

THE GLADIATOR

A Tragedy

IN FIVE ACTS

PHILADELPHIA, APRIL, 1831

Persons Represented

- Marcus Licinius Crassus, a Roman Praetor.
- Lucius Gellius, a Consul.
- Scrophia, a Quaestor.

Jovius, a Centurion.

Mummius, lieutenant to Crassus.

Batiatus Lentulus, a Capuan Lanista, or master of
gladiators.

Bracchius, a Roman Lanista.

Florus, son of B. Lentulus.

Spartacus, a Thracian,

Phasarius, his brother

Enomaius, a Gaul, \ Gladiators.

Crixus, a German,

and others,

A boy, son of Spartacus.

Julia, niece of Crassus.

Senona, wife of Spartacus.

Citizens, soldiers, etc.

SCENE. Rome, and parts of Italy. Time, B.C. 73.

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ACT I

SCENE I. Rome. The Street before Bracchius's house. Enter Phasarius, ^nomaiis, and other gladiators.

PHASARIUS.

There never was a properer moment. I look around me on the Roman flocks, that are deserted by their watchdogs and shepherds, and my fingers itch to be at their throats. Rome has sent forth her generals to conquer the world, and left nothing but her name for the protection of her citizens.

Where now is that warlike, arrogant, and envious coxcomb, Pompey? Quarrelling, — he and that old brawler, Metellus, — in Spain, with the rebel, Sertorius: Lucullus, the Spoiler? Chasing the braggart, Mithridates, over his Pontic mountains: and Marcus, his brother? Killing the rest of my countrymen, the furies speed him! That restless boy, young Caesar? Among the islands, crucifying the pirates. Marius dead, Sylla rotting. —

There is not a man in Rome, that Rome could now look to for service.

The praetor, Crassus,

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PHAS.

The miserable rich man, the patrician monger, that,
by traffic in human flesh, has turned a patrimony
of an hundred talents into an hundred thousand!
If there be any virtue in the love of wealth,
then is the praetor a most virtuous man; for he
loves it better than he loves the gods. And if he
be great and magnanimous, who coins his gold
from the sinews of his bondsmen, set me down
Crassus as the beloved of all greatness. 'Sblood,
brother sworder, what were such a counter of
silver in the iron wars? Get me up a rebellion,
and you shall see this great man brained by the
least of his merchandise.

/ENO.

Well, I should like to be at the killing of some dozen
such tyrants.

PHAS.

Why should you not ? Some thousands like ourselves,
Most scurvy fellows, that have been trained, like dogs,
To tear each other for their masters' pleasure,
Shed blood, cut throats, and do such mortal mischiefs
As men love best to work upon their foes, —
Of these there are some thousands in this realm,
Have the same wish with us, to turn their swords

Upon their masters. And, 'tis natural,
That wish, and reasonable, very reasonable.
I am tired of slaying bondmen like myself,
I am sick of it. That day the Roman knight.
To win the smile of the rich quæstor's daughter.
In the arena sprung, and volunteered

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To kill a gladiator, and did find
His liver spitted, like a thing of naught,
Upon my weapon, — since that day I tasted
Of Roman blood, I have had no desire
To kill poor slaves — I've longed for naught but Romans!

JEHO.

Well, we can die, and kill some, ere we die.

PHAS.

Ay, marry, some dozens ;
And should those wretches be but moved to join us,
We might, for dozens, count us glorious thousands.

^NO.

Well, we are all agreed to this. We are thirty. But how
Shall we get weapons?

PHAS.

Set our dens afire.

And force the armoury.

Our master, Bracchius,

Has a sharp watch to that.

PHAS.

In half an hour.

We are at our morning's practicing. Now, thou knowest.

To keep me in good heart, he hounours me

Most fulsomely. I have won him some great wagers,

So I am worth his fooling. I will urge him.

For this day's play, instead of laths, to give us

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True brands, for keener practice, that we may

Show nobler for him at the praetor's games.

JENO.

<He knows, indeed, 'tis needful we have ready,

For these same games, the best of skill : > I've heard

That Lentulus the Capuan brings a troop

Of excellent swordsmen on that day.

Phas.

What, excellent?

Did I not beat his boaster ?— Excellent ?

'Tis rumoured so.

.ENO.

PHAS.

By Jove, we will put off

This thing a day ! I have seen no excellence

In weapons for a month.

Why need you see it ?

PHAS.

Nay, if he have a man to meet a man,
I must be in the arena : No desertion.
When there's a peril to be dared and ended !
Faith, I will have a bout, if it but be
To make Rome talk. You shall see, jEnomaiis,
If he be matched with me in the Thracian combat.
How I will use that trick my brother taught me,
When first I flashed a weapon.

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^NO.

I doubt not,
You will maintain your reputation.

PHAS.

Faith,
I'll hear once more this Roman acclamation.
Ere it be changed to curses.

MHO.

See ! Our master —

PHAS.

Well, get you gone.

iENO.

Forget not for the weapons.

PHAS.

Ay, ay — after the shows.

{Ex[i]t. .(Enomaiis and the Gladiators. Enter
Bracchius.)

BRAC.

How now, Phasarius; what did these cutthroats here?

Idling, Sirrah?

PHAS.

No; they were moralizing over their scars, and asking
what they had got by 'em.

BRAC.

Do the rogues think themselves soldiers, that their
cuts should be worth anything but showing?

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PHAS.

No. But some of them hope to be made freedmen one
day, when they are no longer fit for the arena.

BRAC.

Fellow, thou knowest I love thee, and will enfranchise
thee.

PHAS.

Yes, — when my eye is dimmed, my arm stiffened, my
heart chilled, my head gray : I look for redemption
no sooner. I am a lusty, serviceable rogue yet:

Why should you free me now?

BRAC.

Sirrah, are you insolent? I will have the centupondium
to your heels, and the lash to your shoulders.

PHAS.

Which will make me fight the better at the prstor's
games, hah ! Which of us is the lunatic ?

BRAC.

What, you knave !

PHAS.

Thou art my master; but I know, thou wouldst as
soon set me free, as scourge me. Both would
destroy thy subsistence, and one thy life; in
either case, I would fight no more. And if thou
wert to touch me lawfully with the thong, thou
knowest, I would unlawfully murder thee.

