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Sir Thomas Overbury:

HHH

Chelst

Feb. 24

1777

A

T R A G E D Y.

(4)

ALTERED FROM THE LATE

MR. RICHARD SAVAGE.

As now performing at the

THEATRE-ROYAL

I N

COVENT-GARDEN.

L O N D O N :

PRINTED BY

WILLIAM WOODFALL;

FOR

FRANCIS NEWBERRY,

THE CORNER OF ST. PAUL'S CHURCH-YARD.

M.DCC.LXXVII.

[Price, One Shilling and Six-Pence.]



T O
GEORGE COLMAN, E s q.

S I R,

THE alterations made in the manuscript of SIR THOMAS OVERBURY, left by *Richard Savage*, in order to adapt it to the Theatre, having been favourably received; I cannot dedicate the Play with so much propriety to any person as to you, to whom it principally owes its theatrical currency.

I therefore take this opportunity of publicly thanking you for your assistance; and rejoice that it enables me to boast of a circumstance so flattering to my vanity, as the honour of your friendship.

I am, SIR,

Your much obliged,

Humble Servant,

February 10, 1777.

THE EDITOR.

ADVERTISEMENT.

DOCTOR JOHNSON, in his Life of RICHARD SAVAGE, gives a circumstantial account of the Tragedy of Sir THOMAS OVERBURY; and tells us, that some years after Mr. Savage had written one Play upon the subject (which, from its own inequality, and the imperfect and feeble state of its representation, was rather unsuccessful) he resolved to write a second. The following scenes are the produce of that resolution.

The manuscript of the Author was some time since put into the hands of the Editor; who, on perusing it, discovered a great many beauties, surrounded by almost as many defects. The Tragedy was not finished; and, from the disposition of the scenes, and conduct of the catastrophe, it appeared altogether unfit for the stage. In this rude state the Editor presented it to the Manager of Covent-Garden Theatre, who received it with candour, and at a convenient opportunity read the Play with him, and agreed to bring it on the stage, when the necessary alterations, to fit it for the scene, should be made. In consequence of this agreement, the Editor consulted his literary friends, under whose advice, and by whose assistance, he has been enabled to give it to the World in its present form.

He

A D V E R T I S E M E N T.

He is aware that, as the Tragedy now stands, it is still liable to critical objections. He is confident however, that every reader of taste will find infinitely more room for praise than censure. The alterations have been made with the greatest deference to the Manuscript of the Author ; additions were avoided as much as possible, and it has been the chief aim of the Editor, by necessary transpositions and abridgements, to make SAVAGE mend himself.

The approbation Sir THOMAS OVERBURY has received in the Theatre, is the best proof that the Editor and his friends were not mistaken when they thought the Tragedy bore strong marks of genius ; and when it is considered, that owing to a late unfortunate loss, (a loss much to be lamented by every friend to the stage !) the play was deprived of the powerful assistance of the two first tragedians of the Theatre in which it is acted, the applause it has been honoured with, not only serves to shew the intrinsic value of the piece, but is also a testimony of the merit of the performers who now fill the respective characters, and who, while they are entitled to the Editor's warmest thanks for their spirit and exertion, have done themselves the highest credit, and have consequently risen considerably in the public estimation.

February 13, 1777.

P R O L O G U E,

WRITTEN BY

RICHARD BRINSLEY SHERIDAN, Esq.

Spoken by Mr. H U L L.

TOO long the Muse—attach'd to regal show,
Denies the scene to tales of humbler woe;
Such as were wont—while yet they charm'd the ear,
To steal the plaudit of a silent tear,
When Otway gave domestic grief its part,
And Rowe's familiar sorrows touch'd the heart.

A scepter'd traitor, lash'd by vengeful fate,
A bleeding hero, or a falling state,
Are themes, (tho' nobly worth the classic song)
Which feebly claim your sighs, nor claim them long;
Too great for pity, they inspire respect,
Their deeds astonish, rather than affect;
Proving how rare the heart, that woe can move,
Which reason tells us, we can never prove.

Other the scene, where sadly stands confest,
The private pang that rends the Sufferer's breast;
When sorrow sits upon a Parent's brow,
When Fortune mocks the youthful Lover's vow—
All feel the tale—for who so mean but knows
What Fathers' sorrows are!—what Lovers' woes!

On kindred ground, our Bard his fabric built,
And plac'd a mirror there for private guilt;
Where—fatal union!—will appear combin'd
An Angel's form—and an abandon'd mind?
Honour attempting Passion to reprove,
And Friendship struggling with unhallow'd Love!

Yet

P R O L O G U E.

Yet view not, Critics, with severe regard
The orphan-offspring of an orphan bard,
Doom'd, while he wrote, unpitied to sustain
More real mis'ries than his pen could feign !
—Ill-fated Savage ! at whose birth was giv'n
No parent but the Muse, no friend but heav'n !
Whose youth no brother knew, with social care
To soothe his suff'rings, or demand to share ;
No wedded partner of his mortal woe,
To win his smile at all that fate could do ;
While at his death, nor friend's nor mother's tear,
Fell on the track of his deserted bier ?

So pleads the tale*, that gives to future times
The Son's misfortunes, and the Parent's crimes ;
There shall his fame (if own'd to-night) survive,
Fix'd by the hand, that bids our language live !

* Life of Richard Savage by Dr. Samuel Johnson.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

M E N.

Sir Thomas Overbury, - Mr. LEWIS.
Earl of Somerset, - - - Mr. WROUGHTON.
Earl of Northampton, - Mr. HULL.
Sir Gervas Elvis, - - - Mr. WHITEFIELD.
Officer, - - - - - Mr. THOMPSON.
Servant, - - - - - Mr. STEVENS.

W O M E N.

Countess of Somerset, - Mrs. JACKSON.
Isabella, - - - - - Mrs. HARTLEY.
Cleora, - - - - - Miss LEESON.

Guards, Attendants, &c.

☞ The lines printed between inverted commas are omitted
in the representation.

SIR THOMAS OVERBURY:

A

T R A G E D Y.

A C T I.

SCENE, *The House of the Earl of Somerset.*

Earl of Northampton and Sir Gervas Elvis.

N O R T H A M P T O N.

HOW chearfully has this day's light broke forth?
The new-ris'n fun, drest rich in orient beams,
Beholds, with triumph, the late wife of Essex
Transplant her beauties from his barren shade,
To flourish by the heat of love and Somerset.

E L V I S.

Never shall I forget the tempting Bride:
Such dazzling lustre sparkled from her eyes,
That the rich gems she wore shone dim beneath 'em.
Inviting warmth glow'd lovely in her cheeks,
And from her tongue flow'd such melodious sounds,
That list'ning rage grew gentle as her accents,
And age was youth again by looking on her.

B

N O R T H-

2 SIR THOMAS OVERBURY:

NORTHAMPTON.

Yet tho' her features are as soft as air,
Strong passions urge her mind to manly daring ;
Work'd up by nature with unusual strength,
Vengeance, ambition, and the lust of greatness,
Swell in her soul, and lift her above woman.

ELVIS.

If rumour lie not, Overbury comes ;
Various conjectures rise at his approach ;
Some say, he hastens to oppose these nuptials.

NORTHAMPTON.

Come as he may ! they cannot be recall'd ;
The nuptial Anthem past fore-ran his Requiem.

ELVIS.

Others conceive a reason diff'rent far.
This fav'rite of the Muses, so admir'd,
They hint, forsakes his father's fair retreat ;
Where learning, solitude, and peace, prevail,
Ambitious, turbulent, to rule the state ;
Or share with Somers, the seat of power.

NORTHAMPTON.

Let ancient honour, then, like your's, give way
To some projecting, rhiming, upstart race ;
Men wild of brain, by heated fancy sway'd !
Stead of sage judgment ; judgment, that of old,
Has founded, modell'd, render'd empires great,
And settled standard laws—Instead of these,
Come from wild genius, innovating councils,

Such

Such as imbrue with more than brother's blood ;
 Such as intail hereditary hatred ;
 Such as convulse a state from age to age.

E L V I S.

Others to gentler cause impute his coming,
 And joining his with Isabella's name,
 Assert, that willing Hymen soon will bless
 Deserving genius with rewarding beauty.

N O R T H A M P T O N.

And give to Overbury, Isabella !
 The man who weds her, (so speaks regal bounty,)
 The King endows her, and ennoble's him.
 But oh ! the treasure of her mind, by far
 Transcends her sex, transcends all earthly dowry ;
 'Tis high, immortal wisdom drawn from learning.

E L V I S.

I thought the texture of a female brain
 So delicately frail, that when the sex
 Aspire at solid wisdom drawn from learning,
 Half inattention leaves in them half knowledge ;
 Half knowledge, mother of Chimeras wild,
 Fantastic silence, and imperious speech,
 Of cunning artifice ; the scorn of wisdom ;
 All, that assumes to know ; yet, wrong of head,
 Is more grotesque than ignorance itself.

N O R T H A M P T O N.

Not Isabella thus. So perfect fram'd
 With native candour, and with native judgment,

B 2

Her

4 SIR THOMAS OVERBURY:

Her mind intent on books, gain'd modest wisdom,
Ever self-diffident ; her heart caught virtue ;
Her tongue strong reason to defend that virtue,
And soft persuasion to make foes its friends.
Her fair deportment has unstudied graces ;
Such, genuine Nature meant the softer sex,
When she endued it with unconscious beauty,
Combin'd with sweet simplicity of manners.

E L V I S.

Warmly you paint, my Lord.

N O R T H A M P T O N.

Yes, for I love her.

I love, she knows my passion, and she loaths ;
And yet I love—But, Elvis, wherefore smil'st thou ?
'Tis well, I know thy thought—Love and stay'd years ?—
Spare me lest reason blush for boundless passion.
Nay urge too I am married—Would I were not !
Can marriage fetter love ?

E L V I S.

But Overbury—

N O R T H A M P T O N.

She loves him not, and he's no dangerous rival.
Each yet unseen by each, both seem to plead
A previous plighted faith, and both decline
Each interview propos'd by Somerset,
Who urg'd their union, but still urg'd in vain.

E L V I S.

When letters num'rous were exchang'd, did not
His prying, intercepting wiles, explore

Deep

A T R A G E D Y.

5.

Deep combination with the court of Rome,
'Till then unknown ; now fatal to your hope ?

N O R T H A M P T O N.

They did—Nor think that I forget they did ;
For this I am exil'd from court—For this,
My genius, baleful as a comet's blaze,
Hangs o'er his head, and burns with red revenge.
But wave we this—Attend to better news ;
Wade is Lieutenant of the Tower no more.

E L V I S.

May I remind your friendship of a promise ?

N O R T H A M P T O N:

So much in mem'ry friendship holds your welfare,
Faithful to promise shall succeed performance ;
Of that hereafter—Go, the bride approaches.

[Exit Elvis.

Enter the Countess of Somerset.

N O R T H A M P T O N.

Hail to those charms, that smile upon the morn ;
And sweetly gild it like a milder sun.
Hail, my fair Niece, now happy too and great ;
Blest with perfection to the height of thought.
The worth that could deserve beauty like yours,
Insures fond love, and heaps long life with pleasure.

C O U N T E S S.

Thus while a lover, talk'd Earl Somerset ;
But now, alas !—

N O R-

6 SIR THOMAS OVERBURY:
NORTHAMPTON.

What means the beauteous bride?

