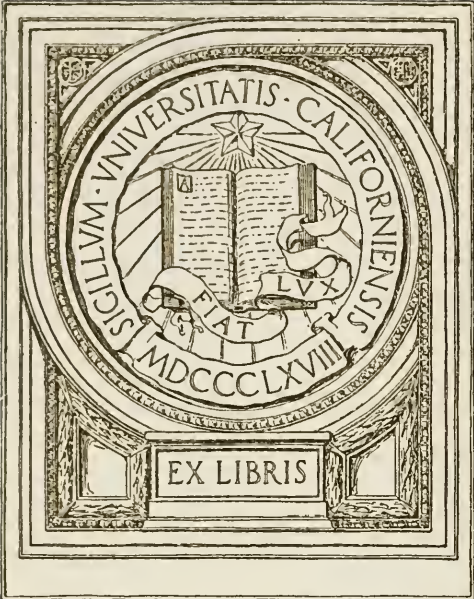


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Plays by Robert Bridges.

No. viij. Aero. Part 2.

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ROBERT BRIDGES. EIGHT PLAYS.  
NERO, PARTS I. & II. PALICIO. ULYSSES.  
CAPTIVES. ACHILLES. HUMOURS.  
FEAST OF BACCHUS.



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## DEDICATION.

With the completion of the volume, I dedicate these plays in memory of old friendships. The first to THOMAS BARLOW, M.D. etc., London.—The second, *Palicio*, to my cousin WILLIAM BRIDGES, D.C.L. etc., Oxford.—*Ulysses* to C. HUBERT H. PARRY, Mus. Doc. Oxford, etc.—*The Captives* to the Right Rev. the Lord Bishop of PETERBOROUGH.—*The play of Achilles* to SAMUEL GEE, M.D. etc., London.—*The Humours of the Court* to the Rev. WILLIAM SANDAY, D.D. etc., Oxford.—*The Feast* to the Rev. C. H. DANIEL, Fellow of Worcester College, Oxford.—and the second part of *Nero* to ANDREW LANG.



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# NERO

PART 2.

FROM THE DEATH OF BURRUS TO THE  
DEATH OF SENECA. COMPRISING THE  
CONSPIRACY OF PISO.

A · L ·

A M I C O

A M A N T E R

R · B ·

Published by GEORGE BELL & SONS, COVENT GARDEN,  
and J. and E. BUMPUS, LIM., HOLBORN BARS.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

As in first part.

NERO

SENECA

LUCAN ... .. a poet, nephew to Seneca.  
PETRONIUS ... .. a gentleman of Rome.  
TIGELLINUS ... .. praetorian prefect (successor to  
THRASEA ... .. a stoic senator. Burrus).  
PRISCUS ... .. a young stoic, lover of Fannia.  
GRIPUS ... .. a Neapolitan boatman.  
POPPÆA ... .. now wife to Nero.

New Characters in this part.

CLITUS ... .. a Christian, brother of Epicharis.  
PISO ... .. a nobleman.  
NATALIS ... .. confidential follower of Piso.  
SCEVINUS, ... .. a rich lord ... .. }  
SENECIO, ... .. an upstart gentleman } courtiers.  
QUINTIAN, ... .. a court poet ... .. }  
PROCULUS ... .. Admiral (successor to Anicetus).  
LATERANUS ... .. Consul elect.  
RUFUS ... .. shared prefecture with Tigellinus.  
FLAVUS, ... .. a tribune ... .. }  
ASPER, ... .. a centurion ... .. } under Rufus.  
VATINIUS ... .. Nero's fool (successor to Paris).  
CASSIUS ... .. a guardsman, distinguished by his size.  
ACTE ... .. Nero's early mistress.  
EPICHARIS ... .. daughter of a tavern-keeper at Naples.  
FANNIA ... .. Thrased's daughter, marries Priscus.  
PAULLINA ... .. wife to Seneca.  
Officers, Attendants, Sailors, Soldiers, Citizens, etc.

# THE SECOND PART OF NERO

## ACT I

### SCENE I.

(As prologue.)

Rome. *Thrasea's house. Thrasea and Priscus.*

*THRASEA.*



WHAT is it, Priscus, that hath led thee now  
To pledge my ear to closer secrecy  
Than what thy loving trust always com-  
mands?

*PR.* I fear to tell.

*THR.* Suppose then I tell thee.

I know thy sickness, and I hold the cure.

*PR.* Nay, sir: I rank among the incurables.

*THR.* Bravo! that is well said. I have watched  
thee, Priscus,

All the six years I have known thee—'tis six years:  
I have seen thine eye grow steadier, and thy smile  
Softer and kinder, and thy speech, which once  
Crackled in flame and smoke, hath stilled to a fire  
That comforts my old age. Even as thy body  
Hath filled to firmness, and its gait grown stately,  
So is thy mind, which ripened manners clothe  
In rich reserve. . .

*PR.* What wilt thou say?

*THR.* Hearken! 'tis some days since

I have noted thy disturbance and rejoiced.

'Tis ill with them, who quake not at the touch  
Of the world's Creator. Thou hast come to tell me  
Thou lov'st my daughter.

*PR.* Ah, sir!

*THR.* Is't not so?

*PR.* Her name is the oath whereby I seal all  
truth.

*THR.* And well: thou'rt worthy of her; in saying  
which

I mean thy praise, for she is worthy of thee.

Nay, while she lives I go not from the world;  
Death sucks me not, though on his iron ladder  
My years descend: she will be Thrasea still  
Without his struggles. Let me acquaint thee, son,  
With one condition which I have thought to make,  
Ere I commit her to thy trust.

*PR.* Good Thrasea,

I know not how to thank thee; but, forgive me,

My secret was not this.

*THR.* Not this?

*PR.* Nay, sir.

Of late I have passed my life half in a dungeon,  
Half in the garden, where thou bidst me forth  
To bask in my love's joy: which in my duty  
I had spoken of to thee openly, but all  
Hath come so quickly: now, a happier way,

I meet thy favour unsolicited.

Let nothing vex this hour; I long to hear  
Thy one requirement, which my full consent  
Leaps to embrace unheard, that thou mayst join  
Fannia and me.

*THR.* 'Tis but a form. I ask  
A promise of thee, Priscus, that thou wilt not  
For ten years join any conspiracy  
Against the Emperor.

*PR.* Why?

*THR.* For Fannia's sake,  
Lest Nero kill thee: and for thy sake too.

*PR.* And why ten years?

*THR.* Ten years is a fair term.  
Thou wilt be old in prudence then.

*PR.* Such prudence

Let me die ere I learn. How wouldst thou, sir,  
For ten years bind me down in slavery  
To flatter a tyrant?

*THR.* Who said flatter? Stay:  
Impatience cannot help. The case is thus.  
Since Burrus died, Nero hath broken loose:—  
Seneca's leading-string hath snapped in the midst  
Without a strain:—in greed of absolute power  
His will cast off restraint; in the possession  
His tottering reason doth the like. His lust,  
His cruelty, his effeminate, blundering passion

For art and brutal vice are but the brag  
Of a hideous nature, which will force the bounds  
Of human action, till the shames of Rome  
Shame shameless Rome to wipe away her shame.  
That is a balance which I cannot poise,  
How much shame Rome will bear; but when I hear  
The whispers of revolt, and now one name  
And now another cast out like a fly

To fish opinion, I give little heed,  
For these two reasons; first, there's not a man  
Among the chiefs of faction of such mark  
As to make change secure: the second, this,  
That lacking such a leader there's no party  
That can command opinion. Nero's fall,  
When he shall fall, will be in a flooding wave  
Of common judgment. What the extravagance  
Of crime is weak to move, some unforeseen  
And trifling circumstance may on a sudden  
Deliver; and the force no man can raise  
None shall control. Await the rising tide,  
It will not need us.

*PR.* Some, sir, cannot wait.

I came to tell thee how I had given my name  
To a conspiracy.

*THR.* The gods forbid!

With whom?

*PR.* I may not name their names.

*THR.* Nay, nay:  
But who is the pretender?

*PR.* Seneca.

*THR.* Seneca! Seneca! Hath he consented?

*PR.* We are such, sir, as can win him.

*THR.* Why, I know you;

The senatorial patriots. Ther'll be Lucan,  
Cassius and Lateranus, Fennius Rufus,  
Flavus, perhaps Vestinus . . .

*PR.* Who they be

Will presently be seen.

*THR.* O, I am in time

To stay you yet. This plot is merely mischief,  
Seneca's death.

*PR.* Not if 'tis Nero's death.

*THR.* Think man! If first ye go to Seneca,

Ere ye slay Nero, he will not consent:

Never, be sure. And if ye first slay Nero,

Seneca's nowhere. Others will spring up,

Piso, and all the Augustan family,

Plautus, Silanus . . .

*PR.* But if Seneca

Consent . . .

*THR.* What! to that crime?

*PR.* He hath consented

To like before.

*THR.* Well, but the wrongs he hath done

His pride alloys, or in pretended retirement

Repudiates; and, could he feel his guilt, 100

That were remorse, whose sick and painful palsy

Cannot raise hand to strike. Think you that he,

Who laughed at Claudius' death; who let be slain

His old friend and protectress Agrippina;

Who glozed the murder of Britannicus;

Who hid his protest when Octavia fell;

That he will turn about and say, 'Such things

'I did for Nero, and the good of Rome:

'Now, since he sings at Naples on the stage,

'I do repent me, and will kill my pupil;

'Will take myself the power I made for him,

'And show how I intended he should rule!'

This were a Roman but not Seneca.

*PR.* We look not for it of him.

*THR.* 'Tis all one.

Seneca! the millionaire!

*PR.* If he consent,

We restore the republic.

*THR.* The Republic!

The Decii and Camilli will you bring us?

That kingly yeoman, frugal Curius?

Can you restore the brave considerate Gracchi,

And Cato's stern unconquerable soul? . . .

O nay: but Seneca the imperialist!—

Praiseus, if Seneca refuse, thou'lt make

A promise for ten years?

*PR.* With that reserve,

And wilt thou not say five years?

*THR.* I'll say five,

If thou wilt promise.

*PR.* Then, if Seneca

Refuse, I pledge myself to take no part

In any plot against the emperor

For five years.

*THR.* Come within, Fannia is thine.

[*Exeunt.*]

## SCENE II.

*Naples.* A marine tavern, the open court of  
it, with fountain at centre, and low  
colonnade around. On the left at a  
table some Mariners are drinking and  
playing with dice. On the right are  
Officers sitting apart and drinking. To-  
wards the front PROCULUS (the  
Admiral) and SENECIO. EPI-  
CHARIS is serving the Officers.

*SE<sup>o</sup>.* I do beg of you, my lord!

*PRO.* Why so frightened, sir, at a little trembling  
of the soil? Had the Gods any appetite to swallow  
you, think you that they would trouble to provide  
warnings for your escape?

*SE<sup>o</sup>.* I do pray you, my lord admiral, take me on  
board your galley for to-night; only for to-night.

*PRO.* We are under Caesar's orders to sail for the  
Adriatic, sir; else I might strain to make some cabin  
accommodation: but then that would be for the ladies.  
Epicharis, help this gentleman to wine; he's nervous:  
some more drink, and I think he'll be as brave as any  
of us.

*EP.* 'Twill be at my cost, your excellence.

*PRO.* Nay, I'll cover that. Come, drink, sir, and  
cheer your soul. That's the only kindness I can do  
you.

*SE<sup>o</sup>.* Thank you, my lord, but I . . . (*a rumbling  
heard.*) Oh! oh! there it is again.

*EP.* (*to Senecio.*) 'Tis safe enough in our court, sir;  
if you sit from the walls.

*PRO.* And fill for me, fair hostess. Wilt not thou  
come aboard my ship?

*EP.* Your ship, my lord?

*PRO.* 'Tis against the rules of the service: but they  
provide not for these earthquakes.

*EP.* Ha! ha! you jest, my lord.

*PRO.* We have no wars to occupy us: why should  
I not give shelter to the ladies, that fear to be  
ashore?

*EP.* That would not be me, my lord. We rode  
out worse shakings last year. 160

*PRO.* Come, I'll have thee come. Should Caesar  
hear of it, I can take care of myself. (*They talk.*)

(*Mariners to each other.*)

*1st Mar.* He was a-acting of Niobby.

*2nd.* Niobe, who was Niobe?

*3rd.* A first-rate, went down with all hands off  
Andros, the year of Claudius' death.

*1st.* True, mate; that was our Niobby. But this  
was a Greek lady that lost all her children at a clap;  
bad luck with her name!

*2nd.* The Emperor would have made to be her, as  
'twere; was it?

*1st.* 'Twas a tragedy, look: and that's just where  
it is. Everybody is somebody else, and nothing's as  
it should be.

*2nd.* That's right: he were dressed out like a  
woman.

*1st.* Did ye not see him, nodding to the music, and  
throwing his hands about? then he gets red in the



face, then he should stoop down to catch his breath, (*he acts*) then creeping up again he should throw back his head, and ei ! ei ! (*Screams. All laugh loudly.*)

*PRO.* Hell and thunder ! Silence there !

*Mar.* (*to themselves*). Why, if we mayn't laugh in the theater, nor out of it !

*PRO.* (*to officers*). Here's a gentleman, who would go to sea to escape being shaken. Shall we take him a cruise ?

*1st Off.* Frightened by the earthquake, sir ? I do not blame you.

*SEO.* When the gods shake your city, as a terrier does a rat.

*1st Off.* But how should the sea cure you ? 'Tis their common plaything.

*PRO.* Indeed, sir, you would learn what heavings be. These land movements are nought. What would you say to thirty feet up and down three times a minute ? with now your bows in the air and now your stern : pitched now forward now backward, now rolled from side to side ; thrust up to heaven till your brains are full of air, then sunk down till your belly squirms, inside out, outside in !

*SEO.* Maybe, sir : but the roof will not fall on your head : the waves do not crack your walls. Your ships being constructed mainly of wood . . .

*PRO.* But the rocks, sir, are mainly constructed of stone, upon which if a wooden-constructed ship be driven, there's no man that would not pay his fortune down to set one foot on the most quakeful or boggy ground 'twixt Ganges and Gades. And there be monsters, too, which, though I have never seen them, will swallow, they say, your whole ship at a gulp, as you do your wine.

(*The house trembles, some jars fall : all run to centre.*)

*SEO.* There 'tis again ! Oh ! oh !

(*A great crash heard.*)

*Mar.* Belay there !

*SEO.* Oh ! oh ! ye gods in heaven !

*1st Off.* Steady, my men, steady !

*Mar.* Ay, ay, sir.

*1st Off.* Order ! To your seats !

*EP.* Sit and drink, gentlemen. Wine shall be cheap to-day. The life in the earth will crack my jars. A few more rumbles like that will drain the cellars.

*1st Off.* (*to men*). We're safe here as anywhere, lads ; if you keep an eye to the mainwalls. It's all plasterwork aloft.

*Enter CLITUS.*

*CLI.* Epicharis ! Art thou here, Epicharis ? <sup>225</sup>

*PRO.* (*to Epicharis*). Who is this scared fellow ?

*CLI.* Epicharis, 'tis come : the day is come ! Fly from this place !

*EP.* (*to Proc.*). 'Tis my poor brother, sir : heed him not, he is simple.

*CLI.* (*come to Epi.*). Seest thou not, 'tis the end, the day of wrath ?

The earth shakes and the dead rise from their tombs.  
*PRO.* (*to 1st Off.*). By Pluto, if he be not one of them !

*EP.* (*to Clit.*). Sit down quietly, Clitus, for a minute : I can speak with you presently.

*CLI.* O Madness ! Come from this hell : fly while thou mayst !

*Mar.* Ay, sit, mate, sit ! be not afeard ! sit with us !

*CLI.* Woe to you, slaves of Babylon ! woe cometh To the queen that sits upon the seven hills.

*1st Mar.* That is Rome : the seven hills is Rome. What of Babylon ?

*CLI.* Rome shall be burned with fire, Babylon burned,  
Her smoke shall curl to heaven.

*Enter GRIPUS, out of breath.*

*GRI.* Gone, she's gone down !

*PRO.* What's gone, man ?

*GRI.* The theater ; foundered, sir, gone clean down. I had just got well clear of her, when she gave a lurch, and plumped under starn-foremost in a cloud of dust. <sup>230</sup>

*CLI.* (*to Epi.*). Come, come, Epicharis, I pray thee !

*SEO.* Is this the gods, or is it not the gods ? (*drinks*)

*PRO.* That was the crash.

*CLI.* (*dragging at Epi.*). Thou shalt, thou must.

*EP.* (*freeing herself*). One moment, Clitus, please !

*GRI.* (*to Proc.*). I ran to know, my lord, if you'll have the boats.

*EP.* Were any killed, Gripus, tell us.

*GRI.* 'Twas a wonder ; all the folk had just left her, I near the last ; I felt dizzy-like, and saw the street seem anyhow : then I looked at the theater, and she was full of crinks and chinks, when down she went all to pieces. A little sooner and we had been buried alive.

*1st Off.* Emperor and all.

*SEO.* O ye gods ! (*drinking*) I drink to thee, old dustman (*to Gripus*).

*PRO.* Off with you, my men : in five minutes I'll be aboard. (*to Epi.*) Come, lass !

(*Mariners go out with Gripus.*)

*EP.* Come where, my lord ?

*PRO.* Why aboard with me.

*EP.* Ha ha ! I thank you, but I cannot.

*PRO.* Would'st thou be buried alive ?

*EP.* There is my old bed-ridden mother, my lord ; I'll not leave her. <sup>275</sup>

*PRO.* Well, stick to your ship, like a true girl. You, Calvus, pay the charges and follow.

*SEO.* Who's afraid now, my lord ! Is it not the gods ?

*PRO.* They take much pains to frighten us, sir.

*SEO.* And me, with a wife and family. I care not. [*Exit.*]

*1st Off.* (*paying*). Thou'lt be buried with thy jars, Epicharis.

*EP.* Balm'd in good wine, eh ! Add me yet a denarius for lord Senecio's drink.

*SEO.* Two ; I have drunk two.

*1st Off.* Here's for him.

*SEO.* (*drinking*). Your health, sir ! If you wish to know the cause of all this, I can inform you. 'Tis the emperor's cursed singing hath done it. He hath offended the gods. To call himself Apollo on the one hand, and on the other to sing in the theatre. What else could he expect ? I give him his due, he cares not for the gods.

*EP.* He doth not, sir.

*SE<sup>o</sup>.* Nor I either : not much.

*1st Off.* Good-night, lass : may we meet again !

*EP.* No fear. [*Exit 1st Off. with the others.*  
(*Senecio remains, and Clitus, who stands aloof.*)

*EP.* (*to Senecio*). Follow thou, follow them. <sup>300</sup>

*SE<sup>o</sup>.* They won't have me.

*EP.* Nor will I. I wonder thou durst even show thy face after all thy vain promises. Thou that wouldst bring me to Cæsar, and I know not what.

*SE<sup>o</sup>.* I can, I shall yet.

*EP.* Begone, see you, begone.

*SE<sup>o</sup>.* Look what I had brought thee. (*showing a book.*)

*EP.* A book I do believe.

*SE<sup>o</sup>.* Purple edges and gold knops.

*EP.* Seneca on morals, I suppose.

*SE<sup>o</sup>.* No. 'Tis Lucan's book. This can bring thee to Cæsar. This little book hath great treasons in it.

*EP.* Treason ! ha ! and I to inform, to show it to Cæsar ?

*SE<sup>o</sup>.* Well, if not, think what his friends might give to recover it.

*EP.* You should have sold it yourself and brought me the money.

