw and spoke from contingent and shifting perspectives."³² Some viewed sati as the ultimate act of love and that it was a beautiful sacrifice. Many Europeans treated it with a great deal of reverence because of this. One observer said, "The deed was not done out of compulsion but out of pure love."³³ While many had this viewpoint, others saw sati as a grotesque act, but it came from a place of guiltlessness. Figueira states, "While outraging Western sensibilities and exploiting Western curiosity about the grotesque and barbarian, the sati's existence satisfied European nostalgia for lost innocence."³⁴ Such an explanation of European views regarding the practice showcases how even some of those who disliked the practice still saw some semblance of love within the act. However, many such as Johann Gottfried von Herder thought differently. In fact, Figueira says that Herder deplored the practice: "He attributed the origin of the practice to the lack of compassion endemic to Hinduism and Indian social organization. Herder strongly criticized the sati's motives: either she was aping some false conception of holiness or submitting to death as punishment."³⁵ This idea that the practice of sati stems from a lack of compassion helps to build the negative connotations and the controversy associated with the practice, throwing motivations behind it into doubt. This negative view of sati (and of Hinduism more broadly) is the one that informs Starke's play.

³² Pompa Banerjee, *Burning Women: Widows, Witches, and Early Modern European Travelers in India*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 7.

³³ Banerjee, *Burning Women*, 9.

³⁴ Dorothy M. Figueira, "Die Flambierte Frau: Sati in European Culture," *Sati, the Blessing and the Curse: The Burning of Wives in India*, ed. John Stratton Hawley (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 57

³⁵ Figueira, *Sati*, 59.

Textual Note

This edition of *The Widow of Malabar* by Mariana Starke was adapted from the first edition (1791) to this digital format with the addition of a modern introduction. In formatting this edition, the target audience is college freshmen, so many words are defined simply and completely in footnotes, and context is given for anything not obvious in meaning. The formatting of the document has been changed by the addition of line numbers next to the play dialogue and eliminating line breaks where appropriate. Italics have been retained in stage directions to distinguish them from the lines of the play; however, no other use of italics within the text of the play or its paratexts has been retained. Character speech tags were centered in the original document but have been left-aligned here for ease of reading. Where a line of the play is split between speakers, the second part of the line has been indented. The first two lines of Act II, Scene II, appear in the original document as prose, but given that no other prose appears in the play, it is likely that these lines were originally verse and were changed to prose by the compositor due to lack of space at the bottom of the page; in this edition these lines have been restored as lines of verse. Similarly, lines 109 and 188 of Act II, Scene II both appear as two lines in the original, but the rhythm of the verse indicates they were intended as single lines, and they appear as such here.

In the editing of this edition, the long “f” was changed to “s,” but unless otherwise noted, spellings remain the same as in the original. For archaic spellings, the modern spelling is noted within the footnote. There are several instances in which apostrophes elide letters and contract words; in these cases, we added a space between the apostrophe and the second word, making the sentence easier to read. For example, “t’authenticate” was changed to “t’ authenticate.” Due to the addition of line numbers, original page numbers were deleted. Catchwords, which helped the printer place the pages in order, were also deleted.

The epilogue, which originally appeared immediately after the prologue, has been moved to the end of the play. We added several introductory context pages regarding Mariana Starke's life and works, the Britain-India relationship of the time, and the practice of sati. It is our hope that these resources will help this play be more readily enjoyed by the college-level reader.

Two sources are cited frequently throughout the text, and so are abbreviated in the footnotes. The full citations are below for reference.

- OED: *OED Online*, Oxford University Press, September 2022, www.oed.com/viewdictionaryentry/Entry/11125.
- TD: *The Thespian Dictionary; or, Dramatic Biography of the Present Age*. James Cundee, 1805.

THE
WIDOW OF MALABAR.

A
TRAGEDY,
IN THREE ACTS.
AS IT IS PERFORMED AT THE
THEATRE-ROYAL, COVENT-GARDEN³⁶.

LONDON:
PRINTED FOR WILLIAM LANE³⁷,

AT THE
Minerva,
LEADENHALL-STREET.
M.DCC.XCI.

³⁶ The Theatre Royal, Covent Garden is in the same location as the current Theatre Royal Drury Lane in London, England. Roe, Ken. "Theatre Royal Drury Lane in London." Cinema Treasures, Nov. 22, 2009. <http://cinematreasures.org/theaters/30674>.

³⁷ William Lane: (1746-1814); a publisher and bookseller best known for his creation of the Minerva Press. Granger, William. *The Wonderful Museum, and Magazine Extraordinary* (London, 1808).

TO MRS. CRESPIGNY³⁸,

MADAM,

As I have no method of testifying my grateful respect towards you, but by inscribing the humble productions of my Muse to your name, I trust you will not think me presumptuous in addressing to you THE WIDOW OF MALABAR; especially, as the chief part of that applause with which my Tragedy has been honoured originated from your zealous friendship and powerful support.

THAT you are the best and most active of Friends I have long experienced; that you possess the most benevolent and candid of spirits every day evinces³⁹; consequently, I am induced to hope you will receive the labours of a young and inexperienced Writer with indulgence, and preserve her Offspring⁴⁰, by your extensive influence, from being consigned to oblivion by the shafts of Criticism, or the more grievous wounds of Neglect.

I KNOW not how to express my thankfulness to all my Friends, and to the Public in general, for their most kind and flattering reception of my Tragedy; -but to you, MADAM, my debt of gratitude is so large that I can never find means to repay it: -if, therefore, you would accept, as interest for this debt, all the regard my heart is capable of shewing⁴¹ you, and allow me, during the whole of my future life, to distinguish myself by the title of Your Friend, you would, if possible, add to the favors you have already conferred upon Her, who has the honor to be,

MADAM,

Your most obliged,

affectionate and devoted

humble Servant,

MARIANA STARKE.

Epsom, Jan. 24, 1791.

³⁸ Mary, Lady Champion de Crespigny (1749-1812): a woman of noble blood and high social status who was also a writer herself, although more famously known as a generous patron of other female writers. "Mary, Lady Champion De Crespigny Author Biography." Orlando: Women's Writing in the British Isles from the Beginnings to the Present, <https://orlando.cambridge.org/profiles/chamm2>.

³⁹ Evince: outward evidence of; to prove or show (OED)

⁴⁰ "Preserve her offspring" in this context means to preserve the reputation of the plays which Mariana Starke wrote.

⁴¹ Shewing: archaic spelling of showing. (OED)

ADVERTISEMENT.

THE following Tragedy is, in many respects, imitated from M. LE MIERRE'S celebrated Drama, entitled, LA VEUVE DU MALABAR⁴², which had a most uncommonly long run in Paris, and which is now become, in a translation, a favourite Tragedy of the Germans:-Such being the case, the Authoress feels it necessary to apologise for not having contented herself with translating instead of imitating LA VEUVE DU MALABAR; but she was well convinced, that neither the Plot, nor the long declamatory Scenes of the French Play, would have been approved, or even tolerated, by an English Audience⁴³; therefore, she rejected all thoughts of a Translation, and has ventured to exhibit a Drama in some measure her own; trusting that the Public will be indulgent to a first Essay, and that if her Work should possess merit sufficient to be deemed worthy of criticism, it will be such criticism as may teach her to correct her errors without too severely wounding her self-love⁴⁴.

THE Authoress takes this opportunity of returning her grateful acknowledgments to Mr. HARRIS⁴⁵ for his liberality respecting the decorations of her Play, and for the care he has obligingly taken in getting it up :-To all the Performers likewise, and to Miss BRUNTON⁴⁶ in particular, her very best thanks are due; neither can she close this Advertisement without acknowledging how much her Tragedy has been embellished by Mr. Stevens's⁴⁷ elegant and characteristic Music.

⁴² M. Le Mierre is Antoine Marin Le Mierre (1733-1793): playwright of *La Veuve Du Malabar*, which *The Widow of Malabar* was based on. "Le Mierre, Antoine-Marin 1733-1793." WorldCat Identities, 1 Jan. 1766, <https://worldcat.org/identities/lccn-n83041661/>.

⁴³ For context, *The Widow of Malabar* was released in 1790, during the French Revolution against the British, though political views on the revolution were still mixed.

⁴⁴ Self-love: "love or admiration for oneself; conceitedness; vanity. Also: excessive regard for one's own interest; self-centeredness, selfishness." (OED)

⁴⁵ Mr. Harris: Thomas Harris (1767-1820) was an owner and proprietor of the Theatre Royale Covent Garden. (TD)

⁴⁶ Miss Brunton: Elizabeth Brunton (1772-1799) was part of a famous acting family who frequently performed at the Theatre Royale Covent Garden. (TD)

⁴⁷ Mr. Stevens's: We are unable to identify this person.

PROLOGUE

WRITTEN BY

T.W. FITZGERALD⁴⁸, Esq.

AND SPOKEN BY

Mr. HOLMAN⁴⁹.

IN Climes⁵⁰ remote, where Ganges⁵¹ rolls his wave,

At once the Indian's Idol and his grave !

Where sultry suns in ardent minds infuse

The richest subjects for the Tragic Muse,

A Custom reigns, which harrows up the soul,

5

And bends e'en Nature to its stern controul !

When Fate cuts short the Hindoo's⁵² thread of life,

One tomb ingulphs⁵³ the Husband and the Wife:

The Widow, warm in youth, must yield her breath,

And, self-devoted, seek her Lord in death:

10

In gay attire she mounts the awful⁵⁴ Pile⁵⁵,

⁴⁸ T.W. Fitzgerald: We are unable to identify this person.

⁴⁹ Mr. Holman: Holman, Joseph George (1764-1817): Originally attended Oxford to become a man of the church; however, a thespian club enticed him into acting. Popular at Covent Garden from 1784. "Joseph George Holman," Wikipedia, June 6, 2022. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joseph_George_Holman.

⁵⁰ Climes: "climate" (OED)

⁵¹ Ganges: a river of the plains of the northern Indian subcontinent, considered sacred to Hindus. Hindus believe that casting the ashes of their deceased into the river gives them entry into heaven. Lodrick, Deryck O. "Ganges river." *Encyclopædia Britannica*, December 7, 2022. <https://www.britannica.com/place/Ganges-River>.

⁵² Hindoo's: Hindu's

⁵³ Ingulphs: archaic variation of "engulfs": "To swallow up in a gulf, abyss, or whirlpool" (here used figuratively) (OED)

⁵⁴ Aweful: archaic spelling and use of "awful": "Arousing or inspiring awe. Later also in weaker or more general use: very bad or unpleasant, and related senses." (OED)

⁵⁵ Pile: "A heap of wood or similar material on which a corpse, sacrifice, etc., is burnt" (OED)

Nor dares with tears the horrid Rites defile;
Her heaving bosom must repress the sigh,
And learn with Stoic⁵⁶ apathy to die :

For, should she yield to Nature's pow'rful sway, 15
And not with smiles this Bramin⁵⁷ Law obey,
Shou'd she, with horror, shun the scorching flame,
Eternal infamy⁵⁸ awaits her name !