C O U N T E S S.

Tho' but last night our nuptials fix'd him mine,
Starting this morning from my slighted arms,
Thought seem'd to press his mind, sighs heav'd his bosom,
And, as repenting of his wish possess'd,
Full, in the blushing dawn, he rose and left me.

NORTHAMPTON.

There is a damp, I know, that clouds his joys;
A vapour, which your warmth might soon disperse.

C O U N T E S S.

What points my uncle at?

NORTHAMPTON.

At Overbury!
That restless foe of your's, your husband's friend,
This morning is expected,

C O U N T E S S.

Overbury!

'Then aid me, indignation, rage, and vengeance!

NORTHAMPTON.

Wisely you call on rage for its assistance;
Justice would be too slow for your revenge,
And conscience whispers, give it up for ever,

C O U N T E S S.

My Lord, I see to what your counsel leads me;
You know, I never lov'd this Earl of Somerset;
'Twas int'rest, 'twas ambition won me to him.

NOR-

A T R A G E D Y.

2

N O R T H A M P T O N.

Yet you have lov'd.

C O U N T E S S.

Lov'd ! whom ?

N O R T H A M P T O N.

This Overbury !

Often, you know, I've hinted my suspicion ;
And memory calls up a host of proofs
To shew how much, how very much you lov'd him.

C O U N T E S S.

Yes, lov'd him more than I detest him now :
Each look, thought, gesture, has confest the folly.
Nay I have wrote—Oh ! Heav'n !—I know not what !
Reason was fled, and every thought was madness ;
And now he may betray me.

N O R T H A M P T O N.

May ! he will.

Oh ! Niece, what have you done ?—But let me pause !
These letters must be artfully regain'd.
Mark !—your Lord comes—He seems amus'd and pensive.
'Tis fit we part. Anon you shall know further.

C O U N T E S S.

I go—Distraction and despair go with me.
My nuptial rites are all made up of horror,
And the soft bed of marriage strew'd with thorns.
When I to peace would sooth my care-worn Lord,
The fond epistles, that unbridled love

Taught

3 SIR THOMAS OVERBURY

Taught my rash hand to fend to Overbury,
Shall rise, like spectres, to appall my soul,
And banish joy and happiness for ever.

[Exit.

Enter Earl of Somerset.

SOMERSET.

A kind good morrow to my honour'd uncle.
Now fortune seems to smile in earnest on me ;
This last night's blessing crown'd my warmest wish !

NORTHAMPTON.

And yet, if my eyes err'd not, sure at entrance,
Your looks were low'ring, and your bosom labour'd,
As if some lurking care perplex'd your peace.

SOMERSET.

Sure you mistook, I thought I was all rapture.
How I adore your niece, be witness Heav'n !
But—Oh—Northampton !

NORTHAMPTON.

Speak.

SOMERSET.

I have a friend,
Dearer than life, and as my honour precious ;
Our wishes and our int'rests are the same ;
Friendship has join'd us in so strict a band,
As if one soul inform'd us both—Yet he—

NOR-

A T R A G E D Y.

N O R T H A M P T O N.

Yet he, opposing friendship thus to love,
Destroys in both your peace—Is it not so?
Trust me, this Overbury has a head
Deep-versed in wily maxims, and a heart
Which policy ne'er meant for mutual friendship.

S O M E R S E T.

Greatly you wrong him.

N O R T H A M P T O N.

Search the race of man,
Are there no other friends?

S O M E R S E T.

None who are mine.

Can I to palace-sycophants impart
Th' unguarded thought, the big important scheme,
The social laugh, or secret meaning sigh?
But to my Overbury's breast, my soul
Can in the private or the public scene,
Pour out her frail or better part; to him
As free and safe as to the lonely rock
Or desert plain.—
His friendship ne'er indulged one fav'rite fault;
It shares, it heightens ev'ry virtuous pleasure,
And ministers to every care a comfort.

N O R T H A M P T O N.

We soon may see him reach the Statesman's sphere;
But rather, I suspect that one like him,
Whose genius runs imaginary rounds;

C

May,

10 SIR THOMAS OVERBURY;

May, in the Muse's fairy land, erect
Romantic schemes, but in the State, bewilder.

S O M E R S E T.

Who most bewilder there, are who abstract
Their selfish int'rests from the gen'ral good.
Not thus the man the Muses call their own;
Him no mean lucre bribes to partial views.
He knows from nature's equitable rules,
To temper justice and enforce the laws;
Knows for the public safety, feats of arms;
Gives gen'rous arts and sciences to bloom;
Tells commerce how to circulate her streams,
And how to fence 'em from invading foes.
'Tis his to boast from elevated spirit,
Freedom of thought to form enquiring candour,
Freedom of speech to check encroaching pow'r,
And kindle glorious jealousy of rights.
The welfare of mankind is first his aim;
Next of his country; last of all, his own.

N O R T H A M P T O N.

But in such men, could eminence of virtue,
If such be his, create so many foes?

S O M E R S E T.

Yes, eminence of virtue draws more foes
Than eminence of vice. Virtue is oft
Unhappy, therefore friendless; vice holds fortune;
And fortune, when 'tis her's has friends. She's honour'd;
This object of disdain has homage—vest
Virtue with opulence and pow'r: each just,
Each great, each frugal, lib'ral act of goodness,

Envy

A T R A G E D Y. I

Envy misconstrues sinister intent,
'Till private malice spread in general clamour,
And end in excellence disgrac'd or murder'd.

Enter a Servant.

SERVANT.

Sir Thomas Overbury is arriv'd:

NORTHAMPTON

My Lord,

I've done——your safe discretion be your guide.

[Exit Northampton.]

Enter Sir Thomas Overbury.

SOMERSET.

Fly to my arms!——welcome as ease to pain,
As health to nature, or relief to want!

OVERBURY.

O Somerset, engraft me on thy bosom!
Each day of absence seem'd a ling'ring age;
But I have hasted ev'n to outstrip time,
Left the dull hours behind me as I flew,
And reach'd the goal of all my wishes here.
But, tell me——

SOMERSET.

Answer first one earnest question.

Why does my friend refuse, un-nam'd, unseen,
The beauteous object I so oft propos'd
To win, and to be won by love?

C 2

O V E R-

OVERBURY.

Oh! there is one,
 Who, if she lives, lives only to be mine;
 If dead, I never will become another's:
 To me then, nameless rest this fair unknown.
 But tell me—for my mind has dwelt upon thee—
 Has thy fond heart regain'd its liberty?
 Does the late Essex yet appear herself?
 Or does she still hang all her spells around thee?
 Inchanting softness dwells upon her tongue,
 And charms in fluent mischief—She has beauty,
 That spreads and blooms like a fresh op'ning flower;
 But pois'nous adders lurk beneath its shade;
 Or from such briars shoots this lovely rose,
 It wounds the touch which it invites to crop it.

SOMERSET.

Oh! let me beg thee, if thou lov'st thy Somerset;
 If friendship makes my peace of mind thy care,
 No more to shock me on this tender point.

OVERBURY.

'Twere flatt'ry all, not friendship, to comply;
 The wound can ne'er be cur'd, that shuns the probing;
 And counsel is a friend's peculiar office.

SOMERSET.

Trust me, my friend, that counsel comes too late.

OVERBURY.

Hear me!—for as I love thee, I will speak—
 Tho' beauty's glitt'ring charms delude the eye,
 Virtue, the light of truth, is long since faded:

Her

Her fame——but dignity of fame deserts her :
 And when a woman's reputation falls,
 So justly falls—all that fair saint-like guile,
 All that repenting virtue can inspire,
 Can never lift it to its state again.

S O M E R S E T.

Cruel report, I know, has wrong'd her worth :
 Envy still feeds upon the fairest fruit,
 And spreads its poisons on the wings of virtue.

O V E R B U R Y.

Virtue and her—Oh ! name them not together.
 Her trial with her late wrong'd husband Essex ;
 Her loose pretensions for that wish'd divorce——
 Come, we know all, and, on my soul, I think,
 Dear as I love thee, could'st thou stoop so low
 As to receive that wanton to thy arms,
 'Twould shake my friendship so, — I could not scorn
 thee,—
 But, ere I'd see thy shame—I'd range the world,
 And leave thee to the ruin thou'rt so fond of.——
 Should'st thou——Alas ! what mean those starting tears !
 Big drops of sweat—dead paleness—trembling limbs !
 Signs of some strong confusion !

S O M E R S E T.

Oh, my friend !

I must not—cannot, hide a thought from thee.
 She, from whose charms your friendship would divert me,
 Is now——my wife !

O V E R-

14 SIR THOMAS OVERBURY:

OVERBURY.

Your wife?

SOMERSET.

My much lov'd wife.

OVERBURY.

Oh, what are men who love! My Lord, I've done
One sigh to friendship only, and—no more—
All those convulsive starts that shook thy frame,
Were the prophetic warners of my fall.

SOMERSET.

Said'st thou thy fall!—

OVERBURY.

That I still love thee, witness this embrace!
Witness these tears!—But, from this fatal hour,
Join'd as you are to her—we part for ever.

SOMERSET:

O stop—repent—recall those hasty words!
I fear I have no friend but Overbury.

OVERBURY.

You have a wife, and friendship is her office.
It stings my soul to see thee thus betray'd,
And my foreboding heart ev'n bleeds with pity.
All that is left me now, is to avoid thee,
And not to see, what, but to hear, will wound me!
Will deeply wound!—Down, down, my throbbing
passions;
Farewell, my Lord—may ceaseless blessings wait you.
[Exit Overbury.]

A T R A G E D Y,

15

SOMERSET, *solus.*

Sorrow, eternal sorrow, claims me now ;
All happy fortune flies for ever from me.
Whate'er's worth wishing for on earth, I've lost ;
Life is a dream, disturb'd by constant woes,
And he who has no friend, finds death a blessing.
When friendship's pow'rs recede from virtue's aid,
Sharp hostile cares unguarded peace invade.
Friendship, from ev'ry care, can life defend ;
Our Guardian-angel's but a faithful Friend,

[*Exit Somerset.*]

End of the FIRST ACT.

A C T II.

Scene continues.

Enter Isabella, and Cleora.

I S A B E L L A.

ALAS, Cleora, comfort comes in vain;
Does not Northampton, from his rank presumptuous,
Affront with base attempt my orphan virtue?
Did not my guardian, Somerset (till then
Indulgent) almost spurn me kneeling, from him,
When I declined a consort, yet unseen?
But would this Overbury force my choice?
No—sure the man whom once the muse has blest,
Can know no cruel, no ungen'rous wish.

C L E O R A.

If such his numbers, and if such his soul,
Why to his suit averse?

I S A B E L L A.

Because another
With sweeter numbers, and a softer soul,
Has long engross'd my breast.

C L E O R A.

Another, say you?

I S A-

I S A B E L L A.

Another, my Cleora! for my Bellmour,
 (So was he called) first warm'd my breast with friendship,
 (Friendship I thought it, but I found it love;)
 And as I aim'd to copy what I priz'd,
 Desire of wisdom gain'd upon my soul,
 And all the toys, the vanities, and trifles,
 (The low amusements of my youth and sex)
 Dispers'd.—The writings of the wise and good
 Earnest I sought, and with my Bellmour's knowledge
 (Which rivall'd 'em) compar'd.—Thus him and truth
 I saw, admir'd, ador'd—Yet long I strove
 (But ah! what lover can?) to hide my passion.
 He wish'd, he watch'd, and what he wish'd, perceiv'd.