*SE<sup>o</sup>.* 'Twould be guessed whence I whizzled it.

*EP.* Wretch ! in what villany wouldst thou snare me ? Give it me. (*Takes it.*) From whom didst thou steal it ?

*SE<sup>o</sup>.* Only from a friend.

*EP.* I'll save thy friends from thee, and first myself. Begone ! begone ! <sup>305</sup>

*SE<sup>o</sup>.* Thou wilt come to Rome, Epicharis ?

*EP.* (*thrusting him out*). Begone !

[*Exit Senecio.*]

(*to Clitus*). Now, brother.

*CLI.* O sister, my sister, my Epicharis ! ; To hear that name defiled ! In what a pit Of sin thou livest, diest ; 'mong the swine Perishest ! Ah, by God's mercy, 'tis not too late : Fly with me, fly !

*EP.* Fly whither ?

*CLI.* From thy sin.

If the Judge find thee here, thou'rt lost.

*EP.* Dear Clitus,

What judge ?

*CLI.* Why He who made thee.

*EP.* (*aside*). Alas ! alas !

*CLI.* Be found with me, perchance I may prevail.

*EP.* Where would you fly ?

*CLI.* Last night in heavenly vision

Paul stood before me, as when three years ago

I saw him at Putcoli : one hand

Outstretched he stood and beckoned me to Rome.

Thither I go : 'Tis my last call to thee :

Thou wilt not see me again until the day

When I shall hide my face for pity of thee,

And stop mine ears to hear thy anguished cry

For mercy, thy vain cry.

*EP.* You go to Rome !

*CLI.* Think, sister : we were once so closely bound.

When we were children in what secret fondness

We linked our hands and hearts ; how oft we pledged

Our innocent oaths that we would never part !

Now shall the great gulf fixed 'twixt heaven and hell Divide us ? I saved, and thou lost, for ever ! <sup>351</sup>  
That endless life of glory I dread, with thee Not there, not there !

*EP.* Is't to our uncle's house You go ?

*CLI.* The house of Gaius on the Tiber, The seventh door above the Cestian bridge : There shalt thou find immortal life.

*EP.* Dear brother, Go not to Rome : your sect is there suspected. Stay here : or, if you will go, stay at least Till I can come with you.

*CLI.* The time is short.

Tarry not : come to-night !

*EP.* Nay, not to-night.

*CLI.* I may not stay for thee.

*EP.* I cannot come.

*CLI.* Thou wilt not come.

*EP.* How can you bid me, Clitus,

To leave our helpless mother in all this terror ?

*CLI.* Ah ! thou wilt never come ; thou'rt lost, lost, lost. [*Exit.*]

*EP.* Pure, noble heart, why should I love thee more Now thou art mad ?—I did him wrong not yielding To his delusions. He hath none to love him But me, and I have let him think that I desert him.—Go with him tho' I cannot, I will follow, And quickly too. To-morrow I'll to Rome. [*Exit.*]

### SCENE III.

*A passage or ante-room in Seneca's house in Rome. Enter SENECA with papers in his hand.*

*SEN.* (*calling*). Paullina !—  
Thus go my mornings : now 'tis scarce two hours To dinner. (*Calling.*) Paullina ! Paullina !—The wretched beggars

Multiply every day. I feed half Rome With doles. 'Tis fortunate that trading thrives. Paullina !

*PAU.* (*within*). I hear thee : I come. (*Enters.*)  
*SEN.* Ah, here thou art !

Look, love, they are bringing wine to-day from Cales, Ninety-two jars by the invoice ;—lay them down In the new cellar. Here's two hundredweight Of pepper that I have bought : see that be weighed And warehoused, for the quoted price is low.

Next, this is Alban raisins, eighteen casks :

They may go with the pepper. A ship's arrived

At Ostia laden with black Spanish wool :

Send that to the factor. That's all : but remember

Our bailiff from Nomentum comes this afternoon :

He is short of hands. Mind he pick sturdy fellows ;

And check the ration-bills to correspond.

Now lastly, love, I want five hundred copies

Made of my letters to Lucilius. <sup>390</sup>

Bid the clerks set routine aside for this ;

'Tis for the provinces. I am pleased, my love,

To think how good the work is ; and 'tis new :



'Twill outlast the decayed light-heartedness  
Of Horace : 'tis more suitable besides  
For plain intelligence, and it should sweeten  
The world.

*PAU.* You know I love it, but I fear  
You work too hard. How is your health to-day?

*SEN.* A little headach only, and the old stiffness  
In the back of my neck : 'tis gout. I think, Paullina,  
That I should dine more frugally : to-day  
Let it be roasted apples.

*PAU.* Why, you eat nothing :  
You should take more, not less. Trust me to give you  
Just the right thing.

*SEN.* Well, I make no complaint :  
Mine are small ailments, and 'tis highest health  
To see thee well : what should I do without thee ?  
Why, all this business that thou takest upon thee  
Is a man's work, which, had I to attend to it,  
Would rob me of my life : now I am free :  
The day is my own.

*PAU.* How will you use my gift? 410

*SEN.* I am in the vein for writing.

*PAU.* The muse attend thee !

*SEN.* See thou, I have her with me.  
(Unrolls a book and goes into his library reading.  
*Exeunt severally.*)

## SCENE IV.

*Room in Seneca's house. Enter Seneca  
reading.*

*SEN.* Father, and god of gods, almighty, eternal,  
Invoked by many names, nature's one lord ;  
Hail ! for 'tis right that all men call on thee.  
For we thine offspring are.—Well said, Cleanthes !  
All things and creatures are as God's possession,  
But we his children : and the will we have  
To thwart his will, he ruleth to his will,  
Owning the ill which he did not create  
But by permission ; as thou goest to show.

(Reading.) *Nor is there any work on earth astir,  
But by the breath of thy divinity ;*

*Nor in the starry pole, nor in the sea,  
Save what the wicked in their foolish minds  
Devise : but thou dost order the disorderly,  
And even unlovely things are dear to thee.*

Let fools hear that, thou second Hercules !  
I should not fret ; nay, and I shall not fret . . .

There's poignancy in the utterance of this Greek  
That I attain not : whether it be the man  
Lived nearer to his nature, or that my art

Clogs the clear hues of thought, and in a varnish  
Drowns to one tone. Would I had written that !

And this too, where the bliss the poet prays for  
His pregnant line is witness that he hath,  
*A vision and a share of that high wisdom,  
Wherewith thy justice governs all things well :*

*That honoured by thee we return thee honour . . .* 440

That honoured by thee we return thee honour . . .  
That's admirable, noble : I'll write myself  
Something like that. Ay, now I feel it within me :

And while I am warm. (A knocking at the door.)

Of course an interruption  
Just as I am stirred. Come in ! To mask vexation  
In courtesy now.

*Enter LUCAN, PRISCUS, LATERANUS and  
FLAVUS.*

*LUC.* My dear uncle, good morning.

*LAT. and others.* Good morning, my lord.

*SEN.* Welcome, good nephew Lucan.  
Welcome, my lords. Thee, Lateranus, first  
Let me congratulate : thou'rt chosen consul  
I hear.

*LAT.* That's a month hence. I care not, Seneca,  
If I shall live to sacrifice my ox. 450

*SEN.* Most ominous words !

*LAT.* Excuse my liberty.

*LUC.* Liberty ! nay if thou have any of that,  
Thou mayst indeed despair to live a month.

*SEN.* What purpose brings you, sirs ? Pray you  
be seated.

(*They sit. Priscus apart.*) \*

What would you with me now ?

*LAT.* We are come as friends.

*SEN.* No need to tell me this.

*LUC.* But yet there is,

Uncle ; thy friends decrease.

*SEN.* That may well be.

'Tis what old age must look for. I have my books.

*FLA.* I never saw so many books before.

*SEN.* And all my good tried friends.

*LUC.* Uncle !

*SEN.* Eh !

*LUC.* They say

Poppæa hath Octavia's head in the palace  
To play with.

*SEN.* 'Tis a journaler's lie.

*LUC.* Did Fulvia  
Not pierce the tongue of Cicero dead ?

*SEN.* Fie ! fie !

Let journalers traduce their filthy souls :  
Why bring ye me their scandals, when to truths,  
That daily I must hear, I wish me deaf ?

*LUC.* O sir, Rome thinks thou art deaf : and  
men whisper

That creeping time devours thee sense by sense,  
While thou, death's willing prey, dost sit at home

Wreathing philosophies to hang the tomb

Of liberty, and crown the coward brows

Of icy oblivion. Sir, if this were true,

Well mightst thou wish not hear : but if thou hast not  
Forgot the murder of Britannicus . . .

*SEN.* Hush, hush !

*LUC.* Or sweet Octavia's wrongs . . .

*SEN.* Stay, nephew ! I say.

*LUC.* The shame of her divorce . . .

*SEN.* None of this, prithee !

For true it is I wish I could forget.

*LUC.* Her transportation and imprisonment

Upon an outlawed isle ; that calumny,

Dumb in her faultless presence, might dare trumpet

Charges incredible : and last her death

By a clumsy soldier, 'gainst whose butcher's knife

She struggled childishly, to the stony walls

Screaming in terror. O sir, let no Roman,

Who hath one hand unbound, wish he were deaf. 485

\*  
FLAVUS  
LATERANUS  
LUCAN

SENECA °

PRISCUS  
..

*SEN.* Enough! enough!  
*LUC.* Why this, sir, is a tale  
 Would damn a tragedy for the overdoing  
 Of the inhumanities.  
*SEN.* Ay, and I think,  
 Nephew, it gains not by thy rhetoric.  
*LAT.* But Nero, sir, is held thy pupil, and thou  
 In part discredited,—nay, none but thou  
 Since Burrus died.  
*SEN.* Well, well: but Burrus' death  
 Hath halved my power, and left the lesser half  
 Helpless in isolation.  
*LAT.* That's a fact.  
 We come, my lord, to bid thee join thy hand  
 With them that look to thee. There's Fœnius Rufus,  
 That's now in Burrus' place, another Burrus.  
*SEN.* Another Burrus! Fifty Rufuses  
 Would make no part of Burrus. Why! I am grieved  
 More for his goodness, when I think of him,  
 Than by all Nero's ill. My staunch friend was he,  
 Stern as a Roman, tender as a woman:  
 A simple mind, a clear head, and true heart;  
 Faithful, unblenched and certain of his path.  
 All that philosophy has ever taught me  
 He knew by instinct, and would hit the mark  
 With careless action, where my reason fumbled  
 And groped in the dusk. I say, if all the books  
 I have ever read or writ, could make one man  
 Like Burrus, with so natural a touch,  
 And such godlike directness, none would doubt  
 Of our philosophy.  
*LUC.* But now he's gone.  
*SEN.* There's none like Burrus.  
*LAT.* Lo, my lord, I am one  
 To dare what Burrus never dared.  
*SEN.* What's that?  
*LAT.* The tyrant's death.  
*SEN.* (rising). Ha! Now we have it!  
 Seal your lips and depart.—And thou too, nephew,  
 To seek to engage me!  
*LAT.* First, my lord; our safety.  
*SEN.* Alas, alas! Nay, leave me. I know  
 nothing.  
 Ye heard I did but guess.  
*LUC.* Thou didst guess right.  
*SEN.* Ye have wronged me, gentlemen, choosing  
 to make me  
 Privy to your distempered plots; but rightly  
 Judged that I would not sacrifice your lives  
 To save the monster's. Nay: were Nero's death  
 God's will, as yours it seems, I might rejoice.  
 But in your scheme to whom would ye entrust  
 The absolute power? If Nero be pulled down,  
 Whom would ye bid us worship? The empire needs  
 A god,—or, if not that, a godlike man,  
 Plato's philosopher for king.  
*LAT.* Agreed!  
 'Tis a philosopher we have chosen, sir.  
*LUC.* Speak not to us of kings and emperors, uncle;  
 We restore the republic.  
*SEN.* Hey! Is't Thrasea  
 Ye would make emperor?  
*LUC.* Thrasea hath no wealth  
 Nor favour with the people.  
*SEN.* Who is't then  
 That leads your dream a-dance?

*LAT.* Sir, 'tis no dream.  
*SEN.* Who then?  
*FLA.* (advancing). Hail, Cæsar, hail!  
*SEN.* Why, man, what's this?  
*FLA.* We choose thee Cæsar.  
*LUC.* We crown thee.  
*LAT.* Hail, great Cæsar!  
*SEN.* Me! madmen, me! Cæsar! me! I am  
 retired . . .  
 And—oh! no—never. Who hath chosen me?  
 Is this thy folly, nephew, when thou tell'st me  
 My friends decrease?  
*LUC.* I said the truth: 'tis time  
 Thou rise and rally them. We have a party.  
*SEN.* I have no party.  
*LUC.* We may count for yours  
 All the republicans. Your oratory  
 Will win the senate, and your wealth the people.  
 Rufus is ours, and brings the guards; Vestinus,  
 The consul ours; here's Lateranus with us,  
 The consul designate; at Nero's death  
 Corbulo and the eastern army. . . 'Tis no party;  
 'Tis all except a party.  
*SEN.* Patience, nephew.  
 I weigh the names we count. I see . . . but . . .  
*LUC.* Nero once slain, 'tis needful for the hour  
 To name an emperor. The pillaged world,  
 That tasted five years of thy regence, loves thee;  
 While those that would restore Rome's public rule  
 Will hail thy leadership.  
*FLA.* Princeps Senatus!  
*SEN.* Pray, how far hath this gone?  
*LUC.* I have sounded many,  
 And found them eager if but thou assent.  
 Yet none knows that we ask thee.  
*PR.* Thrasea knows.  
*SEN.* Ha! Priscus, 'thou hast been silent all this  
 while:  
 And what said Thrasea?  
*PR.* In my credit, sir,  
 I may not tell.  
*SEN.* Indeed! And while ye invite me  
 To plunge into the bowels of Hell, and wrap me  
 In the bloody purples of a murdered Cæsar,  
 Thou wouldst hide from me, for some petty scruple,  
 What my best friend says of it!  
*PR.* I should tell:—  
 He said you would refuse.  
*SEN.* And he said right.  
 I do refuse.  
*ALL.* Refuse!  
*LUC.* Uncle, consider!  
*FLA.* We cannot take that word, sir; 'tis not  
 thine.  
 The state requires thee: there is none but thou.  
*SEN.* My word is No, I will not.  
*LUC.* Thou wilt not?  
 Wilt not throne virtue in the seat of might?  
 Not crown philosophy? and in thyself  
 Fulfil the dream of wisdom, which the world  
 Hath mocked at as impracticable?  
*SEN.* Yea,  
 And yet shall mock. 'Tis not for me. Ye think  
 Because I am rich, that I despise not wealth;  
 Because I have been involved in courtly faction,  
 I loathe not crime; that what ye have seen to touch me,

That I would handle. Can ye thus mistake me?  
And deem that I, being such an one to serve you,  
Might be entrapp'd with flattery,—that ye style me  
The one man worthy? ay, to rule the world  
Ye said: Well! I shall rule it; but not so.  
I make my throne here, and with these nibbed reeds  
Issue my edicts to the simple-hearted,  
To whom all rule shall come: Yes, it shall come  
If God's will count for aught.

*PR.* My lord, consider.  
This is the hour to set you right for ever.  
'Twas of your doing Nero came to power: 590  
Now with one word you may blot out the past.

*SEN.* Priscus, if thou didst think I was to blame  
For all the wrongs and crimes, which by thy speech  
Thou wouldst impute, wouldst thou be here to-day  
To hail me Cæsar? 'Tis a stingless taunt.

*LAT.* Thou shalt not be reproach'd.

*FLA.* We do not blame thee.

*LUC.* We ask but thy consent.

*SEN.* Shame, nephew; shame!

*LAT.* Sir, you mistake: we ask not your consent  
Unto the deed.

*FLA.* We take that on ourselves.

*LAT.* We ask of thee but this: Nero once slain,  
Wilt thou be Cæsar?

*SEN.* No, sir: I will not.

*FLA.* Thou wilt not change thy books for  
provinces?

*SEN.* No, sir.

*LAT.* Dost thou refuse?

*LUC.* Oh, uncle, uncle!

*FLA.* My lord, allow me.

*LUC.* Hear what I would say.

*SEN.* I know it, nephew, afore. Now let this end.  
'Tis said.

*PR.* I was prepared, my lord, for this:  
And we at least may spare you further danger  
Of our suspicious conference. I go. (*moving.*)

*SEN.* The ill is done.

*FLA.* One word. Nero must die;  
And whosoe'er but thou steps in his place 610  
Must also die; for none is worthy. Come  
At once, ere more be slain. This ends not here.

*SEN.* Thou dost say right: this ends not here:  
if more

Shall die, thou bearest some blame of it. Farewell!  
God can bend all to good: this, which to me  
Seems ill, may not be so.

*LAT.* (*going.*) Sir, I shall trust you.

*SEN.* Indeed fear not. Now, for my safety and  
yours,

Leave me, I pray. Farewell!

*All.* (*going.*) Farewell! [*Exeunt.*]

*SEN.* Nay, can it be? Fools! can it be they cried  
Seneca, Cæsar? My hand is trembling, my sense  
Swimming: 'tis true: my mortal stroke, and dealt me  
By would-be friends. The way that least I expected,  
When I least looked for it—yea—thus cometh Death.  
No hope. I am named. But ah! thou bloody tiger,  
Who slewest her that bare thee, now I that trained  
thee

Might . . . yea, I might.—The whole world for a bait  
Dangles upon the hook, and I refuse.

I would not; nay, I could not . . . What then do?

Stand firm? with my poor palsied limbs,  
Stand firm? budge not a hair, as Burrus put it? 630  
—So take rank in the monster's tale of murders:  
My gravity in his comedy of crime:  
Suffer in my last act of serious life  
His hypocritical smile, his three or four  
Crocodile tears: be waved off with a smirk,  
'A sacrifice to the safety of the state'?  
Oft have I thought of death to brave his terror,  
But ne'er forereckoned thus . . . Why it were better  
To give life its one chance, still play the game.  
That may well be: That I'll do: all my skill  
Summon to aid me: else 'tis my death,—the end:  
That execrable nothing which no art  
Of painful thought can reconcile . . .

*Enter PAULLINA excitedly.*

*PAU.* Seneca, Seneca!  
The Circus Maximus is burned; the fire  
Hath reached the embankment—Ah they have told  
you?

*SEN.* Nay:  
What didst thou say?

*PAU.* The fire, my lord, the fire.  
The Circus is burned down, and the Velabrum  
Is now a field of flame, that waves in the wind.  
Rome will be burned.

*SEN.* A general calamity  
Might turn attention from me.

*PAU.* My lord, you are strange.

*SEN.* Paullina, it matters not to me or thee  
If the whole world should burn: a little while  
And all is nought. There have been here this morning  
The heads of a conspiracy.

*PAU.* A conspiracy!

*SEN.* To murder Nero.

*PAU.* Indeed I wonder not.

*SEN.* But who is the man, thinkst thou, whom  
they would take

To set up in his place; who, if they fail,  
Must fall a sacrifice? Who least desires  
The crown? Who least deserves the death? 'Tis he.

*PAU.* Not thee! ah, ah, my lord, not thee!

*SEN.* Take comfort,

Be brave, Paullina; check thy tears: there is hope;  
There is yet a hope. I shall renounce my wealth,

Place my possessions all in Cæsar's hands,

And stripped to naked, harmless poverty

Fly Rome and power for ever: such a life

I have praised and well may lead—philosophy

Graced by the rich graceth the poor, and I,

Who have sought to crown her, may be crown'd by  
her.

I'll save my life's last remnant with applause.