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BRAC.

You shall be crucified !

PHAS.

Then shall the crows pick forty thousand crowns from
my bones; for so much are these muscles worth.

BRAC.

Out upon you, villain ! It is my favour has made thee
so insolent.

PHAS.

It is my knowledge of my own price, and not thy
favour, which is more perilous than thine anger.

Pr'ythee, threaten me no more; or I shall grow
peaceable, and spoil thy fortune.

BRAC.

You have sworn never to decline the combat.

PHAS.

Ay; so I have. But I have found no one regards a slave's oath; and why now should the slave? It is my humour, and not my oath, makes me a shedder of blood. But the humour may change.

BRAC.

Well, thou art a most impudent talker; it is eternal Saturnalia with thee. But I forgive thee, and will do thee more kindness than I have done already.

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PHAS.

Which is to say, you have some new jeopardy to put my neck in. You have some gladiator of fame you would have me fight, is it not?

BRAC.

Ay, if humour be worth the noting. Crassus has hired the gladiators from Capua; and, 'tis said, Lentulus will bring with them a man that will cut the coxcomb from thy pate, and utterly annihilate thee.

PHAS.

They say so? Annihilate me!

BRAC.

Faith, 'tis so reckoned, and strong wagers are making

against you.

PHAS.

Hah? Against me? Annihilate me! If he have a head of adamant and a breast of brass, he may do it; but if his scull be common bone, and his skin no thicker than bullhide — Mehercle! let me see this Cyclops.

BRAC.

Now, by Jupiter, I love thy spirit.

PHAS.

Has he no name? No country? No voucher of triumphs? Marry, for a mushroom, a thing that was yesterday unknown, his credit is a jot too

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arrogant; and, as I am a Thracian, and feel the blood of the warlike god, the father of Thrace, still tingle in my fingers, I will make my iron acquainted with his ribs. — Out upon him, — Annihilate me!

BRAC.

Come, thou art his better; but he is noted enough to make thy triumph the more glorious. Put thyself in t he meanwhile to practice. But who comes here? What, Lentulus of Capua?

{Enter Lentulus.}

By mine honesty, I am glad to see thee. Bringest

thou any new cutthroats? What man, here is
my Mars of gladiators, my most unmatched and
unmatchable, Phasarius the Thracian. Look how
lusty the knave looks! Hast anything fit to be
slashed by such a fellow?

LENT.

Nay, I know not. 'Tis a most gallant villain. < Slew
he not six at the shows given by Gellius the
consul?

BRAC.

Yes, by Mars; and would have made eel's meat of the
seventh, but that the people grew pitiful and
pointed their thumbs. — T could have cuffed 'em,
senators and all. — He had him on his hip, his
body bent round him thus, his fist to his poll,
his dagger to his throat. By Mars, 'twas the
noblest sight I had seen for a month: and yet

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when he looked to them for the doom, the pitiful
things cried Nay. — I could have cuffed 'em ! >

LENT.

But is he thy best man ?

BRAC.

The best in Rome. I have a Gaul too; but he is not
his equal. I would thou hadst a match for either.

Crassus will pay: the best gladiator in the land

were no loss, if killed in his service.

LENT.

I have brought some indifferent good fellows: and
one of them, I think, I would wager against your
unmatchable.

BRAC.

Hearest thou that, Phasarius? Get in and practice.

{Exit Phasarius.}

LENT.

But he will not take the gladiator's oaths.

BRAC.

What, is he slave or felon?

LENT.

A slave that I bought of the quaestor just returned
from the army of Thrace; a shepherd, I think,
they told me, and leader of a horde of his savage
countrymen. I bought him on the faith of the
fame he brought with him, of being the most
desperate, unconquerable, and, indeed, skilful

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barbarian in the province. < Thou hast not forgot
Caius Clypeus, the centurion, that fought in
the shows at the funeral of Sylla ?

BRAC.

He was accounted on that day the second swordsman
in Rome.

LENT.

His bones, with those of two of his followers, are rotting on the banks of the Strymon. The three attacked the valiant savage, my bondman; and by Jupiter, without other help than fortune and extraordinary prowess, he slew them all.

BRAC.

Hercules! he has magic weapons !> But how was he taken ?

LENT.

Betrayed by his follower, while he slept; and yet he had vengeance on his betrayer, for he dashed his brains out upon a rock.

BRAC.

Excellent! Dash his brains out! He is a Titan. I wotild have given a dozen common slaves to have seen him do that thing!

LENT.

But he will not swear.

BRAC.

Come, thou knowest not the nature of these fellows.

Didst thou speak him kindly?

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LENT.

Ay: but I had better have talked softly to a hyena:

he did but scowl at me. Faith, he will sit yon

by the day, looking at his chains, or the wall; and
if one has a word from him, it is commonly a
question. How many leagues he is away from
Thrace.

BRAC.

Didst thou tell him of the honours of a gladiator?

LENT.

Ay; and he asked if cutting throats was the most
honourable occupation in Rome?

BRAC.

By Mars, thou shouldst have scourged him.

LENT.

I did.

BRAC.

And how wrought it?

LENT.

I think the knave had killed me, when I struck him, — ay,
even with his manacled fist, — but that he was
felled by the staff of my freedman. I should
have hanged him, but was loath to lose so bold
a varlet. Wherefore I had him scourged again,
and faith he took it as passively as a stone. But
it will not make him swear.

BRAC.

Didst thou vow to the gods to hang him up like a dog,
if he were so obstinate?

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LENT.

I had a halter put to his neck; but then he laughed,
and thanked his barbarous gods for such indulgence.

BRAC.

Nay, this is a madman.

LENT.

I had the fetters taken from his arm, and sent one to
attack him with a weapon. But although I laid
a sword by him, he would not use it ; y et he struck
the assailant with his fist, and felled him as one
would a wall with a battering ram. But then
he was angry. Another time, he sat still, and
let the slave wound him, unresisting.

BRAC.

Moody caitiff! Thou hadst better drown him. — Look
thou — Mine eyes are dim — I have bought a troop
of women and children — Thracians too — and I
think those be they coming yonder.