Driven from her Caste⁵⁹, she wanders on the Earth,
Disown'd by those to whom she owes her birth ; 20
Life grows a burden which she cannot bear,
And Death the only refuge from Despair !

Unhappy Race ! by double chains confin'd,
Oppress'd in body, and enslav'd in mind ;

For ever doom'd some tyrant to obey, 25
The Priest's, the Despot's⁶⁰, or the Stranger's prey !

How bless'd the Natives of this happier Land,
Where FREEDOM long has made her glorious stand!
Where neighb'ring Kingdoms may, with envy, see

The MONARCH great, because the SUBJECT'S free! 30

A Nation fam'd for arts, in arms renown'd⁶¹,

⁵⁶ Stoic: "One who practises repression of emotion, indifference to pleasure or pain, and patient endurance." (OED)

⁵⁷ Bramin: archaic spelling of "Brahmin": "In the traditional Indian caste system: a member of the highest group of castes, originally that of priests and scholars." (OED)

⁵⁸ Infamy: "Evil fame or reputation; scandalous repute; public reproach, shame, or disgrace." (OED)

⁵⁹ Caste: "Any of the (usually hereditary) classes or social ranks into which Hindu society is traditionally divided" (OED)

⁶⁰ Despot: "a tyrant, an oppressor" (OED)

⁶¹ Renown'd: "celebrated, famous" (OED)

PERSONS OF THE DRAMA.

Raymond, <i>General of the English Forces,</i>				Mr. Farren ⁶⁸ .
Albert, <i>an English Officer,</i>	—	—	—	Mr. Evatt ⁶⁹ .
The Chief Bramin,	—	—	—	Mr. Harley ⁷⁰ .
The second Bramin,	—	—	—	Mr. Powell ⁷¹ .
The young Bramin,	—	—	—	Mr. Holman.
Narrain, <i>an Indian Chief,</i>	—	—		Mr. Thompson ⁷² .
Indamora, <i>the Widow of Malabar,</i>		—		Miss Brunton.
Fatima, <i>her Attendant, a Persian,</i>	—	—		Mrs. Rock ⁷³ .

Bramins, — Fakirs, — Relations of the Widow, — English Officers, — Soldiers, &c. &c.

*The vocal parts by Mess. Bannister and Incedon, Mrs. Warrell, Miss Williams, Miss Stuart, and Mrs. Mountain.*⁷⁴

SCENE, a Sea-port City on the Malabar⁷⁵ Coast.

Time of Action, one Day.

*** The Lines marked with inverted Commas are omitted in the Representation.*

⁶⁸ Mr. Farren: Farren, William (1754-1795): Actor at Covent Garden. First major debut was playing in Othello in 1782. (TD)

⁶⁹ Mr. Evatt: Evatt, Robert (fl. 1787-1809): Mr. Evatt was an actor at Covent Garden ranging in stage productions from 1787 until 1799. He later went to work for Richmond Theatre where he met his wife, who was also an actress. (TD)

⁷⁰ Mr. Harley: Harley, George Davies (1762-1811): Actor, author and poet, popular between 1789 and 1793. "Harley, George Davies." Jackson Bibliography of Romantic Poetry, <https://jacksonbibliography.library.utoronto.ca/author/details/harley-george-davies/6415>.

⁷¹ Mr. Powell: Full name unknown (?-1799): Actor for Covent Garden known for playing older men in supporting roles in productions. (TD)

⁷² Mr. Thompson: We are unable to identify this person.

⁷³ Mrs. Rock: Rock, Mrs. Edward Anthony (?-1793): Actress at Covent Garden (TD)

⁷⁴ Mess. Bannister ... Mountain: We have not identified these individuals.

⁷⁵ Malabar: a coastal area located on the west coast of the country of India.

THE WIDOW OF MALABAR.

ACT I.

SCENE I.

The inside of the Pagod⁷⁶ of ESWARA⁷⁷.

THE CHIEF-BRAMIN — THE SECOND BRAMIN — THE YOUNG
BRAMIN — AND OTHER BRAMINS.

CHIEF-BRAMIN.

BUKAH⁷⁸, illustrious Chief, in arms renown'd,

Has paid the debt to nature.

[To the second Bramin.

Bramin, go,

Learn if his Consort, as our custom dictates,

(That sacred custom which maintains it's sway

In ev'ry State where holy Ganges flows,) 5

Learn if her mind be fix'd to mount the Pile,

And join, in death, her mighty Husband's shade.

[Exit second Bramin.

⁷⁶ Pagod: "In South and South-East Asia: a Hindu or Buddhist temple or sacred building, typically having the form of a many-tiered tower with storeys of diminishing size, each with an ornamented projecting roof" (OED)

⁷⁷ ESWARA: Ishvara, an epithet associated with Shiva or Vishnu in certain Hindu traditions. "Ishvara." Wikipedia, Oct. 28, 2022. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ishvara>.

⁷⁸ Bukah: The name of the "illustrious chief"

[To the young Bramin.

Young Priest, the glorious envied task is thine,
To guide the widow'd Fair to certain bliss;
Since thou wast last admitted 'mong the Train 10
Who watch, with pious zeal⁷⁹, o'er BRAMA'S⁸⁰ altars.

YOUNG BRAMIN.

And can you, then, while England's hardy Sons
Hurl their dread thunders at our groaning City;
Can you, when ruthless war, with iron hand,
Has made these Shores a theatre of horror, 15
Say, can you add to our calamities⁸¹
A sacrifice which nature shudders at?

Shall one prepare this Victim for the Pile?

No-rather let my tongue essay⁸² to save her.
In Realms remote from hence, her Lord was slain; 20
She saw him not at those soul-melting moments
When, struggling in the fearful grasp of death,
The cruel Husband, from his awe-struck Partner,
Full oft obtains a promise to descend,
With his loath'd ashes, to the silent tomb. 25

⁷⁹ Zeal: "Passion, fervour" (OED)

⁸⁰ Brama: Hinduism. The creator god who, with Shiva and Vishnu, forms the Trimurti. (OED)

⁸¹ Calamity: "The state or condition of grievous affliction or adversity; deep distress, trouble, or misery, arising from some adverse circumstance or event." (OED)

⁸² Essay: "An attempt, endeavor" (OED)

CHIEF BRAMIN.

And what avails that he ne'er gain'd her promise?

Cou'd she whose blood has flow'd unsullied down

Thro' a long line of glorious Ancestors,

Cou'd she be vile enough to purchase life

With total loss of honor?—" Cou'd she bear

30

" To live degraded, shun'd, calumniated⁸³,

" The foul reproach of all her noble race?"

YOUNG BRAMIN.

Ill-fated Wives of cruel Malabar!

While wedded, forc'd to drag the galling⁸⁴ chain

Of abject servitude, to live the Slaves

35

Of a proud Tyrant's will:—when widow'd, doom'd

To feel the sharpest stings of obloquy,⁸⁵

Or die for him, whom, living, ye abhor'd⁸⁶!

CHIEF BRAMIN.

Know'st thou not, Youth, with what tyrannic pow'r

Imperious⁸⁷ Custom rules o'er Human-kind?

40

⁸³ Calumniated: "To asperse with calumny"; "to slander." (OED)

⁸⁴ Galling: "Chafing, irritating or harassing physically" (OED)

⁸⁵ Obloquy: "Verbal abuse directed against a person or thing; detraction, calumny, slander."(OED)

⁸⁶ Abhor'd: "To shrink with horror or repugnance from; to recoil from. *Obsolete.*" (OED)

⁸⁷ Imperious: "Having, expressing, or characterized by a domineering character or manner; overbearing, dictatorial; arrogant." (OED)

Whene'er Japan's great Master⁸⁸ bends to fate,
Finds he not flatterers e'en after death,
Who pour their life-blood on his senseless clay?
And saw we not, when India's Sov'reign Lord
Mounted the regal seat, his Brothers all 45
Doom'd to the murderous bowstring?—Is not Man,
O, everlasting shame!—on Niger's banks
Put up to common sale, shackled, enslav'd,
And treated worse than BRAMA's Children treat
The deadliest reptile that infests our clime? 50

YOUNG BRAMIN.

Can Custom banish ev'ry tender feeling,
And render Men more savage e'en than Brutes?
O, for some Spirit of superior kind,
Some glorious soul by love of freedom sir'd,
Whose nervous hand might break this Tyrant's chains, 55
And place benignant⁸⁹ Reason on her throne!

Enter Second Bramin.

CHIEF-BRAMIN.

What tidings bring'st thou?—Has the youthful Widow

⁸⁸ Japan's great master refers to the emperor of Japan and the act being referred to is known as junshi, a practice where vassals would commit seppuku—voluntary suicide—to follow their lord into death. “Junshi.” Wikipedia, Dec. 22, 2022. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Junshi>.

⁸⁹ Benignant: “Cherishing or exhibiting kindly feeling towards inferiors or dependants; gracious, benevolent (with some suggestion of condescension or patronage).” (OED)

Resolv'd to burn with her departed Lord?

SECOND BRAMIN.

She has and means to mount the Pyre this day.

YOUNG BRAMIN.

O, how my heart bleeds for her!—Can the Gods, 60

Can they enjoin⁹⁰ this dreadful Sacrifice?

" Have they not given to each created being

" The fondest, the most earnest wish to live?

" Is not this spacious universe replete

" With blessings to sustain and sweeten life? 65

And can the Gods, all-gracious as they seem,

Demand that we shou'd cast their boon⁹¹ away

" Amid the horrid agonies of fire?"

CHIEF-BRAMIN.

Hearken, rash Boy.—A mightier voice than mine,

The voice of BRAMA warns thee to be mute, 70

" Know'st thou our law, and know'st thou not that virtue

" By suffering only can obtain reward?

" View the Fakirs⁹²,—their voluntary torments

⁹⁰ Enjoin: order; command

⁹¹ Boon: a divine gift (paraphrased from OED)

⁹² Fakirs: "Properly an indigent person, but specially applied to a Mahommedan religious mendicant, and then loosely, and inaccurately, to Hindu devotees and naked ascetics" (OED)

" Surpass description and exceed belief;
" Yet they are anxious still to suffer more, 75
" And from this mortal fabric⁹³ purge away
" Each base alloy⁹⁴ that presses down the soul
" To misery eternal Wou'dst thou then,
" O, wou'dst thou strive t' appal the pious Fair,
" And baffle, thus, her glorious enterprize⁹⁵?" 80
Hence! lead her to the flames!—and rather try
To fan the holy zeal that warms her breast.