C L E O R A.

Was love by love return'd?

I S A B E L L A.

Ardent it was,
 Consulted virtue too, with willing sanction,
 Cemented in firm faith, our meeting souls.

C L E O R A.

Say, was he greatly born?

I S A B E L L A.

All that I learn'd,
 He was of humble, not ignoble birth.

C L E O R A.

Why did you part?

D

I S A-

ISABELLA,

Fam'd Oxford, nurse of arts !
 Whose charge he was, recall'd the virtuous youth,
 To close the period of each studious course ;
 But ere the time of his propos'd return,
 (For then in Sylvan scenes I liv'd sequester'd)
 News of my distant father's hast'ning death,
 Swift summon'd me, to pay my last sad duty.
 Ere since that hour, (a fatal hour to love)
 Enquiry has no clue to guide him to me ;
 Nor is this all—to multiply my griefs,
 Dear to my eye, his letters, missive wooers !
 O'er whom I often sooth'd the pangs of absence,
 By some strange hap, are lost, or stolen from me,

CLEORA,

Good Heav'n forbid !—but see, Northampton's Earl !
 Who raises other thoughts than those of love !

ISABELLA,

Far other thoughts indeed—I loath his presence.
 Let virtue learn from Overbury's lays,
 “ He comes too near, who comes to be denied*.”

[*Exeunt.*

Enter Earl of Northampton.

NORTHAMPTON:

Stay, Isabella—ah ! she flies my call,
 Flies, like disgust, from love. For once then, hate,
 Afford that happiness which love denies !
 Well, Overbury, if deep plots have force ;

If

* A line in *The WIFE*, a Poem, written by Sir Thomas Overbury.

A T R A G E D Y.

19

If poisons can be drawn from baneful plants ;
Then horror from my fury light upon thee.

Enter Countess of Somerset.

C O U N T E S S.

My Lord, I know not if I'm yet betray'd,
My foe just met me with a look estrang'd,
No courtly gratulation 'scap'd his lips ;
Silent he pass'd, and bow'd with cold reserve.

N O R T H A M P T O N.

Saw you your Lord ?

C O U N T E S S.

I did, and strangely moved.
The social sweetness of his nature's lost ;
With folded arms he traverses the room,
Now red—now pale—big on his wat'ry eyes
Prompt tears stand trembling—speak to him, he sighs,
Or shakes his head ; at ev'ry question shock'd,
Drops in some broken phrase, a dubious answer ;
Then on a sudden starts, and flies observance.

N O R T H A M P T O N.

Now is the time to mould him to our purpose.
Then to our business—View these letters well.
To whom, from whom—This name's unsuperscribed,—
And that unsign'd.

C O U N T E S S.

'Tis strange.

D 2

N O R-

20 SIR THOMAS OVERBURY,

NORTHAMPTON.

Yet speak not these ?

These sure mark'd characters, some well-known hand ?

'Semblance of thought and stile too—

COUNTESS.

Overbury's ?

NORTHAMPTON.

They cannot be mistaken.—Overbury's—

And wrote to Isabella.

COUNTESS.

Her ?—Distraction !

When lost ? where found ? by purpose or by chance ?

NORTHAMPTON.

A tender billet dropt, first told the secret ;

The others from her followers were obtained ;

Won by my well-tim'd gifts, and promis'd favours,

To break into the cabinet of love,

And plunder it of this its choicest treasure.

COUNTESS.

Me, then he scorns, and doats on Isabella.

Oh Jealousy !—

NORTHAMPTON.

— That Passion, turns at once

Love, ill-requited love, to deadly hate ;

To hate ten-fold embittered.

COUN-

A T R A G E D Y.

C O U N T E S S.

To revenge.

N O R T H A M P T O N.

Aye, to revenge, invoke that pow'r—Revenge !

C O U N T E S S.

Revenge dares strike at Thrones, or ev'n at Altars ;
Rivers of blood mark out her purple way,
And cities flame to give her triumph lustre.

N O R T H A M P T O N.

Then Overbury study fancied virtue,
Fine spun philosophy, romantic honour,
'Till sure revenge rush suddenly upon thee ;
Then start, behold who strikes—and so expire.

C O U N T E S S.

But what the means ?

N O R T H A M P T O N.

These undirected papers.

Disclose 'em to your lord as sent to you,
As am'rous suitors from his rival friend.
The rage of slighted love, at present your's,
Will then seem Overbury's. Jealousy,
'Tho' now it rend your breast, shall rend no more.'
But be transplanted to your lord's, and your revenge
Be his—this done I have a farther plot ;—
Ere night this Overbury sees the Tower.

C O U N.

22 SIR THOMAS OVERBURY:

C O U N T E S S.

But soft!—the Earl!

N O R T H A M P T O N.

Then listen to my counsel.
First stir his temper with such cautious art,
That ere his judgment can exert its power,
His blood take ferment from a warmth of passion,
And when his fiery spirit flames with rage,
In its full heat, then stamp it with revenge.
Let me retire.—Be artful and be prosp'rous.

[*Exit.*]

Enter Earl of Somerset.

S O M E R S E T, *mus'ing*:

They say our thoughts distinguish us from brutes:
Would I could never think!—I then were happy.
Reflection rivets woe upon the wretched.
Thought teaches me to feel a friend's lost worth.
When we have friends, to them we trust our griefs:
Our care lies lighten'd, and the mind is peace.
To me that comfort's lost—I have no friend—
A wife! A friend! Oh! they include all joys,
And love and friendship are so near allied,
They should like poesy and music join,
Each formed to grace the other—why in me,
Why in my breast should friendship jar with love?

C O U N T E S S.

His heart seems prest with care. (*aside*) My gentle
lord,

Why

Why leave you thus the gaiety of friends?

Why has unsocial grief usurp'd your soul?

S O M E R S E T.

I found myself disorder'd and I left you——

Oft am I thus—Leave me, I'll soon return.

C O U N T E S S,

Oh! my dear Lord, I am not soon deceiv'd.

Those care-bent brows ill-suit a bridegroom's face.

Are folded arms the gestures of delight?

Are these sad sighs the voice of inward joy?

No, no,—Remember I am now your wife,

'Tis mine to ease your cares and bring you comfort;

If you have sorrows, I must claim my part:

If you deny me this, you love me not.

S O M E R S E T.

Not love thee, say'st thou? Oh! thou soul of Somerset!

Could those bright eyes discern my inmost thoughts,

There would you see, how your suspicion wrongs me.

Let me look nigh!—Let me gaze here with wonder!

Where's friendship now? why reason yields to beauty.

What tho' the crimes of which her foes accuse her,

Glar'd broad as day-light on my startled soul,

Angels sit smiling on her soft'ning eyes,

And lend an awe to sweetness; love reigns round her,

And when she speaks, comfort, like sweetest music,

Melts in her voice, and charms away my grief.

C O U N-

C O U N T E S S.

Oh! with what art you sooth my fainting spirits!—
 And am I still your dear, your much lov'd wife?
 Why do I ask? Those eyes confess I am.
 Then tell me, for you should impart your cares,
 Why are you thus?

S O M E R S E T.

Oh!

C O U N T E S S.

Nay again you're cruel.
 I guess to whom I owe my loss of power:
 You have a friend—A friend! weigh well that name;
 A wife becomes the truest tend'rest friend;
 Link'd to her lord, in int'rest as in love;
 Partner of ev'ry care, and ev'ry joy,
 Thro' ev'ry various turn of life the same;
 The balm of comfort, source of all delight.
 Such once was marriage—But you have a friend;
 A friend, whose tongue can tell you tales of honour,
 And bid you use a power, an early power,
 To triumph o'er a wife, while yet a bride;
 Who has indeed her faults, but whose chief crime
 Is loving you—perhaps, with too much fondness.

S O M E R S E T.

What means my love?—What friend?

C O U N T E S S.

Is there not one,
 Who stains my honour, and arraigns my love?
 Whose

Whose zeal of friendship has oppos'd our nuptials,
 And mad'ning now at opposition vain,
 Rebukes your choice? Hence flows not your disquiet!
 Lift up your eyes on mine!—To this, reply.
 Ah! they decline, your thoughts can find no utterance;
 And yet your silence speaks—Come, come, my Lord,
 I know your tutor chides your faulty conduct.
 Go then and make your peace. Be meekly penitent;
 Promise to err no more, and he forgives.

S O M E R S E T.

Hear me, sweet tyrant, I beseech thee hear me!
 Thou'rt dear to me as beauty is to love;
 Dear as enjoyment to desire:—as dear
 As filial blessings to parental fondness,
 Or gen'ral welfare to heart-felt benevolence.

C O U N T E S S.

And does my foe, who calls himself your friend,
 In vain endeavour to subvert my hope?
 He does, and I forgive him—Yet methinks
 'Tis pity, one who shines in various science;
 In all the graces that embellish knowledge,
 That one, so form'd to charm, should hide a heart
 That merits infamy, contempt and hate.
 But I must tell you—yet I would not—

S O M E R S E T.

Speak.

C O U N T E S S.

This Overbury, this lov'd man, is——

E

S O M-

S O M E R S E T.

What?

C O U N T E S S.

'Tis a harsh word—A villain.

I could forgive all hate ; but his who aims
To alienate your heart from love like mine ;
Or could I pardon such a wrong to me,
What to my dearest Lord was meant I could not.

S O M E R S E T.

I prithee do not turn me wild—explain.

C O U N T E S S.

Why what if he design'd against my honour ?

S O M E R S E T.

Against your honour !—Madness !—Fury !—Death !

C O U N T E S S.

Suppose, to urge his passion against your's,
He told me your were false, designing, jealous ?
Suppose he, when each art was tried in vain,
Attempted force, and threaten'd me with slander?

S O M E R S E T.

Force !—Slander !—Thou hast warm'd me—Think
once more,
He could not be so base.

C O U N T E S S.

Were he as honest as he seems, he could not.

S O M-

S O M E R S E T.

Ere yet my fury mounts into a blaze,
 Ere I upbraid him with designs like these,
 I charge thee tax not innocence with guilt;
 For thou may'st open such a scene of horror,
 'Twill shake thee to behold it—Have a care!
 “ Dare you confirm it with an oath ?

C O U N T E S S.

“ Dare I ?

S O M E R S E T.

“ Nay, but weigh well what you presume to swear !
 “ Oaths are of dreadful weight—And if they're false,
 “ Draw down damnation”——They who murder fame,
 Kill more than life-destroyers.

C O U N T E S S.

By my hopes,

What I have said——

S O M E R S E T.

——No more——I must believe you ;
 Believe you, said I ? what must I believe ?
 If you prove false ; if you traduce my friend,
 And wrong my faith, may sorrow blast thy bloom !
 May conscience rise in all her dreadful triumph,
 Scare ev'ry sense, and strike thee with distraction !
 Yet sure thou'rt true——That foul wrapt round with
 charms ;
 That soul can wear no stain of barb'rous falsehood?—
 What then must Overbury be ?——Reflection

28 SIR THOMAS OVERBURY:

Sickens with doubt, and dies in dark confusion.
Give me some proof.—

C O U N T E S S.

The proof is here—These letters—
Dark scrolls of love from Overbury's hand,
Fill'd with her praise, whom now he basely flanders.
Note but the character—Observe the stile—Peruse—

S O M E R S E T.

