

A S C E N E BEFORE THE WALLS OF A C R E.

BONAPARTE, with General Officers.

General Kleber.

I FEAR, my General, we must soon RETIRE;
This stubborn Englishman, whom they call SIDNEY,
Has, WITH A SHIP'S CREW, baffled all our hopes;
'Tis Nine long Weeks, since first the Trenches open'd;
More than TWO THOUSAND of our Bravest Troops
Are kill'd outright—Seven hundred VALIANT MEN
Lie wounded in the Tents—Nothing remains
But to RETREAT!

Bonaparte.

As soon as Night sets in,
We will begin our March—

Kleber.

But, for our WOUNDED COMRADES—How dispose
OF THEM?

Bonaparte.

Why let Them lie and rot! No—I've bethought me,
Send hither the Physician MUSTAPHA—
And prepare quickly for our safe Retreat;
I will be ready—

Generals withdraw—Enters MUSTAPHA.

Bonaparte.

MUSTAPHA! Your Skill and Science I have long admired,
And now I wish to put them to the test—
REASONS OF STATE now urge us to retire;
The Army will be soon in motion; but
We have no means, or Waggons, to secure
Our SICK AND WOUNDED SOLDIERS—What can be done?

Mustapha.

Leave them, Sir, to me—I will attend them;
My care, affixed by the GENEROUS AID
Of the BRAVE ENGLISHMAN, will soon relieve
The greater Part—SIDNEY IS MOST BRAVE,
And therefore GENEROUS; e'en to an Enemy.—

Bonaparte.

Oh! name him not—MY SOUL SICKENS AT HIM;
He is the First, who stoop'd me in my March—
Till I met HIM, I was INVINCIBLE—
I cannot bear the thought of being oblig'd
To a sworn Foe—Besides, my Mustapha,
These wounded Soldiers know too much—Remember,

“DEAD MEN TELL NO TALES”—Are there no Means
To silence these?—Is it not possible
To mix some deadly Potion with their Meals,
Which may produce, e'er morn, the wish'd Effect?

Mustapha.

What! POISON, Sir! POISON OUR VALIANT FRIENDS,
AND DEAREST COMRADES! I cannot do it—

Bonaparte.

Come, come, these are the Scruples of a Christian;
The Laws of Mahomet do not forbid you—
Besides, my Mustapha, here's Money for you—
And if you do this Business well, believe me,
I will give you more—But YOU MUST NOT LEAVE
A MAN BEHIND!

Mustapha.

(*Aside.*) I fear I must comply—
But Sir, mark this—THEIR BLOOD RESTS ON YOUR HEAD—

Bonaparte.

Be it so then—I CAN BEAR THIS AND MORE—
My steps from Paris to this Spot are all
Deep trac'd in Blood—FRANCE, ITALY, and EGYPT
Bear witness to the Terrors of my Arms—
RAPE, RAPINE, MURTH R follow'd me by Day,
FLAMES from the COTTAGE-THATCH lit me by Night—
I was not bred in School of ROBESPIERRE,
That I should tremble at a Woman's tears.
What should appal me? What keeps Men in awe?
RELIGION?—I have none—HONOUR? a mere
Empty word!—HUMANITY? a softer Name
For COWARDICE—Had I been held by THESE,
AND SUCH-LIKE TRIFLES—I had still remain'd
Amongst the Vulgar Herd; nor would my Name
Have been, as now, IMMORTALIZ'D IN HISTORY—
Therefore, my honest Mustapha, proceed,
Let not a FOOLISH CONSCIENCE stop your Hand,
But RID ME OF THESE FELLOWS!

Mustapha.

It shall be done—and e'er To-morrow's dawn,
Your amplest Wishes shall be gratified—
[Exit. Bonap.]

MERCILESS VILLAIN! BUT I MUST OBEY,
LEST HIS REVENGEFUL HAND SHOULD FALL ON ME.