LENT.

Thou art mistaken. Those are mine own cutthroats,
and the wild Thracian among them.

BRAC.

Why didst thou bring him to Rome?

LENT.

In a last hope to urge him to the oath. Look, is he

not a most warlike and promising fellow?

J

(Enter Spartacus, chained, and Florus with the CAPTIVE
PUAN Gladiators.)

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BRAC.

A Hercules, a Mars! What, thou rogue, why dost
thou droop thus? Why art thou so sullen and
obstinate? No words? What, canst thou not
speak? — Fetch me a scourge hither — I'll find
thee a tongue.

LENT.

Come, sirrah, look up, speak, show thyself.

SPART.

Is it a thousand leagues away to Thrace?

LENT.

What, thou fool, wilt thou always be harping on
Thrace?

'Tis so far away, thou wilt never see it more.

SPART.

Never.

LENT.

Why I say, never. Why wilt thou be so mad as to
think of it ?

SPART.

Have Romans fathers, and wives, and children?

BRAC.

Truly ! Thou art a Thracian ; what is thy name ?

SPART.

Misery.

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LENT.

Thou seest !

BRAC.

Faith, thou hast scourged him too much; thou hast
broke his heart. Come, sirrah, dost thou love
thy country?

SPART.

I have ijone, — I am a slave. I was bought; I say,
I was bought. Do you doubt it? That man
scourges me ; thou didst threaten me with stripes ;
every Roman I look upon, speaks to me of scourging.
Nay they may: I was bought.

LENT.

Thou seest, Bracchius! This is the manner of his
obstinacy.

BRAC.

Nay, I see more than thou thinkest. I can move him
yet. — Observe him. — He mutters to himself.

SPART.

Is not this Rome? The great city?

BRAC.

Ay; and thou shouldst thank the gods they have
suffered thee to see it, before thou diest. —

SPART.

I heard of it, when I was a boy among the hills, piping
to my father's flocks. They said, that spoke of it.

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it was the queen of cities, the metropolis of the
world. My heart grew big within me, to hear of
its greatness. I thought those men who could
make it so, were greater than men ; t hey were gods.

LENT.

And are they not, sirrah? —

SPART.

How many palaces, that look like the habitations of
divinities, are here about me ! Here are marble
mountains, that have been hewn down and
shaped anew, for men to dwell among. Gold,
and silver, and purple, and a million of men
thronging the pillared hills!

BRAC.

And what thinkest thou, now thou hast seen it ?

SPART.

That, — if Romans had not been fiends, Rome had
never been great ! Whence came this greatness,
but from the miseries of subjugated nations?

How many myriads of happy people — people that

had not wronged Rome, for they knew not Rome
— how many myriads of these were slain like the
beasts of the field, that Rome might fatten upon
their blood, and become great? Look ye, Roman,—
there is not a palace upon these hills that
cost not the lives of a thousand innocent men;
there is no deed of greatness ye can boast, but
it was achieved upon the ruin of a nation; there
is no joy ye can feel, but its ingredients are blood
and tears.

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LENT.

Now marry, villain, thou wert bought not to prate,
but to fight.

SPART.

I will not fight. I will contend with mine enemy,
when there is strife between us; and if that enemy
be one of these same fiends, a Roman, I will
give him advantage of weapon and place; he
shall take a helmet and buckler; while I, with my
head bare, my breast naked, and nothing in my
hand but my shepherd's staff, will beat him to
my feet and slay him. But I will not slay a man
for the diversion of Romans.

BRAC.

Thou canst boast, barbarian! If thou canst do this,

what brought thee to Rome, a captive?

SPART.

Treachery! I was friendless, sick, famished. My
enemies came in numbers. They were like the
rats of Egypt, that will not come near the crocodile
while he is awake : t hey attacked me sleeping.
Had they found me with a weapon in my hands,
Gods I I had not now been a thing for Romans
to scourge.

BRAC.

Fellow, I love thee. What is thy name?

SPART.

What matters it?

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BRAC.

Wilt thou be free?

SPART.

Free!

BRAC.

Take the oaths of a gladiator, and kill me a score of
lusty fellows —

SPART.

A score! kill a score of men? in cold blood? and for
the diversion of Rome's rabble? I will not.

BRAC.

By Mars, then you shall be sent to man young Caesar's

galleys, and be whipped daily.

LENT.

Fight me half a score, and, by Jupiter, I will send thee
back to thy wife.

SPART.

My wife! — The last thing that mine eyes looked on.

When my steps turned from Thrace, it was my cottage

A hideous ruin; the Roman fires has scorched it;

No wife sat sobbing by the wreck; no child

Wept on the sword; not even the watchdog howled:

There was no life there. — Well, why should I talk?

'Tis better they are perished.

The slave is reckless. -

LENT.

This is despair :

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SPART.

O ye heavens ! t hat sight

Withered my heart; I was a man no more.

I had been happy too !— Had ye spared them,

Then spoke of freedom, you should have had my blood,

For beastly ransome: All integrity

And pride of heart I would have sold for it.

BRAC.

Sirrah, there are more wives in Thrace.

LENT.

Lo now!

He'll speak no more. — You, Bracchius, have more skill

To move these obstinates. You shall buy him of me.

BRAC.

And hang him! Marry, not I. He is a madman.

I have some better merchandise here now.

Not warlike, but as gainful.

{Enter Senona, with a child, and other slaves.}

Thou seest these creatures:

Here are some Thracians too. — The moody villain !

He shovdd be hanged. — The Thracian women are

Most excellent spinners. Buy a brace of them

For your wife. I care not for so many.

LENT.

This woman

That weeps so, she with the brat, — is she a Thracian?

BRAC.

Hark ye, mistress, answer — are you of Thrace?

One might swear it by her silence; for these savages

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Are always obstinate at the first. You like her?

Well, out of my friendship now, I'll almost give her to you. Three thousand

drachmas

—

LENT.

Three thousand furies!

BRAC.

Ay, with the boy too — 'Tis a lusty imp.

LENT.

Three thousand sesterces; and that's too much,

BRAC.

Jove! talk of sesterces? This cub is worth it!

(brac. handling the child roughly.)