Weep not, there's hope: yes, there is yet a hope. 670

END OF ACT I.



## ACT II.

*A room in the palace, with large windows at back, and doors right and left. The scene remains unchanged throughout the act.*

SENECIO, SCEVINUS and QUINTIAN.

SCE. 'Tis abominable, sir. What's your net loss?

SE<sup>o</sup>. I ask you, Quintian, as a man of culture and erudition, what do you make of it?

QU. You admit that Cæsar was not drunk?

SE<sup>o</sup>. Had he been drunk, he had had some excuse. 'Twas past midnight when he burst in, turned us all out of bed, and ordered the house to be pulled down; and I a married man. I have a wife and daughters.

SCE. Married! well, I never knew that. So your house is pulled down. <sup>681</sup>

SE<sup>o</sup>. And half the street, for that matter.

QU. 'Twas done to stay the fire: 'twas well done.

SE<sup>o</sup>. But we were reckoning our danger past: and 'twas so situated, that if he wished to protect his palace he had choice of some four streets: and he chooses mine, and begins with me, my house, Senecio's house; Senecio his sworn comrade. I have played housebreaker and looker-on to him these eight years, and helped to save his life a score of times from injured husbands and common fellows . . .

SCE. You do not stand with him as you did.

SE<sup>o</sup>. Nay, nor you.

QU. And he hath made verses on me, which he will recite in all company when I am present.

SE<sup>o</sup>. 'Tis that long-nosed cad Vatinius, who hath undermined me.

SCE. And all of us. We are put down by a coarse pig. <sup>700</sup>

QU. He hath no true wit, no true humour.

SCE. The commoner a man is now, the better will he like him.

SE<sup>o</sup>. It used not to be so: he was once thick with me.

SCE. He hath sunk to depths.

QU. With his acting and singing.

SE<sup>o</sup>. I believe 'twas he set fire to the city. I would the earthquake had swallowed him!

QU. Well, I'll not be civil to his buffoon any longer.

SE<sup>o</sup>. A gentleman must draw the line somewhere.

SCE. Hark, then! Shall we unite in some plan of lordly revenge?

SE<sup>o</sup>. I care not; I'd as lief run him through and have done with it.

SCE. Are you in earnest? Mean you what you say? Would you join the patriots?

SE<sup>o</sup>. I care not.

QU. Could we not raise a quarrel between Tigellinus and Vatinius?

SCE. Poison the brutes both.

SE<sup>o</sup>. All three of 'em, damn 'em!

QU. Hush thou! here they come.

*Enter NERO, TIGELLINUS and VATINIUS.*

NER. Ha! Here's my Quintian!

The pale Parnassian reptile, that hath n'er,

Moistened his leathery tongue in Hippocrene . . .  
Nay, laugh not so immoderately, I fear  
Your sides may split.

TIG. O no, thou god of the world,  
Thou hast practised them too well.

QU. And I, your majesty,  
Am proud to move your jovial lips to smile.

VAT. We all believe it, while thy writhing grin  
Makes us such sport.

QU. (*aside*). Curse on this ugly brute!

NER. Mind him not, Quintian; we are in good  
spirits.

We have worked all night like firemen, and saved  
the palace

If not the city. Ha! Senecio, tell us,  
How stands it with thy house?

SE<sup>o</sup>. Permit me, sire,

To thank you for the imperial favour shown  
To my poor dwelling.

NER. Thank Vatinius:

'Twas his idea.

SE<sup>o</sup>. Then, sir, I thank thee humbly, — <sup>740</sup>  
(*aside*) Till I can kill thee.

VAT. The emperor and I  
Are glad to serve you; we are very free  
To all the race.

NER. 'Tis true:—Senecio,

Thou wilt remember well the merry nights,  
When I and thou and Otho inaugurated

My reign with freaks of license: since that time

What steps we have made! I laugh when I recall

Those timorous revellings in the dark, and how

'Twas deemed a scandal Cæsar should be seen

Horseracing. What misgivings when I first

Opened my circus on the Vatican!

But what applause!! Then I saw Rome was with me,

Nor ever have doubted since: in other games

Outrunning popularity, till now,

—My thanks to Tigellinus—there's scarce one

Of all the noblest houses that can brag

It hath not sent some actor to the stage,

Or wrestler to the theatre: and I crowned

My triumph in Naples, when ye saw, ye heard,

Ye applauded.—Would it be believed that when

I came to the throne I might not, in my palace,

Sing my own song at supper?

SE<sup>o</sup>. Glorious Cæsar,

The Gods deny you nothing.

TIG. Thyself a god,

By destiny their peer.

VAT. Perfect Apollo!

In music equal, and in medicine . . . (*acts taking  
poison*).

TIG. (*hastily*). Above all gods in this, that full  
success

Attests thy wisdom.

NER. Well, and isn't it sense

To seek for happiness the natural way?

Not by the notions of philosophers,

Who fashion theoretic right and wrong

From books; or if they judge mankind at all,

Judge by themselves, who are unlike the rest,

Scarce human. 'Tis soundest principle

To follow nature; and what nature is

I well perceive. I judge all by myself:

The appetites are universal gifts:

Cæsar will never stoop to flatter Cæsar  
By such pretence of difference, nor withhold  
From others what himself loves. I believe  
That no man in the world worth calling man  
Is what philosophers term pure and good ;—  
Nor woman either. All would gratify  
The strong desires of nature, and all shall  
While I am emperor.

*TIG.* Blessed be the god,

Who first named thee for rule.

*SCE.* We all admire.

*NER.* Is it not sense?

*TIG.* 'Tis common-sense.

*VAT.* I wonder

None ever thought of it before.

*NER.* Tut ! fool ;

That is the greatness : 'tis the common thing

For man to beat about. True genius

Is but simplicity : all great inventions

Seem first devices.

*TIG.* 'Tis a revolution.

*NER.* Just so : in ethics as in politics.

I let the world wag as it will ; and if

The world mistake its will, then I am Cæsar

To wag it.

*VAT.* Here's a flaw, good wag ; you judge

The appetites of all men by your own :

The standard is too high.

*NER.* We'll see to that ;

By one experiment I'll strangle doubt.

This is my plan. I mean to hold a fête,

Say at Agrippa's pool :—the folk will need 800

Some such diversion when the fire is o'er :—

Thither I'll draw all Rome, with novel shows,

Sea fights and monsters ; round about the water,

Along the bank, I shall have wine-booths set,

Brilliant with luxury and enticement, wine

Gratis ; and to all comers night and day

They shall stand open. Now I'll have these booths

Kept by the Roman ladies :—that's my plan.

They shall have license, everything permitted

But interference. We will watch our Trojans,

How they conduct themselves.

*VAT.* This is simplicity.

*NER.* (*aside to Tig.*) And mark the disaffected.

*TIG.* (*aside.*) Here's a trap

To catch all but the vermin.

*SCE.* A grand invention.

*NER.* The details, my good master, are for you :

Our three friends here may help.

*SCE., SE<sup>o</sup>.* and *QU.* (*bowing.*) Our humble  
thanks.

*Enter a servant.*

*NER.* (*to servant.*) What is it?

*Serv.* Seneca is in attendance, sire.

*TIG.* (*to Ner.*) Send the old man home to his wife.

*NER.* What can he come for?

*VAT.* Is't not the hour for lessons?

*NER.* Now what say you

To have him in, and make him of your council

For the ordering of the fête? (*To serv.*) Go, show

him here. [*Exit servant.*]

*TIG.* (*aside to Nero.*) Jest not with this man,  
Cæsar ; Thræsea and he

Are your worst enemies.

*NER.* Mighty enemies !

*TIG.* If there were no pretenders.

*NER.* What do you mean?

*TIG.* (*apart with Nero.*) My only pleasure is thy  
service, Cæsar :

If 'tis thy will that Tigellinus die,

I'll be thy sacrifice and welcome death.

The mob shall tear me, as they tore Sejanus,

And tread my mangled corpse on Tiber's steps :

But pardon Nature's shudderings, they come

At sound of these men's names.

*NER.* Why, know you not 850

I am reconciled with Thræsea, since I put

His motion to the senate? While he lets me

Go my way, he goes his.

*TIG.* And Seneca?

*NER.* Pooh !

*TIG.* Cæsar said well these men were not to fear,

If there were no pretenders.

*NER.* What pretenders?

*TIG.* Sylla and Plautus are the first to name.

*NER.* Both are retired from Rome.

*TIG.* And whither, Cæsar?

Mark you that Sylla is retired to Gaul,

Fire to the tinderbox : those doughty legions

Forget not how they crossed the Rubicon.

And where is Plautus? close by Corbulo,

Whose army is a creature of discipline,

To serve him as his fingers . . .

*NER.* Corbulo, now ! my prince of generals,

Rome's trusty dexter arm.

*TIG.* Trust not that giant !

Nature packed not his mighty body full

Of intrepidity for nought. I well

Remember when I sat by him at supper,

The day he took his baton ; how his triumph

Was undisguised : and when Cæsar was mentioned—

You happened to have won a horse-race . . .

*NER.* And what said he?

*TIG.* No word, else had I told it ; he but hemmed :

But the couch shook. In his big iron chest

A thunder rumbled, such as Jove might make

If he found Juno faithless.

*NER.* Ha, ha, ha !

He'll crunch us, think you, master? But this Sylla

Is poor as a rat : and Plautus, if he is wealthy,

Lives moderately.

*TIG.* Poor men are poor in scruples :

And rich men that live moderately, be sure,

Hide some rich purpose.

*NER.* Had these men a purpose, 860

It would be bruited.

*TIG.* It is bruited.

*NER.* Ha !

That's so?

*TIG.* 'Tis also hoped that, being a pair,

The one may fight the other and both be slain.

*NER.* That is a trouble we can spare them,

master :

That were a pity.—I thank you, Tigellinus :—

Take you the order for their deaths ; but mind,

Secretly, secretly. Here's Seneca.

*Enter SENECA. (SCE., SE<sup>o</sup>. and QU. still stand aside.)*

*TIG. (aside).* Two of my foes wiped out; now, Mister Seneca,  
I take you next.

*NER.* Good Seneca, what wouldst thou?

*SEN.* Cæsar, I ask  
A private interview.

*NER.* 'Tis private here :  
This is my privy-council.

*VAT.* Rome's triumvirate.  
Ha, ha ! we rule the world ! *(Tableau.)*  
*(gesturing).* Come, trust thy secret  
In Cæsar's ear, my lord.

*SCE<sup>o</sup>. (Aside to SCE.)* Let us make up  
To Seneca by going out.

*SEN.* As Cæsar wills.

*SCE. (to Nero).* Cæsar's august permission !  
We are not stoics.

*NER.* I understand you, sir :  
You may withdraw.

*SCE., SE<sup>o</sup>. and QU.* Our humble thanks.  
*[Exeunt, bowing separately to Nero and Seneca.]*

*NER.* Now we are private.

*SEN.* If your majesty  
Will lend me attention, I will put my business  
Shortly.

*NER.* I shall not interrupt.

*VAT.* Nor I ; 880

Unless I snore. *(sits.)*

*SEN.* 'Tis fourteen years, Cæsar, since I was first  
Chosen your guide ; and for eight years and more  
You have governed the empire not without my aid.  
Through all which time your kindness hath heaped  
on me  
So many dignities and so much wealth,  
That nothing wants to my felicity  
Save some curtailment of it.—I can allege  
Precedents for my conduct : the divine Augustus,  
Who was your great-great-grandfather, permitted  
Marcus Agrippa to withdraw himself  
To Mitylené and a private life :  
Mæcenas too he let abide in Rome,  
As in a foreign country, at his ease ;—  
Whereof the one had served in all his wars,  
The other toiled at home ; and each grown rich  
With presents answerable to their high deserts.  
As for myself, what I have done to merit  
Your prodigal favour,—being but a student,  
A teacher, a philosopher,—I say not : 900  
But being enriched, it comforteth my mind  
'Twas not for me to strive against your gifts.  
Both of us, sire, have filled our measure, you  
In giving all a prince should give a friend,  
I taking what a friend might from a prince.  
But now, sire, in my journey of life grown old,  
The business of my riches burdens me.  
And 'tis by envy augmented ; which if you  
Be set above the sting of, yet 'tis known  
What curse to peace it is. Wherefore I pray,  
Let me retire. I crave your helping hand  
To ease me of my wealth : that I restore  
Whence first I had it, to yourself : receive it,  
I pray you, as your own. You, in your flower,

May serve your generation, and permit  
Your old friends to betake themselves to rest.  
'Twill be your praise, sire, to have enriched such men  
As could live happy in a mean estate.

*TIG. (half aside).* There's something behind this.

*NER. (to Tig.).* Silence, I bid !  
*(to Sen.).* If, Seneca, I am able out of hand  
To meet thy long premeditated speech  
With equal answer, that I owe to thee,  
And thine instruction.—First thou didst allege  
Mæcenas and Agrippa : but from them  
Divine Augustus took not back their wealth ;  
Which if they won in danger, yet I doubt not  
Thy weapons and thy hand would not have wanted  
Had I had need of them. But what I needed  
That gavest thou ; such reason and good counsel  
As shall abide with me while my life lasteth. 930  
Those goods material, which thou hadst of me,  
Are liable to perish ; and I am shamed  
That thou, who art the first in my affection,  
Art not first also in wealth :—nay, there be slaves  
Own more than thou :—and for thine age, I know  
Thou'rt lusty for thy years, and able well  
To enjoy thy wealth and its commodities.  
Keep thy rewards still, and still do us service :  
If slipperiness of youth be overprone  
To what it should not, thou mayst draw us back ;  
And our unseemly and unruly zeal  
Temper with kind advice. Harked I to thee,  
'Tis not thy moderation we should hear of,  
Nay, nor thy ease, shouldst thou forsake our service :  
Rather my covetousness and thy fear  
Would be in all men's mouths. 'Twould ill beseem  
Such a philosopher as thou, at cost  
Of thy friend's infamy to win thy comfort.

*TIG.* Hear, hear ! 'Tis well said, Cæsar !

*VAT.* Admirable !  
But somewhat senecal.

*NER.* Embrace me, Seneca. 950  
Let us be friends.

*VAT.* Ye gods ! I shall be jealous.  
Me too, my lord.

*SEN.* If, Cæsar, in this embrace  
Power kissed philosophy, 'twere well with both.

*NER.* I have my own philosophy to kiss ;  
Be thou content with thine.

*SEN.* Nay, the wise man  
Is so convinced of truth, he seeks to impart it.

*NER.* I would impart my wisdom unto thee.  
*(A messenger enters and speaks to Tigellinus, who goes out with him.)*

*SEN.* Alas ! all schools alike spue out your  
doctrines,  
Zeno or Epicurus.

*NER.* That is because  
You all agree to teach what none believes,  
That pain and misery and death are nothing,  
But goodness all-sufficient. Tell me, Seneca,  
Can a good man be happy on the rack ?

*VAT.* Not if the rack be good.

*SEN.* Such questions, Cæsar,  
Have their fit time and place. I came to offer  
My wealth and counsel both ; you refuse both,  
And let your fool mock me.—Knows he not whom  
Ill manners hurt, that thus he wounds his master ?



*NER.* And better have no manners than be made,  
As thou, of manners only. Thou affectest <sup>970</sup>  
Insensibility ; thy pompous maxims  
Of wordy wisdom thou wouldst pass for strong  
Because they are harsh, generous because inflated.  
Thy rhetoric is like a mouldy cake ;  
I have eaten to loathing of it : I would no more.

*SEN.* Look for no more. That speech delivers  
you.

Whether my words are false and empty bubbles  
There's nought to show, but 'twill appear the day  
When life must answer for it :—The condition,  
Cæsar, I accept, and do not fear the judgment.

[*Bows to Néro and exit.*]

*Re-enter TIGELLINUS excitedly.*

*TIG.* My house is burning, Cæsar !

*NER.* Well ! if it be ?  
By all the gods, vex me not now.

*TIG.* My house !

*NER.* And what's thy house, curse it ? when half  
the city  
Was burned to the ground, wert thou not cool ? why now  
Fume for thy house ?

*TIG.* Cæsar, the Vatican !

*NER.* The Vatican !

*TIG.* You may see it from the windows.

*NER.* (*going to window*). Then Rome will all be  
burned.

*TIG.* (*aside*). And by thy foes.

When the wind was in the south, they fired the south :  
Now it hath changed, they fire the north.

*NER.* (*returning*). 'Tis true.

I can do no more : it must burn.

*TIG.* What, sire, <sup>990</sup>

To tell the captains ? May they use discretion  
To pull down ?

*NER.* Bid them change the wind, man : bid them  
Snow from the south. Wood must burn ; when 'tis  
burnt,

I will rebuild in stone. Go : tell them that !

Go, sir ! Stay : hark ! Have supper laid to-night

On the palace roof, music beneath, and ladders

Outside for the attendance. [*Exit Tig. and Val.*]

If Rome must burn,

Well, let me see it. (*Goes to window.*)

*Enter POPPÆA.*

*POP.* Ah, Néro, Néro ! Rome will all be burned.  
Canst thou do nought ?

*NER.* Nothing. Come watch it with me.  
What are my spectacles to this ? The gods

Burn at my feet the capital of the world,

'Tis done for me to look on.

*POP.* Hast thou a heart ?

*NER.* There is no mischief, love, I am not a  
match for.

Rome is a second Troy, but when Troy burned

None built it up ; but I will rebuild Rome :

Its name shall be Neropolis.

*POP.* Vain thou art !

*NER.* Eh ! wouldst thou have it called Poppæ-  
polis ?

*POP.* I would not jest to think of all the misery,  
These homeless thousands . . .

*NER.* Seneca hath taught me <sup>1010</sup>  
The good man cannot suffer, and the bad  
Deserves ill-fortune.

*POP.* Woe to me ! alas,  
That e'er I loved thee ! one day thou shalt I  
Taste of thy scorn.

*NER.* Nay, love ; thy will's my law.  
Tell me what I shall do.

*POP.* If thou didst love me  
Thou wouldst not suffer Acte in the palace.

*NER.* Acte ! what's she to do with it now ? and  
yet

If that's thy sorrow, she shall go to-day.

Send the witch hither.

*POP.* And never to return.

*NER.* Send her at once. I promised thee.

[*Exit Poppæa.*]

See how

'Tis private pleasure that she seeks, nought else :

And Seneca the same. That's the true fire,

That burns unquenchable in all human hearts.

Let it rage, and consume the rotten timbers

Of old convention, the dry mouldering houses

Of sad philosophy, that in their stead

I may build up the free and ample structure

Of modern wisdom. Ay, and let Rome burn.

Blow, wind, and fan the flames till all's consumed ;

That out of full destruction may arise <sup>1030</sup>

The perfect city of my reconstruction,

Beautiful, incombustible, Neronic,

Good out of ill : or rather there's no ill :

'Tis good's condition, cradle : 'tis good itself.

But now for Acte, my Acte : poor little Acte !

That bearest all so patiently ; the insult

And domineering scorn, which this fine lady,

Whom for her beauty I have made my empress,

Pours on thy head ! Thou shalt have full protection :

I cannot give it here, but I can send thee

To those who hate thy rival, and for that

Will cherish thee. Thy rival ! rob me of thee !

Why, there's no clown in my subservient world,

No drudge of lot the vilest, but may smile

Secure in tyranny of one fair province,

Where young love first campaigned, the tender trust

Of a devoted woman : and shall Cæsar

Throw up this allmen's joy ? nay, here the heart  
rules :

Who aims at thee wounds me.