YOUNG BRAMIN, (*aside*,)

Gods! wherefore am I doom'd t' inspire this Victim
With zeal I cannot cherish?—I, whose sight
Was never blasted yet with the dread view 85
Of human sacrifice.

CHIEF BRAMIN.

—How?—Dost thou pause?

YOUNG BRAMIN.

Commit the task to others—I am young—

CHIEF BRAMIN.

⁹³ Fabric: figuratively, the structure of the human body.

⁹⁴ Alloy: "Less valuable metal added to a metal of greater value" (OED)

⁹⁵ Enterprise: "An undertaking, task, or project" (OED)

Therefore, thy duty is submission. Hence!

Be faithful to the mighty Power we serve,

And in me rev'rence his Vicegerent⁹⁶ here.

90

[Exit the young Bramin.

Enter Narrain.

CHIEF BRAMIN.

Narrain!—What cause brings thee?

NARRAIN.

Our Rajah's⁹⁷ will:

He deems it frenzy, at a time like this,

When showers of iron death overwhelm the City,

To draw our Warriors from the tott'ring⁹⁸ walls

To gaze at a religious spectacle:

95

'Tis, therefore, his request, that you postpone

The sacrifice of beauteous Indamora,

(The youthful Widow whom our law requires

To burn with her dead Lord,) till a short truce

From England's Leader be obtained. Reflect,

100

This sacred Temple, your asylum, stands

Close to the ramparts⁹⁹:—Were funeral fires

⁹⁶ Vicegerent: "Applied to persons as representing some other supernatural or spiritual power." (OED)

⁹⁷ Rajah: Indian king or chief (OED)

⁹⁸ Tott'ring: "tottering"

⁹⁹ Ramparts: "A defensive wall or mound of earth" (OED)

From yonder¹⁰⁰ consecrated square to rise,
The blazing wonder could not fail to strike
Each British eye:—and would not England's Sons 105
Essay to stop the rites?—too sure they would!
Nay, e'en our City, of its Guards bereav'd,
Might fall an easy conquest.

CHIEF BRAMIN, (*after a pause.*)

Chief, retire.

Anon, we'll claim admission to the Rajah,
And bear him our resolves.

[*Exit Narrain.*]

Immortal BRAMA, 110

Shall we postpone thy rites, desert thy altars,
Because the plagues of war are scattered o'er us?
No!—rather be our sacrifices doubled—

That we may deprecate¹⁰¹ the wrath of Heaven,
Draw down its hottest lightnings on the Foe, 115
And drive him from this shore.—The present moment
Alone, perhaps, is our's;—but, let us prove,
That BRAMA'S Sons, tho' compass'd round with ruin,

¹⁰⁰ Yonder: “At or in that place; there; usually implying that the object spoken of is at some distance but within sight” (OED)

¹⁰¹ Deprecate: “To call down by prayer, invoke (evil). *Obsolete.*” (OED)

Can stand undaunted¹⁰² on the brink of fate,

And, to the last, his sacred cause maintain.

120

[Exeunt omnes.]

SCENE II.

The Pavilion of Indamora.

INDAMORA and FATIMA.

FATIMA.

My dearest Mistress, to what barb'rous¹⁰³ laws

Stern Fate has made thee subject!—The fierce Lion,

In this dire clime, is nobler far than man:

He lives but to protect his weaker mate,

Smooths all her paths, and even dies to save her;

5

While Man, who boasts the glorious light of reason,

Adds to the various ill entail'd on woman.

Nay, wreaks his cruelty beyond the grave!

INDAMORA.

Born, as thou wast¹⁰⁴, beneath mild Persian skies,

The rigours¹⁰⁵ of our law excite thy wonder:

10

But I, accusom'd to behold these walls

Crafted with smoke of human sacrifice,

¹⁰² Undaunted: "Not daunted or discouraged; undismayed; intrepid" (OED)

¹⁰³ Barb'rous: "Savage in infliction of cruelty, cruelly harsh" (OED)

¹⁰⁴ Wast: Archaic form of "were" (OED)

¹⁰⁵ Rigours: "Rigidity of action, interpretation, etc."; "Harsh inflexibility" (OED)

I, who, alas, too frequently have seen
The op'ning flower of life consum'd in flames,
I stand resign'd to meet that awful doom
Which waits the Matron who survives her Lord.

15

FATIMA.

Canst thou alone be tranquil and resign'd,
When even the humblest menial¹⁰⁶ of thy train
Is lost in frantic woe?

INDAMORA.

My Husband lives not;
His spirit calls me hence.

FATIMA.

Can sorrow, then,
Chase from thy bosom ev'ry wish to live?—
How must thy soul have doated¹⁰⁷ on it's Lord!

20

INDAMORA.

Mistake not, Fatima. Tyrannic Honor
Alone impels my steps.—I have no choice,
Save death, or more intolerable shame!

25

¹⁰⁶ Menial: a domestic servant (OED)

¹⁰⁷ Doated: "To love (a person) to excess; to bestow affection, care, or attention on (a person or thing) extravagantly" (OED)

FATIMA.

Unjust, inhuman law!

INDAMORA.

Weep not, my Friend!

The sun of happiness ne'er beamed on me—

From early youth, e'en to the present hour,

Misfortune's clouds have darken'd all my days.

FATIMA.

What sayst thou?—Whence that agonizing sigh?

30

Ne'er, till this wretched moment, has one sound

Of murm'ring discontent escap'd those lips.

INDAMORA.

Know, duty to a husband tied my tongue.

FATIMA.

That duty ceases now—and ere the flames

For ever hide thee from my sight, O speak,

35

Deign¹⁰⁸, my lov'd Mistress, to unveil the source

Of those fast-gushing tears, which e'en the thought

Of thy approaching, thy terrific fate

¹⁰⁸ Deign: "To think it worthy of oneself (*to do* something); to think fit, vouchsafe, condescend." (OED)

Cou'd not force from thee.

INDAMORA.

For myself alone

I ne'er cou'd weep—but, for my dearer self!— 40

O BRAMA, if I have transgress'd thy laws

By loving One, when to Another wedded,

Accept, in expiation¹⁰⁹ for the crime,

Thy hapless servant's life !

FATIMA.

I'm lost in wonder!

INDAMORA.

Alas, what cruel, what incessant conflicts, 45

'Twixt¹¹⁰ Love and Duty have I not endur'd!—

But thou shalt know my sorrows—for thy heart,

Thy faithful heart, will then forbear to grieve

That I shou'd cast life's heavy burthen¹¹¹ down.—

O moment, big with mis'ry, when my Sire 50

Forsook his native Ougly's¹¹² fruitful fields

¹⁰⁹ Expiation: "The action of expiating or making atonement for" (OED)

¹¹⁰ Twixt: between (OED)

¹¹¹ Burthen: archaic spelling of burden. "A load of labour, duty, responsibility, blame, sin, sorrow, etc." (OED)

¹¹² Ougly: "Hugli, also called Hugli-Chinsurah, Hugli also spelled Hooghly, city, central West Bengal state, northeastern India." "Hugli River." *Encyclopedia Britannica*, March 14, 2019.

<https://www.britannica.com/place/Hugli-River>.

To settle on these shores!—The self-same bark
Which, spite of adverse billows¹¹³, bore me hither,
The self-same bark contain'd—disast'rous fate!—
A British chief, adorn'd with ev'ry virtue 55
To charm and captivate the gentler Sex.
Oft we convers'd, and soon, too soon, were join'd
In adamant¹¹⁴ bonds of purest love:
But the harsh laws of India's barb'rous Clime
Forbade my Father to resign his Child 60
Into a Christian's power;—and, lest this heart
Shou'd dare to disobey great BRAMA'S will,
My ruthless Sire compell'd me to accept
The faith of an aged Bukah¹¹⁵, whom I loath'd,
Detested—for his unenlighten'd mind 65
Was brutal, savage as the fiery pard¹¹⁶
Who hunts our woods for prey.

FATIMA.

And canst thou, then,

O canst thou to his manes sacrifice
A life which, now, thy Lover sure may claim?

¹¹³ Billows: "A great swelling wave of the sea, produced generally by a high wind" (OED)

¹¹⁴ Adamantine: "Made, or having the qualities, of adamant"; "unable to be broken or dissolved; unbreakable; impenetrable." (OED)

¹¹⁵ Bukah: Indamora's late husband's name

¹¹⁶ Pard: "A panther, a leopard" (OED)

INDAMORA.

Alas, he fled from Asia's fatal shore 70

The instant cruel force had torn me from him:

Perhaps, ere now, his noble soul has left

That gallant form which, to my mental sight,

Is present still.—Perhaps, in some new shape

His tender faithful spirit hovers near me, 75

And trembles at his Indamora's doom:

But, if in human mould¹¹⁷ he stood before us,

What cou'd it profit me?—for death itself

Dissolves not, in this land, the nuptial¹¹⁸ vow.

Religion, honor, virtue, all demand— 80

O destiny accurs'd—that I should join,

For ever join, in death, the hated tyrant

Who tore me from the Husband of my heart.

FATIMA.

Horror! behold a Bramin moves this way—

His pensive look bespeaks his fatal errand. 85

INDAMORA.

Now, BRAMA, drive the Woman from my soul,

Arm it with more than manly fortitude,

¹¹⁷ Mould: "loose, broken, or friable earth; surface soil" (OED)

¹¹⁸ Nuptial: "Of or relating to marriage or a wedding." (OED)

That I may boldly plunge 'mid gulphs of fire,
And expiate my ev'ry crime 'gainst thee !

Enter the young Bramin.

FATIMA.

Com'st thou, fell Priest, to claim a dreadful promise, 90
And crop the sweetest flow'r that ever bloom'd
Beneath these scorching suns?—O gaze upon her,
Gaze on that angel-form, that winning softness,
And pity, sure, will melt thy harden'd heart!

YOUNG BRAMIN.

Thus, wheresoe'er I tread, reproach pursues me! 95

INDAMORA, *to Fatima.*

Withdraw, my Friend.—We wou'd be private.

[Exit Fatima.

Bramin,

Dread not reproach from me. In thee 'tis virtue
To urge my fate, and lead me to the flames.

YOUNG BRAMIN, *aside.*

Her accents pierce my soul;—her plaintive¹¹⁹ eyes,
Where deep-despairing sorrow sits enthron'd, 100

¹¹⁹ Plaintive: “Afflicted by sorrow; grieving, lamenting” (OED)

Destroy my best resolves.

INDAMORA.

From whence proceeds

That pitying sigh? Stern BRAMA'S Votaries¹²⁰,

In tenfold¹²¹ apathy shou'd sheathe their hearts.

YOUNG BRAMIN, *aside*.