SENO.

Ah, hurt him not.

SPART.

Hah!

LENT.

Three thousand sesterces. —

SPART.

Did my ears mock me?

For the woman alone.

BRAC.

Well then sesterces,

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SENO.

You will not part us ?

SPART.

Hah!

Gods, pity me! does the grave give back the dead?

Senona!

SENO.

Hah! Hah! My husband!

BRAC.

What's the matter?

LENT.

A bargain —

BRAC.

What, his wife? Six thousand drachmas.

No more sesterces! — Caitiff, is this thy wife? — {To
Spart.)

SPART.

And my miserable boy too,

Exposed in the street to sell!

BRAC.

By Jove, I have you.

Six thousand drachmas.

SPART.

Why didst thou not die? —

Villains, do you put them up for sale, like beasts ?

Look at them : they are human.

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LENT.

Silence, rogue. —

SPART.

I will not silence. I will ransom them,

What way you will, with life or blood. —

BRAC.

By Jove,

I will not sell her. Into the house, get in. — •

Take her along.

SPART.

You shall not — I will brain that man

That lays his hand upon her.

BRAC.

Kill the villain.^

SPART.

Man, master! — See, I am at your feet, and call you.

Of mine own will. My Master ! — I will serve you

Better than slave e'er served; — grant me this prayer.

And hire my blood out. Buy — yes, that's the word;

It does not choke me — buy her, buy the boy;

Keep us together —

BRAC.

Six thousand drachmas —

SPART.

I will earn them,

Though they were doubled.

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LENT.

Will you fight?

SPART.

And die.

LENT.

Die! Then my gold is lost.

SPART.

I will not die. —

Buy them, buy them.

LENT.

And you will swear?

SPART.

I will —

To be a cutthroat and a murderer, — Whate'er you will, — so you will buy them.

LENT.

Unbind him.

BRAC.

Six thousand —

LENT.

Three. Remember, Bracchius,

If you prevent his fighting, your own profit

Suffers as well as mine.

BRAC.

Five thousand then.

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LENT.

Nay, pr'ythee, four.

BRAC.

Well, out of friendship,

It shall be four. — But, faith, my Gaul shall kill him.

LENT.

We shall see. I'll wager even, and no less
Than the purchase money. —

SPART.

Come dry your tears, Senona :
We are slaves: Why should slaves weep ?

SENO.

O, dear my husband.
Though I ne'er thought to have the joy to meet you
Again, in this dark world, I scarce feel joy —
I think, my heart is burst.

SPART.

Come, be of better cheer: —
Art thou not now amid the gorgeous piles
Of the potential and the far-famed Rome?

SENO.

But Oh, the hills of our own native land !
The brooks and forests —

SPART.

Ah! no more, no more:
Think of them not. —

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SENO.

Where we fed sheep, and laughed
To think there could be sorrow in the world;
The bright, clear rivers, even that washed the walls
Of our burned cottage —

SPART.

No more, no more, no more.

Are there not hills and brooks in Italy,

Fairer than ours? Content you, girl.

SENO. Alas,

This boy must be a Roman, and a slave.

SPART.

By heaven, he shall not ! Free as rock-hatched eagles,

Thy boy was born, and so shall live and die! —

We wear our fetters only for a time —

Romans are not all like these men. We'll see

Otu- home yet. We are slaves but for a time. —

I need not ask thee for my mother, girl :

I know this thing has slain her. Her heart cracked,

When they bore off my brother.

LENT.

With the Gaul then:

And if he beat him, as I think he will,

Then shall he battle with your best. — Now, sirrah.

SPART.

Hah!

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SENO.

Husband !

SPART.

Well, it is not chains alone

That make the slave. What will my master have?

LENT.

I'll have thee exercise thine arm in practice.

Thou wilt have brave men to contend with.

SPART. Well,

I will do so : but speak it not before my wife.

LENT.

Get thee along. Florus, conduct them to

Their lodgings. See this Thracian exercised.

{Exeunt.}

END OF ACT I.

ACT II

SCENE I. A room in Crassus's house. Enter

Crassus, Jovius, an Artificer, and a Slave.

CRASSUS

To the full letter of the law. What, use

My excellent slave in thy most gainful craft,

And groan at the reckoning? By Jupiter,

Thou shalt his hire pay to the utmost sesterce,

Or have a quittance writ upon thy back.

Breed I then servants for the good of knaves?

Find me the money, or I'll have thee whipped.

Begone. {Exit Artificer.} I built not up my fortunes
thus,

By taking sighs for coin : had I done so.

Foul breath had ruined me. How should I then

Have borne the hard expenses of these games,
The uproarious voters clamour for?
jov. What! true.

' Wealth is the key to office, here in Rome, —
Or is the lock that best secures it.

CRASS.

Sirrah,
Thou dost not mean, the officers bribe the people?

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I had sooner lug old Cerbjeorvu.s by the ears,
Than do aught to our citizens, but praise 'em.
But, in your gracious ears, — our sovereign Romans
Are something bauble-brained; and, like to children,
Pass qualmish by their needful medicines.
To snatch at sugary playthings. What do they
In their elections? Faith, I have observed.
They ask not if their candidate have honour.
Or honesty, or proper qualities ;
But, with an eager grin, What is his wealth?
If thus and thus — -Then he can give us shows
And feasts: and therefore is the proper man.
An excellent mode of judging !

CRASS.

Ancient comrade,
At me thou point'st now.

JOY.N ot irreverently :

I question of the people; and, I think.

They loved great Marius more for his rich feasts.

Than his rich victories. Sooth, when angry Sylla

Swept them, like dogs, out of his bloody path.

And made their hearts sore, they forgot their fury,

When once they had looked upon his fighting lions.

CRASS.

Hence, thou inferrest, they have chose me praetor.

Being rich enough to purchase them diversions !

But I have done them service in the wars,

And, out of gratitude — But no more of that. —

They shall be pleased: the games go bravely on.

THE GLADIATOR 329

The Capuan hath brought me a new sworder. —

Sirrah, go bid my niece here {Exit Slave.} This Capuan

hath

A son most insolent and troublesome.

{Enter Florus}

What, Sirrah, again? Hast thou not had thy answer?