*Re-enter POPPÆA with ACTE.*

I thank thee, love ; now leave us. Hither, Acte ! <sup>1050</sup>

(*Poppæa goes out, and is seen to hide where she can be  
seen by the audience, and can overhear.*)

*ACT.* Cæsar sent for me.

*NER.* My sweetest, dearest girl : my only pleasure.  
I have ill news for thee.

*ACT.* Nought can seem ill

Told me by Néro.

*NER.* Acte, thy noble Cæsar

Is sometimes sad.

*ACT.* Ah, 'tis the fire : thou'rt sorry

For thy poor folk. Would I had strength to cheer  
thee,

If thou didst send for this.

NER. No: but to see thee  
Doth comfort me. It comforts me to tell thee  
I am not happy.

ACT. Let the happiness  
Which thy love gives me, turn to thee again. <sup>1060</sup>

NER. Acte, I think, I know, Acte, that thou  
Art the only one in the world that truly loves me.

ACT. I wish it were no crime to wish I were.  
Yet I would have all love thee, since I know  
None can as I.

NER. And none hath loved so long:  
Thou wert my first delight.

ACT. Did Cæsar send  
To tell me this bad news?

NER. Nay, but I love to tell it:  
Now for the bad. Hark: thou must leave the palace:  
Poppæa is jealous, and the day draws near  
When she and I must solemnize our nuptials:  
Rome needs an heir.

ACT. I am not jealous of her,  
If Cæsar love me; for I know that Cæsar  
Cannot be bound like other men.

NER. 'Tis true:  
And I can send thee too where they will love thee;  
To Siliæ's house; thou wilt be happier there.

ACT. I think so.

NER. This is not dismissal.

ACT. Nay.

NER. 'Tis needful for thy sake.

ACT. I know that Nero  
Will not love Acte less, when she is away  
From his dislikes.

NER. Ah, pretty sweet, thou know'st  
My secretest heart. Come, I will write a letter <sup>1080</sup>  
For thee to take to Siliæ. Come! (*The fire brightens.*)

ACT. (*turning*). O, Nero,  
The fire, the fire! I am frightened.

NER. Hide thine eyes  
And think not of it.

ACT. Nay, but I can hear it,  
And smell the smoke.

NER. It shall not hurt thee, darling:  
And Siliæ's house lies down beyond the Tiber,  
Far from the flames. Come, sweetest, thou shalt sit  
Beside me while I write the letter. Come!  
I treasure thee 'bove all I have. Fear not!

[*Exeunt Nero and Acte. Poppæa comes out from  
where she was hid. The fire rages.*]

POP. Accursed wretch! I knew it: she is thy wife,  
And I thy harlot. Yet I can dissemble—  
I can dissemble too—I, sanctified  
By long devotion to the Queen of heaven,  
Shelter too well thy godless head. I live  
To reign when thou art dead. Vain, hideous fool!  
Whose heart not murder scathes nor fire can scare,  
Proof by self-evil against all outer evil:  
There is one mischief that thou'rt not a match for,  
The hate of thy bed-fellow. I shall be avenged.

## END OF ACT II.

(*There is at the end of this act such a tableau of fire  
as the stage machinery will allow of. The fire  
is first seen thro' the windows when Tigellinus  
sends Nero to the window at line 986. At Act's  
speech, "Nero, the fire!" it is very bright: and  
its climax is during Poppæa's last speech.*)

## ACT III.

## SCENE I.

A burned street in Rome: night.

## THRÆSEA.

In these burned streets I wander like a ghost:  
Rome is no more: O see, my memoried Rome, <sup>1100</sup>  
My senatorial city is burned and gone!  
The city of Camillus, whose abrupt  
And tortuous streets my ancestors have threaded,  
Here going about a tower of Servius,  
Here an Etruscan temple of carved wood,  
Here by some patriot tribune's gabled home:  
All gone, as the free spirit that made it, gone:  
And I like this old beam, in vain escaped  
The burning, shall be cast out, nor find place  
In the new Rome that Cæsar promises,  
O'erlaid with perfected monotony,  
The textbook ornaments of shallow taste,  
Imperial gewgaws.—What poet was it said  
That Desolation was a beautiful thing?  
What parricidal spirit? To cut down  
And burn the gnarl'd trunk of a thousand years,  
And plant the trifling shoot of one gay summer  
Rootless in the ground. (*Cries heard.*) What noise  
is this?  
Some wretched Christian, that in blind revenge  
The maddened people sacrifice.

*Enter the mob carrying off CLITUS—EPI-  
CHARIS following.*

Mob. Burn him! To the Vatican! to the Vati-  
can! Burn him!

EP. Pity, pity, pity, sirs! He is guiltless,  
indeed he is guiltless. He is my brother.

THR. Stay, ye mad fools! To what detestable,  
Forbidden crime of hellish witchcraft haste ye!

Mob. Here's another. He's a Christian. Seize  
him!

THR. Hands off, fools! I am Thræsea.

Mob. Thræsea!

THR. Are ye Romans?

Citizen. 'Tis Nero's order.

EP. (*kneeling to Thræsea*). O sir, save thou my  
brother.

Cit. If thou wert Thræsea, man, thou wouldst not  
hinder us from punishing them that fired the city.

Mob. On! on!

Another Cit. Nay, nor let any Christian woman  
touch thee.

Mob. To the Vatican! on! (*going*.)

THR. Fools, I am Thræsea, and I bid you stay.

Mob. Burn him, burn him! [*Exeunt mob, etc.*]

THR. Stay! Are ye men?

EP. O sir, 'tis my brother, my brother Clitus;  
save him!

THR. What can I do? Alas, (*calls*) stay! stay!  
(*to Ep.*) Thou seest. [*Exeunt running.*]

*Enter LATERANUS and FLAVUS.*

LAT. This is the only way. The Fabian street  
is blocked with red-hot ashes.

FLA. Where's this Natalis?

*LAT.* He should be here ; we must wait for him.

*FLA.* You trust him, sir ?

*LAT.* Yes.

*FLA.* And Piso ?

*LAT.* Certainly.

*FLA.* It is hard, sir, for a man like me, to trust a man like Piso. I yield to the choice of my betters, and the vote of the majority. I would not split the party. Yet I wish we had persuaded Seneca !

*LAT.* So do I, and it cost him a pang to refuse. 'Twas only Thrasea's opinion that overweighed him.

*FLA.* Priscus ruined us.

*LAT.* There's no choice for us now ; and I doubt not we can make Piso emperor. He hath a wider following than Seneca. But when we have set him up, 'twill be in the power of any to pull him down.

*FLA.* And then Seneca : why not Seneca then ?

*LAT.* Hush ! who comes ?

*FLA.* 'Tis Rufus.

*Enter RUFUS.*

*RUF.* Good evening, gentlemen ; go you to Petronius' ? 1170

*FLA.* We do, general.

*LAT.* We wait for Natalis.

*RUF.* Flavius, I'm glad of thee ; hast thou heard of any new adherents ?

*FLA.* Too many, general : and not the least some of Cæsar's bosom friends.

*RUF.* Who are they ?

*FLA.* There's Scevinus, hot as fire, who drags with him Senecio and Quintian, with one or two more filibustering fellows.

*RUF.* The household contingent should help us when we come to close quarters.

*FLA.* If they are to be trusted.

*RUF.* If a man cannot be trusted to hate Nero for a week or ten days, there's little to reckon on in this world.

*LAT.* Here is Natalis.

*Enter NATALIS.*

*NAT.* All's well. Piso is at Petronius'.

*RUF.* Hath he consented to head our party ?

*NAT.* Yes, believe me. But you will find him cautious and delicate in speaking of it.

*FLA.* If he speak not, how shall we trust him ? He may turn on us.

*NAT.* My life for yours ; my assurance ; what oath you will . . .

*RUF.* We know, Natalis, thou art a man of honour,

One that would not deceive us, wert thou not As heartily with us as I know thou art.

*NAT.* I am much hurt that Flavius questions Piso.

*RUF.* He knows not, sir, the perfect intimacy 'Twixt Piso and thee. For my part, I should think Piso unreliable, if I should find him 1201

Hasty and indiscreet in such a matter.

*FLA.* I use but the same caution.

*NAT.* I do not blame you : But be assured he is won.—My part is done.

Go you and prosper. Farewell, sirs. (going)

*All.* Farewell. [*Exit Natalis.*]

*RUF.* 'Tis good, now let us to Petronius'.

[*Exeunt.*]

## SCENE II.

*The previous scene withdraws, showing a supper-room in the house of PETRONIUS. Slaves removing the last of the feast. PETRONIUS, PISO, LUCAN, SCEVINUS, SENECCIO, and QUINTIAN. Three places are empty.*

*PETRONIUS.*

(*To Piso.*) That's the last dish, my lord : a little banquet

Of fruit remains, and, best of all my supper, Three jars of Otho's wine.

*PIS.* Ha ! merry Otho, Become a man of affairs. Drink we to him And Lusitania.

*LUC.* (*rising excitedly.*) A toast with Otho's name ! Republican integrity !

*PET.* What a fuss, Lucan, you make, because a gentleman Is honest. What else could you expect of Otho ?

*SE<sup>o</sup>.* When, too, there's nought worth stealing in his province.

*PIS.* (*to Petr.*) You, 'sir, would underrate high qualities,

Being proved in them yourself. Bithynia Praises you still, though Rome forgets your zeal In the grace of your retirement. Will you never Mix in affairs again ?

*PET.* Nothing could tempt me. 1220

The very thought of travelling wearies me, And the occupation of the mind in matters That any clerk is fit for.—Yet I praise

The world and all its fret : its vanity, Advertisement, vulgarity and dirt Are precious for one thing ; they make retirement Positive joy. Blest are the gods who sit On changeless seats. I think they framed the world That they might look upon it and rejoice They lived not in it : that's its use to me.

*LUC.* True, as Rome says, Petronius, thou art steeped

In gross epicurism.

*PET.* Bravo, stoic !

I may be what men say : yet very few Are what they show the world : there's a screw-twist

In every mind. It is the sensuous man Follows asceticism : the passionate man Who is practised in reserve. Why *know thyself*, Unless to hide thyself ? Look at the houses

Of our philosophers : the epicurean, 1240 Who holds the happiness of life depends

On small accessories, lives in discomfort :

The stoic, he who says all outward matters Concern him not a pin, orders his home With scrupulous care ; however nice your taste, There's not a better host.

*QU.* You'd tell us then

You set no store by elegance and culture.

*PET.* Eh ! I' may be an exception, sir : and yet I'd have you think I most love elegance Where 'tis most rare and out of reach of the world.



I'd not without reserve praise Lucan's style <sup>1250</sup>  
In poetry.

*SCE.* Nor his matter.

*SE<sup>o</sup>.* Yes, his matter,

Where he laments the fall of the republic ;

"But if the fates could find no other way

"For Cæsar to succeed" . . . what was't he said ?

*QU.* "All crimes and horrors we with joy regard,

"Since thou, O Nero, art our great reward."

(*Laughter.*)

*LUC.* Let that be read with what I have written  
since.

What thinkest thou, Senecio, of the days

When thou wert Nero's darling? If what thou didst

Be as well condoned by what thou goest to do,

As what I wrote shall be by what I write,

Thou'lt be a hero.

*SCE.* Hear, hear!

*PET.* (*who has motioned the slaves out*). Really, sirs,  
You grow obscure.

*PIS.* Explain.

*SCE.* Ay, speak your mind.

*LUC.* I ask then, is Senecio still content

To share in Nero's deeds?

*SE<sup>o</sup>.* Nay, I abjure them.

*LUC.* (*coming to him*). Patriot, I take thy hand!

*SCE.* And I.

*QU.* And I.

*LUC.* Ye too abjure the bloody tyrant's guilt?

Would ye see Rome free, let us make an oath

By black Styx, and invoke the gods of crime!

*PET.* Hey-day! here's tinsel!—Let me refill  
your cup, <sup>1270</sup>

Piso; the gold mellows this ruby juice,

As music comforts poetry, and the eye

Assists the palate (*pouring*).

*LUC.* Is't not true, Petronius,

Thou dost hate Nero too? Thou hast held aloof

From all his crimes. Thou sippest an exile's wine,

Thou laughest and art comfortable: ah! man,

Stop well thine ears with luxury, lest thou hear

The shrieks in Cæsar's garden, where men burn

To light his revels up.

*SE<sup>o</sup>.* Ay, burned alive,

Because he saith they burned the city,—and he

Did it himself: would he were burned.

*QU.* I heard him

Whisper to Tigellinus, "I had liefer

'Twere all burnt than a little; help it, master!"

And so it was.—

*PET.* I have come to see the purpose of this  
supper.

(*To Piso.*) The company, my lord, was gathered here

By Fænius Rufus: he and other two

Have disappointed me . . . My lord, I see

My house was chosen for security.

I'll take it as a compliment: you are welcome

To all but my attention. Ha! I think

Here be the others.—(*Letting in RUFUS, LATER-*

*ANUS and FLAVUS.*) Welcome, my lords!

*RUF.* I fear we are late, Petronius.

*PET.* Make excuse

To my most honoured guest. (*They bow to Piso.*)

*PIS.* Ye are come in time

To share the best of wine.

*PET.* Pray serve yourselves:

I go to close the door 'gainst listeners.

*RUF.* (*to Luc.*). Ye have broached the business?

*LUC.* (*to Ruf.*). Yes. (*Motioning.*)

*RUF.* Nay, I'll sit here,

And fill my cup. (*Sitting.*)

*PIS.* And you too, sirs, be seated.

*RUF.* (*pouring*). I saw a sight as I came here:  
the mob

Dragging some wretched Christian to be burned. <sup>1300</sup>

And all the while his sister ran beside,

With her vain anguish heightening their fury:

And he! . . . believe me, I never saw a man

In all my life look better pleased.—I quaff

To Piso.

*All* (*toasting*). Piso! Piso!

*RUF.* And what saith

Calpurnius Piso?

*PIS.* How, general?

*RUF.* You consent?

*PIS.* Consent to what?

*LUC.* Speak, Rufus.

*LAT.* Let the general

Make our proposals to his lordship.

*All.* Hear, hear! (*Petronius returns.*)

*RUF.* My lords and gentlemen, since I am chosen

To expound the common thought . . . It sprang at  
first,

I think, of the earthquake: seeing Cæsar's life

So near extinguished, as it was, at Naples;

It came into our minds that no provision

Was made for the succession; which neglect,

In case of accident, might cause disturbance,

And saddle us with an upstart. We agreed

To choose our Cæsar; but, to shield ourselves,

Would sound him privately.

*PIS.* My noble friends,

Ye are justified by circumstance: I share

Your fears, and was acquainted with your purpose.

But, ere I stand committed to your party,

What are their names? Have you them writ?

*LUC.* No, no.

We write no names.

*PIS.* Who be they?

*RUF.* You see us here.

There are besides, my tribunes Statius Proximus

And Granius Silvanus: my centurions

Scaurus and Paullus. There's Sulpitius Asper,

And Julius Tugerinus, Martius Festus,

Proculus, a whole list,—Munatius Gratus,

Vulcatius Avaricus . . .

*PIS.* And the consul

Vestinus?

*RUF.* Nay.

*PIS.* Thræsea and Priscus?

*RUF.* No. <sup>1330</sup>

*PIS.* We lack the senatorials then: perhaps

Seneca is with us?

*RUF.* Nay, nor he, my lord.

*PIS.* You mentioned Proculus: doth Proculus

Bring all the navy?

*RUF.* Nay, our Proculus

Is not Volusius.

*PIS.* Nor the navy either!

*SE<sup>o</sup>.* I know the Admiral, my lord: let me

Sound him, if he hangs back.

*FLA.* No hangers-back.  
*RUF.* Your name, my lord, when we may mention it,  
 Is all-sufficient.  
*PIS.* I give not my name  
 Till Nero is dead.  
*FLA.* That will be soon.  
*SCE.* Three days.  
*PIS.* Indeed! how know you?  
*SCE.* Here I show you a sword  
 I have whetted for the deed.  
*FLA.* Eh, sir! and who  
 Named thee?  
*SCE.* Myself to Capitolian Jove  
 Offered myself and weapon.  
*FLA.* And what, I pray,  
 Said Jupiter?  
*PET.* Peace, peace! Here in my house  
 Let me be chairman.—  
 I'll ask Scævius first to state his plan.  
*FLA.* Yes, state it, sir.  
*SCE.* I would set fire to his house,  
 And stab him as he hurried to and fro.  
*PET.* Enough of fire. The palace is already  
 Half-burned, and what remains of it is prospectively  
 Piso's.—Now, Subrius Flavus, what's your scheme?  
*FLA.* I'd kill him when he is singing on the  
 stage,  
 In face of all the people, a sacrifice  
 To his Greek Apollo.  
*PET.* Not ill thought of, sir;  
 But who's to do it?—Well, Senecio?  
*SEV.* Why fix the time or place? Let all here  
 swear  
 That the first one of us who can approach him  
 Shall stab him to the heart.  
*RUF.* Yes, and be killed for it. 1360  
 'Tis rare that Cæsar goes unguarded now.  
*LUC.* You bid us sacrifice our lives, but I  
 Would gaze, like Cassius, on my glorious deed.  
*PET.* Then, Lucan, have you a plan?  
*LUC.* I should propose  
 To leave the deed to Rufus: he commands  
 The needful force.  
*PET.* Well, Rufus?  
*RUF.* 'Tis not easy,  
 As Lucan thinks: and if he escape our swords,  
 'Tis death to us all. There is but one way free  
 Of personal risk.—If Piso would invite him  
 To an entertainment at his house at Naples,  
 We might be sure of him.  
*PIS. (rising).* What! Good Heavens, General!  
 Take you me for a Jew? An entertainment!  
 My house!  
*PET.* Hear, hear!  
*PIS.* Rufus, and all my friends,  
 Hear me. While Nero lives, my life's in danger:  
 Yet will I never move to take him off.  
 If you shall choose to do it, or if he die,  
 I'll be your Cæsar: there's no more to say.  
 I leave you to consult. (*going*)  
*PET.* Not in my house.  
 As chairman I adjourn the meeting: nay,  
 I have done more than my duty.  
*LUC.* And why, Petronius,  
 Wilt thou not join us?

*PET.* Rather, I beg you each, 1380  
 Whoever may be Cæsar, to remember  
 My innocence, and leave me to myself.  
*PIS.* Why for your very virtue I shall need you.  
*PET.* Indeed, my lord, you know me not: my  
 habits  
 Are incompatible with business.  
 Ye have eaten with me now, but, late as 'tis,  
 Your supper is my breakfast; and while you  
 Go to your beds, I shall begin my day:  
 Like an old lion . . .  
*LUC.* Or like an owl.  
*PET.* Well, sparrow,  
 Or like an owl, that makes his day of night,  
 And when men stir hies to his barn; so I:  
 And by this trick of time shut myself off  
 From half the curse of life. You little think  
 What charm the witching night hath for her lovers:  
 How her solemnity doth deepen thought,  
 And bring again the lost hellenic Muse  
 To sing from heaven: or on moonlit swords  
 Of fancy shadows in transfigured scene  
 The history of man.—Thus, like a god,  
 I dwell; and take the early morning cries 1400  
 For calls to sleep; and from divinity  
 Fall to forgetfulness, while bustling day  
 Ravages life: and know no more of it,—  
 Your riot and din, the plots and crimes of Rome,—  
 Than doth a diver in Arabian seas,  
 Plunging for pearls beneath the lonely blue:  
 But o'er my slumbering head soft airs of dreamland  
 Rock their wild honey-blooms, till the shy stars  
 Once more are venturing forth, and I awake.  
 Is not that something?  
*PIS.* Ha, ha! Well, good-night!  
 I mean good-morning. Yet ere we depart  
 I'll take each by the hand,—you, sir, and you,—  
 And let it be an earnest of my favour  
 In time to come: I shall remember all.  
 Consult meanwhile with Rufus: I shall see him,  
 And shall myself make ready.  
*PET.* The slaves, my lord,  
 Are sent away: I'll show you to the street:  
 Come: you shall see me undo the doors, and say  
 I care well for my safety. Pray keep silence.