I know 'em well—The periods that so oft
Once glow'd in seeming friendship, kindling here
In am'rous passion—This, in me, they censur'd;
Yet while they censur'd, rival'd,——well I know 'em.
He's false, false, false.—Curse on all treach'rous
friends!

Enter Earl of Northampton.

N O R T H A M P T O N.

Why are the bride and bridegroom thus retir'd?
Crowds of all ranks press in to join your pleasures,
And ev'ry instrument of music vies
To sound sweet notes and swell the hour of love.

S O M E R S E T.

Alas! my Lord! ev'n harmony grows harsh;
Thought's out of tune, discord has struck my ear,
And my soul jars within me.

N O R T H A M P T O N.

What the cause?

S O M-

A - T R A G E D

S O M E R S E T.

'Tis a vile world, Northampton!

N O R T H A M P T O N.

This is but too apparent——Who has wrong'd you?

S O M E R S E T.

The darkeſt of all villains——A falſe friend!——
But as I am a man, I will revenge it.——
Oh! what a change has my poor heart ſuſtain'd?—
But a few moments ſince, this man's lov'd memory
Sat ſoft as brooding halcyons on my ſoul;
Now my rouz'd rage——

N O R T H A M P T O N.

Nay, this is wild, my Lord.
When anger ruſhes unreſtrain'd to action,
Like a hot ſteed it ſtumbles in its haſte.
The man of thought wounds deepeſt, and ſtrikes ſafely;
Premeditation makes his vengeance ſure,
And levels it directly to the mark.

S O M E R S E T.

I cannot, tho' a Courtier, kill with ſmiles;
My fury ſcorns to glow conceal'd in embers;
No, it ſhall mount and ſpread in flaming fierceneſs.
If I muſt fall, why I was born to die,
And fall as a man ſhould——If I revenge me,
I right my injur'd honour as I ought.

N O R T H A M P T O N.

This Overbury?—

S O M-

30 SIR THOMAS OVERBURY:

S O M E R S E T.

Said'st thou Overbury?

Now, by my soul, there's magic in the name,
And my charm'd rage grows still as midnight silence.
Why would'st thou speak it?—Let me not dwell upon
him.

Talk of false friendship, of abandon'd honour;
Of basely-rival'd love—Of force—Of slander;
Of hate, revenge; of ruin, of distraction;—
But spare that name at which my fury melts;
Or guilt will smile like sweet-ey'd innocence.

C O U N T E S S.

My Lord, be calm—Reflect how penal rigour
Oft hardens him, whom pardon may reclaim.
'Tis nobler to forgive, than to revenge.

S O M E R S E T.

Do'st thou plead for him? he has hurt thy fame,
Ev'n to my ear has hurt it—Gen'rous charmer,
The more thou plead'st the cause of him who wrong'd
thee,

The more should thy wrong'd goodness be reveng'd.

Thou, injur'd friendship, my griev'd soul inspire,

With awful justice, with vindictive fire!

“ Let my revenge to match th' ungen'rous wrong,

“ Be swift as eagles, be as lions strong;”

Aid me, ye light'nings, wing'd with fate descend,

And blast the worst of foes, a faithless friend!

[*Exeunt.*]

End of the SECOND ACT.

A C T III.

Scene continues.

Earl of Northampton and Sir Gervas Elvis.

NORTHAMPTON.

LET me congratulate my faithful Elvis :
The Tower-lieutenantcy will soon be your's,
For Somerset has said it.

E L V I S.

My kind lord !

NORTHAMPTON.

Yet more to please you, if you love Northampton,
The man I hate will soon be in my power.

E L V I S.

Is't possible ?

NORTHAMPTON.

The King comes here in private,
And Overbury dear shall rue his coming.

E L V I S.

Can Somerset forsake him ?

NORTHAMPTON.

He detests him.

E L V I S.

Prodigious change ! this news indeed surprizes.
And can he then believe his friend is false ?

N O R-

NORTHAMPTON.

Friendship at first was to belief averse;
 But when we touch'd the master-spring that mov'd him,
 Then wrath arose ere reason was on guard.
 Note, that credulity gains fast on wrath;
 "If wrath reply to wrath 'tis outrage all;
 "If gently treated, it insults submission;
 "Deaf, as the adder, when persuasion pleads;
 "If it meet silence, silence more provokes;
 "Silence it deems the signal of contempt.
 "No violence can tame no softness still it."
 But if 'tis stifled, as I trust it shall be,
 'Tis cool, deliberate, conducted malice,
 A deep, a secret, settled scheme of death.

ELVIS.

Must Overbury's death then crown this deed?

NORTHAMPTON.

It must; for this commences now our plan:
 An embassy to Russia is propos'd—
 His policy will deem it decent exile;
 (Exile it is) refusal will be fate.
 'Then of undutiful contempt accus'd,
 The King will straight commit him to your care,

ELVIS.

What will the people say?

NORTHAMPTON:

The courtly rank

Will

Will joy to see an envied fav'rite fall.
 The vulgar herd take rumour for their guide,
 Slow to examine, forward to believe,
 And to insult the falling ever prone.

These to enflame I have a hireling tribe,
 Whose venal pens will plead oppression's cause,
 And these (before retain'd, now full prepar'd)
 Shall, issuing from the press, proclaim him leagu'd
 With men, whose zeal is mark'd against the state.
 Say—dare you be a friend?

E L V I S.

I dare the worst!

N O R T H A M P T O N.

The Tow'r be your command, and he your charge.
 No more——be secret.

Enter Earl of Somerset.

S O M E R S E T.

Good Sir Gervas Elvis,
 I greet you gladly with your new-giv'n honour,
 Which the King's pleasure thus confirms by me.
[Delivers a commission.]

E L V I S.

My lord, you bind me ever to your service.

N O R T H A M P T O N.

Elvis, be ready and prepare a guard.

[Exit Sir Gervas Elvis.]

S O M E R S E T.

Oh!—my Northampton!

F

S O-

NORTHAMPTON.

Why that sigh, my lord?

SOMERSET.

I have been thinking when we lose a friend,
'Tis like an eye pluck'd from its bleeding orb;
No more the other holds the joy of sight,
But ceaseless weeps 'till it grows blind with anguish.

NORTHAMPTON.

Methinks your wrongs should sting you with repentment.

SOMERSET.

Aye, mention those, and I relapse to fury.
My restless thoughts drive round like veering winds,
And whirl into distraction!—Oh, forgive me;
'Tis the last struggle of expiring friendship.

NORTHAMPTON.

Shame on your softness!

SOMERSET.

Be not rash to blame me!

The King's inflam'd, the embassy propos'd,
And Overbury fummon'd to attend—
But Oh, Northampton! treach'ry startles me!—
Why rather not accuse him face to face,
And with an open anger prove the charge?

NORTHAMPTON.

His art would gain advantage o'er your passion.—
Nay, I could tell you more.

SO.

SOMERSET.

Oh, give it all !

NORTHAMPTON.

His party whisper that he rules the helm,
 Makes you a court-machine, a tool of state,
 And turns and winds your actions at his will.
 You've lodg'd within his bosom mighty secrets ;
 And hence (they cry) you've made him dangerous ;
 For he whose easy faith believes a friend,
 Makes him another self, and tells him all,
 Invests the man he trusts with too much pow'r,
 And from a trusting friend becomes a slave.

SOMERSET.

And means he then to awe me with betraying
 The close, the sacred confidence of friendship ?
 " Such, as when friendship into discord turns,
 " Ev'n hatred holds its honour to conceal ?"
 Come, shape me as you please !—anon we meet—
 Remorse farewell !—Now wiles shall cope with wiles.
[Exit Northampton.]

SOMERSET, *solus*.

My angry breast, like wounds that ache at air,
 Sore-shrinking at his lightest breath, will smart ;
 While he, unconscious of my hate, has peace.
 'Till to the brim this cup of vengeance swell,
 'Till then I suffer what I mean his doom,
 And feel, self-punish'd, all the pangs he merits.

36 SIR THOMAS OVERBURY:

Enter Sir Thomas Overbury.

OVERBURY.

I come obedient to your summons, Somerset!
The force of friendship overflows my grief,
And I must love you still.

SOMERSET.

Dissembling villain! [*Aside.*]

OVERBURY.

But if you still propose the fair unknown,
Know that affianc'd faith and constant passion
Have made another mistress of my heart.

SOMERSET.

Say rather, gallantry disdains all ties,
That it must rove, must leap all mortal bounds,
Seduce fair innocence—no matter whom!
What tho' a father, agoniz'd, behold
The fairest daughter of his hope abus'd,
She weep her virtue, peace, and fame destroy'd:
What tho' some husband, first an injur'd friend,
Then father of an offspring not his own,
Shall be mark'd out by hooting scorn for wrongs,
No time can heal, no penitence atone?

OVERBURY.

Al this wretch?

SOMERSET.

I wander from the purpose.
I have a message from the King this morn,
That will, I doubt, surprise you—'Tis his pleasure,

That

That you prepare yourself, without delay,
For an immediate embassy for Russia.

OVERBURY.

The warning's sudden ;

SOMERSET.

The design is deep :
Perhaps too, not propos'd by your best friends.

OVERBURY.

“ And why for Russia ?—An unnotic'd nation
“ Untrain'd to civilizing arts and grandeur ;
“ Unform'd by martial discipline for terror ;
“ Unknown to naval pow'r—From us remote—
“ What should we ask, or fear ?—Some petty commerce,
“ Such as, beneath the dignity of treaties,
“ Demands some low-born genius to transact.—”
To me 'tis exile—Yet, my friend, your counsel.

SOMERSET.

If honesty's your guide, you cannot stray.

OVERBURY.

If to be blest and honest were the same,
I should not be unhappy—But I see you !
Northampton, and your wife (serpent and woman !)
Have alienated from a friend your heart ;
And your plain mind, unfashion'd for deceit,
Knows not to veil its frailty.

SOMERSET.

Have a care !

OVERBURY.

What, threaten'd too ?—Ungrateful Somerset !

Have

38 SIR THOMAS OVERBURY:

Have I for this still made your cares my own?

“ For this too left a father’s green retreats,

“ Where filial and parental love combin’d ;

“ Where competence, pure joy, contented virtue,

“ Health, contemplation, all the muses charm’d,

“ And learned leisure was with wisdom blest’d?”

Farewell the splendid slavery of Courts ;

Farewell the guile that wears the mask of friendship,

To that and Somerset farewell for ever !

SOMERSET.

Then I must tell the King you’ll not obey.

OVERBURY.

Tell him I’ll serve him to my latest breath,

’Till the reward of loyalty be mine ;

For patriots still must fall for statesmens’ safety,

And perish by the country they preserve.

SOMERSET.

’Tis dang’rous thus to tax the royal justice.

I see you take rash counsel from your passions ;

Accuse e’en me, and her I hold most dear——

If when you touch’d me in too weak a part,

I shrunk, ’twas from quick sense of aching pain.

I was too blame—Excuse it as a friend.

OVERBURY.

Confess you then, you were to blame ?—no more !

My fit of rage, like inoffensive light’ning,

But flashes and is lost—What, still uneasy !

SOMERSET.

’Tis a hard struggle to dissemble thus.— [*Aside.*

You know I’m rais’d to fortune’s topmost height——

If

If I grow giddy, I shall move away,
And roll at once to ruin.

O V E R B U R Y.