Can I, the guardian of our hallow'd altars,

Bereave them of their prey? Compassion, hence! 105

And thou, unfeeling Honor, teach these hands

To do their horrid office!—Gentle Lady,

Our Chief commands, that I should guide thy steps

To yonder funeral pile.

INDAMORA.

Why starts that tear?

Why dost thou gaze so anxiously upon me? 110

YOUNG BRAMIN.

Oh I must gaze no longer! lest my lips,

Rebellious to their duty, bid thee shun

¹²⁰ Votary: "A person who has dedicated himself or herself to religious service by taking vows; a monk or nun." (OED)

¹²¹ Tenfold: "Ten times as great or as much; ten times increased or intensified; also indefinitely, many times as great." (OED)

That death, which, if our Sages err not, wafts
Thy soul to bliss transcendent as thy fame.

INDAMORA.

Those Looks, those words, accord not with a Bramin. 115
Say, wherefore didst thou link thyself with Men
Who vow to stifle pity.

YOUNG BRAMIN.

O what Mortal
Is Master of his fate?—From life's first dawn
I've been the sport of Fortune. Had the hand,
The gen'rous hand which snatch'd me from the waves, 120
Oh had it borne me from this clime for ever!—
An Outcast, unconnected with the world,
I enter'd yon¹²² proud temple; and, e'en there,
The barb'rous Fiend who, from my natal¹²³ day,
Assail'd my tender life, torments me still. 125

INDAMORA,

Unhappy Youth!—What Fiend?—

YOUNG BRAMIN.

¹²² Yon: That.

¹²³ Natal: "Of or relating to a person's birth" (OED)

Tyrannic Custom:

She bids the savage sons of Indostan¹²⁴

Suspend, for three successive nights and days,

Beneath some branch of the wide-stretching palm,

Each Babe whose feeble mouth rejects the breast: 130

These hapless lips refus'd that first support

Of Man's frail being:—thrice 'twas offer'd, thrice

I still refus'd,—when he who gave me life,

By cruel Custom's absolute decree,

To Ganges' holy flood consign'd his child: 135

But Ganges, as if piteous of my fate,

Threw back his burden to the shore—when lo!

A stranger, by benign compassion sway'd.

With fost'ring care recall'd my fleeting breath,

And rear'd me up to Man,—but now, alas! 140

His aged eyes are clos'd.—Forgive me, Lady!

I dwell upon my own calamities,

Nor think of the dread cause which brought me hither.

INDAMORA.

Thy sorrows, ill-star'd Youth, recall my own.

Far from this Shore, in my dear native Land, 145

¹²⁴ Indostan: "Designating a native or inhabitant of northern South Asia; of or relating to this region or its language." (OED)

That cruel law, which doom'd thee to the waves,
Cost me a Brother.

YOUNG BRAMIN.

Fatal superstition!

INDAMORA.

Relentless BRAMA's wrath pursues my race.

By his decree, in bloody Malabar,

The widow'd Sister dies;—by his decree

150

The Brother perish'd, guiltless babe, in Ougly.

YOUNG BRAMIN.

In Ougly, saidst thou?—Wonder, joy and fear,

Spring in my soul.—O speak! cam'st thou from Ougly?

INDAMORA.

There was I curst¹²⁵ with life.

YOUNG BRAMIN.

Thy Father's name—

Quick, quick reveal it!

INDAMORA.

¹²⁵ Curst: archaic spelling of cursed (OED)

Was Lanassah.

YOUNG BRAMIN.

Heav'n!

155

All bounteous Heaven!—My Sister!—

INDAMORA.

How?—Amazement!

May I believe?—

YOUNG BRAMIN.

Lanassah was my Sire:

Lanassah, too, on Ougly's Shore, consign'd

His infant-son to death: but this bless'd moment

Atones for all the rigours of my fate.

160

Oh take a Brother to thy heart—

INDAMORA.

A Brother!

And may I call thee by that tender name?

Is he who, in this rude unfeeling Land,

Could melt with pity for a Stranger's woes,

Is he indeed my Brother?—Now, methinks,—

165

Thy pardon, BRAMA!—now, I fain would live,

But oh, it must not be!

YOUNG BRAMIN.

It must! it shall!

BRAMA himself has sent me here to save thee!

INDAMORA.

No, rather say to torture me.—Ah, think,

At what a moment we are re-united! 170

The gates of life, alas, 'gainst me are clos'd—

My word is pledg'd—Death claims his promis'd victim,

And, shou'd I basely shun his dreadful grasp,

Eternal infamy awaits my fear.

Then, if thou art my Brother, kindly act 175

An Indian Brother's part;—inspire this soul,

This soften'd soul, with fortitude to drive

Each tender thought away, and firmly rush

Mid waves of roaring flames.

YOUNG BRAMIN.

Distraction! Horror!

O, thou hast brought a picture to my view 180

Which nature shrinks from!—Have the Fates restor'd thee,

All-perfect as thou seem'st, have they at length,

Restor'd thee to a brother, that his hand
May crop thy being short?—

INDAMORA.

Religion, Honor,

Thy Honor, (dearer than my own,) demands 185
This forfeit life:—then, let us pause no longer,
But lead me to the Pyre.

YOUNG BRAMIN.

Lead thee to death!

No—sooner; far, these desp'rate hands shall lay
Yon Temple and it's hellish laws in ashes.
Too long, already, this devoted Land 190
Has groan'd beneath imperious Custom's empire:
But we'll destroy the Fiend, o'erthrow her altars,
And, on their ruins, found a godlike Pile
To Reason and Humanity.

INDAMORA.

Thou rav'st!

Can we, two atoms in the scale of Beings, 195
Can we destroy the mighty work of ages,
And trample BRAMA's sacred laws in dust?

Nay, were it possible, cou'dst thou, my Brother,
Who bear'st a Bramin's hallow'd name, cou'dst thou
Be impious,¹²⁶ sacrilegious¹²⁷?

YOUNG BRAMIN.

Peace, I charge thee! 200

Thy cruel words drive Reason from her seat,
And fill this anguish'd mind with madness.—Hah!
A ray of light breaks in—'tis sent by Heaven,
In pity to our suff'rings.—If thy heart
Can boast one spark of that unfeign'd affection 205
Which blazes, with triumphant power, in mine,
Approach not yon terrific Pile till I
Return to guide thy steps. Farewel, my sister!
And, if a Brother's life be worth thy care,
Remember my injunction¹²⁸.

[Exit young Bramin.]

INDAMORA.

Like a dart, 210

Shot from the Tartar's bow, he fled away,
What means this eager haste!—Dear, ardent¹²⁹ Youth!

¹²⁶ Impious: "Not pious; without piety or reverence for God and his ordinances; presumptuously irreligious, wicked, or profane." (OED)

¹²⁷ Sacrilegious: "Committing sacrilege; guilty of sacrilege" (OED); sacrilege: "The crime or sin of stealing or misappropriating what is consecrated to God's service" (OED)

¹²⁸ Injunction: "The action of enjoining or authoritatively directing" (OED)

¹²⁹ Ardent: "Glowing with passion, animated by keen desire" (OED)

Can thy weak efforts BRAMA's laws reverse,

Or make the clam'rous voice of Honor mute?

Still, I'll remember thy injunction—yes—

215

Far as I can, I'll prove my gratitude,

My tender gratitude to thee.—O, Heaven,

Was not my cup of sorrow full before?

And must this heart, too prone, alas, to grieve

For others' woe, must it be tortur'd, rack'd,

220

With a lov'd Brother's suff'rings?—Now, indeed,

Death wears a ghastly shape.—Reflection¹³⁰, hence!

Lest these new ties bind down my soul to earth,

Rob it of endless fame, and,—sad exchange!—

With infamy eternal blast my days.

225

[Exit.

END OF THE FIRST ACT.

¹³⁰ Reflection: “The action or process of thinking carefully or deeply about a particular subject, typically involving influence from one's past life and experiences” (OED)

ACT II.

SCENE I.

Raymond's Tent.

RAYMOND, *Solus*¹³¹.

FORGIVE me, O, my Country, if by Love,

Too powerful Love impel'd¹³², I've dar'd to grant,

For one short day, a truce to these barbarians!

To-morrow's sun may see their Ramparts storm'd,

Their streets deep-drench'd in blood, their Babes, their Matrons, 5

Resign'd to all the brutal rage of War:

And cou'd I, then, when Fortune gave the means,

Cou'd I forbear t' employ this little day

In search of Her, for whose dear sake alone

I brave, once more, these fervid Eastern skies? 10

O my Beloved !-does thy tender heart

Still groan beneath a Tyrant Husband's power?

Or has high Heaven, in mercy, broke thy chains,

And given thee back to liberty and Raymond?

By day, by night, thy image haunts my soul! 15

E'en while I sleep, in baseless fantasie,

Thy fair form flits before my mental eye:

Sometimes, methinks, I view thee, in the fight,

¹³¹ Solus: "Alone, by oneself" (OED)

¹³² Impel'd: To drive, force, or constrain (a person) to some action, or to do something, by acting upon his mind or feelings; to urge on, incite.(OED)

Falling, beneath a thousand clashing swords;
Till thy fond Raymond to thy rescue flies, 20
Strikes all thy Foes with terror and dismay,
And bears thee to some sweet enamell'd bower¹³³:
Then, with the whirlwind's speed, thou art transported
To a lone rock encompass'd round with sea;
And, while vast foaming waves come tow'ring o'er thee, 25
Thy Raymond borrows quick an Angel's shape,
And wafts thee, in his faithful arms, to Heav'n.

If that bless'd Power who, in compassion, veils
From mortal eyes the book of Fate, if e'er
He makes a dream the Herald¹³⁴ of his will 30
Sure this is most auspicious.—Albert!—Hah!—

Enter ALBERT.

RAYMOND.

So soon return'd!—O, speak, disclose my doom!

It hangs upon thy lips.—Do yonder walls

Yet hold my life, my Love?

ALBERT.

Alas, I know not,

I cou'd not reach the Town.

¹³³ Bower: "A place closed in or overarched with branches of trees, shrubs, or other plants; a shady recess, leafy covert, arbour" (OED)

¹³⁴ Herald: "One who proclaims or announces the message of another; a messenger, envoy" (OED)

RAYMOND.

What fatal cause

35

Deter'd thy steps?

ALBERT.

A spectacle of horror

Which Ign'rance, aided by fanatic Zeal,

Prepares in yon enclosure, where the spire—

Sacred to BRAMA, rears it's hallow'd head.

All entrance to the City is denied,

40

Save thro' yon Temple, whose stupendous gates

The Natives in such clust'ring groupes¹³⁵ surround,

That 'twere as easy to dispart the earth,

As penetrate thro' this huge mass of People.