[*Exeunt.*]

## SCENE III.

*The next morning: a room in Lucan's house.**Enter a servant.*

*Serv.* Scarce an hour after sunrise, and two ladies  
 for my master already. This it is to be a poet. One  
 gives no name; the other is Thrasea's daughter,  
 Priscus' young wife. I am to take her first: though  
 the other looks the more pressing. (*Goes to side, and  
 returns ushering FANNIA.*) If my lady will kindly  
 wait here a moment.

*FAN.* Is your master not up?

*Serv.* He was late last night, my lady: and is  
 now breakfasting.

*FAN.* Will he not see me? 1420

*Serv.* Yes, my lady. [*Exit.*]

*FAN.* It is then as we feared: Lucan was there.  
 He is one of the conspiracy of Piso,

And he was at Petronius' house last night :  
I come too late.

*Enter LUCAN, hurriedly.*

LUC. Fannia, good-morning !

FAN. Good-morning, cousin !

LUC. What brings you here so early ?

FAN. Ah ! if I am not too late ! My husband sent me

To save thy life.

LUC. (*excitedly*). What's this ?

FAN. These were his words,

'Bid him, by all we love and hold in common,

'Withdraw from the conspiracy.'

LUC. (*aside*). 'Tis nothing.—

(*to Fan.*). I thank thee. Take this answer to the message,

'I bid him, by the love we hold in common,

'Join the conspiracy.'

FAN. Judge, my dear cousin,

By them that hold aloof how ill 'tis plotted,

LUC. Then rather win the hearts that hold aloof,  
Than tamper with the movers.

FAN. Sir, my husband . . . .

LUC. Thou hast the fairest star in heaven to guide thee.

FAN. Let him guide thee.

LUC. I must not hear thee, cousin.

Write down my name 'mong the tyrannicides. <sup>1450</sup>

I know I have thy prayers ; and to say truth,

I need them : 'tis an anxious time : indeed

While we talk here, a secret messenger

Awaits me : the suspense distracts me. Excuse me ! . . .

Farewell ! . . . I must . . .

FAN. Ah, Lucan, Lucan !

LUC. Give

My thanks and love to Priscus.

FAN. Alas ! Farewell.

May the gods aid thee ! [*Exit.*]

LUC. In sleep or action is my mind at ease :

Between the two, each moment is a world

Of scared imaginations. Better suffer

One worst at once, than all the thousand tortures

The making mind invents. Who is this woman,

That I should dread her message with more fear

Than I would grant to death ?

*Enter EPICHRIS.*

Come in ! Ah, lady, I fear there's something ill ?

Com'st thou from . . . say, bringst thou a secret message ?

What is't ? Ay, sit and speak.

EP. (*sitting*). Art thou the poet Lucan ?

LUC. I am.

EP. 'Tis well.

I bring this book. (*giving*.)

LUC. Ha ! a passport : from whose hand ?

EP. A courtier gave it me in lieu of money.

LUC. (*aside*). The copy I gave to Quintian.—

Was it Quintian ?

EP. No, sir. Ask not his name.

LUC. Tell me thy message ;

Or if this book is all, what is thy price ?

EP. Sir, I was told this book, if given to Nero,  
Would be thy death. 'Tis writ by thee ? <sup>1475</sup>

LUC. It is.

EP. Then thou dost hate him.

LUC. (*aside*). What should this lead to ?—

Thy manner frights me, lady, not thy matter.

Who art thou, pale and breathless as the grave,

That comest thus ?

EP. My name is Epiccharis.

Three days ago, sir, when this book was given me,

I thought to bring it back to thee, from whom

No doubt 'twas stolen, and win gold for my silence.

To-day I ask not money ; but much more

I'll ask, if by this chance I have found in Rome

The man to avenge me.

LUC. Avenge thee ? What is thy wrong ?

Tremble not so.

EP. Wilt thou ? Art thou the man ?

Dost thou hate Nero ?

LUC. Pray, lady, be still.

EP. Sir, canst thou help me ?

LUC. If thou art wronged by Nero,

Lady, I can and will help thee.

EP. And thou

Thyself too art in danger.

LUC. In greater danger

Than thou surmisest.

EP. If all wait their turn,

Who shall be left to avenge ?

LUC. I do not wait.

Let me beseech thee, lady, master this passion,

And tell thy grief.

EP. My grief ? nay, that's past telling :

There are no words for that. Yet fear not, sir ;

I can be quiet while I tell my story.

LUC. Be comforted to know thou tellest to one

Thy sworn ally, before thou sayst a word.

To his strong mortal anger add thy cause.

EP. I shall, sir ; I can. All womanly soft <sup>1500</sup>  
feeling

I have driven for ever from me ; and I have sworn

A pact with tears, that I will shed not one

Till I be avenged.

LUC. Trust me ; and tell thy wrong.

EP. I live at Naples, sir ; my mother keeps

The tavern where the sailors most resort.

My father died five years ago, and then

It happened that my brother, my only brother,—

Whose generous nature blamed the life of gain

That there we led,—left us, and was ere-long

Inveigled by the Christian sect. It happened

He met their leader Paulus,—whom 'twas said

Burrus protected,—for he came by Naples,

And there my brother heard him, and had after

Strange visions, and believed the end of the world

Was near, and Christ would come to reign in Rome,

And other doctrines taught by Paul ; and lately,

Three days ago, he saw Paul in a dream,

Who beckoned him to Rome. Either he came,

And I soon after him, being full of fear,

Knowing the ill-odour of his sect, and him

Inclined to boast it ; and so I came. The Christians

Were seized last night, and my poor brother, sir,

Though unknown, unsuspected and unchallenged,

Gave himself up. Now all is over.

LUC. Thou meanest . . .

EP. I could not stay him. I saw him taken. <sup>1525</sup>  
One Thrasea,



A senator, whose voice seemed powerful with them,  
Joined his commands with my poor prayers in vain :  
'Twas Nero's order.

*LUC.* Was he burned ?

*EP.* Ye gods,  
If there be any gods ; if there be Christ,  
Or Zeus, or Jove, or who you will, look down,  
Avenge !

*LUC.* Thou shalt be avenged.

*EP.* I know not, sir,  
Where I have been, nor how my brother suffered :  
He had no fear ; he welcomed death : and yet,—  
Ah ! what I saw ! were it assured a dream,  
I would not live after that dream ; the memory  
Would make a horror of joy. I pray to die,  
Die and forget ; but first live and avenge him :  
I will do that : help me or show me how.

*LUC.* Can thy just hate teach thy tongue silence,  
lady ?

*EP.* Fear not my tongue : fear nothing : were I  
not brave,

Should I be alive ? should I be here ?

*LUC.* My secret,  
That I shall tell thee, is my life. I am one  
Of a conspiracy to rid the world  
Of this black monster.

*EP.* Thou art ? thou art ? Thou tellst me  
That I may join ? Alas, that I am a woman.

*LUC.* Prove now thy mastery of thyself by  
reasoning  
In sober terms.

*EP.* I can.

*LUC.* (*showing the book*). Who gave thee this ?

*EP.* Senecio.

*LUC.* Ha ! Senecio ! can it be . . .

*EP.* Thou mayst not think it, sir, seeing me  
to-day :

But yesterday thou wouldst have well believed  
I might have lovers.

*LUC.* . . . At Naples, at this tavern, <sup>1556</sup>  
Hast thou acquaintance with the Admiral ?

*EP.* I know him well.

*LUC.* How doth he stand towards Cæsar ?

*EP.* He hates him.

*LUC.* Yes, but would he join our party ?  
We have no means to sound him : this Senecio  
Has taken it on himself. I did not trust him ;

Now I suspect him.

*EP.* You would win the navy ?

*LUC.* 'Tis that.

*EP.* I could approach him.

*LUC.* I think thou mayst.  
Bide with me here to-day ; for ere we talk  
Thou must have food and sleep. I shall speak with  
thee

More confidently then : thou art now o'erstrained.

*EP.* I shall not sleep.

*LUC.* To the distracted heart,  
To whom this life is hell, nature hath given  
A perfect boon, the numbing poppy-juice :  
Soothed by its gracious power thou wilt sleep well.  
My mother shall attend thee : she knows all.

END OF ACT III.

## ACT IV.

## SCENE I.

*The tavern at Naples, (as at I. 2).*

*GRIPUS, MARINERS and SENECIO.*

*GRI.* I say weather permitting : it's always  
weather permitting. <sup>1568</sup>

*1st Mar.* There was no weather permitting in it.  
I heard the Admiral say he had his orders to sail for  
the Adriatic, and the ships at Formiæ were to join  
him here last night.

*GRI.* Weather permitting.

*1st M.* No : no weather permitting. If it had  
been weather permitting, would they have put out in  
the teeth of a sou'-wester ? that's what I look at.

*2nd M.* No sailor would have done it ; least of all  
Regulus.

*GRI.* Then 'twas Cæsar's fault not to have said  
weather permitting.

*3rd M.* Eight firstrates : the pick of the fleet.

*1st M.* Nay, seven, mate. The Ulysses is put in  
for repairs.

*SE<sup>o</sup>.* What is it you talk of, fellows ?

*1st M.* Why, where have you been, sir ? Half  
the fleet's ashore off Misenum.

*SE<sup>o</sup>.* Wrecked ?

*GRI.* Ay, that they be.

*Enter EPICCHARIS.*

*EP.* Is it true, Gripus ? Is the squadron lost ?

*GRI.* True enough.

*EP.* Was the Admiral with them ?

*1st M.* Regulus : 'twas Regulus at Formiæ, lady.

*EP.* Not Proculus ?

*1st M.* Nay, he's with his ships in the bay.

*EP.* And the crews ?

*2nd M.* Ther'll not be many stand up, when they  
come ashore.

*EP.* Poor fellows ! And whose fault was this ?

*GRI.* Cæsar's, I say, lady : and none else.

*SE<sup>o</sup>.* Epicharis, see, I am returned. <sup>1600</sup>

*EP.* Well, I see you, sir. Have you been to  
Rome and back so soon ?

*SE<sup>o</sup>.* Yes, my house is pulled down. But I saw  
the Christians burned.

*EP.* Hark, sir ; I have news for you. (*takes him  
aside and speaks with him.*)

*Enter PROCULUS.*

*PRO.* What ! a dozen of you fellows here ! Up  
with you ! be sharp, and off to the point. See if you  
can't be of some use. You may save a life or two  
yet.

*Mar.* We have no orders, my lord.

*PRO.* Where do you expect to find your orders ?  
Go and help your mates. You may get into a scrape  
yourselves some day.

*Mar.* Very willing, my lord ; so we be sent.  
(*All drain their cups standing.*)

*PRO.* Come, leave your possets.

*Mar.* Ay, ay, my lord.

[*Exeunt Mariners.*]

*PRO.* Epicharis, wine !

*EP.* Gauran, my lord ?

*PRO.* Yes.—And you, sir, I think are the gentle-

man that begged to go aboard the fleet to get clear of the earthquake. What did I tell you?

SE<sup>o</sup>. You did not tell me, my lord, that Cæsar ordered you to be shipwrecked. (*Epicharis serves Pro. with wine.*)

PRO. Well, 'twas his doing: I'll bear no blame of it. Three days ago it was Cæsar's intention to go to Greece; we must therefore be ready to meet him at Brundisium. Never had more stringent orders. Now he has forgot all about it, and gone to Rome: and I have lost a third of the fleet for nothing. May all the gods . . . 1630

EP. The fire took him to Rome.

SE<sup>o</sup>. The Romans, my lord, can never spare him long: their bread depends on him.

PRO. Can't that old shrimper Tigellinus feed 'em on sprats?

SE<sup>o</sup>. Hi, hi!

PRO. Well, sir!

SE<sup>o</sup>. I shan't tell.

EP. The wine will soothe you, my lord. (*Refilling his cup, she signs to Senecio, who goes out.*)

PRO. Thank you, lass.

EP. Did Cæsar give the order himself?

PRO. Don't talk to me. Ha, that fellow's gone, is he? He is not one to blab?

EP. How should I know, my lord?

PRO. What's his name?

EP. Senecio.

PRO. Senecio, yes, of course: one of Nero's intimates: and I called Tigellinus an old shrimper: 'twould cost me my life if he heard it. 1650

EP. No man is safe.

PRO. Nor woman either, Epicharis: guard your tongue.

EP. I am a Greek, my lord.

PRO. What's that to serve thee?

EP. Nothing truly; and yet

I have no share in Rome's reproach; I laugh

Rather to see my country's conquerors

Themselves enslaved. I have no pride in Cæsar:

Let him be a madman, one day burn his city,

The next day wreck his fleet,—poison his brother,—

Murder his mother,—behead his wife,—I care not.

Let all his courtiers be curs, and he

Sing in the theatre . . . In Greece a tyrant

Had little heart for singing; nay, at night

He slept not, thinking what undaunted spirits

Were lying wide-awake for torturing shame

Till they could kill him.

PRO. By Jove, thou hast a tongue!

EP. And they that like it, thou may cut it out.

PRO. Drink with me, lass (*offers his cup*).

EP. I would I were a Roman

But for one day.

PRO. I love thee for thy spirit.

EP. Thou lov'st to hear the words thou dar'st not say.

PRO. Well, give me more.

EP. Greek as I am, my lord,

And woman, were I now as near to Cæsar

As I am to you, I'd stab him to the heart.

PRO. I would not stay thee.

EP. But thou wouldst not do it.

PRO. Bah! thou'rt a Greek to brag what thou wouldst do: 1675

I am a Roman, and would do the thing Before I speak it.

EP. Yet mightst never do it.

PRO. Thou knowst me not.

EP. Then none knows thee, my lord.

Were there a plot among the brave in Rome, Which they should fear to break to thee, and say We know him not, we cannot risk to sound him, A woman might; then should they send a woman, Some woman that thou lov'st, to learn thy mind, What wouldst thou say?

PRO. Then were it time to speak.

EP. The brave in Rome have plotted: I am the woman—

Their messenger.

PRO. What! a conspiracy?

'Gainst Cæsar's life?

EP. They bid thee bring the navy.

PRO. Art thou in earnest?

EP. I am a Greek, my lord;

And risk my life for Roman liberty.

PRO. What are their names?

EP. The best in Rome.

PRO. Who are they?

EP. In time I'll tell their names.

PRO. And what the plot?

EP. In three days Cæsar will be slain: 'tis asked

Of thee that thou wilt bring thy ships to Ostia,

And seize the granaries till Rome is ours.

PRO. What are their names?

EP. With fair security

I will tell all.

PRO. And what security

For me?

EP. Enough, my lord, even in this risk

To well content thee.

PRO. Tell me the chief names.

EP. When I have won thee.

PRO. Thou hast won me: tell. 1700

EP. In good time all.

PRO. What would they have me do?

EP. First bring the officers whose names are here (*giving a paper*)

To meet me here to-night. Then I shall see

Who is to trust.

PRO. (*reading the paper*). Give me the names of those

Who sent thee.

EP. In good time.

PRO. I would not harm thee.

EP. Thou canst not.

PRO. See, Epicharis, I'll help thee

Out of this mischief. Give me up the names,

And thou shalt be informer.

EP. Ah, Proculus,

Play not that part; thou that so oft in secret

Has cursed the tyrant to me; now play not

That part; it cannot serve thee: be true, Proculus,

To the nobleness within thee, that hast not only

A heart sufficient, but in face and figure

Lookest the hero: thou that mightest stand

For a statue of Brutus, and outdo the man

As nature made him: Be thou from this day

Named with the noblest; Proculus the brave,

Who turned the tide 'gainst Nero, and delivered

Romans from shame and slavery;—or wilt thou

Be Proculus the futile ; Proculus,  
Who aided first infamous Anicetus  
To murder Agrippina, and then perceiving  
Remorseful Cæsar cast out his gross tool,  
Sought to win favour of the parricide,—  
And vainly tried to stay the avenger's hands,—  
And sold a trustful woman whom he had loved,  
On the eve of liberty? 1725

*PRO.* That day's not come.  
Look to thyself, and I will win thy safety.  
To-night thou wilt set forth with me to Rome :  
In two days I shall bring thee before Cæsar.  
Then, if thou tell these names, thou wilt go free,  
And mayst be rich. Thou canst not 'scape : be ready  
In one hour hence. [Exit.]

*EP.* Ah, wretched Roman slave,  
Thy paltry spirit hath baulked me : go thy way :  
Thou knowest nought : thou'rt in my power ; thou  
too,

If I could turn aside, shouldst bleed for Clitus :  
He hated thee, condemned thee, and thou deservest.  
But what care I for thee ? what is't to me  
That Piso be set up on Nero's throne ?  
Only make void that throne, only tear out  
That monster from the world. As for thee, Proculus,  
I know thee and can outwit thee : I have my tale  
Ready, and false Senecio for my witness.  
Where is Senecio ?—I have yet an hour. [Exit.]

## SCENE II.

*A street in Rome.*

*Enter SCEVINUS, followed by NATALIS and  
LATERANUS.*

*SCE.* No more, sirs : let me go. This sword  
shall do it.  
I am sworn.

*LAT.* Stay, stay, sir ! stay ! be more discreet.

*SCE.* I know there's not a man among you all  
Durst risk his life but I. I have made my will :  
I have set my house in order. Cæsar dies,  
Dies by this hand to-day.

*NAT.* For heaven's sake, stay, sir !  
Have patience. Piso is unprepared.

*LAT.* Scevinus, 1750  
Thou art bound to abide by and respect the voice  
Of the party.—We do not choose thee.—

*SCE.* Whom choose ye ?

*LAT.* No scheme is ready as yet. The matter  
needs  
More judgment than thou usest.

*NAT.* And more caution.

*SCE.* Caution and judgment are for cowards. By  
God

I have sworn. 'Tis by this hand Cæsar shall die.

*NAT.* (to Lat.). We must prevent him.

*LAT.* (to Nat.). Shall we seize him ?

*SCE.* My lords,

I thank you for your counsel. Go now to Piso,

And make him ready : I shall to the palace

To screen my purpose in some usual conduct.

To-night all will be over.—Fare-you-well. [Exit.]

*LAT.* Come after him, Natalis : we must make  
A show of yielding, and delude him gently  
By mock conviction ; else he'll ruin all. [Exeunt.]

## SCENE III.

*A room in the palace. NERO and  
POPPÆA meeting.*

*NER.* Empress ! the emperor of the world salutes  
thee,  
Bows to thee.

*POP.* And embraceth ?

*NER.* And embraceth.—  
Didst thou sleep well in thy new chamber ?

*POP.* I did.

*NER.* How doth it please ?  
*POP.* 'Tis fine. It hath no fault,  
Save that it lies so far from thine.

*NER.* In that  
See how I trust thee.

*POP.* I shall need my litter  
In this new palace : 'tis a morning's journey  
From end to end. What distances !

*NER.* Yes, space :

Grandeur in space : we cannot emulate  
Starry distinctions and ethereal peace ;  
Mortal conditions hamper us . . . yet I'll teach 1775  
The world what may be done ; and my new Rome  
Shall stand for a type : the streets all laid out broad,  
Straight and intelligible ; and all the houses  
Of fireproof stone from Alba and Gabii.  
In four years 'twill be finished.