<Kill me these flies that being lean themselves,

Swarm after fatness. > Why art thou this fool.

To covet my rich niece ?

FLOR.

I seek not riches.

CRASS.

Pah ! Will poor lovers sing eternally

The self -same song? They seek not riches! Jove,

Why pass they then all poverty, where their choice

Might find a wider compass?

FLOR.

Excellent praetor.

Give me the maid, and keep her lands thyself.

CRASS.

Sirrah, thou know'st, the girl abhors thee. Look,

She has the blood of nobles in her veins,

Distilling purely through a thousand years ;

And thine comes grossly from a German slave's,

That was thy grandsire.

FLOR.

Worth and deserving toil can raise me up, y^

Even from my poverty, to wealth and honours.

And these shall do it.

330 DRAMATIC WORKS OF ROBERT BIRD

CRASS.

Get thee away then

To warring Pompey, and, with thy soiled sword,

Carve out clean honours ; not forgetting, whilst

Thy right hand grasps the enemy's throat, to

thrust

The left into his purse : For what is honour,

With empty pockets, in this thievish world?

Honour is men's consideration : men
Consider none, but those can profit them.
Therefore, if thou'lt be quick
In gaining honour, use thy right hand rather
For gathering gold than killing — or rather use them
both:

Make much, and thou shalt be most honourable.
Thou hearest, Florus? Tjhoivs is the truer wisdom.
I've fought for honour some good thirty years, —
< Courting her with such madman freaks, as
leaping.

First man, upon an arm'd wall in the storm;
Saving a comrade's life (some dozen of 'em,)
Out of the jaws of death ; contesting singly
With scores, in divers places. > But being foolish,
In my hot haste for slaughter, I forgot
To look for spoil; and lo, the consequence!
I bear the vine-branch,^ and am only honoured
As a gray-haired centurion.

' The MS. contains the following note, written in Bird's hand:

" This (the vine branch) was the badge of a centurion's office,
and he should carry it — at least in camp and in his embassies. ' '

THE GLADIATOR 33i

CRASS.

Get thee gone.

When thou art worthy, ask her, and no sooner.

{Exit Florus.}

A most mad, insolent boy, and honest son
Of a breeder of cutthroats ! Would some knave would
hang him.

He has the damsel's heart too. See, she comes. —

Is the litter ready?

{Enter julia.}

It cannot be, dear uncle,

You will send me to the country?

CRASS.

It cannot be !

What, chuff, it cannot be? In faith, it can be,

And, instantly, it shall be :— Into the country.

To weep and meditate. I am ashamed

You have so poor a spirit as to love

This base-born Capuan, whose whole wealth you
might.

Piled up in coin, base on a puny drachma.

Ah! When did love ever think of drachmas, uncle?

< You would have me, when a lover moans, demand
him.

Could he coin gold, as easily as sighs;

Or when he wept, ask if his pockets had

As many talents as his eyes had tears.

332 DRAMATIC WORKS OF ROBERT BIRD

Then should he change his manner, and where he

might

Have wooed me with soft words, assault me with

A schedule of his properties ; i nstead

Of flattering, boast me of his lands; his vows

Change into oaths of, lord, how rich he was.

How could I say him nay?>

CRASS.

A milksop boy,

That has done nothing in the world but breathe, —

Has won no name or fortune. Why should such

A natural expletive, < a sack of breath, >

Aspire to wealth or woman? When he proves him

Worth his existence, then let him aspire.

Till then thou shalt be hid from his presumption.

Even in Campania.

Oh, JbUuLt. not today.

Tomorrow, or the next day, when the games are done.

I must see them : ' twould kill me, not to look

Once more upon the fighting gladiators.

CRASS.

Pho!

Thou a green girl, and talk of gladiators!

My youth was pass'd in battles, and I am not

Unused to blood; but my flesh always creeps,

To see these cold-blood slaughters.

JUL.

So does mine.

Ugh ! m y heart stops with terror, and my eyes
Seem parting from their sockets ; m y brain reels.

THE GLADIATOR 333

While I look on; and while I look, each time,
I swear I ne'er will look again. But when
They battle boldly, and the people shout,
And the poor creatures look so fearless, — ^frowning,
Not groaning, when they are hurt :— Indeed 'tis noble !
<And though they fright me, always make me weep,
I love to see them. These are your own shows: >

Oh, I must see them.

Thjiosv . is a brave maiden.

< You should look on a battle — two great armies,
(Perhaps a hundred thousand men apiece:)

Fighting as stavuichly as so many wolves,
Throttling and stabbing, dying in multitudes, —
A chaos of death: — Even such a one as that

(My own first fight) at Aqua Sextia,
Against the Ambrones, where a hundred thousand
Of the barbarians fell.

AJnXJ L .h undred thousand !

jov.

Was it not glorious?

HorJrXJiLd.!

JOV. Horrid ! Humph,

Still woman. — But these were barbarians.

334 DRAMATIC WORKS OF ROBERT BIRD

Were they not men? JUL.

Whjyo v. yes, a sort of men.

They had legs and arms, noses and eyes like men,

They bled like men; but, being barbarians,

Of not much matter of account as men.

That makes a difEerence. J U L .B ut an hundred thousand

Was many to kill, even of barbarians.

CRASS.

Come, you're a goose, you know not what you say.

O but these gladiators ! J MUyL. friend, Caloeia,

Told me that famous one, Phasarius,

Would fight today. He is a handsome rogue,

And kills a man the prettiest in the world. >

CRASS.

You shall not see him.

DJeUaLr. my uncle.

CRASS.

You came

Into this city, modest and obedient;

Now you have learnt to cog, cajole and cozen;

And, in the teeth of my authority,

THE GLADIATOR 335

Give private hopes to this low Capuan;

And, while mine eyes are tied upon the games,

Would — But I'll balk your hoped for interviews.

The litter waits you at the door. Farewell.

This good old man, who once was my tried client,

Shall have you in charge. Now no more opposition.

Farewell. Be wise, and love none but the worthy.

{Exeunt.}

SCENE II. A court before Lentulus's house.

Enter Florus with Spartacus, Crixus, and other
Gladiators.