Confusion on the Rajah !—tho' his tongue,

45

In honied¹³⁶ accents, pleaded for a truce,

That India, and her fraudulent Priests, might give

Funeral honors to their Warriors slain,

His plea was mere pretence¹³⁷.

RAYMOND.

Pretence!

¹³⁵ Groupes: archaic spelling of groups (OED)

¹³⁶ Honied: archaic spelling or honeyed. Sweet, pleasant or soothing words or music (OED)

¹³⁷ Pretence: "An assertion of a right or title, etc.; the putting forth of a claim" (OED)

ALBERT.

To offer

A human sacrifice at BRAMA'S shrine,

50

He sought this pause from war.

RAYMOND.

Dissembling Villain!

ALBERT.

And, ere another be past, the Victim,

(A lovely Widow in life's freshest bloom,)

Will mount the Funeral-pile, and, self-devoted,

Die to rejoin her Lord.

RAYMOND.

Forbid it, Heaven!

55

Know'st thou not Albert, that the Priests of BRAMA,

Lur'd by those gems which each deluded Victim

Presents at his curst shrine, from age to age

Enforce, thr'out this barb'rous Land, a practice

Which Frenzy, not Religion, first began.

60

Shall Christians, then, who come to chase away

Those mists of error that o'ercloud¹³⁸ the East,

¹³⁸ O'ercloud: Overcloud; "To cast a shadow or gloom over" (OED)

Shall they allow self-murder?

ALBERT.

Should you thwart

The will of the fierce Bramins, they may break

Our just-concluded truce.—Wild Havock¹³⁹, then, 65

Wou'd reign triumphant—and our utmost care

To succour¹⁴⁰ her you love.—

RAYMOND.

O, name not Love!

Humanity now calls me—and the Wretch

Who disregards her voice, is not a Briton¹⁴¹!

Strike up our drums—I'll seek the treach'rous Rajah— 70

And, if entreaties move him not, this sword

Thro' butchering Priests shall mow it's desp'rate way,

And save the Victim.

[A flourish¹⁴². Exit Raymond.]

ALBERT.

Inconsid'rate youth!

Ardent to save a single life he goes,

Perhaps, to spill the blood of thousands.—Hah! 75

¹³⁹ Havock: archaic spelling of havoc; “Devastation, destruction” (OED)

¹⁴⁰ Succour: “To help, assist, aid” (OED)

¹⁴¹ Briton; Person originally residing in Britain (OED)

¹⁴² Flourish: “A fanfare (of horns, trumpets, etc.)” (OED)

If my sight errs not, hither speeds a Bramin.

Enter the young Bramin.

YOUNG BRAMIN.

Where is your Chief?—this moment wou'd I see him—

ALBERT.

Then, seek the City—thither¹⁴³ is he gone

To overthrow yon fatal Pile which tow'rs

Above your Temple-gates.

YOUNG BRAMIN.

O, rapture! Gone! 80

Is he then gone?—Heaven aid the glorious work,

And, on his head, pour choicest blessings down!

But haste, brave Warrior, haste to save your fleet.

Our crafty Bramins, anxious to avert

From their solemnities, each Christian eye, 85

Sent, ere I fled the walls, a daring Band

To fire yon stately ships.

ALBERT.

Infernal Traitors!

And is it thus they keep the truce? What, ho,

¹⁴³ Thither: "To or towards that place" (OED)

Soldiers, to arms!—If truth dwells on thy tongue,

Not e'en the altars of accursed BRAMA,

90

Shall prove a refuge to his perjur'd Sons.

[Exit Albert. A flourish.]

YOUNG BRAMIN.

Exalted Chief of Britain! art thou gone,

By nought, save mild Humanity, impel'd,

To rescue One thou know'st not?—O, for feet

Swift as the Antelope's, that I might fly,

95

With this bless'd news, to wretched Indamora!

[Exit.]

SCENE II.

The inside of the Pagod of ESWARA.

Solemn Music.

Enter, from the further end of the Pagod, a Procession of Bramins, &c. followed by the Chief-Bramin, Indamora, Fatima, and Indians. Indamora throws gifts to the People as she walks along.

CHIEF-BRAMIN.

Here, let us pause. Retire, my Friends, and wait

In yonder hallow'd square.

[Exit all but the Chief-Bramin and Indamora.]

Heroic Matron,

Cast off those sparkling gems, those gorgeous vestments,

Almighty BRAMA claims; and, robed in white,

Come forth, a spotless offering, fit for Heaven.

5

INDAMORA.

I go; but mark me, Priest. The holy Youth,

By thee deputed to inspire this heart

With fortitude to die, his hand alone

Shall lead me to the flames.

CHIEF-BRAMIN.

Why stay for him ?

Unmindful of his charge, th 'inconstant Boy

10

Cannot be found:—and, in these tott'ring walls,

By Foes encircled, each delay breeds danger.

Thy word is past; already thy great soul,—

Tow'ring above this Earth, is fix'd on Heaven.

The Champion of our law, th' elect of BRAMA, 15

The bright example of thy Sex thou stand'st;

And death alone remains to waft thy fame

To holy Ganges and the distant Ind¹⁴⁴.

Thy Husband too, perhaps——

INDAMORA.

Name not my Husband!

There's terror in the word—but, since our law 20

Makes death, or infamy, my only choice,

I cannot pause between them. What rewards

The Gods bestow on those who dare to meet

A doom like mine, is yet wrap'd up in darkness;

Nor will I trust my thoughts to meditate 25

On scenes a world unknown may bring to view.

Sorrow has been my portion here—and sorrow

Turns death's terrific semblance into smiles.—

But, for those favor'd few, whose paths are strew'd

With roses, not with thorns, to die is grievous— 30

And O, if Martyrs¹⁴⁵ prayers indeed are borne

¹⁴⁴ Ind: Early name for India; shortened version (OED)

¹⁴⁵ Martyr: “a person who undergoes death or great suffering for a faith, belief, or cause” (OED)

On Angels' wings to Heaven, great BRAMA, hear!
And never more let Honor's voice compel
The heart unfortified by woe, to rush
Mid life-devouring fires!

CHIEF-BRAMIN.

Thy wish is impious! 35

And sullies, with it's pois'nous breath, the crown,
The Martyr's crown which hovers o'er thy head,

By holy BRAMA, these vile Sons of Britain

With coward Christian doctrines taint our minds
More quickly than their thunders 'raze our Cities! 40

And e'en thy mind—shame to thy glorious Race!
Thy mind's infected.—Hence ! prepare for death!

And, mark me, if thou dar'st again to cherish

One thought repugnant to high BRAMA'S laws,
His vengeful arm will plunge thy soul in flames 45

Unquenchable, eternal!

[Exit the Chief Bramin.]

INDAMORA.

Furious Priest!

Thy words disgrace the Power thou mean'st to serve.

My Brother! wherefore¹⁴⁶ com'st thou not?—Ah, wherefore,

In cruel kindness, dost thou lengthen out

¹⁴⁶ Wherefore: "For what?" (OED)

These last sad hours of life?—And must I die 50

For him my soul detests?—That thought alone

Puts fortitude to flight.—Support me, Heaven!

And if a wretch so fallible, so frail,

Dare ask thy favor, deign to hear me now!

Shou'd that dear Youth who, spite of time and distance, 55

Still reigns unrivall'd in this fond, fond heart,

Shou'd he yet draw the vital air, O make me,

(Soon as this mortal form to ashes turns,)

Make me a Guardian-Angel to my Love!

Then, if temptations rise to stain his honor, 60

I'll whisper in his ear bright Virtue's charms;

Then, if he strives in the unequal combat,

I'll turn the murd'rous falchion¹⁴⁷ from his breast;

And when, at length, worn out with glorious toils,

He struggles in the very arms of death, 65

I'll watch his Spirit from its house of clay,

And guide it to extatic joys above!

Cou'd I hope this!——My Brother!——

Enter the Young Bramin.

YOUNG BRAMIN.

Indamora!

I come, the happy messenger of joy!

¹⁴⁷ Falchion: A broad, curved sword with the edge on the convex side (OED)

Each threat'ning cloud, which gather'd o'er thy head, 70
Is breaking fast away—Britannia's¹⁴⁸ Chief,
Fearless, has past our gates, and now, with all
A Lover's warmth, before the Rajah pleads
For thy dear life,—nay, even deigns to offer
Peace, honorable peace, if BRAMA's Sons 75
No more pollute his rites with human blood.

INDAMORA.

Astonishment !—Can Britain's Leader risk
His precious life for me, for One he knows not?

YOUNG BRAMIN.

Benevolence, that glorious Guide of all
Who bear the Christian name, Benevolence 80
Alone impels his steps.

INDAMORA.

O lead me to him!

That I may pour out this full soul in thanks
For goodness so transcendent.

YOUNG BRAMIN.

Hold!—Our laws,

¹⁴⁸ Britannia: The country of Britain personified as a woman (OED)

Our cruel laws, detain thee here. Excite not

The anger of the Priests, lest they should drag thee,

85

Heart-rending thought! to instant death——

Enter Fatima.

FATIMA.

O Bramin,

If thou indeed wou'dst prove thyself the Brother

Of my lov'd Mistress, fly, and save her champion.

No sooner did the Priests his purpose learn,

Than, in yon hallow'd¹⁴⁹ square, they posted Ruffians¹⁵⁰

90

To stab him as he quits the Temple.

INDAMORA.

Horror!

And shall he bleed for me?—The truce must guard him——

YOUNG BRAMIN.

Already is that broken.—England's fleet

Is wrapp'd in flames.

INDAMORA.

Nay, then, my death alone

¹⁴⁹ Hallow'd: "Sanctified, blessed" (OED)

¹⁵⁰ Ruffian: "Brutal or lawless villain; a violent criminal" (OED)

Can quell the murd'rous fury of our Priests,
And save this Hero's life.—In such a cause,
To die is transport!¹⁵¹

95

YOUNG BRAMIN.

O what madness——

INDAMORA,

Haste!

Haste, if thou lov'st me! Tell th' insatiate¹⁵² Bramins,
I go to cast these splendid trappings off,
And, instant, meet my doom.

YOUNG BRAMIN.

O stop!—Reflect!

100

INDAMORA.

This is no time for thought. Nay, if thou ling'rest,
I'll to the Priests myself. Exalted Briton,
This heart, responsive to thy own, exults
To die for him who risks his life for me!

[Exit Indamora.]

¹⁵¹ Transport: “the state of being carried out of...one’s normal mental state; vehement emotion; rapture, ecstasy.” (OED) This line suggests that Indamora would find death to be a supreme pleasure if it were to save Raymond’s life.

¹⁵² th’ insatiate: i.e, “the insatiable”

YOUNG BRAMIN.