Let me guard you,
And, to be near you, not accept this offer :
Form some fair cause, and urge it as my answer.

S O M E R S E T.

I'll do't—Oh, Overbury ! my rack'd soul
Ties up my tongue—I cannot speak to thee—
I cannot say how much I love, I fear thee—
A war of passions rages in my bosom,
A thousand wild emotions shake my frame.
I'll to the King—No, friendship root me here !
Yet I must hence—love summons me—hark ! hark !
Farewell, and think of Somerset no more !

[*Exit wildly.*]

O V E R B U R Y, *solus.*

This message from the King bears some design,
But I'm more touch'd with Somerset's disorder.
What can this mean ? Come, be it as it may !
The polar star shall no longer fix'd,
But turn delusive to the sailor's eye,
Sooner than Somerset prove false to me.

Enter the Countess of Somerset.

C O U N T E S S.

Now, now support me pride, or I am lost !

O V E R B U R Y.

She here ?

C O U N.

COUNTESS.

Why start you, calm, insulting man?
Is love a crime too great to be forgiv'n?
But thy cold soul admits no warmth of passion:
I, like the sun, darted too fierce a blaze!
Yet thy chill wishes
Dawn'd some sick hope, when Isabella's eyes,
Like a pale moon, gleam'd some faint beams upon thee.

OVERBURY.

How! knows she that? (*aside*) when honour lights up
love,
Th' illumin'd soul burns lambent with a flame,
Pure as the hallow'd altars—such my hope!
Such were the wishes mov'd by Isabella.

COUNTESS.

How I disdain thee!—Yes, I scorn thee—hate thee—
Thou who could'st stoop to expose a woman's weakness,
To taint her fame, and blast her to the world.

OVERBURY.

You wrong me—I was secret—If your fame
Has drawn unhappy stains, am I the cause?
Was it not that divorce which—

COUNTESS.

Peace, upbraider!

O V E R-

A T R A G E D Y.

O V E R B U R Y.

I not upbraid your love, but your wild passions,
Which would, like envious shades, eclipse those beauties,
That else, with justice, sure had charm'd mankind—
Oh! that my words were with attraction arm'd,
'Till from a conscious breast and conscious eye,
This flood of frailty rose exhal'd in sighs,
And flow'd away in streams of soft repentance!

C O U N T E S S.

Where are my letters? Thou detain'st them poorly
As trophies of thy triumph o'er my weakness,
As evidence of thy pretended virtue,
And my imputed guilt.—

O V E R B U R Y.

Injurious woman!
Hear then, and mark how much you wrong me!
Mov'd by a conscious hope to ease your fears,
Prompted by honour, 'twas my fixt resolve
'To give them up—now they are your's again.
[Delivering them.]

C O U N T E S S.

Is't possible?—Too generous, cruel Overbury!
Love warms my breast anew, and wakens pity.
Can I on thy fond letters build thy ruin,
When mine had blasted me, had'st thou withheld them?

O V E R B U R Y.

I understand you not.

G

C O U N.

44 SIR THOMAS OVERBURY;

COUNTRESS.

But thought's too late.
I am embark'd—the waves of fate surround me,
And if I make not on, I'm sunk for ever.

OVERBURY.

What means this strange disorder?

COUNTRESS.

Madness—phrenzy!
Let me not stay! Oh! wretch! death hovers o'er thee;
He grasps a dart, and in pale fury shakes it
High o'er thy head!—Now, now it falls to strike thee!
Hold, hold thy hand! I fly to ward the blow.

[Exit Countess of Somerset.

OVERBURY, *solus*.

Or I'm ensnar'd or madness seiz'd the Countess—
But arm'd by virtue, what have I to fear?
A deeper care than grandeur, wealth, or pomp,
Than fame, or fate, hangs heavy on my heart—
My soul's best hope!—Creation's fairest pride!
The life of life!—Her all the live-long day,
And her in nightly dreams I ceaseless mourn;
Gone, gone, in absence lost—Perhaps for ever.

[Retires.

Enter Isabella and Cleora.

ISABELLA.

Cleora, no—let Somerset propose
Threat or intreat in Overbury's cause;

“ Let

" Let this fam'd Overbury's happier muse
 " Melodious steal upon the list'ning passions;
 " Add eloquence of speech, add truth of heart,
 " Accomplish'd nature—These are Belmour's—Add
 " Accumulated wealth and Idol-honours—
 " But how inferior these to humble fortune
 " By virtue aggrandiz'd—to love and Belmour?"
 Know that intreaties, menaces, persuasions,
 Combin'd allurements—all are vain to me.

C L E O R A.

If right I learn—
 This Overbury has, like you, refus'd
 What Somerset has urg'd—A fair there is,
 Whom wand'ring far and wide, he long has sought;
 Mutual their love, but fruitless is his search.

I S A B E L L A.

May Heav'n propitious then befriend his hope;
 His honest hope, his ever constant worth!—
 Oh! Belmour, Belmour!—whatsoever thy fate,
 If in some flow'ry sylvan scene you dwell,
 With letter'd solitude and virtuous peace,
 Or pine with hapless love, or hopeless rove
 In search of her, who of thy sight despairs,
 I still am thine—" Or, if thy mighty grief
 " Has driv'n thee, as, alas! mine hurries me,
 " Thro' darksome death, to life that shines for ever;
 " There with all native excellence from earth,

44 SIR THOMAS OVERBURY:

" (All now enlarg'd, exalted and refin'd)
" There, if aught mortal can deserve thy care,
" Hear me, illustrious shade, devoted vow
" Pure, constant flame, to honour, love, and thee."
—O Belmour! Belmour!

OVERBURY.

Heav'n! what means that name!
Inchantment rivets me!

CLEORA.

Madam, Sir Thomas Overbury.

ISABELLA.

Ha!

[Overbury comes forward.]

I am betray'd—Hence let us fly, Cleora!

OVERBURY.

My Isabella, stay!

ISABELLA.

That well known voice—

OVERBURY.

My charmer!

ISABELLA.

And that face!

My prayer is heard—

OVERBURY.

'Tis she! 'tis she, indeed—

Oh! happy Overbury! Happy Belmour!

ISA-

A T R A G E D Y.

45

I S A B E L L A.

“ Has Heav’n then will’d some missionary angel
“ To take this shape ? To visit thus in love ?
“ Ah no !—My thoughts run raptur’d round and round,
“ And form this dear illusion, which may vanish,
“ And in new absence leave me worse distraction.
“ Then, Isabella, trust it not ! [Going.

O V E R B U R Y.

“ Yet stay !
“ It is the voice of love—Thy Belmour calls—
“ Conjures thee—On his knees conjures—She turns !
“ She meets—Oh ! take me to thy heav’nly bosom !
“ Here die our sorrows ! Here revive our joys !”

I S A B E L L A.

And is it possible ?—It is my Belmour !
Myriads of tender thoughts crowd fast for ut’rance ;
Myriads of doubts at once to be resolv’d !
Say, Belmour ; why that borrow’d name—and—

O V E R B U R Y.

Pardon the only fiction love has us’d.
Truant from Isis’ banks, my boyish fears
Join’d to a wildness, a romance of passion
Led me to veil my name to try thy love.
Time shall explain it all. But say, wert thou
The fair so oft propos’d, so oft refus’d ?—

I S A B E L L A.

Mutual our wishes, mutual our denial,
And mutual constancy may find reward.

O V E R.

OVERBURY.

Let my soul bless the musick of those words!
 "My heart beats rapt'rous at the soft'ning sound!—
 "I feast my famish'd eyes upon thy smiles,
 "I touch thee and am lost in extacy!
 "Here in soft sighs I'll pour my pleasures forth,
 "Gaze 'till I e'en grow giddy with delight."
 Now Heav'n thou art too kind!—I have a father,
 Who longs to bless our love—I have a friend—
 But let us glad my Somerset! Where is he?
 Haste we to him!

Enter Sir Gervas Elvis, and a Guard.

E L V I S.

Sir Thomas Overbury,
 I fear I bring you an unwelcome message.
 'Tis the King's pleasure that you stand confin'd
 Close in the Tow'r a pris'ner to the state.

OVERBURY.

The state—The Tower—A pris'ner?—Wherefore
 this?
 Where is the Earl of Somerset?

E L V I S.

I know not.

OVERBURY.

May I not see my friend?

E L-

A T R A G E D Y,

47

E L V I S.

I dare not grant it.

O V E R B U R Y.

No—That's hard indeed—But ah! my love!
Why is that cheek inanimately pale?
Why stops th' enliv'ning musick of that tongue?
Why motionless those eyes?—Those fair chaste orbs
Of light, of love, of beauty, life and joy?—
Add not to what I feel, the worst despair:
Oh! cheer me with one glance; tho' dimm'd by tears,
Tho' sad with sighs, yet blest me with thy voice,
And ease my pain!

I S A B E L L A.

Is this our promis'd joy?
And art thou as by miracle restor'd
From long—long absence, to be snatch'd at once
Thus in an envious cloud for ever from me?

O V E R B U R Y.

What can my love's kind thought divine of ill,
That merits this sweet sadness?—Safe in virtue,
I have no fears, but tender fears for thee.

I S A B E L L A.

Yet do I view thee with such dangers round,
“ That now thy sight more painful is than absence,
“ Yet sure new absence would to both be fate.

O V E R B U R Y.

“ Teach me some art, but to assuage thy sorrows,
“ And mine, believe me, mine are griefs to smile at.”

Ah!

48 SIR THOMAS OVERBURY:

ISABELLA.

Ah! whither—whither go you?—To the Tower?
Perhaps to death—

OVERBURY.

What's death, but leaving thee?
Yet we shall meet again—Perhaps shall smile:
'Till then, farewell. Weep not, my fair, for me,
Weep for the guilty—Why should we lament
Affliction born of errors not our own?
No—Patience, spight of all malignant foes,
Turns undeserved woe to virtuous pleasure,
And thus retorts the pang on those who cause it:
But nature will have way. The storm that bears
Me thus from thee, bears me from more than life,
Yet shall my gaze pursue thee to the last!

Thus when high seas, swell foaming o'er the coast,
The wretch who treads the dang'rous beach is lost;
Plung'd in his fate, like me, he strives to rise,
And views the swallow'd land with wishful eyes;
But as his arms extend to reach the shore,
The waves o'erwhelm him, and he's seen no more.

[*Exeunt omnes.*]

End of the THIRD ACT.

A C T IV.

SCENE, *The Tower.*

Earl of Northampton, and Sir Gervas Elvis.

NORTHAMPTON.

ELVIS, be swift, for Somerset's unsettled;
The Countess too, who lately urg'd his death,
Melts in a fit of softness from her purpose:
Then let the stream of ruin rapid roll,
To bear him down the tide; for if it turn,
'Twill overwhelm us all.

ELVIS.

Your will's our law:
'Tis your's to speak; be 't ours' to execute.

NORTHAMPTON.

'Tis well.
Weston and Franklin—

ELVIS.

They are both resolv'd.

H

NORTH.

50 SIR THOMAS OVERBURY,

NORTHAMPTON.

Bring they the wine the Countess has prepar'd?

ELVIS.

Yes; as a present from her Lord, his friend.

NORTHAMPTON.

Then he who late by royal favour shone,
That favour veil'd, shall straight be dark again.

ELVIS.

But see, my lord, where Isabella comes,
To visit in the Tow'r her 'prison'd lover!

NORTHAMPTON.