*POP.* Four whole years  
Of rubbish-heaps and hammering ?

*NER.* Come see  
The plans in the library.

*POP.* Would you believe  
The plans of architects can cheer a woman ?

*NER.* If thou wert happy thou wouldst love to see  
All that I do, and for my sake admire.

I wish that thou wert happier. Think, Poppæa,  
What cause thou hast, being for thy peerless beauty  
Chosen the world's Augusta. I could wish  
Thou didst smile oftener.

*POP.* Well, consider, love,  
I have cause for care.

*NER.* I wish that thou couldst sing :  
Music can cheer. Dost thou remember once,

When thou wast fearful in a thunderstorm,  
How I diverted thee with sprightly music ?  
Then I should love if, when I came to see thee,  
I heard thy voice afar, and in thy chamber . . .

(*VATINIUS interrupts, entering noisily.*)

Who's there ? (*Vatinius gives a note to Nero.*)

(*reads*) 'Proculus the admiral is come from Naples  
'With secret tidings ; he hath a lady with him !'

(*to Vat.*) Let him in, or his tidings, or his lady,  
Whichever is most secret—or all three. [Exit Vat.]

(*to Poppæa, who is going.*) Thou needst not go, love.  
*POP.* Why ! if 'tis a lady.

*NER.* Pooh ! 'tis some state affair.

*POP.* I hate affairs. [Exit.]

*NER.* Marriage ruins a woman : and how quickly !  
And I to lead the ape-dance, who am sworn  
To rid the world of this and all its plagues ! 1805



Enter TIGELLINUS with PROCULUS and EPICCHARIS; VATINIUS following.

NER. Good-day, Lord Proculus; what brings you here?

PRO. Forgive the intrusion, Cæsar.

NER. The lady's looks

Are ample excuse. You ask leave to be married?

PRO. Nay, Cæsar; I accuse her.

NER. Bravo! divorce?

TIG. (aside to Nero). His story is urgent.

NER. What is it?

EP. Mighty Cæsar,

This is a charge 'gainst me: a foolish charge

Not worth your ear. I have a witness with me

Would make short matter of it, might he enter.

NER. By all means. Why, sir, did you keep him back?

His name?

EP. Senecio.

NER. Good. We know him, lady.

Vatinius, fetch him in. (Exit Vat.) What is the charge?

PRO. This woman, sire . . .

NER. (interrupting). What is thy name, fair lady?

EP. Epiccharis, your majesty.

PRO. This lady

Was known to me at Naples.

NER. I understand:

Spare your excuses.

PRO. At a tavern.

NER. Ho!

You sailors! (Vat. re-enters with Senecio.)

(To Epiccharis.) See, your witness, lady, is come.

PRO. She took occasion of her intimacy

To draw me into a plot 'gainst Cæsar's life.

NER. Ha!

PRO. Entrusted by conspirators at Rome

Three days ago to tamper with me.

NER. By heaven!

And thou dost laugh? (to Epic.)

EP. Will Cæsar hear the end?

NER. (to Pro.). Give me the names at once.

PRO. I know no names,

Cæsar; she would not tell.

NER. No names? and whom

Wert thou then to conspire with?

PRO. She would tell

Nothing of her confederates, unless <sup>1830</sup>

I brought together certain officers,

Whose loyalty I know suspicious.

NER. Dost thou? By God,

I'll have their names.

PRO. I was to sail to Rome,

And seize the granaries.

NER. Enough. Now, madam;

What dost thou answer?

EP. If Cæsar need an answer

To a charge so empty, 'tis enough to say  
I have never been in Rome.

NER. 'Tis not enough.

Didst thou speak to the Admiral in the sense  
He avers?

EP. I humbly crave great Cæsar's pardon  
For jesting with his name.

NER. Thou didst? and why?

EP. Here is my witness; Lord Senecio

Will say my story is true. Holding with him

Some talk of Proculus, I laid a wager

That I could make the Admiral believe

Anything, no matter how ridiculous:

And this we hit on. Then straight he comes in,

And if I went too far, 'twas in my fear

To lose my money.

NER. Is this so, Senecio?

SE<sup>o</sup>. 'Twas so, sire; I backed the Admiral, and  
lost.

NER. (to Proc.). You sailors are so clumsy. You  
are a fool.

PRO. Sire! on my life 'twas true. 'Twas not a  
jest:

She would outface me.

VAT. As Octavia did

That old sea-mutton Anicetus.

TIG. Hish!

NER. First, sir,

Send me these same suspicious officers.

Meanwhile for her,—thy rank may win thy tale

So much respect,—she goes not free. (To Tigell.)

Good master,

Keep her in custody.

EP. (aside to Proculus). Hear me! I warn thee.  
Join, or be first to die!

PRO. Now, Cæsar, again

She invites me to conspire.

NER. Come, man; she mocks thee:

She hath won the privilege. (To Tig.) Take her <sup>1860</sup>  
away;

But treat her well. You follow me: I go

To judge the cases argued yesterday.

No folly, Proculus, like being in earnest,

When others are all jesting.

[Exeunt. Tigellinus with Epiccharis; Proculus  
and Vatinius with Nero.]

#### SCENE IV.

A room in Piso's house.

Enter PISO with NATALIS.

PIS. (at door). Show them in here, Natalis; I  
must see them. [Exit Nat.]

'Tis dangerous: Rufus should know better. Five,

Five of them here together! 'tis enough

To damn an innocent: mere information

By any vagabond. Why should they come?

Re-enter NATALIS with RUFUS, LATER-  
ANUS, LUCAN, FLAVUS and ASPER.

Come in, my lords; come in.

All. Good-day, Lord Piso.

PIS. Your purpose, gentlemen? Ye would not  
come

In such a dangerous body to my house

Without great cause.

RUF. 'Tis urgency, my lord.

We have met to-day, and voted with one voice

Immediate action. That madman Scævius

Hath taken the whole affair upon himself,

And full of mystery walks at large, parading

His self-importance ; wearing on his face  
The secret of our lives. You must come forward,  
Or we are lost.

*PIS.* I shall not move.

*RUF.* My lord ! 1850

My lord ! my lord ! (*A servant has been speaking  
with Natalis at the door.*)

*NAT.* (*to Piso*). Here is another come.

*PIS.* Bring him in.—(*to Ruf.*) Nay, Rufus, I  
shall not move. [*Exit Nat.*]

Why should you come to me ? I made no promise  
But this, when Nero is dead, to be your Cæsar.

*ASP.* The men, my lord, whose hands you  
grasped in faith

Need your support. A Cæsar we must have ;  
Stand by us or withdraw.

*PIS.* May I ask the name

Of the last speaker ?

*ASP.* Asper, my lord.

*PIS.* By heaven !

Asper thou art.

*Re-enter NATALIS with SENECIO.*

*NAT.* Betrayal ! betrayal !

*SE<sup>o</sup>.* (*excitedly*). My lords, we are betrayed.

*ALL.* Betrayed !

*PIS.* Scevius is it ?

*SE<sup>o</sup>.* No. Procnlus,

The Admiral. He hath brought to Nero a woman  
From Naples, who was sent to gain him over.

*LUC.* (*aside*). Epicharis failed me !

*PIS.* A woman too !

*RUF.* What names hath she betrayed ?

*SE<sup>o</sup>.* No names at all.

She outfaced the Admiral with a lie, and I  
Swore it was true.

*PIS.* Hath she not mentioned me ?

*SE<sup>o</sup>.* No, my lord, none.

*LUC.* (*aside*). Well done !

*PIS.* May be then she knows nothing. 1900

*SE<sup>o</sup>.* Ay, she knows :

She told me.

*LUC.* You ?

*SE<sup>o</sup>.* Yes ; me, sir.

*PIS.* What is her name ?

*SE<sup>o</sup>.* Epicharis.

*RUF.* Who is Epicharis ?

*PIS.* Ay, who is she ? how came she in the plot ?

*SE<sup>o</sup>.* Lucan perhaps may know.

*LUC.* I have heard the name,

And mentioned with my uncle, the physician.

If that is what Senecio means, 'tis nought.

*FLA.* Where is she ? let us see her.

*SE<sup>o</sup>.* Tigellinus

Hath her in custody.

*RUF.* She will be questioned.

*FLA.* We must not wait.

*PIS.* Who, now, is guilty of this ?

I have other evidence too that your secret

Has been ill-kept, gentlemen.—When I sent

A messenger to Seneca this morning,

He was refused admission.—Seneca knows.

*LAT.* My lords, we are all in danger : there's no  
time

To investigate. Act,—act ere we be lost !

*RUF.* But how to act ?

*LAT.* The plan I have always urged :  
Remember, sirs, how Julius fell. To-morrow  
Are the Circensian games ; Nero will come :  
I, under the pretence of some request  
Will kneel to him, as Cimber knelt to Cæsar ;  
And as I beg my boon I'll drag him down,  
If one of you will slay him.

*FLA.* That will I.

*ASP.* And I.

*SE<sup>o</sup>.* Or Lord Scevius.

*RUF.* Better, sir,

Do without him. And I still hold my plan

The best, that Cæsar should be asked to supper : 1925

Then nought were risked. Once more I pray Lord  
Piso

To save unneeded bloodshed.

*PIS.* I could not do it :

Nor were it wise, in face of the great pity

Such treachery would stir.

*ASP.* And the delay :

To-morrow is late.

*RUF.* Then Lateranus hath it :

We adopt his disposition. You, my lord,

Must be by dawn to-morrow in Ceres' temple

Clad in imperial purple : I with my guards

Will keep the doors ; and when the deed is done

Will bring you forth, and lead you through the city,

Proclaiming you with shouts.

*PIS.* Well, let it be so.

I give consent. Let nothing stop you now :

But each man learn his part and act it bravely.

Your lives are forfeit. Secresy and despatch—

And now depart.

*RUF.* Be you in Ceres' temple.

*PIS.* I understand. I shall await you there.

Action, Rufus, is now your only hope ;

Let nothing stop you. Fail me not.

*RUF.* Nay, trust me.

*LAT.* Bravo, Lord Piso.

*FLA, and ASP.* Hail, great Cæsar !

*PIS.* Hush !

Depart your different ways : be no more seen

Than cannot be avoided. I see none

Until to-morrow.

*ALL* (*going*). To-morrow ! to-morrow ! [*Exeunt.*]

## SCENE V.

*A room in the palace. Enter NERO and  
TIGELLINUS with a drawn sword* (R.).

*NER.* Fury and Hell ! Murder me, would he !

A plot,

A damnable hellish plot ! Stab me ! by God,

Arrest him and fetch him hither. 1950

*TIG.* Bethink you, Cæsar,

Now of Epicharis.

*NER.* Ah, true, by heaven !

The impudent drab : she knew it all. Send straight

To the prison, and have her questioned. Rack and

fire :

Torture truth from her.

*TIG.* I will. Whist ! Cæsar, I see

The man himself.

*NER.* Come out! he may be armed.  
We'll close the doors upon him and shut him in,  
Till we have got assistance. [*Exeunt hastily (L.)*]

*Enter SCEVINUS and QUINTIAN (R.)*

*SCE.* How the sun shines to-day, Quintian!  
Great Phœbus,  
The Python-slayer, smiles upon my deed.

*QU.* Hush! walls have ears.  
*SCE.* When the gods favour a man,  
They set his mind at ease: he disregards  
Your fearful chances. Think you, Quintian,  
'Tis the April air intoxicates me so,  
And floats my head with birdlike confidence?  
Is it the April morning air? Ah, no;  
'Tis the air of the eve of liberty.—Is that  
Not poetry, good fellow?

*QU.* Well, they say  
Occasion makes a poet of any man.

*SCE.* It pleases me to walk about the palace,  
And count the columns: with my eye I measure  
The carven friezes and gold roofs, and say  
All this is thine, Scevinus: stretch but forth  
Thy hand and take it from its master: give it  
Back to the world. These busts, Hellenic statues,  
All these are thine, Scevinus! Let us go <sup>1975</sup>  
To the western court, where we may gaze on Rome.

*QU.* Ay, if you will.

*SCE.* All this is thine, Scevinus!

Open the door!

*QU.* 'Tis closed.

*SCE. (trying it).* Shut fast! 'Tis strange.

I never knew this door shut up before.

*QU.* We can go back the same way we came in,  
And round by the north corridor.

*SCE.* We will. (*Going hurriedly back to first door.*)  
By God, 'tis closed too: fast. We are locked in.

*QU.* What can it mean?

*SCE. (going again to the second door).* They both  
are fast.

*QU.* I hear  
Footsteps without.

*SCE.* Here, here! my dagger: take it.

*QU.* Nay, curse thee, I'll not have it.

*SCE.* They will search me.

*QU.* Throw it out of the window.

*SCE. (throwing).* So!

*QU.* They are coming.

*SCE.* By God, Quintian, I forgot. It was the  
dagger

That should have pierced my heart, if I was taken.

*QU.* Brave it out. I know nothing.

*Enter NERO and TIGELLINUS preceded  
by guards (L.)*

*NER.* Ha! Quintian too, my feathery Quintian.  
(*to Tig.*) What of him, master?

*TIG. (to Ner.).* Send him out.

*NER.* Begone, sir:  
And thank thy littleness.

*QU.* I am Cæsar's slave. [*Exit.*]

*NER.* Now, sir, we have thee; we know all:  
go down,  
Fall on thy knees (*Sce. kneels*). Confess, and tell me  
first

Why in the temple of Capitoline Jove  
Thou didst present and dedicate a sword.

*TIG.* This sword, sir, sharpened too, and tem-  
pered freshly.

*SCE.* Most mighty Cæsar, I know not on oath  
Why I am treated thus. What of this sword?

*NER.* Is it not thine?

*SCE.* Pray let me see it near. <sup>2000</sup>

*TIG.* I'd like to put it, sir, where thou couldst feel  
More than thou saw'st of it. Dost see it now?

*SCE.* 'Tis mine. O sacred heirloom of my house,  
Left to my father by my grandfather . . .

*NER.* Invoke not thy curst ancestors to me.

*SCE.* It hath been stolen from me: some slave,  
Cæsar,

Knowing the store I set by it, hath purloined it.

*TIG.* One of those thieves whom thou three days  
ago

Didst liberate,—when thou mad'st thy will—? We  
know.

Why didst thou that?

*SCE.* It is the time of year  
I fix my household, and reward my servants.

And for my will, it is my habit oft  
To change the disposition of my goods,  
As they change, and my friends.

*NER.* Thou hast changed thy friends,  
Say'st thou, of late! As for thy change of will,  
Thy little damnèd will, the estate of felons  
Passes to Cæsar at their execution.

*TIG.* And why, sir, shouldst thou lay up in thy house  
A store of bandages, styptics and drugs  
Good for fresh wounds?

*SCE.* I did not: I pray you, Cæsar,  
Who hath informed against me?

*NER.* Question me,  
Wilt thou?

*TIG.* He hath been seen, sire, with Natalis.

*SCE.* Never, I know him not.

*NER.* Get up, sir.—Take him

To torture, till he tell.

*SCE.* Cæsar, I pray  
Have me not tortured. I am innocent. <sup>2025</sup>

*NER.* Villain, I'll have thee drawn out limb from  
limb;

And thou shalt taste at leisure from this sword

What stabbing is. Take him away.

*SCE.* Nay, Cæsar,

Have me not tortured. I am innocent.

*TIG.* Take him off, guards.

*SCE.* Indeed I am innocent.

Cæsar, Oh Cæsar! [*Exeunt guards carrying off  
Scevinus.*]

*TIG.* The informer Milichus, Scevinus' slave,  
Saith he was with Natalis, Piso's man:  
Shall I seize Piso?

*NER.* Not yet, no, I am safe  
Here in the palace. Have the city guarded,  
And go first to the prison: look thyself

To the torture of Epicharis: from her  
Learn all, and bring it to me here. A woman

Is delicately nerved: use thy full art  
Most exquisitely.

*TIG.* She hath confessed by this:

I sent at once.

*NER.* Return then soon.

*TIG.* I shall.

[*Exit.*]

*NER.* A plot! and this contemptible Scevinus



I could almost forgive ; that woman never.  
She fooled me to my face, laughed as she fooled me ;  
A common woman ! Cæsar ! me ! on the eve  
Of being the ridicule of history :  
My wisdom a mockery,—my insight,—to the end of  
time

Schoolboys to laugh at turning of my page,  
The favourite tale to spice their dreary task.  
Nero ! and I who, when my very mother, <sup>2050</sup>  
She who upraised me, dared to plot against me,  
Scrupled not, I, for my world-reaching schemes  
And absolute power, I scrupled not to hide  
Sonship in Cæsarism : yes, and for that  
Have oped my soulgates to the powers of hell,  
And daily face spectres of horror, ghostly  
Environments, the blue upbraiding lips  
Of shadowy forms, that kiss in mockery,  
And poison peace upon the paths of sleep.

To have borne in vain the murderer's scaring plague,  
To be by a common woman—killed : I doubt not,  
Had but occasion served, she would have done it.  
Have laughed to do it, laughed on when 'twas done.  
Ah ! by that lately-laughing, cherruping mouth  
Shall all her damned conspirators be snared :  
Yes, and a thousand times shall she scream truth,  
Ere I will hear ; a thousand times shriek forth  
The names of those her shrieks shall shriek to hell,  
Ere she go after them. (*Enter Tigellinus.*) What,  
Tigellinus !

What saith Epicharis ?

*TIG.* Nothing.

*NER.* Nothing ?

*TIG.* Nothing.

Cæsar will never get a word from her.

*NER.* Thou hast not killed her, fool ?

*TIG.* Nay, Cæsar : but no corpse  
Keeps better silence.

*NER.* Where's thy art, man ? Use

Rack, redhot pincers, the slow fire . . .

*TIG.* Not all together make her give a sound.

*NER.* Persist.

*TIG.* They do ; but 'tis beyond our power  
To match the first pangs ; and they moved her not.  
I came to say we had forgot Senecio.

*NER.* True : take him.

*TIG.* And to torture ?

*NER.* Rack him well.  
But make this woman speak. Use better art. <sup>2080</sup>

*TIG.* I found the torturers sitting round their task :  
Their zest had cooled. Without a cry or scream  
'Tis a dull sport.

*NER.* She is a Christian, then.

*TIG.* The Christians never plot : I think in that,  
Cæsar, you wrong them.

*NER.* I ? Thou know'st them little :  
They are the time's worst plague. I do not care  
If they burned Rome or no : were they all burned  
'Twould richly compensate the world. Hark, friend !  
The people might be masters ; what they lack  
This Christ provides. Were I to prophesy,  
I'd say that should their cursed doctrines spread,  
They would one day drown all, learning and beauty,  
Wisdom and rule and art. For that I hate them,  
And love to destroy them. I AM THEIR ANTI-CHRIST.

## ACT V.

## SCENE I.

*A strong room in the palace dungeon. TIG-  
ELLINUS seated at a table centre.  
NATALIS scared, and with his hands  
bound behind him, stands R. before two  
guards.*

*TIG.* (*to guards*). Leave him.—(*Exeunt guards.*  
Natalis, thou hast had a taste of the rack ?

*NAT.* (*kneels*). Mercy, my lord ; have mercy on  
me, I pray thee :

I will tell all, and better without torture.

*TIG.* So far I have had mercy, sir : I have shown  
thee

In this Epicharis what thou mayst look for, <sup>2100</sup>  
Should I lack mercy. Canst thou too be silent ?

*NAT.* Nay, my lord, nay. My lord, I am not  
brave.

Knowing I cannot suffer, I will speak truth  
Without the torture.

*TIG.* Truth, fool ! what is that ?