Stop, Indamora!—

[To Fatima,] Follow, quickly follow!

105

Arrest her fatal steps! Tell her, the brand¹⁵³

Which lights her Funeral-Pyre consumes me too:

O bid her live, and trust a Brother's zeal

To save her Champion!—[Exit Fatima.] Gracious Heaven! he's here!—

Enter Raymond, (attended.)

RAYMOND.

Conduct me to your victim: I would learn,

110

From her own lips, if 'tis her choice to die.

Behold the Rajah's mandate. (*Shews*¹⁵⁴ a paper.)

YOUNG BRAMIN.

Noble Chief,

Our lofty Priests own not the Rajah's power

Within these hallow'd walls: besides, the Victim

Is parted hence, to purify her soul

115

By holy rites, and fit it for the skies.

RAYMOND.

Away!—Thou'st coin'd this tale.

¹⁵³ Brand: Piece of wood that has been burning on the hearth; also a torch or match (OED)

¹⁵⁴ Shews: archaic spelling of "shows"

YOUNG BRAMIN.

You little know me.

RAYMOND.

Thou art a Bramin.

YOUNG BRAMIN.

Yes, I blush to own it:

But, tho' a Bramin, I am still a Man;

A Man oppress'd by sorrow.—Read my soul.— 120

In her, whom cruel fate condemns to die,

I found a lovely Sister.—

RAYMOND.

Hah! a Sister!

Then she is lost indeed.—Too well I know

The bonds of Nature here are burst in twain

And he, who should protect a Sister's life, 125

Exhorts¹⁵⁵ her to the flames.

YOUNG BRAMIN.

Confound not me

¹⁵⁵ Exhort: "To admonish earnestly; to urge by stimulating words to conduct regarded as laudable. Said also of circumstances, etc.: To serve as an incitement." (OED)

With my accurs'd associates. This fond breast
Glow with fraternal love; nor is there aught¹⁵⁶
I've not attempted to preserve the best,
The brightest of her sex. E'en to thy camp 130
I flew for aid,—" but thou, benignant¹⁵⁷ Christian!—
" Wast gone, unask'd, to plead the righteous cause
" Of soft humanity. Fain would these lips
" Essay¹⁵⁸ to thank thee;—but all words must fail
" To paint th' overwhelming sense of gratitude 135
" Which reigns in souls like mine."

RAYMOND.

Thy accents, Priest,
Accord not with deceit. I'll doubt no more.
Then tell me, is it choice, or rigid Honor,
Impels thy Sister's steps? Say, was her heart
So wedded to its Lord, that life, without him, 140
Is but a ling'ring death?

YOUNG BRAMIN.

If Fame speaks true,
Her heart had early form'd another union,

¹⁵⁶ Aught: "Chiefly in interrogative, negative, and conditional contexts: anything; anything whatever, anything at all, even the least thing." (OED)

¹⁵⁷ Benignant: "Cherishing or exhibiting kindly feeling towards inferiors or dependants; gracious, benevolent (with some suggestion of condescension or patronage)." (OED)

¹⁵⁸ Essay: "An attempt, endeavour." (OED)

Which cruel wedlock broke.

RAYMOND.

Another union!

YOUNG BRAMIN.

Yet, such is her heroic sense of honor,

That all a Brother's prayers have not avail'd 145

To shake her direful purpose:—but kind Heaven,

As if resolv'd to stop our bloody rites,

Has sent a pitying Angel, in thy form,

To save my dearer self; my Indamora——

Wherefore that start? what mean those looks of frenzy? 150

RAYMOND.

Thy Indamora, said'st thou?—She, the Victim!

Came I thus far to be the wretched Witness

Of Indamora's death?—Distraction!—Lead me,

If pity ever touch'd thy bosom, lead me

This moment to her sight!

YOUNG BRAMIN.

Alas, those gates, 155

To Strangers ever clos'd, must keep thee from her,

Till, rob'd for sacrifice, she issues forth
To mount yon horrid Pile.

RAYMOND.

My brain's on fire——

Oh urge me not to madness!—

YOUNG BRAMIN.

Heav'n and Earth!

Whence springs this sudden rage?

RAYMOND.

I tell thee, Bramin, 160

Not gates of tenfold adamant¹⁵⁹ shall stop

A desp'rate Lover's course.

YOUNG BRAMIN.

A Lover's—Hah!

RAYMOND.

Oh, she was mine by ev'ry sacred tie

That binds enamour'd hearts, ere ruthless Bukah

Seiz'd her reluctant hand!

¹⁵⁹ Adamant: “a hard, strong rock or mineral, not otherwise identified, to which various other (often contradictory) properties were attributed. In later use chiefly a poetical or rhetorical name for: an embodiment of surpassing hardness” (OED)

YOUNG BRAMIN.

Mysterious Heav'n!—

165

Yet listen to my words, and let not passion,
Blind headstrong passion, render vain the wonders,
The miracles a Power divine has wrought
On this inhuman shore——

Enter Narrain.

NARRAIN.

Speed, Chief of Britain,

From these perfidious¹⁶⁰ walls!—Our fraudulent Rajah,

170

Confed'rate¹⁶¹ with the Bramins, feign'd to lean
Towards honorable peace, that he might lure thee
Into his cursed toils. The faithless Wretch,
'Spite of our truce, involves¹⁶² thy fleet in flames:

And now, the Bramins lead a mighty Host

175

To slay thee in this Temple. Though a native
Of guileful Malabar, my heart recoil'd
At baseness so unrival'd; and I flew
(Impatience lent me wings,) to warn thee hence.

¹⁶⁰ Perfidious: "Characterized by perfidy; guilty of breaking faith or violating confidence; deliberately faithless; treacherous." (OED)

¹⁶¹ Confederate: "To unite (persons or states) in a league, bring into alliance, ally; to form into a confederation." (OED)

¹⁶² Involves: "To roll or enwrap in anything that is wound round, or surrounds as a case or covering; to enfold, to envelop." (OED)

RAYMOND.

Well, let the Traitors come. This little Band,

180

With conscious Virtue arm'd, is more than equal

To thousands, fighting in a guilty cause.

NARRAIN.

Alas, not e'en thy matchless valour, Chief,

Which oft has made our bravest warriors fly,

Not e'en thy valour can avail.

YOUNG BRAMIN.

Reflect,

185

The life of Indamora hangs on thine.

RAYMOND.

O thou hast made a Coward of me!

(a distant shout.)

NARRAIN.

Hark!

Heard ye that shout?—The Murd'rers come—O haste!—

YOUNG BRAMIN.

Yon grass-grown aile conducts thee to a cavern

Scoop'd thro' the solid rock; and oft, 'tis said, 190

The sepulchre¹⁶³ of those who dare rebel

'Gainst BRAMA'S sov'reign Priest: This cavern leads,

By windings, to the main. Then haste, brave Christian,

Myself will point the way: haste to thy camp;

And, since our truce is broken, bring thy powers, 195

Clad in the terrors of wide-wasting war,

To rescue her thou lov'st.—Meanwhile, my cares

Shall, for a time, retard¹⁶⁴ the sacrifice.

(A louder shout.)

NARRAIN.

Another shout!

YOUNG BRAMIN.

O haste!—

RAYMOND.

What?—Leave my Love

In the fell Bramins' grasp?—No—this good arm— 200

YOUNG BRAMIN.

What can one arm atchieve¹⁶⁵, oppos'd to thousands

¹⁶³ Sepulchre: "A tomb or burial-place, a building, vault, or excavation, made for the interment of a human body." (OED)

¹⁶⁴ Retard: "To hold back, delay, or slow (a person or thing) with respect to action, progress, etc." (OED)

¹⁶⁵ Atchieve: alternate spelling of "achieve"

Speed, or my Sister dies!—Behold that Pile——?

RAYMOND.

Horror! distraction! O direct me, Heav'n!

(Another shout.)

YOUNG BRAMIN.

In me, thy Indamora calls——

RAYMOND.

I come:

But, mark me, tell these treach'rous Priests of BRAMA, 205

These vile Assassins, Indamora stands

A shield 'twixt them and fate:—Should they destroy her,

By Heav'n I'll sweep their bloody Race from earth.

Their Friends, their altars, nay, their very Idols,

Shall feel my utmost rage.—This splendid Temple 210

I'll make a smoking heap of dust and ruins,

And the whole city one huge Funeral Pyre.

[Exeunt omnes.]

END OF THE SECOND ACT.

ACT III.

SCENE I.

A spacious quadrangle, surrounded with Rocks—At the further end, the Pagod of Eswara.—A Funeral Pile in the middle of the quadrangle, with a Platform, leading from the steps of the Pagod to the top of the Pile.—The Sea at a distance.—Time, Evening.—The rising Moon discovers the English Fleet standing out to Sea.

The Young Bramin solus.

WRETCH that I am! and is the only joy,

The only ray of hope my soul cou'd catch at,

Obscur'd so soon?—Supreme ESWARA, hear me!

With strength divine endue this feeble mind;

Lest I should murmur at thy sacred will,

5

And dare to question thy indulgent goodness!

O Raymond! when benevolence like thine

Is recompens'd with death,—when Indamora,

The good, the pious Indamora, falls

By Priestcraft's guileful hand;—Oh, who shall say,

10

That Virtue is the care of Heaven? I shudder!—

My tongue grows impious.

Dearest Indamora!

Thou know'st not half the rigours of thy fate—

For this, I thank the Gods.—With what fond transport

I flew to tell her, that a Lover's arm

15

Was rais'd to shield her life!—but bless'd indeed,

Thrice bless'd, was the High-Priest's imperious mandate,
Which bar'd my entrance.

Enter Fatima.

FATIMA.

Bramin, from thy Sister,

A last request I bring; that thou'lt forbear,

Thro' rash mistaken love t' oppose her doom.

20

YOUNG BRAMIN.

Alas, the hand which should have snatch'd her from it

Is now unnerv'd.—The glorious Chief of Britain

No sooner 'scap'd from hence than, swift as light,

Eager to save his burning ships he sped;

But, scarce had reach'd the harbour, when a jav'lin,

25

By Indian fury guided, pierced his heart.—

Confounded, panic struck, the troops of Britain

On board the remnant of their squadron haste,

And spread each sail for flight.

FATIMA.

Whence comes this news?

YOUNG BRAMIN.

From one, by the Chief Bramin's care, dispatch'd 30
To bring intelligence;—and, were there need
Of aught t' authenticate the tale, behold,
Where lightly skimming o'er the pathless main,
The rapid vessels fly.

FATIMA.

My dear lost Mistress!

Are, then, thy many virtues all devoted 35
A prey to rav'nous flames?

YOUNG BRAMIN.