By Heav'n, 'tis well, she more than meets my wish;
Now let our followers seize her, ere she goes,
And force her where her struggles, tears, and cries,
Shall but proclaim the fullness of my triumph,
And fate, at once, my vengeance and my love.

[*Exeunt.*

Enter Isabella.

ISABELLA.

Why stays Cleora—while within these walls
Alone I wander?—Is not this the Tower?
The Tower, where Henry, Clarence, Edward's chil-
dren,
Fell by the hands of murder, not of law?
Such secret death, my gallant Overbury,
May prove thy fate.—Good Heaven guard thy virtue.

(*To*

(To her) Cleora.

Cleora, welcome ! do'st thou bring me peace ?
Where is Lord Somerset ?

CLEORA.

Within these walls.

ISABELLA.

Has he obtain'd my Overbury's freedom ?

CLEORA.

Ah ! how are you deceiv'd ?—Obtain'd his freedom ?
—'Tis he whose pow'r confines.

ISABELLA.

Then farewell hope !
Can noble Somerset betray his friend ?

CLEORA.

The Countess, aided by Northampton's arts,
Wrought her fond lord to this ; but, now distracted,
Stung with her guilt, no place can give her ease.
Wild, 'twixt the fallies of remorse and love,
Her whole soul rush'd to her unguarded pen,
And here laid bare her guilt—Then trusted it
To one, whose meritorious treach'ry
Betray'd the scroll to me.—

(Gives a letter.)

ISABELLA.

'Tis pious treach'ry :

Secretly

52 SIR THOMAS OVERBURY:

Secrecy here were treason to mankind;
To Overbury!—How my heart beats at it!

[Looks at the letter.]

CLEORA.

Those letters, which you deem'd mislaid or lost,
Stol'n by Northampton, there she owns applied
In wiles that have seduc'd her easy lord:
She owns a former unaccepted flame;
Proposes, urges Overbury's flight,
Seeks to partake the flight, which well she plans,
And terms past hatred wild excess of love.

ISABELLA.

What love?—of whom?—Not Overbury?

CLEORA.

Him.

Nay more, the guards are by her agents brib'd;
Your name is us'd to favour the deceit,
That, should ought fail, her's may be still secure.
But read.—

ISABELLA.

(Reads) 'To venture on this plann'd escape,
'She in the silent, fable noon of night,
'Would meet, and then'—Enough, enough, my friend!
Fate with this clue unravels all her falsehood,
And if she comes—But see, Lord Somerset!

[Exit Cleora.]

Enter Earl of Somerset.

SOMERSET.

Why visit I the Tower?—Yet I must see him!
But to upbraid him here, is to insult.

Bafe

Base as he is, I would not——(*seeing Isabella.*)

Art thou here?

Why, Isabella, why that mournful brow?

Why do those eyes, that sparkled gladness round 'em,
Lose their fair lustre now, and look so languid?

ISABELLA.

Can I forget, my Lord, that fatal day,
When my dear father's trembling hand press'd yours?
His dying eyes, wet with paternal tears,
While agonizing sweats bedew'd his face,
To you, my Lord, he rais'd his falt'ring voice,
And gave me to your care—kind was the thought,
And pleas'd he bade farewell, and breath'd his last.

SOMERSET.

Have I not us'd thee with the tend'rest care,
And cheer'd thy virtue with the smiles of fortune?
Then wherefore this?—In me repose thy grief.

ISABELLA.

Should Overbury—

SOMERSET.

Well, I guess thy meaning.
When last we parted, 'twas on terms unkind.
I press'd (ungen'rous as I was) a choice
Not thine—may heav'n, thy father's shade and thou
Forgive!—press'd one—Oh, be he never thine!
Unworthy of my friendship and thy love.

ISABELLA.

Oh, my good lord, you've been a father to me,
And gratitude calls forth these sighs and tears.

S O-

SOMERSET.

To see thee thus, excites my grief and wonder.
 Did'st thou not, kneeling, yester' morn, beseech me
 No more to hurt thy ear with hateful nuptials?

ISABELLA.

If Overbury wrong'd—

SOMERSET.

He, traitor, wrong'd!—

ISABELLA.

Oh think how dear this man was to your soul!
 Why have you cast him thus unkindly from you?

SOMERSET:

Nay, let me question thee: why does this man
 (His name so late offensive to your ear)
 Now lord it o'er your heart?—Have then his arts
 (For he has arts, delusive arts) Have they
 Already stole on your unguarded softness?
 Know then—his faith has long been pre-engag'd;
 He own'd it, to evade thy love propos'd.
 False to his mistress and his friend—Oh, villain!
 His very name grates on my ear—Farewell! [Going.

ISABELLA.

Yet stay;—low on my knees I beg your stay!
 For your own sake but hear me—you're betray'd—
 'Tis Somerset now wrongs his Overbury.
 By friendship join'd, you comforted each other;
 Joy crown'd your days, your minds were then serene,
 Your thoughts had harmony, and your souls were blest.

S O.

SOMERSET.

Fool that I was, I dreamt so.—

ISABELLA.

Ah! reflect!

Oh, shut not thus your heart against your friend,
And open your dear breast to vile Northampton!

SOMERSET.

My friend Northampton! why asperse him thus?

ISABELLA.

He who assails an orphan's innocence,
Is sure unworthy of her guardian's friendship.

SOMERSET.

And could Northampton that?—

ISABELLA.

My blushes speak it.

Yet more, your virtue wanders in the dark.
The Countess——

SOMERSET.

Who?—I charge thee name not her!

Should but a word, a word impeach her honour,
'T would urge me so, I might forget my nature.

ISABELLA.

I fear 'tis almost death to undeceive you,
But, in the cause of honour, I am arm'd
To meet all dangers boldly.—Be prepar'd,

For

56 SIR THOMAS OVERBURY:

For I must wound you with such piercing accents,
That your poor heart, I know, will bleed with anguish.

S O M E R S E T.

Suspense is the worst rack ; speak all thou know'st.

I S A B E L L A.

Read this—'twill speak all for me. *(Gives the letter.)*

S O M E R S E T.

'Tis her hand—

Address'd to Overbury ? Hell !—confusion !
Some devil sure has rais'd this mist of error !
My eyes belye her—hold—let me peruse—
'Tis all black forgery—away, away !
False Isabella !

I S A B E L L A.

Who is false, my lord ?

S O M E R S E T.

Thou, thou art false—I prithee own thou art—
Rather than kill me with a cruel truth,
Flatter my hope,—that will be kind deceit.

I S A B E L L A.

Night is already round us, and, ere long,
The Countess will arrive, and clear all doubts.
In yonder darken'd room expect her coming ;
That was th' appointed place—th' appointed hour
Will soon be here—and then who's false, determine.

S O-

S O M E R S E T.

If thou art so, fly where I ne'er may see thee !
If thou art true, I am a wretch indeed.

[*Exeunt.*]*Enter Countess of Somerset.*

C O U N T E S S.

Oh, my torn bosom !—whither am I going ?
I go t' atone my Overbury's wrongs,
To meet my love—my love ?—what's then my husband ?
So kind, so wrong'd a husband ?—Hold, my brain !
Fain wou'd I think—but all good thoughts forsake me,
Varying conclusions torture ev'ry nerve :
I love ! I rage ! hate, fear, and love by turns !
Yet I must see him ; and the cruel wrongs,
Which hate once meant him, love shall now atone.
—Hark !—sure e'en walls grow conscious of my crimes ;
What sudden distant whispers damp my soul !
Each step, methinks I hear my husband's voice ;
The night now brooding o'er her gloomy shades,
Owns not a spectre half so foul as I am.

[*Exit.*]*Earl of Northampton, Sir Gervas Elvis.*

N O R T H A M P T O N.

Escaping, say'st thou ?

E L V I S.

'Tis their settled purpose.

But now a trusted yeoman of the guard
Betray'd their whole design of present flight.
Yon darken'd chamber is their seat of council.

I

N O R-

58 SIR THOMAS OVERBURY;

NORTHAMPTON.

The darkness best befits my love and vengeance,

ELVIS.

What means my lord?

NORTHAMPTON.

The poison not administer'd.

Left the repenting Countess should recall it,
My sword shall end him. Be his death imputed
To forcing his escape—Thus much for vengeance!
For Isabella, let us but secure
Each avenue that leads to her return;
Then love shall seize her and complete my joys.

[*Exeunt.*

Earl of Somerset.

SOMERSET.

I am abus'd, indeed—Why do I live?
With what an eagerness she hung upon me,
Call'd me her Overbury, own'd her guile,
When, choak'd with silent rage, I burst away?
Let me turn wild, or tear out my fond heart,
That could be thus far wrong'd, and not discern it.
O! thou false woman! O! my injur'd friend!
Mad, rash, deluded Somerset!—

Enter Earl of Northampton (with his sword drawn)

NORTHAMPTON.

'Tis well!

The passage is secur'd—Now for yon chamber—

Hark!

Hark!—he approaches—what already fallied!
Now, Overbury, die!

S O M E R S E T.

Villain!—Northampton?

N O R T H A M P T O N.

Save me, some Angel, from this strange illusion!

S O M E R S E T.

View my eyes well, do they not flash with fury,
And tell thee, that 'tis Somerset thou look'st on?

N O R T H A M P T O N.

Northampton was not born to look with fear,
Tho' death blaz'd furious in the eyes of Somerset—
Yet, as a friend—

S O M E R S E T.

A friend?—thou sycophant!
Would'st thou again betray me to thy friendship?
To work the fall of faithful Overbury,
And ruin, with more ease, my Isabella?

N O R T H A M P T O N.

No more—I can no longer brook this railing;
Whate'er Northampton acts, he dares to answer:
Let this defend it all!

S O M E R S E T.

For this I thank thee.

[They fight, Northampton is disarm'd.]

60 SIR THOMAS OVERBURY:

Why liv'st thou in the pow'r of Somerset?
I wish thee dead, but would not kill thee basely.
Give me the chance once more—

NORTHAMPTON.

No, take my life,
'Tis now not worth defence.

SOMERSET.

Not worth destroying—
Live then—but hold, with life, the villain's lot,
Life worse than death.—From this tremendous hour,
No reconciling penitence to Heav'n,
To man, or to thyself, be thine!
Live, and repent—yet be as curst as I am!
Nay, deeper—deeper still, to sting thy pride,
Hold life from him, who gives it to insult thee.

NORTHAMPTON.

Is this the language?—

SOMERSET.

Yes, of just disdain.—
Go, save me from the pain thy presence gives me.

NORTHAMPTON.

I go, proud lord—but go to wreak revenge. [*Aside.*
[*Exit Northampton.*

Enter the Countess of Somerset.

SOMERSET.

Now, whither shall I wander?

[*Going, meets the Countess of Somerset.*
Death! confusion!

COUN.

C O U N T E S S.

I heard, or I'm deceiv'd, a clash of weapons,—
But ah!—Yon light shews a drawn sword, bent hither.

S O M E R S E T.

Ay, tremble at it—'Tis the sword of justice.

C O U N T E S S.

Sure, I am not betray'd—'Tis Somerset. [*Aside.*
What means my lord?—Methinks your words sound
angry,
You know me not.

S O M E R S E T.

Oh! yes, too well I know thee!
Know'st thou this letter?—Ha! why start? why tremble?

C O U N T E S S.

Then I am lost, indeed.

S O M E R S E T.