I haggle not with thee for thine own tale :

That cannot serve thee. I require of thee  
Such answers as best please me.

*NAT.* I will confess.

*TIG.* Thou hast betrayed thy master Piso ; now  
Tell me, was Seneca in this conspiracy ?

*NAT.* No, my lord.

*TIG.* (*calling*). Guards !

*NAT.* I swear he was not. (*Enter guards.*)

*TIG.* Guards !

Take him to torture.

*NAT.* Oh, my lord, have pity !

Ask me not this.

*TIG.* I'll ask thee nothing else  
While thou art parting with thy skin. Once more :  
Was Seneca in this conspiracy ?

*NAT.* He was.

*TIG.* Just as I thought ; stick tight to that ;  
Else, by great Jupiter, the things thou hast seen  
Are nothing.—Take him off and send in the other.

[*Exeunt guards with Natalis.*

Now I am rid of Seneca, this method  
Is easy and short. The foolish rich Scevinus  
May serve me another way.

*Enter two guards with SCEVINUS, whose  
hands are bound before him.*

(*To guards.*) Leave him.—(*Exeunt guards.*) Sce-  
vinus,

Cæsar hath ordered thee the rack.

*SCE.* (*kneels*). My lord,  
Have pity upon me I beg. I turn informer :  
I will betray it all : I withhold nothing.

*TIG.* Thou hast seen the torture of Epicharis . . .

*SCE.* O, my dear lord, not that ! mercy ! <sup>2125</sup>

*TIG.* Since she  
Hath baulked my inquisitors, I have promised them  
Some noisy victim to restore their credit.

*SCE.* Not me, not me !

*TIG.* And why not thee ? I think thee  
A likely fellow.

*SCE.* My lord, I am too tender.  
The least prick of my finger, or if the wine  
I drink be overheated, 'tis enough  
To put me in a frenzy: I should die  
At first stretch of the rack.

*TIG.* Pooh! man: they'd keep thee  
Alive for a week.—

*SCE.* O spare me, good Tigellinus!  
Spare me, I pray, kind Tigellinus, spare me!

*TIG.* Shall I? and if I do, what is it worth?  
Hast thou two thousand sesters?

*SCE.* Oh, my lord,  
I have not the tenth of it.

*TIG. (calling).* Guards!

*SCE.* I swear I have not. *(Enter guards.)*

*TIG.* Get up, that is the price.—Guards, take him  
off.—

I'll make good use of thee.

*SCE.* Sir, I might find it.

*TIG. (motioning guards back).* Hark, thou canst  
raise the money, and mayst write  
From prison to thy friends: and if 'tis paid  
To me to-night, I will respect thy wish.—  
Guards, take this prisoner to the outer cell;  
Let him there write what misses he desires,  
And see they be delivered in the city.

*[Exeunt severally.]*

## SCENE II.

*A room in the house of Piso.*

*Enter FLAVUS and PISO, meeting.*

*FLA.* My lord, I come from Rufus.

*PIS.* Give thy message.

*FLA.* Natalis and Scevinus both are taken.

All must be known; and your complicity  
The first: meanwhile Rufus is unsuspected; 2150

Cæsar hath summoned him to sit as judge

In trial of the accused this afternoon.

He has therefore this last hope, but only this,

That you with all your friends proceed at once

To the fort of the guard: he will proclaim you there,

Relying on the people, who well know

Your prudence, and may passively accept

The revolution as a thing accomplished,

Seeing you countenance it, and have your title

Supported by the guards.

*PIS.* Calls he this hope?

'Tis the forlorn hope.

*FLA.* Desperation, my lord,

Is not despair. I venture it with gladness.

*PIS.* So do not I. I am no doubt betrayed

Already and watched.

*FLA.* Rufus may still be clear:

The informers will not name him while the guards

Remain their last resource.

*PIS.* Bid him act quickly,

And for himself.

*FLA.* My lord, he looks to you.

Unless you appear we cannot gain the people.

Consider how we have all trusted our lives

To your concerted action: now stand forth

And help us as you can.

*PIS.* Stay, man; consider

How I have trusted my life to your action;

And what ye have done with it: my stake in this  
Compares no more with thine than does my prize  
In the success with thine: I should be Cæsar,

Thou Flavius still: so if we fail, I suffer

In like degree, my family dishonoured,

My rich estates confiscate, my innocent,

Honest dependants, whom I count by thousands,

All plunged in misery: to them my duties

Forbid this reckless hazard.—Return to Rufus,

And say so much. I utter no reproach

'Gainst thee nor any other; I forgive

What reproach thou didst hint. I know thou'rt brave;

Thou hast wished well, and I with thee; but now

Our ill-built ship founders. I am your captain;

My word is each man for himself; my part

I shall act no less bravely, that I see

All goes to the bottom.

*FLA.* Defer, my lord, to the last.

I'll save you if I may. I will go armed

To the trial.

*PIS.* Act for thyself; think not of me.

Now bear my word to Rufus. Go this way.

*[Exit, showing Flavius out.]*

## SCENE III.

*The previous scene withdraws and discovers  
an open court of the palace disposed for  
the trial, the seats in a half-circle. Nero's  
at centre, back, the seat for the judge at  
left front: the raised platform for the  
accused at right front. Guards behind  
Nero, and lining the half-circle.*

*Enter LUCAN, FLAVUS and ASPER, left. They  
stand talking under cover of judge's seat. Guards  
and most of audience are assembled.*

*LUC.* Rufus will do his best: trust we to Rufus

To minimise the matter; 'tis his interest.

*FLA.* If Cæsar come unguarded, I will kill him.

*ASP.* I will stand by thee. Is Lateranus here?

*LUC.* He said he should not come. I pray you

both

Wait: let us first see who is betrayed.

*FLA.* Go thou,  
And wait thy death. *(Lucan goes to his place.)*

*ASP.* Let us die bravely, Flavius;

'Tis all we can. *(Coming forward to centre.)*

*FLA.* We will. Ah, see! he is guarded. 2200

*Enter R. NERO, TIGELLINUS and RUFUS;  
preceded by guards, who thrust Flavius and Asper  
back, making passage for Cæsar.*

*NER. (at centre).* Here is our court. I love the  
open air:

It savours more of justice, heavenly justice;

And while we sit, we breathe. Rufus, ascend.

*(Showing judge's seat.)*

Cæsar is plaintiff, and in his own cause

Might bear a bias: so I make thee judge.

My counsel, Tigellinus, sit by me. *(They sit.)*

*FLA. (to Asp.).* I'll not despair. I'll keep my  
dagger ready.

Be near him if I rush. *(Asper takes a seat on Rufus'  
proper left.)*

*NER.* Is it in order, Rufus,  
That I speak first?  
*RUF.* 'Twere well for form's sake, Cæsar,  
To state the purpose of this court, and read  
The names of those denounced. Where are the  
informers?  
*NER.* Bring in the prisoners.—As for this court,  
general,  
'Tis called to inquire upon a matter known  
To most here : they that know it not may gather it  
As we proceed ; I will premise thus far :—  
You will hear certain citizens confess  
That they, with others whom they name, were joined  
In a conspiracy to murder another,  
And him your chiefest citizen, myself.  
Rome at the first had kings, and being returned  
To an autocratic rule, in the exigency  
Of wide dominion, I, her king, her Cæsar,  
Her prætor, tribune, consul, typify  
The general weal : who aims at my life, aims  
At Rome and all. Therefore, though Cæsar needs  
No sanction to his sentence, he invites  
The public ear unto the public wrong,  
That all, before the guilty are arrested,  
May hear the evidence, and self-impeachment  
Of the two chief informers. There they are ;  
Natalis and Scevinus.—(They have been brought in  
guarded during Nero's speech, and now stand  
up. *Rt.*)  
As plaintiff I shall watch the case, as Cæsar  
I watch the judge. Proceed !  
*TIG.* Scevinus.  
*SCE.* Here, sir.  
*TIG.* Thou in this writing hast confessed the truth  
Of all the several charges brought against thee  
By thy slave Milichus.  
*SCE.* I have, my lord.  
*TIG.* 'Tis true there was a plot 'gainst Cæsar's  
life,  
And thou the instrument ?  
*SCE.* My lord, 'tis true :  
I crave great Cæsar's mercy.  
*TIG.* In hope of that,  
And moved by late contrition, thou hast revealed  
The names of thy confederates.  
*SCE.* I have.  
*RUF.* Will Cæsar let me scan the information ?  
*NER.* No need. Take each in turn.  
*TIG. (to Scev.).* I ask thee, therefore,  
Now to confirm this paper in open court.  
Who was the head of this conspiracy ?  
The man who thought to sit in Cæsar's place,  
When ye had murdered Cæsar ?  
*SCE.* Calpurnius Piso.  
*TIG.* Stand forth, Natalis.  
*NAT.* Here, my lord.  
*TIG.* Art thou  
Of Piso's household ?  
*NAT.* I am, my lord.  
*TIG.* Then thou  
Shouldst know : was Piso head of this conspiracy ?  
*NAT.* He was, my lord.  
*NER.* Judgment !—  
*RUF.* Arrest Calpurnius Piso on this charge.  
*NER. (to Tig.).* Send and arrest him. (*Tig.*  
*speaks to those behind.*)

*FLA. (to Ruf.).* Let me by thee, Rufus !—  
Send me to Cæsar with some paper, Rufus !—  
Now I may reach him.—to save Piso, Rufus !—  
*RUF. (to Flav., thrusting him back).* Be still !  
*TIG. (looking up).* Order ! who speaks ?  
*NER. whispers to Tigellinus, who sets two guards  
before Nero's seat.*  
*RUF. (to Flav.).* See, fool ; he hath smelt thee.  
*TIG.* I'll ask Natalis further if he knew  
Of any other chief man in the state  
Cognisant of this plot, or joined therein.  
*NAT.* Calpurnius Piso was the chief, my lord.  
*TIG.* No other ? and I have here thy writing !  
*FLA. (aside to Rufus).* Now,  
General, thy turn is come.  
*RUF. (to Natalis).* Speak, sir !  
*NAT.* I pray,  
Rufus, to urge not this : nay, from my heart  
I say . . .  
*TIG.* 'Tis written here.  
*RUF.* This witness, Cæsar,  
I do not trust.  
*TIG.* Carry Natalis out  
To torture.  
*NAT.* I will speak.  
*TIG.* Then name, sir, name !  
*NAT.* Seneca.  
*RUF.* Seneca !  
*TIG.* Yes, Seneca.  
Let Seneca be arrested. Judge, what sayst thou ?  
*RUF.* Let Seneca be arrested.  
*FLA. (to Ruf.).* Villain thou art !  
*NER. (to Tigell. who has whispered to him).* Leave  
Seneca to me.  
*TIG.* These are the heads. Now will I read  
three names :  
Tell me, Scevinus, if I read aright :  
Quintian, Senecio, Lucan.  
*SCE.* I denounce them.  
*NER.* Three hypocritical and fawning curs,  
The lap-dogs of the palace. Where are they ?  
*TIG.* They are here, Cæsar.—Quintian, stand  
forth.  
*QU.* Here,  
My lord.  
*TIG.* Dost thou confess ?  
*QU.* I give Scevinus  
The lie direct.  
*NER.* We found thee in his company,  
The hour of his arrest.  
*QU.* Cæsar, I knew  
Of nothing 'gainst thy life. 'Tis true that oft  
I have spoken against Vatinius ; were he Cæsar,  
I should be guilty : but yourself have loved  
To prick me to it ; and so, may be, my tongue  
Hath given Scevinus undeserved occasion  
To think me of his party.  
*NER.* Rufus, judge !  
*RUF.* I look for evidence.  
*TIG.* Dost thou ?—Then, Quintian,  
To save thy life wilt thou inform ?  
*QU.* I will.  
*TIG.* Then was not Lucan with you ?  
*QU.* He was.  
*NER.* O Quintian,  
Quintian ! if I forgave thee for thy treason,



I could not for thy folly. Arrest him.

*RUF.* Arrest Quintian.

The next?

*TIG.* Senecio, General, hath confessed.

His evidence we will take later. Where is Lucan?

*LUC.* I am here, my lord, ready to answer.

*RUF.* Then let us hear thine answer.

*LUC.* I deny

The charge of treason: but so far confess

My intimacy with the accused, that oft

My zeal for senatorial forms hath led me

To listen to them, when the words that passed

Might tell against me: and if I was betrayed

By antiquarian taste, to trust these men 2300

Against advice and warning . . .

*NER.* Ah! thou sayest

Against advice. Who warned thee?

*LUC.* Cæsar, I said . . .

*NER.* Sir, I will know who warned thee of this plot,

And warned not me.

*LUC.* Sire, I meant not so much.

*TIG.* We heard thee.

*LUC.* I make appeal to Rufus, whether

I must betray the innocent.

*NER.* If thou look

For thine own pardon.

*TIG.* We can make thee speak.

*RUF.* Tell us, sir, who these wondrous patriots were,

Who set thy private safety above Cæsar's.

*LUC.* If Cæsar bids me speak, I may hide nothing.

I will confess it was my mother, Atilia,

Who warned me against these men. Punish not her

For not betraying her son.

*NER.* Nay, sir, but thee

Who in this bungle of prevarication

Betrayest thine own mother. Judge!

*RUF.* Arrest him.

*LUC.* I am arrested, Cæsar, not condemned.

*NER.* Thou'lt see. Stand by!—(to *Tigell.*)

Another woman! why

Comes not Epicharis?

*TIG.* I know no cause

For the delay. I'll send again.

*NER.* Do so.

(to *Severinus.*) Go on, sir: who is next?

*SCE.* Plautius Lateranus.

*NER.* Plautius Lateranus! Have more care

Whom thou accusest. This is one bounden to me

By special favours: from disgrace I raised him

To sit among the senate, and now he is chosen

Consul.

*TIG.* Dost thou denounce him?

*SCE.* I do, my lord. 2325

*NER.* Whom then can Cæsar trust? Judge, Rufus, judge!

*TIG.* Judge!

*RUF.* Let him be arrested.

*NER.* Send to his house.

*Enter an Officer.*

*Off.* Cæsar, being sent to arrest Calpurnius Piso, We found him dead.

*RUF.* Dead! how?

*NER.* Is Piso dead?

*FLA. (to Rufus).* See how thou hast ruined all!

*RUF. (to Flavius).* Speak not to me!

*Off.* He died by his own hand as we arrived.

I viewed the body.

*TIG.* He must have killed himself

To escape the confiscation.

*NER.* Bah! he hath robbed

The treasury.

*TIG.* We shall have pickings yet.

*RUF.* Cæsar, the untimely suicide of the accused

Confirms the charge against him in so far

As he hath declined to meet it. But the trial

Falls to the ground: we lose both the defence

And the chief witness.

*NER.* Not so. My chief object

Remains, and my chief witness.—(to *Tig.*) Where is Epicharis?

*TIG.* I see a litter passing 'neath the trees.

*NER.* Meet them, and bring her in.—

[*Exit Tigellinus.*]

I now produce a woman in the court.

Her name Epicharis: she lives at Naples,

And there was used by the conspirators

To tamper with the navy: the Admiral

Arrested her; but she, being charged before me,

Turned off suspicion with a specious tale,

Which I more readily believed, because

I hate informers, nor will lightly think 2350

Evil of anyone. Senecio

Confirmed her story, but hath since confessed

He knew it false: himself, as he affirms,

Was not in Piso's confidence, this woman

Knew all. Now Piso towards Senecio

Trusted too much in trusting but a little,

Trusting Epicharis much he trusted well:

For in the extreme of torture she hath not flinched,

Nor given a sound: but seeing her silence now

Confuted by so many tongues, she hath yielded,

And promised to speak truth. See, here she is.

*During this speech Epicharis has been borne in on the litter, and is set down at the centre of the stage.*

Her speech shall now unmask what traitorous faces

Still screen their villany.

*RUF.* A woman, Cæsar;

And in the pangs of torture, and fear of death!

What evidence is this?

*NER.* What would ye object?

*RUF.* Shall Romans have their free lives played with thus?

*NER.* What puts thee in fear? Silence!—Epicharis,

I bid thee now speak truth before the court.

Piso is dead. Thou seest thy comrades taken.

Truth may not save thy life: yet speak the truth

As thy last hope. Let no man interrupt her.

*EP. (speaks from the litter).* Cæsar, I thank thee that in all my torture

Thou hast spared my tongue to tell thee truth at last:

That I am admitted where my free confession

May reach the public ear, nay not denied 2375

Thine own ear, and for that I thank thee most;

And for my torture I thank thee too: 'tis proved

I speak not lightly, and must be well believed.



Thou bidst me, mighty Cæsar, tell thee truth :  
Weak is my tongue to tell the mighty truths  
Cæsar dare hear, and none hath dared to tell :  
And I die . . . hearken quickly. Of all thou seest  
There is not one whom thou canst trust : all hate  
thee . . .

Yet needst thou not, great Cæsar, fear them much ;  
For all are cowards : nay, there is not among them  
One brave enough to kill thee. And yet again,  
Great Cæsar, I counsel thee to fear them too ;  
For all the world 'gainst one will have their way.

I know thou fear'st. Then who is most thy foe ?  
Whom first to kill ? That I can tell thee, Cæsar :  
For none of all thou seest, or ever saw'st,  
Or wilt see again, nay, not thy murdered mother,  
Thy poisoned brother, thy beheaded wife,  
Whose bloody ghosts watch on the banks of hell  
To mark thy doom, none hateth thee as I,  
Defieth thee as I, curseth thee as I.  
O emperor of the world, thine hour is come.  
Within thy cankered soul dwell side by side  
Remorse and vanity to drive thee mad :  
The grecian furies hound thee, the christian devils  
Dispute for thee. Fly to thy dunghill, Cæsar ;  
Where thou must perish.

NER. Will none there stop her mouth ?  
EP. Plague-spotted, abhorred for ever—by all—  
accurst—

ASP. Let no man interrupt her !

NER. Who spoke ? Arrest him.—  
*Epicharis' last words are spoken as the soldiers  
surround her. She struggles on the litter  
violently, and falls back dead. Other guards  
arrest Asper.*

Who art thou, sir ? thy name ?

ASP. My name is Asper.

I am centurion under Rufus.

NER. Rufus,

Know'st thou thy man ?

RUF. I grieve, sire, it is true :

He is one of my centurions.

NER. Question him.

TIG. *(who is standing by Epicharis, to Nero).*  
Epicharis is dead.

NER. Ye have killed her, fools ?

Hath she got quit ?

TIG. 'Twas her own doing, Cæsar :  
She meshed her neck among the cords, and so  
Hath left her of what little life remained.

NER. Remove her to the prison, and let  
physicians

Attend her at once.

TIG. She is dead. *(They carry Epicharis out.)*

NER. Rufus, proceed

With thy centurion.

ASP. If all hate thee, Cæsar,  
How wilt thou bid that hater question this ?

RUF. What, fellow ?

ASP. Thou that sittest there to judge,  
And shouldst stand here, wilt thou dare question me ?

RUF. I, fellow ?

NER. Ha ! Rufus, thou turnest pale.

RUF. With anger I turn pale, that in your presence  
A traitor should defame me.

NER. Be cool, sir :

Thou wast suspected, now accused thou art.

Thou hast but one appeal : In thy worst case  
'Tis to thy friends. *(pointing to accused.)*

RUF. Call not those men my friends.

NER. I'll see. Speak, traitors all ; was Rufus  
with you ?

LUC., SCE, and others. He was. He is guilty.

NER. Arrest the judge.

RUF. Who dares ?

What officer of mine dares raise his hand  
Against his general ?

CASS. That will I, my lord ;

Knowing that thou deservest more than all.