No—ere she mounts

This fatal Pile, I swear, th' inhuman Priests
Shall tear me limb from limb.—Nay, I'll appeal
To India's Sons at large, assert the rights
Of nature, and demand a Sister's life. 40
Haste to her, Fatima, declare my purpose,
My fix'd resolve not to survive her loss.

[Exit Fatima.]

Solemn Music.

*A grand Funeral-Procession advances from the Pagod of Eswara,
and, crossing the Platform, descends upon the Stage.*

Chorus of Bramins.

Haste, haste, haste! the solemn Rites prepare!

BRAMA's Sons an off'ring bring;

Haste, haste, haste! the solemn Rites prepare!

45

Let our Shores with gladness ring.

Semi-Chorus.

See! the widow'd Fair draws nigh,

Deck'd with beauty's freshest bloom:

See her nobly fix'd to die,

On an aged Husband's tomb.

50

Chorus of Bramins.

Heav'n, with gracious smile, looks down;

Haste, the solemn Rites prepare!

Lo! behold!—a Martyr's crown

Floats upon the buoyant air!

Semi-Chorus.

Heart-cheering songs of proudest triumph raise;

55

To India's further confines waft her praise,

Who prizes life less high than glorious fame,

And adds new lustre to great BRAMA'S name!

YOUNG BRAMIN.

Horror!—my heart dies in me.—Righteous Gods,

Look down, look down at this distracting moment; 60
Send winged lightnings to consume that Pile,
Or arm with more than mortal eloquence
These trembling lips, that I may melt the breasts,
The iron breasts of India's Tribes to pity!

*The Procession continues with Oriental Music. The Chief Bramin
and his Train advance from the Pagod. A Number of Indians
crowd the Quadrangle.*

CHIEF-BRAMIN.

Natives of India, give a loose to joy! 65
The Monster, War, is fled, and lovely Peace,
With blessings in her train, descends from Heav'n,
To heal the wounds of this afflicted land.

BRAMA, all-gracious Lord! to swell the fame
Of his vicegerent here, has deign'd to make 70
Your Sov'reign-Priest his bleeding Country's Saviour.
Another day too surely wou'd have crown'd
Britain's detested Sons with victory.—

I madden'd at the thought.—The plaintive Shades
Of our brave Vet'rans, on the ramparts slain, 75
Each moment rose before me, and call'd loud
For vengeance on the Foe.—To break our truce,
Or drag the chain of slavery, and see
Our laws, our altars, nay, our Pagods perish,

Alone remain'd.—I paus'd not in my choice, 80

But sent a faithful Band, to blast with flames

The stately fleet of Britain.—Fair success

Follow'd the patriot-deed:—avenging BRAMA

Smote the proud Christian Chief, whose lips profane¹⁶⁶

So lately dar'd to thwart his will;—and now, 85

The Enemy, appal'd, forsakes our shores.

To BRAMA, then, let grateful incense rise

From this funeral Pile, and reach his throne.

[To the young Bramin.]

Young Priest, 'tis thine to lead the Victim forth;

Away, and bring her straight.

YOUNG BRAMIN.

Infernal Monster! 90

Art thou not glutted yet with human blood?

Cannot the death of Raymond, peerless Chief!

Suffice to sate thy cruelty?—Nay, frown not—

Think'st thou I still can venerate a Wretch

Who violates the faith of Nations, nay, 95

Boasts of the hellish act, and calls himself,

(Unheard of blasphemy!) the instrument

Of an avenging God?

¹⁶⁶ Profane: "Of persons or things: unholy, or desecrating what is holy or sacred; unhallowed; ritually unclean or polluted; heathen, pagan." (OED)

CHIEF-BRAMIN.

Am I awake?

What madness prompts thee?

YOUNG BRAMIN.

The clear light of Reason.

Art thou a Priest? art thou a hallow'd Bramin? 100

When all thy deeds proclaim, thour't not a Man.

Humanity, the instinct of our Kind,

Born in us, with us, and our being's soul,

The essence of our nature,—thou, fell Savage!

Thou know'st it not.—Some flinty rock conceiv'd 105

And brought thee forth, to scourge the human Race.

Thy heart ne'er soften'd at another's woe,

Nor felt the godlike bliss of drying up

Afflicted Virtue's tears. This barb'rous Temple,

This tyger's den, ne'er witness'd one kind act 110

Of sweet compassion.—Oh I grieve to think

I ever enter'd its disgraceful doors!

CHIEF BRAMIN.

Wert thou not shielded by that sacred garb,

My vengeance should o'ertake thee, empty Railer¹⁶⁷!

¹⁶⁷ Railer: "A person who rails; esp. one who rants, or is argumentative or abusive." (OED)

Canst thou abolish Customs handed down 115
From age to age, as holy and heroic?
Can thy weak hand root up that ancient Cypress
Which shadows all the East?

YOUNG BRAMIN.

Reason's strong axe
Shall fell it to the Earth.

CHIEF BRAMIN.

Vain-glorious Boy!
Time, round the tree, has wrapp'd a triple brass. 120

YOUNG BRAMIN.

Say, rather, round thy heart.

CHIEF BRAMIN.

Urge me no more;
Lest all the self-command a Bramin boasts
Should not suffice to stem the tide of passion
Which rises in my soul, blaspheming Traitor!
This moment bring the Matron, or, with life, 125
Atone thy breach of duty.

YOUNG BRAMIN.

Think'st thou, threats

Can bend me to thy will?—Then learn, Barbarian,

Such is my zeal to save this blameless Victim,

That, 'spite of pride, and the long-cherish'd rancour¹⁶⁸,

Which Indians feel 'gainst Europe's craving sons, 130

I sought, this morn, the British Leader's tent,

And would have stoop'd t' implore his aid; but he,

Unask'd, had ta'en upon him the defence

Of Indamora's life.

CHIEF BRAMIN.

Consummate Villain!

Faithless alike to India and her Gods! 135

Bear him to death:—not e'en those holy vestments

Shall longer prove his shield.

(To the second Bramin.)

Mean-while, go thou,

And lead the Matron forth.

(Guards surround the young Bramin.)

YOUNG BRAMIN.

Thou know'st not yet

Of half my guilt, if it be guilt to hear

¹⁶⁸ Rancour: "Deep-rooted and bitter ill feeling; resentment or animosity, esp. of long standing; an instance of this." (OED)

Great Nature's voice.—Listen, my Countrymen! 140

In Indamora, I have found a Sister,

Whom that relentless Fiend would snatch away

The moment Fortune gives her to my sight.—

But Oh, if Nature be not dead within ye,

Assert her cause and mine,—preserve this Sister, 145

And prove, that virtue and benignant pity,

In spite of Priest-craft¹⁶⁹, still adorn the East.

Music.

Semi-chorus.

See! The Widow'd Fair draws nigh,

Deck'd with beauty's freshest bloom;

See her nobly fix'd to die 150

On an aged Husband's tomb!

Grand chorus of Bramins.

Heav'n with gracious smile, looks down;

Haste, the solemn Rites prepare!

Lo! Behold! a Martyr's crown

Floats upon the buoyant air! 155

INDAMORA advances, (robed in white and veil'd,) from the Pagod of ESWARA:—she is led by the Second BRAMIN, and followed by

¹⁶⁹ Priest-craft: "Priestly scheming, guile, and deceit." (OED)

two WOMEN, the one bearing a Mirror, the other a dart. FATIMA attends.

YOUNG BRAMIN.

Look there!—Look there!—Can ye permit that form?—

CHIEF BRAMIN.

Peace, impious Wretch!—Bear him to instant death.

(Guards seize the young Bramin.)

INDAMORA, *running down from off the Platform.*

Bear him to instant death!—Stop, murderous Ruffians!

(She attempts to free her brother, but the guards oppose her.)

Do ye resist?—Avaunt¹⁷⁰!—Wou'd ye defile,

With touch profane, the Favorite of Heaven?

160

(The Guards retire) My Brother! is it thus we meet again!

And has thy boundless love for me—O, horror!

O'erwhelm'd thee in destruction?

CHIEF BRAMIN.

Haste! Begone!

INDAMORA.

Spare him, great Priest!—Lo, on my knees I sue.

¹⁷⁰ Avaunt: “Originally and lit.: Onward! Move on! Go on! Hence, Begone! Be off! Away!” (OED)

CHIEF-BRAMIN.

Thy suit is vain.

INDAMORA.

Then, by ESWARA'S self,

165

Heaven's awful King! yon Pile shall ne'er receive¹⁷¹

It's destin'd prey.

YOUNG BRAMIN.

What says my Sister?—Rapture!

And can I still preserve thee?—Lead me hence—

This moment let me die.—But O, remember,

Thy word is past—my death gives life to thee!

170

INDAMORA.

Mis'ry!—The very thought is madness, torment,

Worse than the fire that waits me!

YOUNG BRAMIN.

O forbear!

This one embrace——and now——

CHIEF-BRAMIN.

¹⁷¹ Ne'er: "Never" (OED). The funeral pyre won't "receive it's destined prey" which refers to Indamora.

Stop, headstrong Boy!

And learn, ye Tribes of India, that a Bramin

Can triumph o'er resentment, to promote

175

The glory of his Gods. Haste, Indamora,

Ascend yon consecrated Pyre; and take,

In recompence¹⁷², thy Brother's forfeit life.

INDAMORA.

Ten thousand blessings on thy tongue! thou'st rais'd me

From mis'ry's deepest gulph to highest joy.

180

Quick light the Pile!—I fly to meet my doom!

A Bramin advances with a lighted firebrand, and kindles the Funeral-Pile.

YOUNG BRAMIN, *holding Indamora.*

O, by the love I bear thee!—by the tortures!—

CHIEF-BRAMIIN.

Part them. Nay, pause not, or, he dies.

INDAMORA.

I come.

¹⁷² Recompence: "To compensate, or make amends to (a person) for a loss or injury sustained." (OED)

She breaks from her Brother, who is held by the Guards: the Second Bramin leads her towards the Pile.

YOUNG BRAMIN *to the Guards.*

Stand off, inhuman Ruffians!

INDAMORA, *stopping.*

Dearest Raymond!

Wert thou stretch'd lifeless on that awful Pyre, 185

With what fond ardour¹⁷³ wou'd I fly to make

These faithful arms thy tomb!—E'en death, with thee,

Wou'd grow belov'd—but O, to mix my ashes

With his, whose mem'ry I abhor!¹⁷⁴

[To the Second Bramin.] Lead on.—

Reflection, worse than death itself, appals me! 190

Soft and Solemn music.

Indamora advances towards the Pile—the Mirror and dart are thrown into it—Slaves throw in oil and incense—Bramins kneel to Indamora, who waves her hand as if to bless them. Indamora stops when she reaches the middle of the Platform, stands ready to cast herself on the Pile.

YOUNG BRAMIN.