Ungrateful traitrefs!

C O U N T E S S.

You will not kill me?

S O M E R S E T.

Ha! not kill thee, say'st thou?
Had'st thou as many lives as thou hast crimes,
My fury would reach all!—Wrong'd love and friendship,
With double cry, demand thy death in vengeance.

C O U N-

62 SIR THOMAS OVERBURY:

C O U N T E S S.

Oh! do but hear me!

S O M E R S E T.

Not one Syren word.—

C O U N T E S S.

Oh! by th' endearing softness of that bosom,
Look but on her you lov'd so much—so lately!
See how she pants for life, and begs for mercy!
Let me die slow, some ling'ring death of sorrow;
But send me not to the eternal bar
With all my crimes, my recent crimes about me.

S O M E R S E T.

Weep, crocodile, weep on, thy tears become thee.
Think what I feel, and think how thou hast wrong'd me!
Yes—Thou must suffer, tho' my heart-strings crack.

C O U N T E S S.

Yet, but a moment, hear me!

S O M E R S E T.

I'll not hear thee:—

Be dumb for ever, for whene'er you speak,
You bring a base infection o'er my anger,
And I, at once, grow sick with pity—Off!
Why cling'st thou to me thus?

C O U N T E S S.

Oh spurn me! drag me!

My tender limbs shall grasp thee to the last,
And ev'n my dying groans plead soft for pardon.

S O.

A T R A G E D Y,

63

S O M E R S E T.

Wherefore, just Heav'n, has guilt such pow'r to
charm?

Or why have I such weakness to be charm'd?

Oh! rise, and turn those pleading eyes away!

Spite of my wrongs—of thy unnat'ral treach'ry,

I cannot see thee bleed—False, lovely trait'refs!

Get hence, lest I relapse!—ungrateful go!

Fly from my rage!—far hence, on some lone isle,

Safe in thy frauds, and pleas'd with ruin, smile!

But shun the man—who must thy fall deplore—

And never—never, will behold thee more.

[Exeunt severally.]

End of the **FOURTH ACT.**

A C T V.

SCENE *continues.**Earl of Somerset.*

S O M E R S E T.

HOW have I wander'd thro' a maze of errors,
 And labour'd for destruction!—Of mankind
 I had but one true friend, and him the most
 Of all mankind have wrong'd—reproachful thought!
 O peace of mind, thou conscious child of virtue!
 How bitter without thee, the feast of pomp!
 With thee! how sweet the homely bread of toil!
 Patience is thine, to sooth the woes of life,
 And hope to smile amidst the pangs of death.
 O peace!—once mine!—Where shall I find thee now?

Enter Isabella.

S O M E R S E T.

If thou abhorr'st all treach'ry, come not near me,
 Let me not hear thee speak, lest I betray thee;
 But fly me as a desp'rate, dang'rous, villain.

I S A B E L L A.

My lord, I come to reconcile your soul
 To the soft joys of peace.

S O-

S O M E R S E T.

Talk not of peace, 'tis gone! 'tis fled with honour!
 Honour once lost, can never be retriev'd—
 Then farewell peace for ever!—now 'tis guilt!
 'Tis grief! 'tis shame! confusion! infamy!
 'Tis hope no more! 'tis infinite despair!
 'Tis the reward of perfidy like mine.

I S A B E L L A.

Your friend yet knows not how you were misled.

S O M E R S E T.

But there's a sense of shame, that knows it all;
 The hesitating tongue, the redd'ning cheek,
 The guilt-dejected eye—These, these will speak it.
 Say, Somerset, then wither would'st thou fly?
 Nay whither can'st thou?—To the throne?—Thou
 can'st not.

There sits a Prince, who trusted, was abus'd,
 And shap'd the property of thy low malice.
 To thy own roof?—Never!—That held a wife,
 The dear curst cause of all thy guilt and sorrow!—
 Or onward here?—No! here's an injur'd friend,
 One, who must scorn thee when he knows thy treach'ry—
 Nor dar'st thou murmur—Scorn is due to guilt.

I S A B E L L A.

Fly to the throne, there justify your friend!
 That gives him liberty, that clears his honour,
 Restores his Sov'reign's smile, the world's esteem.—
 To Overbury next—unbosom all!
 He will discern, will pity, will forgive.

K

Your

66 SIR THOMAS OVERBURY:

Your wife, Northampton, and their new Lieutenant,
Now, (vile designers) fit in dark cabal,
Waft busy whispers, drop ambiguous words,
Make hinting signs supply their silent tongues,
And point their will to ruffian-visag'd slaves.

S O M E R S E T.

Monstrous! oh! monstrous!—Why spar'd I Northampton?
Why kill'd not her?—O foolish, foolish mercy!
I might have known, “(good-nature knows too late!)”
No grace can win upon ungrateful minds.
I might have known their life was death to him.
Death, said I?—But thou weep'st—Be mute, my tongue,
Be not that angel's tear, good heav'ns prophetic!
No—Thou hast rous'd me to prevent——

I S A B E L L A.

Be swift!

S O M E R S E T.

I will—But seek thou first the King.
Thy Grandfire's suff'rings in the royal cause,
Will gain his ear to listen to thy pleadings.

I S A B E L L A.

I go—but you——

S O M E R S E T.

I will not loiter here.
My mind compos'd, what my tongue dares not utter,
Instant my pen shall to my Prince reveal;

Yes,

Yes, it shall clear my friend and charge myself—
And more—Yet more—But fly and save my friend!

I S A B E L L A.

Oh! may kind Heav'n prosper our endeavours,
And all be peace again.

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE *with dark chamber.*

Northampton, *alone.*

Enter Elvis from the dark chamber.

N O R T H A M P T O N.

What news, Elvis?

E L V I S.

The deed is done; a deed now past recall!

N O R T H A M P T O N.

Then I'm reveng'd—But still I fear the Countess,
A woman's softness hangs about her still;
Like three wild streams that rush against each other,
Vengeance, remorse, and love divide her soul.

E L V I S.

Her phrenzy may prove dangerous—

N O R T H A M P T O N.

It may.

Our lives are set upon this single cast.

Retire we then awhile, and watch th' event. [*Exit Elvis.*]

Come what come may, I'm arm'd for either fortune,
 Yes, haughty Somerset, I'm well aveng'd ;
 My fullen genius towers with scorn above thee,
 And smiles at disappointment.

[Exit.]

Enter Sir Thomas Overbury.

OVERBURY.

Methinks some angel prompts my soul to muse,
 On life—On death—Here let me pause—What's life ?
 'Tis cradled, idiot, childhood, boyish folly ;
 'Tis headstrong youth, now rising into manhood,
 Now sunk in luxury ; now rashly soaring,
 Then falling by ambition fool'd ; stay'd years,
 With wrinkling care, with knowledge drawn from
 sorrow.

Next 'tis old age, first narratively idle,
 Then helpless, fretful, void of health and thought ;
 A burden to itself, to friends a grief.

Come life or death ! be that as heav'n ordains.

“ What's this clay tabernacle ?—’Tis th’ abode

“ Of perils, maladies, and fev’rish passions ;

“ Low-thoughted cares ; contaminating wishes ;

“ Infatiate appetites ; repented pleasures ;

“ Various calamity, that multiplies

“ Thro’ life, and never but with life can end.

“ If this the moral, trace the nat’ral world.—

“ What sees enquiring science there ?—effects,

“ Not causes—blasting, baffled knowledge.

“ O pure religion, set before mine eye,

“ That just, all-ruling, wise, eternal mind ;

“ Fountain of life, of lights, of all perfection ;

“ O pure religion lend the ray, that points me

“ What

A T R A G E D Y.

69

“ What to avoid or seek ; to bear or combat ;
“ When to relent, and when to persevere ;
“ How to draw good from ill—This thou inspirest ;
“ All other science dazzles, not enlightens.”

Enter Earl of Somerset.

S O M E R S E T.

With manly thought, collected in himself,
Lo where he stands !—Perhaps he thinks
On treachery and me—where shall I turn ?
Where honour urges on, guilt fears to tread,
And each alternate rules. Can guilt face virtue ?
No—Let me fly to ruin, rush on fate !
Let me die straight a victim to my foes,
But never let me see the friend I’ve wrong’d.

O V E R B U R Y.

’Tis well, my Lord, you do not still forget me ;
But had my Somerset been thus confin’d,
Had I thus learn’d to shun him ?

S O M E R S E T.

Oh, my friend—
I’m not the Somerset that once you knew,
I’m alter’d much of late.—

O V E R B U R Y.

Thou hast a wife.—

S O M-

70 SIR THOMAS OVERBURY:

S O M E R S E T.

That was the fatal rock we both have split on;
You, like a skilful mariner, discern'd it;
But I, bewitch'd by the curs'd Syren's voice,
Sail'd on, regardless, till we struck on ruin.

O V E R B U R Y.

Do'st thou repent it then?

S O M E R S E T.

Repent it, said you?

I must a tale unfold—no—spare my tongue, I dare not.—
Confiding friendship turns me into dread,
Unmanly dread! In you, alas! 'twill change
To wrath, rebuke, to distance, to distrust;
To hate, revenge, or worse—to just contempt.

O V E R B U R Y.

What phrenzy, baneful to all bosom quiet,
What dæmon, foe to friendship, dictates this?
Why dost thou grieve?—what, silent?—Is this kind?
Am I unworthy of thy trust?—Yet silent?

S O M E R S E T.

Thou dost not know how base thy friend has been.
No more—from guilty silence guess the rest.

O V E R B U R Y.

Down, down suspicion, alien to my nature,
Lest I distrust mankind, grow sick of being—
No—I will still believe thee true.

S O M-

S O M E R S E T.

My wife—my wife—

Oh that fair devil has ensnar'd my soul,
And stain'd it o'er with falshood.

O V E R B U R Y.

Ha!—with falshood?

S O M E R S E T.

First I was drawn to judge your friendship false :
My faithless wife—(ah ! faithless found too late !)
Wrought me to think, when you oppos'd our nuptials,
It was the rival, not the friend, oppos'd.—

Oh, that I could recall a few past hours !
With them fled virtue, peace !—Wrought by my wife,
And curst Northampton, I contriv'd thy ruin :
I have accus'd thee to the King—the rest—
But rage fast rising seems to choak thy speech—
Thy breast—thy cheek swift catches flame—thy eyes—
Avert these eyes that flash indignant on me !
Tho' I deserve,—

O V E R B U R Y.

Avert 'em ?—Yes, with scorn.

Think'st thou I'm angry ?—Oh, thou art deceiv'd,
In me deceiv'd, as I was once in thee—
Yet wherefore look'st thou thus like man ?

Thou art——

To tell thee what thou art, my soul disdains ;
Go—leave me to my prison and my wrongs.

S O M.

S O M E R S E T.

Yet I must stay, till you forgive or pity.
 Rather than pierce me with such words as these,
 Strike thro' a heart that bleeds for having wrong'd you ;
 Here, take my sword—kill me—But as I fall,
 Reach me thy hand, and say thou hast forgiv'n me,
 Then I shall die in peace.

O V E R B U R Y.

No, keep thy sword. I would not use it basely.
 Thou know'st I would not—Go for ever from me—
 Had any other thus contriv'd my ruin,
 I could have born it with a manly patience !
 But from thy hand ! my friend !—my very self !
 Such unexpected wrongs have shook my soul.
 But I forgive thee all—away, away !