FLOR.

You have played well, and beaten Crixus fairly.

Carry this skilfulness to the arena.

And you shall win great honour.

SPART.

Great degradation.

No matter : I am sworn to be a caitiff.

Where have you placed my wife ? It was conditioned,

You should not part us.

FLOR.

She is lodged hard by :

After the combat, you shall see her. — Come,

Play me a bout here with Soturius.

I'll fetch you foils.

SPART.

I'll play no more: I was not sworn to that.

336 DRAMATIC WORKS OF ROBERT BIRD

FLOR.

You cannot go too well prepared.

SPART.

Even as I stand,

Awkward or skilful, doomed to die or kill.

So will I go. — I'll train no more for murder.

FLOR.

Well, as you will.

SPART.

Will it not be enough.

If I disarm or worst my enemy ?

May I not spare him ?

FLOR.

Not unless the people

Grant you permission. <When you have him at

Your mercy, look to the spectators then.

If they consent, they will their thumbs raise — thus:

Then you shall spare. But if their hands be clenched.

And the thumbs hid, then must you slay. >

SPART.

Well, well^

I understand.

FLOR.

Breathe yourselves here awhile.

Then follow to the armoury.

{Exit.}

SPART.

Good brother,

Have you yet fought i' th' Amphitheatre?

THE GLADIATOR 337

CRIX.

SPART.

Your adversary?

CRIX.

Ay. Each one of us

Has won some reputation.

SPART.

Reputation !

Call you this reputation?

This is the bulldog's reputation:

He and the gladiator only need

The voice o' the master, to set on to mischief .-

Love you your masters?

CRIX.

No.

Ay.

And killed

SPART.

Go ye to perish?

CRIX.

Or of your own wishes

No; but being slaves,

We care not much for life; and think it better
To die upon the arena, than the cross.

SPART.

If ye care not for life, why die ye not
Rather like men, than dogs?

338 DRAMATIC WORKS OF ROBERT BIRD

CRIX.

What mean you?

SPART.

Were it not better
To turn upon your masters, and so die,
Killing them that oppress you, rather than fall,
Killing your brother wretches ?

CRIX.

True, it were.

Put arms into our hands, unlock our dungeons.
And set us out among the citizens;
Then ask this question.

SPART.

Do you say this? By heaven,
This spirit joys me. — Fight ye all today ?

CRIX.

We are so ordered.

SPART.

How many do you number?

CRIX.

Fifty.

SPART.

Fifty? How many hath this Roman,

This villain Bracchius?

CRIX.

Some five and thirty.

THE GLADIATOR 339

SPART.

And fight they all?

CRIX.

Some forty pairs today.

SPART.

O heaven, what, forty?

Two hundred pairs.

CRIX.

And ere the shows are done,

SPART.

Two hundred pairs !— Four hundred

Arm'd slaves, that hate their masters !

CRIX.

On the third day,

All that survive, will fight in general battle.

SPART.

In general battle! — If Senona now.

And the young infant were in Thrace. — Alas,

To peril them. —

CRIX.

What say'st thou, Thracian?

SPART.

Nothing;

At least, not much. — Are there now troops in Rome?

340 DRAMATIC WORKS OF ROBERT BIRD

CRIX.

Four legions of Praetorian Guards; and now

Each legion counts five thousand.

SPART.

'Twill not do.

CRIX.

What will not do ?

SPART.

I'll tell you by and by:

'Tis worth your ear. — But let us now go arm,

Then to the Arena, to begin the work

Of slavish murder. — ^We are gladiators.

(Exeunt.)

SCENE III. The Arena of an Amphitheatre, behind
which are many citizens. Crassus seated with his
Lictors, MuMMius, Lentulus, Bracchius, Florus,
and many officers, — ^diles, Conquistores, etc.

CRASS.

Let our good friends, the citizens, be seated.

We purpose to delight their himiours with

The bravest gladiators of this realm. —

What say'st thou, Capuan ? Why tell me, thou
Hast brought me some brave cutthroats, to be pitched,
Through the first hours, in single combat, with
The best slaves of our Bracchius.

LENT.

Even so,
Most noble prastor; and, with the consent

THE GLADIATOR 341

Of your appointed officers, we first
Will bring a lusty Thracian, who, although
Yet unadventured in the Arena, bears
A name of valour.

CRASS.

Let him before us.

{Exit Florus.}

Had Thracians, by their firesides, fought as fiercely
As now they fight upon the Roman sand.
The cranes o' the Strymon still had been their sentries.

{Reenter Florus, with Spartacus, as a gladiator.}

Is this the man ? A very capital knave;
Yet, or I err, of but a little spirit.
Where is the fiery confidence, should flash
From his bold eyes? the keen and tameless spirit,
Should brace his strong limbs to activity?

LENT.

Driveller, arouse thee! — Let not his gloom condemn

him:

He is most wayward, but, in truth, right valiant.

What, sirrah, shake off these clouds, and do thy
homage

To the most noble praetor. Bend thy knee.

SPART.

Did I swear that? Kneel thou, whose servile soul
Was given for crouching. I am here to fight!

CRASS.

This is some madman!

342 DRAMATIC WORKS OF ROBERT BIRD

LENT.

A barbarian,

Bred in a savage roughness.

SPART.

Well, I am here,

Among these beasts of Rome, a spectacle.

This is the temple, where they mock the Gods

With human butchery, — Most grand and glorious

Of structure and device! — It should have been a cave.

Some foul and midnight pit, or den of bones.

Where murder best might veil himself from sight. —

Women and children, too, to see men die.

And clap their hands at every stab ! This is

The boastful excellence of Rome ! I thank the Gods

There are Barbarians.

CRASS.

Now by Jupiter,

The rogue speaks well — But Romans must be pleased —

Sirrah, — {Comes down center.}

SPART.

Roman !

CRASS.

Most impudently bold.

I did mistake him. Prepare thyself.

SPART.

I am ready,

As ready to die, as thou to see me die.

Where is the opponent? Of what nation comes

The man that I must kill ?

THE GLADIATOR 343

CRASS.

What matters it?

SPART.

Much, very much. Bring me some base ally

Of Roman rapine, or, if ye can, a Roman :—

I will not grieve to slay him.