RUF. Help ! help !—*(To Flavius.)* Now, man,  
strike now or never.

FLA. Hush !  
I am the last. *(Rufus is seized after a struggle.)*

NER. *(stepping down).* Now will I mount myself  
the judge's seat.

FLA. *rushes forward to stab Nero.*

NER. Ha ! Murder ! *(Tigellinus, who has  
watched Flavius, intercepts him. Flavius is seized.)*

TIG. Clear the court !

*The inner line of guards faces outwards, and all  
present except the prisoners are driven from centre  
into the wings, and the court begins to clear.*

NER. *(to Flavius, who is held before him).* Who  
art thou, sir ?

FLA. A tribune and an honest soldier, Cæsar ;  
And none more faithful, while you well deserved.

But I began to hate you from the day  
You killed your mother, and debased yourself,

Performing to the people : and I am freed  
From all my oaths, by all the gods in heaven,  
With all the world ; and sworn with half the world  
To kill thee or be killed.

NER. Fool ! I shall kill thee,  
With thy half world, and rule the other half.

*(The curtain falls, or scene shuts across.)*

## SCENE IV.

A room in the palace.

Enter TIGELLINUS.

TIG. Rufus, my rival, is condemned to die :

The city troops are mine : I am secure :

Cæsar I hold by flattery, Rome by force.

Sophonius Tigellinus of Agrigentum !

Of Agrigentum,—well done ! be content.

Thou hast the second place in all the world,

And rulest the first ; while of thine envious foes,

Sulla, Plautus and Piso, all three are dead :

A few remain : but on the spaniard Seneca

Shall the sicilian eagle swoop to-night,

As on a flying hare. Poppæa, in this

My keen ally, hunts with me eagerly.

Enter NERO and POPPÆA.

Hail, mighty Cæsar ! fairest Augusta, hail !  
*(They salute.)*

The assassin hath not hurt thy spirits ?

NER. Fear not,

I have dined.

TIG. Dined well, I pray the gods.

NER. Superbly.—  
We sent to speak with thee of Seneca,  
What should be done.

TIG. What hath been done already?

NER. Hark, I will tell thee. I sent a letter to  
him,

Pressing the information of Natalis ;—

“Why if thou knewest of this plot—I said—

“Didst not thou warn me? And if thou knewest  
not,

“What was thy reason why thou didst refuse

“Audience to Piso, alleging that such meetings

“Were good for neither ; adding also, *I hold*

“*Thy life needful to mine*”? Now I await

His answer.

TIG. The tribune is returned.

NER. Impossible ;

Seneca is in Campania.

TIG. Nay, your majesty ;

He is in the suburbs : he returned to-day,

Trusting his wit before his innocence.

NER. Go, fetch the tribune in. [*Exit Tigellinus.*]

POP. Why dally thus?

NER. I dally not : I go the shortest way

To find if he be guilty.

POP. Stick you at that?

NER. Romans are free. There is no man can  
be touched 2475

On an unproven charge.

POP. Are you not Cæsar?

NER. Cæsar administers the law, while it  
Can minister to him.

*Re-enter TIGELLINUS.*

TIG. Here is his answer written.

NER. Read it us, Tigellinus.

TIG. If I can . . .

The letters are so pinched and shaky . . . it needs  
The scholarship of Cæsar.

NER. Give it me.

(*Reads.*) “To Cæsar, Lucius Annæus Seneca

“Greeting . . . In answer to thy message ; first

“’Tis true that once Natalis came to me

“From Piso, and begged that I would visit him :

“And I excused myself on plea of sickness,

“And need of quiet : As to the words imputed,

“However I may prize thy safety, Cæsar,

“I have no cause to set a private person’s

“Above my own ; nor do I stoop to flattery,

“As well thou knowest ; nor to such shallow arts

“As would hide treason in a salutation.”

TIG. Is that the sum?

NER. ’Tis all. He is not guilty.

TIG. Not guilty!

NER. Nay.

POP. Why he confesses it.

NER. I know the man : his mind is here at ease.  
The style is pithy and careless. When he has aught  
To excuse he is wordy.

TIG. He was wordy enough

In the matter of Agrippina, true.

NER. Well, sir!

POP. And in the matter of Britannicus.

NER. Why raise these matters now? 2500

TIG. These are the matters

That Seneca harps on : while he lives they live.

POP. These are the deeds Epicharis charged  
against thee.

TIG. This was the root of Flavius’ hate.

POP. ’Tis this

The people mean, who whisper when I pass,  
‘Octavia, Octavia.’

TIG. And he now persuades  
Half Rome ’twas not himself who did these things,  
But thou . . . which thou, permitting him to live,  
Indorest with thy name ; dost set, I say,  
The imperial warrant on the black account :  
As orphans sign away their patrimony  
To scheming uncles ; as unwitting pupils  
To crafty tutors fall a prey.

NER. One lesson

He taught me perfectly, that is to hate him.

POP. Thy hate and love go by half measures,  
Nero.

TIG. ’Twere pretty, Cæsar, wert thou a private  
person,

To play the philosopher upon the man  
Who led thee astray—albeit to sacrifice  
Thy wife and friend,—if he who saved thy life  
May style himself thy friend . . .

NER. Yes, friend ; thou savedst  
My life to-day.

TIG. And yet saved not, if thou  
Wilt throw it straight away, and with thy saviour’s.

NER. Stay, I am resolved : I will not vex you  
further :

I yield. I know there is no man in the world,

Nor ever was, but hath his flaw : In some

’Tis a foul blot, that in the eye of nature

Stands out unpardonable and unredeemed

By all the school of virtues, howsoe’er

They dance in grace around it : In another

’Tis like a beauty-mark, a starry mole

Which on a virgin’s body but sets off

The dazzling flesh, that else were self-extinguished

In its own fairness.—Yet by these flecks and flaws,

Whate’er they be, ’tis fated that men fall :

And thus may I, nay must ; unless in time

I heed good warning, for my fault is gross.

I am over generous ; yes ; ye say it ; I know it.

That is my flaw. It is because my schemes

Are wider than his own, that Seneca hates me :

Because the world hath tasted more of freedom

Under my rule than under any Cæsar

Who went before—and that can no man question—

It is for this my throne hath more been envied,

And by more plots and treacheries besieged,

Than ever others were : and when I saw

(My safety and the people’s good being one)

I must make holocaust of private feelings

To that which helped the whole, then ’twas for that

The bungling crowd condemned me, and where I  
looked

For gratitude to be my consolation,

I met reproach. ’Twas Seneca, ye say, 2550

Who did those things. ’Tis true those deeds were his

In reason and connivance ; but in the act,

Doing and suffering they were mine, and are.

Yet now, if he withdraw his countenance,

Condemn, wear vulgar horror on his face,

And turn men’s hearts against me, what could move

My anger more if I were vain or cruel?

No. Have your will.—and if I hinder not,  
He cannot blame me; since I do but play  
Seneca to your Cæsar.

*TIG.* I thank thee, sirc.  
He dies to night; or shall we wait to have him  
Compose the palliation?

*NER.* Jest not; 'tis done. [*Exit Tig.*]

*POP.* You have talked too long, Nero; come in  
and rest.

*NER.* He was my tutor once, and once I loved  
him.

*POP.* You might have done it with a nod.

*NER.* He is old:

I rob him not of much. The end of life  
Is tedious, I believe. Come back, Poppæa;  
And while we are in our prime, let us be merry  
And thank the gods. [*Exeunt.*]

## SCENE V.

(As epilogue.)

*Scene withdraws and shows Seneca's garden in the  
suburbs: a table set out under a tree.*

*Enter SENECA, THRASEA, and PRISCUS.*

*SEN.* This way: I have bid them set a table,  
Thrasæa,

Under my favourite tree. Here let us sit,  
And watch the April sunset; the mild air  
Permits this summer pleasure.

*THR.* I long doubted  
Whether to come upon an invitation  
Written before these troubles. 2575

*SEN.* You did well  
Not to desert me. Fannia too shall comfort  
My grieved Paullina.—Here is the best wine  
Of all my vineyards: drink to my long journey:—  
But first remember solemnly our friends  
Who have already died to-day: I pour  
This cup to them, and specially must name  
My nephew Lucan.

*THR.* 'Tis an ancient custom.

*SEN.* (*offering to Thrasæa.*) And should be kept.

*THR.* (*taking and sprinkling.*) I'll name the  
gentle Piso.

*PR.* (*taking from Thrasæa.*) This to Epicharis.  
(*Sprinkling.*)

*THR.* Well spoken, son.  
No better wish than that we all may die  
Bravely as she.

*SEN.* So be it! Now let us sit. (*They sit.*)  
And I between (*sitting.*) I would so spend this hour,  
That ye shall not forget it in after-days,  
When ye think of me. 'Tis the last time, friends,  
That ye will sup with me.

*PR.* Nay, say not so:  
I trust you have escaped.

*SEN.* Look on yon sun:  
An hour hence he will set; and now he sinks  
Smiling eternal promises. Ye both  
Shall see him rise, but I—I shall not see it.  
This tree shall hang its branches, and another  
May sit and comfort his poetic sadness,  
As I have done, only not I: I only  
Not here . . . not there, where I have been: all  
things

Have hitherto existed with me, henceforth  
All will exist without me.

*PR.* Have more hope. 2600  
*SEN.* Nay, it is so; what else could Cæsar  
mean?

*THR.* Your answer may convince him.

*SEN.* Nay, good Thrasæa;  
These be the last hours of my life: I'd say  
To you, my friends, what I have most at heart.  
And first rejoice with me that I depart  
With all my senses perfect, not as some  
Tortured by pain and praying for release;  
Nor like a man, who walking in the dark,  
Comes to a brink upright, and steppeth over  
Unhesitatingly, because he knows not.  
Nor is my term much shortened, I shall die  
Like aged Socrates, and with his hope  
That the spirit doth not perish;—I mean not  
A senseless immortality of fame:  
That I shall have, but more I'll have; I dream  
Of life in which I may be Seneca again,  
Seneca still.

*THR.* Now if thou couldst convince us,  
Seneca, of that, 'twere worthy thy last hour.  
Teach me to picture what thou thinkst to see,  
That land betwixt oblivion and regret;  
Where is't? how is it?

*SEN.* It lies not in the scope  
Of demonstration, Thrasæa; but my heart  
Bears witness to it: the best that I could say  
Is in my books. What all mankind desires,  
The mind requires; what it requires believes: 2625  
And that is truth. I hold that one God made us,  
And at our death receives our spirits kindly:  
We shall meet elsewhere those whom we leave here.

*PR.* This will not comfort Romans: Nero again,  
And Tigellinus . . .

*SEN.* Why may there not be  
Distinction, Priscus, as old fables tell;  
Rewards for good, and punishments for ill?  
The myths are gross and brutal, but philosophy  
Finds reason in religion.

*THR.* Then the vulgar,  
'Gainst whom you have waged your philosophic war,  
Hold the last truth.

*SEN.* The sanction of all truth  
Lies in our common nature. A religion  
Based on the truth of what all men desire  
Must carry all before it.

*THR.* But you said  
Philosophy found reason in religion.  
What is your ground?

*SEN.* My first is this, that else  
All were unjust. It needs a second life  
To set this even.

*THR.* You have not found in life  
Its own reward?

*SEN.* Nay, I have not.

*THR.* I know not  
If 'tis not sadder, this profound impeachment  
Of God's whole constitution as we see it,  
Than the belief that death's our end of all.  
To live in conscious harmony with nature  
May satisfy our being; but religion  
Looks like the poetry which childhood makes 2650  
To cloke its empty terrors, or bedizen



Its painted idols ; such is my persuasion.

*PR.* And mine.

*SEN.* Ah, Priscus, thou art young. I once  
Looked forward into life with a proud heart,  
Nor saw the exigency and irony  
Of all-subduing Fate. Consider, Priscus,  
Whether your father's virtue or Nero's crimes  
Have found their recompense.

*PR.* If Thræsea's heart  
Is comforted by virtue, sir, and Nero  
Made wretched by his crime . . .

*SEN.* Then put it thus :  
If any were to make a tragedy  
Of these events, how would it pass or please,  
If Nero lived on at the end unpunished,  
Triumphing still o'er good ?

*THR.* Yes, Seneca :  
But see you make not now your god of the stage  
The God of Nature. Our true tragedy  
Is just this outward riddle, and the god  
That mends all, comes not in pat at his cue  
On a machine, but liveth in our hearts  
Resolving evil faster than it falls,  
As the sun melts the snow.

*SEN.* 'Tis not enough,  
Thræsea, 'tis not enough : there must be more.

\* \* \* \* \*  
Hear you a tramping ? That is Cæsar's men :  
They will surround the garden. Come aside.

(*Comes to front with Thræsea.*)

Stand by me, Thræsea, to the last. I would not <sup>2673</sup>  
Slur the last act of life. Be thou my witness  
Of word and deed.

*Enter PAULLINA with FANNIA, who goes to  
PRISCUS.*

*PAU.* O Seneca, they are come ;  
They are come again.

*SEN.* Dear wife, remember, and help me.—  
See, friends, the sun is almost set ; 'tis time  
We went within.

*PAU.* Alas ! (*weeping.*)

*SEN. (to Paullina.)* Thy tears distract me,  
And shame us both.

*Enter a Centurion.*

*Cent.* Annæus Seneca !

*SEN.* Well, sir : thy message ? Art not thou  
Silvanus,  
That stoodst with Rufus and with Subrius Flavius ?  
How hast thou wriggled out ?

*Cent.* I am Silvanus,  
And bring thee Cæsar's bidding.

*SEN.* Is it death ?

*Cent.* 'Tis death.

*PAU.* Shame on thee.

*SEN.* Hush, wife : be brave.—A man  
Need not be shamed, sirs, that his wife bewail him.  
(*To Paullina.*) Go thou, Paullina, fetch my will.

*Cent.* Stay, madam :  
'Tis not allowed.

*SEN.* This is unkind : my wealth  
Was Cæsar's gift : but now he takes from me  
More than he ever gave, my life : 'tis mean  
To grudge me my last freedom, the little use  
I'd make of his old favours. I but wished  
To leave mementoes to three loving friends,  
Who have supped with me to-night.—In lieu thereof  
The example of my constancy shall be  
More lively undelayed by gentle speeches  
And farewell gifts. Come with me, all is ready.

*Cent.* I await thee.

*SEN.* Farewell, friends ! Farewell, Paullina !

*PAU.* Not to me here.

*SEN.* Yes, we must part : the day  
Is not much hastened. See how skeleton-like  
Already the hand, with which I go to shear  
The filmy threads of life.

*PAU.* But I will die  
With thee.

*SEN.* Be still. Let not thy heart rebel.  
Now is the hour of proof.

*PAU.* If 'twere God's will.

*SEN.* All is God's will : and as we lived together  
In love, so now we part.

*PAU.* Why should we part ?  
What thou doest I will do : I fear not death.

I'll hold my little candle by thy sun . . .

*SEN.* It may not be. Use thy high courage rather  
To live. Yes, live in peace : live long.

*PAU.* With thee  
Murdered ! Alas !

*SEN.* Give me thy last embrace.

*PAU.* Was not my faith then true ? Are we not  
one ?

*SEN.* Yes, yes : we are one.

*PAU.* Then now forbid me not  
To die with thee.

*FAN.* Do not this thing, madam !

*PAU.* Nay, hold me not !

*SEN.* Paullina, dost thou make  
This desperate choice truly with all thy heart ?

*PAU.* With all my heart.

*SEN.* Thou dost ? Dear wife, I thought  
Cæsar could part us : now I can forgive him.—  
To you, my friends, farewell ! Thræsea, farewell !  
Priscus, farewell ! Fannia, farewell !—Paullina,

(*taking her hand*)

Since thou canst dare, we will go hand in hand  
To learn the mighty secret ; we will set forth  
Together unto the place where all have gone. <sup>2724</sup>



## NOTES.

## NOTE I. ON ENCLITICS, ETC.

In the fifth chapter of the Life of Johnson, the following story is given by Boswell: 'His schoolfellow and friend, Dr. Taylor, told me a pleasant anecdote of Johnson's triumphing over his pupil, David Garrick. When that great actor had played some little time at Goodman's Fields, Johnson and Taylor went to see him perform, and afterwards passed the evening at a tavern with him and old Giffard. Johnson, who was ever depreciating stage-players, after censuring some mistakes in emphasis, which Garrick had committed in the course of that night's acting, said, "The players, Sir, have got a kind of rant, with which they run on, without any regard either to accent or emphasis." Both Garrick and Giffard were offended at this sarcasm, and endeavoured to refute it; upon which Johnson rejoined, "Well now, I'll give you something to speak, with which you are little acquainted, and then we shall see how just my observation is. That shall be the criterion. Let me hear you repeat the ninth commandment." *Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour.* Both tried at it, said Dr. Taylor, and both mistook the emphasis, which should be upon *not* and *false witness*. Johnson put them right, and enjoyed his victory with glee.' Johnson was of course wrong, and Garrick right, at least if he accented the *shalt* in the usual way.

A friend of mine once told me that when he was a boy at St. Paul's school it fell to his lot to recite the passage in Shakespeare's "Julius Cæsar," where Brutus and Cassius quarrel; and in the following lines

CASS. I am a soldier, I,  
Older in practice, abler than yourself  
To make conditions.  
BRU. Go to; you are not, Cassius.  
CASS. I am.  
BRU. I say you are not.

when he stressed them correctly, as here shown, he was censured and told to say Go to; you are not, Cassius. However on the day of performance he lost his presence of mind, and did it right.

These two illustrations of pedantry refusing to conform to idiom will explain the occasion of many of the accents, with which I have thought it necessary to disfigure my text; for a good number of them will be found to be common enclitics. The rest are all put as guides to the dramatic rhythm, and many of them to ensure the usual pronunciation of words in verses the rhythm of which depends on it, but which I found some readers stumble at, so that they would rather mispronounce the word than accept the intended rhythm.

To pass to another subject, there is a story told of a lady fallen into poor circumstances, who determined to support herself by the making and selling of muffins: but when she got out into the streets with her basket, her heroism forsook her, so that she had not the courage to cry her wares. "Muffins, muffins," she said in an inaudible voice, and "I hope to heaven no one will hear me!" Now I have some hope that my readers will never credit me with such futility, but I have thought it better that the advertisement of my books, which has hitherto always appeared on the wrapper of my plays, should be printed this time on a leaf of the book itself, so that it may be bound up with it, and serve me, with this statement, for an abiding evidence against the writers for the press, who repeatedly assert that my published works are withheld from the market. I feel that my recent mention of the ninth commandment is altogether unfortunate in their regard: but the collusion of my remarks was unforeseen.

## NOTE II. ON PALICIO.

Since the publication of PALICIO, unexpected light has been thrown on the married history of Palicio and Margaret. It would seem that they had a son, who was probably named after his maternal uncle, the chief Justiciary: for in March 1891 a half-witted Sicilian, named Manuel Palizzi, or Palicio, was among the Italians who were executed by the mob in New Orleans, for being concerned in the murder of the head of the police. Though the mental condition of this unfortunate fellow was such as to make his responsibility questionable, yet his connection with the Mafia society, and with their motives and crimes, points, as unmistakably as his name, to his ancestor in my play, terribly degraded though he was in body as in mind. It is possible that some of our

*fanatical anarchists may be similarly the prey of a depraved atavism, and be impelled by a fermentation of the sour dregs of an old puritanic heroism. I hope that the family is now extinct. The late Professor Freeman in the introduction to his History of Sicily, contributed to the literature of my play, by giving a careful and full account of what I assumed to be the origin of the family name.*

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