S O M E R S E T.

A few words more, and I have done for ever.
 Thy Isabella—

O V E R B U R Y.

Ha!—that sound is love,
 'Tis soothing love, that steals on lift'ning rage,
 And gives a pause to thought.—

S O M E R S E T.

Weeping, she seeks the King to plead thy cause ;
 To urge thy wrongs ; my letters, those confirm
 And clear thee.

O V E R B U R Y.

Clear me?

S O—

SOMERSET.

And accuse myself.

OVERBURY.

Hast thou done this?—'Tis more than Roman justice.

SOMERSET.

They sue dismissal now from pow'r, entreat
 That thou the best, succeed the worst of men;
 Trust I resign, unworthy as I am,
 To serve a nation, who betray'd a friend.
 A long adieu to pow'r and thee.

OVERBURY.

Not so.

Enough of anger! it has rag'd too long.
 Oh 'tis a hurrying, ruthless, frantic passion,
 That hears not, sees not, weighs not—yet condemns.
 Come reason, gentle spirit, come!—resume
 Thy power; assuage, enquire, decide—

My friend,

Me you deceiv'd, but were yourself deceiv'd;
 And tho' my name you sully'd, yet you clear'd.
 In that, thou still art noble, still thyself.
 In me 'twere mean not to resent it, urg'd;
 Not to forgive it, when retracted, meaner.
 Thou say'st thou wert misled; we all are frail,
 And misled virtue claims the tend'rest pity.

SOMERSET.

Oh say—speak on—I am attention all;
 For on thy brow sits mercy sweet enthron'd,
 And penitence implores remission from thee.

L

OVER-

OVERBURY.

How amiable thy nature? faults in thee,
(So can repentance work) are lost in virtues.

But Isabella! hast thou not in her
Cherish'd my soul's far dearer part? thou hast—
Wer't thou misled by passion?—So was I:
Or hast thou wounded friendship?—So have I:
Then, each forgiving, and forgiving each,
Here let oblivion bury past unkindness.—
Come, come—I pardon all.

SOMERSET.

O joy! O friend!
Pardon my softness too—My tears will flow,
While I rejoin thee thus to my glad bosom.

Enter Isabella.

ISABELLA.

Live, live endearing and endear'd for ever!
Scarce can I speak my transport—But the King
Has yielded to my suit and given thee freedom.

OVERBURY.

I thank his justice, but adore thy goodness.

ISABELLA.

Thy foes (in that I know thou wilt not triumph)
Have due disgrace.

OVERBURY.

I wish 'em due repentance.

IS A-

I S A B E L L A.

My lord, your gen'rous, repentant candour,
Inroofs, not tears you from the Royal favour.

O V E R B U R Y.

More, than for all, I thank you for my friend.

I S A B E L L A.

My Overbury, on thy injur'd worth,
Wealth, power and new-ennobling honours wait.—

O V E R B U R Y.

Heap wealth on wealth, on honours honours raise ;
To these add pow'r as boundless as ambition,
What are they all compar'd to love and thee ?

I S A B E L L A.

The King, no stranger to our plighted faith,
Has order'd too—

O V E R B U R Y.

Thy blushes are explain'd ;
Love well interprets love.—Love in those eyes,
Reads the soft meaning of consenting passions.
How my heart swells with joy !

S O M E R S E T.

Live long thus blest'd !

O V E R B U R Y.

In friendship and in love thus blest indeed.

76 SIR THOMAS OVERBURY;

ISABELLA.

So sweet a calm, as my late cares are hush'd in,
Ne'er yet succeeded such a threat'ning tempest.
But you, methinks, look pale—

OVERBURY.

No—say not so—

My heart is but oppress'd and sick with transport—
Another start—That rapture was so strong,——
It shot quite thro' and trembled to my soul!
Another yet!—Nay now I scarce support it—
My spirits sink—exhausted—with delight,
And nature reels—Oh!—I am sick at heart.

ISABELLA.

He faints!—A death-like dew hangs on his temples.
Help! help!—who waits?

Enter Attendants.

ISABELLA.

Thy Isabella calls!—

Return to life!

OVERBURY.

Where, where are now my joys?
All fled at once—Oh! Somerset, I'm poison'd—

SOMERSET.

Good Heav'n forbid!

OVERBURY.

The wine, the wine you sent—

SO-

S O M E R S E T.

Say'st thou I sent?—O dire abuse!

O V E R B U R Y.

Thy wife—

She then disguis'd it with thy pow'rful name.

S O M E R S E T.

If so, may ev'ry vengeance be her portion!

O V E R B U R Y.

I sicken—am grown chill—save me!—I shudder I
 I feel—Oh! torture!—My blood boils within me—
 Cause, I have none, to be ashamed of life,
 And cannot dread a death, I not deserve:
 Yet nature shrinks from pain—And groans will follow.

S O M E R S E T.

My friend!—My Overbury!

O V E R B U R Y.

Oh! Somerset!

Just now, gay wealth and grandeur woo'd my youth;
 Now they desert—Why let 'em pass!—But thus,
 From wailing friends, endearing in their sorrows,
 Their hearts all bleeding at my pangs!—From them,
 Thus to be torn!—Such parting shocks indeed!
 Be firm my soul!—Tho' robb'd, my love of life,
 All in its pride!—Of more than life, of thee!
 Go tell my foes I pity and forgive—
 "Tho' by their power unjustly I expire,
 "'Tis in my own to die with manly virtue"

I S A B E L L A.

Talk not of death!

O V E R-

OVERBURY.

Methinks I see the tyrant;——
 Oh!——in the field of glory had I fallen
 Protector of mankind; or had I bled,
 Upon the scaffold bled, their martyr'd friend,
 Death had been welcome!—" Yet, in humbler sphere
 "'Tis worth, not length of days, gives life perfection—
 " To that I trust!"——Save me!——

SOMERSET.

What means that start?

OVERBURY.

Ha! what a shoot was there!—What sudden pangs!
 They strain, they agonize, convulse, distort——
 Oh gaze not here! deformity will follow, (*To Isabella.*)
 " Will make me seem a spectacle of guilt,
 " Instead of love, create in the aversion,"
 And turn, what once was thy delight, to horror.

ISABELLA.

Never—" That, which thy foes can never compass,
 " Thy virtue, heighten'd in its charms by wrongs,
 " Endears the more"—And must we, must we lose thee?

OVERBURY.

Weep not my fair, " we seporate to meet
 " Where never treach'ry shall part us more;
 " In joys all permanent and pure—But see!"
 See Somerset!—She sinks o'whelm'd with grief,
 Let me conjure thee by my dying friendship,
 To comfort all her sorrows!—Life ebbs out——

Flames

Flames wind about my breast—My brain 's on fire,
And my eyes swim in a blue sea of sulphur.
Oh ! Somerset—My Isabella—Oh !——

S O M E R S E T.

Death seizes on him strong—My friend!——

I S A B E L L A.

My kindest !

O V E R B U R Y.

A fickle damp creeps cold—O love !—O friendship !
Sustain me !—catch my fleeting soul !—farewell ! [*Dies*]

I S A B E L L A.

Stay, stay a while, dear shade, and I'll o'ertake thee.
Oh for a dagger now !—death, give me ease !
He comes !—I feel him at my heart already !
He brings me all I wish. (*Faints.*)

S O M E R S E T.

Alas, she swoons !

Convey her gently from this scene of horror,
And guard her with the tend'rest care.—

(*Isabella borne in by Attendants.*)

Dear Friend !

'Twere just that I, the author of these woes,
Should on these lips breathe out my last.

(*Falls on the body.*)

Enter

Enter an Officer and Guards.

OFFICER.

My lord!

Your pardon—but you're here a prisoner.
Your wife has, in a fit of raving phrenzy,
Confest the murder of Sir Thomas Overbury!
Her vile confed'rates are impeach'd and seiz'd,
And say the wine was sent from you.—

SOMERSET.

Vile trait'refs!—

But heav'n is just, and I deserve it all.

Enter Countess of Somerset, mad.

COUNTESS.

Was it the wine I sent?—a draught of fire!
And dost think heav'n will conceal the murder?
Tho' mountains cover'd us, they could not hide us!
Dreams will disclose it; or, if night wants eyes,
Lightnings will flash and point us out to justice.

OFFICER.

Her guilt has made her mad—

COUNTESS.

Who talks of guilt?

What! snatch'd the cup? and drain'd it to the last?
Then there's no drug, or health-restoring herb,
Which the sun smiles on can expel th' infection.
Hark! there's a tell-tale wind groans under us,
And the earth heaves with wonder. — Blood, blood,
blood!

The

A T R A G E D Y,

The heavens ring with murder!—The red clouds
Rain a whole sea of smoking blood upon us!
And I am stain'd all over.—Curst Northampton!
You've driven me to the brink of misery;
The yawning earth opens to swallow me.—
Down,—down I sink into the gulph of darkness;
Help! or I'm lost for ever! *(Runs off.)*

S O M E R S E T.

Wherefore do I not rave? but that were happiness—
To lose my senses, were to lose my pain.
Yes, let me know, and feel myself a wretch!
I do resign me to th' impartial hand
Of justice, nor dare murmur at my fate,
—But ye, who see my suff'rings, shun their cause.
“Fly, fly, fond youth, the guilty fair one's arms,
“Nor judge of excellence by outward charms!”
They, who for faithless love, a friend betray,
Chuse glitt'ring toys, and throw rich pearls away;
Ruin and death, on ill-plac'd love are built,
And passion, sprung from weakness, ends in guilt.

T H E E N D.

E P I L O G U E,

Written by RICHARD CUMBERLAND, Esq;

And spoken by Mrs. HARTLEY.

TH E Muse, who late with melancholy pride
Stalk'd by her poor, neglected poet's side,
And, as the musing *Wanderer* stroll'd along,
Chear'd his sad evenings with her patient song;
Round his unhoused temples twin'd her bays,
And soften'd hunger with the food of praise;
In want, despair, imprisonment, in death,
With hands convuls'd, still wove this tragic wreath,
True to the last in his lov'd cause appears,
And asks the soft libation of your tears;
To his yet ling'ring shade the prize imparts,
And greets him with the tribute of your hearts.
Thus, whilst with praise you crown departed worth,
You bring succeeding genius to its birth.

And have you, Britons, have you hearts to prove
Alien from us, the children of your love?
Are you, like *Savage's* dire mother, grown
Gentler to all mens offspring than your own?
Will you renounce, for an exotic band,
Plants of your own, and natives of your land?
On English ground a Gallic stage erect,
And all that fash'on propagates protest?
Out goes the word, Subscribe! a scheme behold,
That turns French tinsel into English gold:
Hither the adventurers flock, for here they find
A huge fat host, that welcomes all mankind.
Domestic bards, avaunt! Shakespeare be dumb!
New capering, quavering, chattering Muses come!
Gay, glittering troops of Adresses appear,
With Autho's tack'd, like Sutlers, to the rear,

What

E P I L O G U E.

What can we plain, unfashion'd mortals do,
Rivall'd by them, and, ah!—renounc'd by you?
Renounc'd!—ere either stage regains its breath,
There stopt by resignation, here by death:
Is it like you to sharpen our distress,
And make affliction's little remnant less?
Were you but faithful, I should scorn to yeild,
By my brave soldiers side, I'd keep the field;
Safe in your arms defy the invader's rage,
Whether it shakes the State, or saps the Stage.

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