CRASS.

Faith, I like

This fearless taunting, and will sound it further.

Thy foe shall be a Spaniard.

SPART.

Alas, I should

Bethink me of his country, as of mine.

Ruined and harried by our common foe;

His kinsmen slain, his wife and children sold.

And nothing left of all his country's greatness.

Save groans and curses on the conquerors.

CRASS.

A Carthaginian.

SPART.

What, a Carthaginian?

A relic of that noble tribe, that ne'er

Would call Rome friend, and perished rather than

Become Rome's vassal? I could not fight with him:

We should drop swords, and recollect together.

As brothers, how the Punic steel had smote.

Of yore, to Rome's chill'd heart; yea, how Rome
quaked.

344 DRAMATIC WORKS OF ROBERT BIRD

How shook her proud sons, when the African

Burst from the sea, like to its mightiest surge,

Swept your vain shores, and swallow'd up your armies !

How, when his weapons, gored with consular blood.

Waved o'er your towns, your bucklered boasters fled,

Or shook, like aguish boys, and wept and prayed: —

Yea, feared to die, and wept and prayed.

LENT.

< Peace, villain. >

CRASS.

Strike him not, Lentulus. The prattler knows
There's scarce a man of the Punic stock left living.
To boast of these mishaps. — Thy adversary
Is a brave Gatil.

SPART.

Why there again! The name
Speaks of Rome's shame. Name but a Gaul, and I
Bethink me of the Tiber rtinning blood,
His tributaries choked with knightly corses;
Of Rome in ashes, and of Brennus laughing
At the starved cravens in the Capitol.

CRASS.

Sirrah, no more.
Be but thy sword as biting as thy tongue,
And I'll assure thee victory. — Bring in
The Gaul. Use thy best skill, if skill thou hast,
Or I'll not lay an obolus on thy life. —

{A Gallic Gladiator is brought in.)

Clear the Arena {Ascends chair again}.

THE GLADIATOR 345

SPART.

I will fight with him ;
But give me to spare his life.

CRASS.

That privilege

Rests with the people. Remember thy oath. — Sound,
trumpets.

{A flourish.}

SPART.

Brother —

CRASS.

No words; but do thy best. < He'll spit thee. >

{They fight. The Gaul is disarmed, and thrown on his
knees. Spartacus looks to the people.}

Thine oath ! Strike, < villain ! > Hah !

(Spartacus kills the Gaul.)

Why that was bravely done.

SPART.

Well, I have done it. Let me go hence.

Most nobly fought!

Bring me another.

crass.

Not so.-

SPART.

Alas, alas, poor slave !—

crass.

{The body is taken away.}

346 DRAMATIC WORKS OF ROBERT BIRD

SPART.

I will fight no more.

CRASS.

Sirrah!

SPART.

I have heart enough to die, but not to kill.

CRASS.

Why 'twas most capitally done! Remember

Thy oath.

SPART.

I care not. I will fight no more.

CRASS.

Thou shalt have freedom. Nay, I'll ransom for thee,

Thy wife and boy.

SPART.

Wilt thou?

CRASS.

By Mars, I will.

Fight through these games ; and thou and they shall be

Sent back to Thrace.

SPART.

Shall we see Thrace again? —

Let him come on; yes, though it sick my soul, —

Let him come on.

THE GLADIATOR 347

CRASS.

Bring in the Thracian!

{Exit Bracchius.}

SPART.

Thracian ?

I will not fight a Thracian! 'Tis my countryman!

CRASS.

Nay, but thou shalt, and kill him too; or thou

And they, are slaves eternally.

SPART.

O heaven!

Bring me a Spaniard, German, Carthaginian,

Another Gaul, a Greek — any but Thracian.

CRASS.

None

But this same Thracian is thy match ; and truly

If thou slay him, there will remain no other

Worthy of thee. Thou shalt be quickly free.

SPART.

I will fight two — three — so they be not Thracians.

CRASS.

The Thracian, or eternal bondage; bondage

For wife and child too.

SPART.

Wilt thou swear to free us?

Fight with a Thracian! — Wilt thou swear to free us?

348 DRAMATIC WORKS OF ROBERT BIRD

CRASS.

Bring hither the Vindicta: With this rod,
If thou escape this man, the praetor frees thee.

{Reenter Bracchius, with Phasarius.}

This is thy foe.

PHAS.

{Aside.} What, do I dream?

SPART. Alas,

Thou art a Thracian and my countryman,
And yet we meet as deadly foes. Forgive me.

PHAS.

{Aside.} This is no fantasy!

CRASS.

Observe them, Bracchius;
Thy boaster hesitates.

PHAS.

Thou art a Thracian ?

SPART.

Wotdd thou wert not.

PHAS.

Of the Ciconian tribe —

A son of blue-waved Hebrus?

SPART.

Such I am.

And comest thou too of the same race? and set
Against thy brother?

THE GLADIATOR 349

Thy name is Spartacus.

PHAS.

Brother, indeed!

SPART.

Where learn't you that?

Freemen have heard it, but not slaves.

PHAS.

How fares thy father?

SPART.

Didst thou know him? — Dead —

I cannot fight thee.

PHAS.

Hadst thou not a brother? —

CRASS.

Why prate these cutthroats? Come, prepare, prepare—

SPART.

A young, brave heart, whose steps I taught to dare

The crags and chasms and roaring cataracts

Of his own native hills, till he was freer

Among them than the eagles. What art thou,

That seem'st to know him? I would be angry with

thee:

These words make me look on thee as a friend.

PHAS.

Seem I not like Phasarius ?

350 DRAMATIC WORKS OF ROBERT BIRD

SPART.

What, thou?

A mailed warrior Hke a singing boy? —

The Romans slew him.

PHAS.

They enslaved him — Brother,

Changed as I am, and from a harmless boy,

Turned to a rough destroyer, still am I

The selfsame fool that once thou called'st brother.

SPART.

Thou mock'st me. Thou !

PHAS.

My father, Menalon —

SPART.

Thy father, Menalon?

My mother-

PHAS.

SPART.

Ay, thy mother?

PHAS.

Laodice.

SPART.