Open kind Earth, and hide me in thy centre!—

Can Heaven look on— *[Lightning and Thunder.*

Hark! what a dreadful voice

¹⁷³ Ardour: "Heat of passion or desire, vehemence, ardent desire; warmth of emotion, zeal, fervour, eagerness, enthusiasm." (OED)

¹⁷⁴ Abhor: "To regard with disgust or hatred; to loathe, abominate." (OED)

Exclaims against self-murder¹⁷⁵!

[More Thunder.]

Hark! again,

More terribly it sounds.—Unhand me, Slaves!

He breaks from the Guards, and rushes towards the Platform:—at the same moment, a Shout is heard, with a grand Flourish of drums and trumpets.

Voices, from within the Pagod.

Stop your unhallow'd Rites! Barbarians, stop!

195

RAYMOND, at the head of his Troops, appears on the steps of the Pagod: a skirmish ensues—the Indians are driven off, and the Chief-Bramin seized. Raymond mounts the Platform in order to save Indamora.

CHIEF-BRAMIN.

Our Enemy alive!—Confusion!

YOUNG-BRAMIN.

Transport!

RAYMOND.

My Indamora!

INDAMORA.

Hah! those well-known accents

¹⁷⁵ Hark ... self-murder: Heaven is angry with the deeds being done. For context on sati see the introduction.

Call back my fleeting soul.—Am I on Earth?

RAYMOND.

No—thus to snatch thee from the flames is Heav'n!

INDAMORA.

Lord of my heart!—yet, sure, 'tis fancy all—

200

Can he, for whom alone I wish to live,

Can he be sent to save me?

RAYMOND.

Bounteous Pow'rs!

What joy e'er equal'd mine?

YOUNG BRAMIN.

My more than Brother!

To see thee living is indeed a bliss

I little hoped for.—Fame declar'd thee dead.

205

INDAMORA.

O say what miracle—

RAYMOND.

By my command

The rumour of my death went forth; and, by
The same command, part of my troops embark'd
In the poor remnant of our squadron; others,
Led on by Albert and myself, took post 210
In hollows near the deep:—and soon as night
Began to cast her pitchy¹⁷⁶ mantle o'er us,
Albert assail'd and seiz'd th' unguarded Town;
While I, by the same cavern which, this day,
From Treach'ry's poniard¹⁷⁷ sav'd me, reach'd the Temple. 215

INDAMORA.

My Guardian! my Deliverer! how dear,
How doubly dear is life, preserv'd by thee!

YOUNG BRAMIN, [*to the Chief Bramin*]

Most just are Heav'ns awards! The very Cave
Which thou, blood-thirsty Wretch, too oft hast stain'd
With human gore, now proves thy deadliest bane, 220
Thy total overthrow!—

CHIEF BRAMIN.

Cease, give me death—

—Most welcome death!

¹⁷⁶ Pitchy: "Pitch-black, intensely dark; (of darkness) intense, thick." (OED)

¹⁷⁷ Poniard: "A small, slim dagger." (OED)

RAYMOND.

No—learn that Christian's conquer

To save and humanize Mankind. Live, Bramin!

And, henceforth, let our holy doctrines teach thee,

That the peculiar Ministers of Heaven 225

Shou'd scatter peace and comfort o'er the world;

Turn savage cruelty to gentle love,

Disarm the hand of vengeance of its steel,

Relieve the Needy, heal Affliction's wounds,

And, in the bosom of forlorn Despair, 230

Relume¹⁷⁸ the embers of life-cheering Hope:—

These are the acts by which a Priest proclaims

His mission is from Heaven.

CHIEF BRAMIN.

Thy clemency

Is insult all.—Gods! shall a Bramin stoop

T' embrace the faith he scorns—the Christian faith? 235

No—rather let me die.

INDAMORA.

If such its doctrines,

Who wou'd not be a Christian'?

¹⁷⁸ Relume: "To relight, rekindle (a light, flame, etc.)." (OED)

YOUNG BRAMIN.

Oh! too long

Spite of kind Reason's warnings, we have stray'd
In BRAMA'S thorny paths.

(To Raymond.)—But thou shalt teach us

The precepts of a faith which lifts Mankind 240
Above humanity.

CHIEF BRAMIN.

Accursed moment!

Our Victim snatch'd away, our City captur'd,
Our very Bramins traitors to their Gods!
Oh I have liv'd too long!—Alas, my Country!
Art thou condemn'd to bear a Victor's yoke¹⁷⁹? 245
To groan beneath Oppression's iron rod,
And lavish all thy precious stores to feed
The av'rice of thy Lords?—Vindictive BRAMA!
If, for the crimes of this once-favour'd Land,
Thy arm be stretch'd against us, let the blood 250
Of thy still-faithful Servant,—here devoted
A sacrifice to thee,—O let it turn
Thy vengeful ire to mercy! *(Draws a dagger.)*

¹⁷⁹ Yoke: "A frame or collar placed around the neck of an animal, or an object resembling this." (OED)

RAYMOND.

Hah ! what mean'st thou?

CHIEF BRAMIN.

T' appease the wrath divine, and free myself

From hated Christian chains.

(He stabs himself.)

RAYMOND.

Fanatic, hold!

255

YOUNG BRAMIN.

Support him!

CHIEF BRAMIN.

Hence, thou stigma to thy name!

The hand of Death already gripes¹⁸⁰ me hard—

That pang—it rends my vitals—Hah! see, see!

I sink in gulphs of fire.—Torment! O Heaven!

If I have err'd—forgive—O mercy!—Oh!—

260

(Dies.)

RAYMOND.

There fled a soul which, had Religion's sun

Unclouded beam'd upon it, might have grac'd

¹⁸⁰ Gripes: “The action of griping, clutching, grasping or seizing tenaciously, esp. with the hands, arms, claws, and the like.” (OED)

And comforted the Land. -My Indamora,

This genial sun shall shed his rays on thee;

Make all thy budding virtues blossom fair,

265

And, with their fruits, bless Raymond and thy Country.

Whilst thou, young Priest, who, 'spite of Errors mists,

Discovered and pursued bright Virtue's paths,

Thou, in yon Temple, henceforth reign supreme,

And, on its altars, fix the CHRISTIAN CROSS.

270

[The Curtain drops.]

END OF THE THIRD AND LAST ACT.

EPILOGUE,

WRITTEN BY

R. J. STARKE¹⁸¹, Esq.

AND SPOKEN BY

Mrs. MATTOCKS¹⁸².

Mrs. Mattocks enters as if pushed upon the Stage by the Prompter, to whom she addresses the two first Lines.

UPON my word, you treat me very ill

To force me here—so much against my will.

To the Audience.

WELL, I protest, 'tis not a little hard

That I'm to plead the cause of our young Bard!

I bore no part in this new-fangled play,

5

Therefore, in fortune's name, what can I say?—

Dispatch'd, in so much haste, from the Green-room¹⁸³,

To find out—if I can—this WIDOW's doom!

They tell me, ev'ry winning way to try,

To rattle, coax, or scold; to laugh, or cry;

10

Nay, turn a very Proteus¹⁸⁴, so I please ye—

Smile then—come, smile, before a panic seize me;

¹⁸¹ R. J. Starke: likely Mariana Starke's brother, Richard Isaac Starke. "Mariana Starke," Orlando: Women's Writing in the British Isles from the Beginnings to the Present, Cambridge University Press, 2022, <https://orlando.cambridge.org/profiles/starma>.

¹⁸² Mrs. Mattocks: Mattocks, Isabella (1746-1826): An actress who became known for her performances in epilogues. "Isabella Mattocks." Wikipedia, Sept. 14, 2022. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Isabella_Mattocks.

¹⁸³ Green-room: "A room in a theater or studio in which performers can relax when they are off stage." (OED)

¹⁸⁴ Proteus: in Greek and Roman Mythology, "A sea-god, the son of Oceanus and Tethys, said to be capable of assuming various shapes at will" (OED)

For your dread anger our small Realm can shake;
Even your frowns can make its basis quake;
The superstructure then comes tumbling down, 15
And buries fancied Fame and castle-built Renown:
Then, helter-skelter,¹⁸⁵ plumes¹⁸⁶ and pinions¹⁸⁷ fly,
And blasted laurels¹⁸⁸ 'mid the ruins lie;
While Envy, smiling grim, her visage shews,
And fills THE WORLD next morning with the news. 20

But how shall I about my arduous task,
If neither you nor I must wear a mask?
If truth must out, and no kind smiles appear,
I shall not like to stand as COUNSEL here.

We've just been taught, nor was it deem'd a wonder, 25
That Jove's¹⁸⁹ decrees are usher'd in by thunder.—
Come, then—one Clap, ye mighty Pow'rs on high!
I love the pealing thunders of your sky,
They augur¹⁹⁰ well,—yet hold—it may be odds
But there's some lurking Fiend among you Gods, 30
Whose baleful wrath a hissing bolt may aim,
To burn poor me, and blast OUR AUTHOR's fame:
And I'm not, like our Heroine, in such haste,

¹⁸⁵ Helter-skelter: "In disordered haste; confusedly, tumultuously, pell-mell." (OED)

¹⁸⁶ Plumes: "Feathers collectively, plumage" (OED)

¹⁸⁷ Pinions: "A bird's wing; *esp.* (chiefly *poetic* and *rhetorical*) the wing of a bird in flight." (OED)

¹⁸⁸ Laurels: a type of foliage in a wooded setting (OED). Laurels were used as symbols of victory or accomplishment in ancient Greece and Rome. "Laurus nobilis." Wikipedia, Jan. 6, 2023.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Laurus_nobilis.

¹⁸⁹ Jove's: "A poetical equivalent of Jupiter, name of the highest deity of the ancient Romans" (OED)

¹⁹⁰ Augur: "To predict, foretell, or forecast from signs or omens; to divine, to prophesy." (OED)

For fiery trials—they don't hit my taste.

Hark!—in yon box, I hear some Fair Ones say, 35

" We really shou'd not like to die that way;

" 'Tis a bad precedent—let's damn the Play."

Hold, gentle Creatures! in these favour'd times,

Mercy prevails, even o'er distant Climes,

And makes the human Race her fondest care, 40

Whether their hue be tawny, black, or fair.

Then, since the Age is thus to Mercy prone,

In this Tribunal, you can fix her throne ;

Break Criticism's shaft, quench Rancour's¹⁹¹ fire,

Nor light our trembling AUTHOR's Funeral-Pyre¹⁹². 45

¹⁹¹ Rancour's: "Deep-rooted and bitter ill feeling; resentment or animosity, esp. of long standing" (OED)

¹⁹² Funeral-Pyre: "A pile or heap of wood or other combustible material; esp. (frequently in *funeral pyre*) such a pile used for the ritual burning of a dead body." (OED)