My brother !

CRASS.

What mean these rogues, that they have dropped
their swords.

And fain, like friends, about each other's necks ?

THE GLADIATOR 351

What ho, ye slaves, give o'er this timeless juggling:

Take up your swords, and look ye to the signal.

SPART.

I do believe the gods have given me o'er

To some new madness: First, I find in Rome,

Where naught I looked for but despair, my wife

And then my brother !

< CRASS.

Villains !

SPART.

But I am sorry

To find thee here, Phasarius. >

LENT.

< Whining miscreant, >

Why mark'st thou not the prsetor?

CRASS.

< Rogues, prepare. >

Let the trumpet sound.

SPART.

Bring me my adversary.

CRASS.

Thou hast him there.

SPART.

What he ? This is my brother.

You would not have me fight with him !

352 DRAMATIC WORKS OF ROBERT BIRD

CRASS.

His brother?

PHAS.

'Tis true, most excellent praetor.

CRASS.

Now, by Hercules,

This is too strange for truth.

LENT.

Ye cogging rogues,

Think ye to balk us thus ?

<BRAC.

Conspiracy !

Shameful collusion! Out on you, Phasarius,

You're not afeard now ? Out, ye cheating villain. >

PHAS.

Hear me, good praetor —

CRASS.

< Rogues > , prepare yourselves.

This is a most evident knavery, to 'scape

From one another. — Brothers indeed! — Prepare;

Take up your arms.

SPART.

Foul Roman —

CRASS.

Bring me in

The guarding cohort: {An Officer goes out.) I'll have
them cut to pieces.

If they refuse the battle. — Brothers indeed !

THE GLADIATOR 353

SPART.

Thou hard, unnatural man —

PHAS.

Patience, brother —

SPART.

Let them come in — We are armed. —

CRASS.

Most strange and insolent contumacy !

PHAS.

{Aside.) 'Tis something sudden — and in Rome! —

Peace brother. —

SPART.

We will resist them, armed as we are.

Can we not die?

PHAS.

Most worthy praetor, pardon.

Grant us a word together, and we are ready.

CRASS.

Fine knavery! I did almost suspect

Yon cutthroat for a coward — that 'twas skill alone

Gave him his courage, which he fear'd to try

With that more skilful savage. For the barbarian.

His soul is made of contrariety.

■i

354 DRAMATIC WORKS OF ROBERT BIRD

PHAS.

(Apart to Spart.) I know them all — This thing was
hatch'd before. —

They wait without,

Circled by cohorts, but all arm'd for combat.

Let me but raise the cry of Freedom to them,

And each man strikes his Roman to the earth.

SPART.

The slaves of Lentulus — they will strike too:

Let us but reach them, and they rise with us. —

PHAS.

One moment, princely prastor.

CRASS.

Not an instant.

What, shall our shows wait on the time and pleasure

Of our base bondmen ? Sound the tnunpets there—

What, treachery, ho ! Call in the soldiers !—

PHAS.

Freedom

For gladiators !

SPART.

Death to all their masters! —

CRASS.

Treachery !—

SPART.

Death to the Roman fiends, that make their mirth

Out of the groans of bleeding misery !

THE GLADIATOR 355

Ho, slaves, arise! it is your hour to kill!

Kill and spare not — For wrath and liberty !—

Freedom for bondmen — freedom and revenge !—

{Shouts and trumpets — The guards and gladiators rush
and engage in combat, as the curtain falls.)

END OF ACT II.

ACT III

SCENE /.' A room in Crassus's house. Enter

Crassus, Jovius, Lentulus, Bracchius, Mummius.

< CRASS.

Incredible! What, fight a consular army?

Or look one in the face?

joSvo. says the courier.

'Tis sworn, that half the slaves of Italy

Are flocking to his banner.

CRASS.

Fight a consul !

Fight Cneus Lentulus!

J'OTVi.s not so much

To one who has already beat a proconsul.

You'll not doubt that? nor that these madman slaves,

Led by this whirlwind slayer —

" There is a query in Bird's handwriting " whether to restore the beginning of this scene or some part of it?" It seems that Dr. Bird submitted the MS. of The Gladiator to Edwin Forrest for revision, who no doubt suggested many of the cuts indicated.

356

THE GLADIATOR 357

LENT.

My precious Thracian ! —

Have vanquished several jyo, v . and in pitched battles,

Three praetors of the provinces.

CRASS.

Shame upon them !

Sneers for their lives, contempt for epitaphs !

Beaten by slaves !— I warrant me, by mine —

Two thousand costly and ungrateful villains :—

I'll hang them, every man. — Beaten by slaves.

Gross, starving, unarmed slaves !

JOV. Not now unarmed.

Each rogue has got a Roman harness on.

Filched from the carcass of a Roman veteran.

Not starving neither, whilst every day they sack

Some camp or city — pouncing sudden down.

Like vultures, from their hills upon our troops.

CRASS.

Scandalous, scandalous! Slaves, wretched slaves,
Led by a slave too !

LENT.

Still my precious Thracian !

CRASS.

A scurvy gladiator, with no brains ;

An ignorant savage. —

358 DRAMATIC WORKS OF ROBERT BIRD

Come, jo gv.i ve the rogue his due:

He has more brains than all our generals,

For he has beaten them; that's a soldier's proof.

This Spartacus, so late a bondman, has

A soul for master; though a shepherd bred,

He has fought battles, ay, and led men too, —

Some mountain malcontents in his own land, —

'Gainst Roman conquerors; and, by the faith

Of honesty, for honest I will be.

In courage, stratagem, resource, exploits,

He shows a good commander. He has formed.

Out of this slavish, ragged scum, an army;

Arms it and feeds it at his foeman's cost,

Recruits it in his foeman's territory;

Which foe is renowned Rome, resistless Rome,

Rome the great head and empress of the world !

Is he not then a general ?

CRASS.

I grant you.

The rogue is not a common one; but still

A slave. And much it shames me that the senate

Finds me no worthier enemy; whom to conquer.

Wins neither spoil nor honour.

JOV. No spoil indeed.

Unless you count their arms and bodies such ;

But honour enough to him that beats the vanquisher

Of some half score commanders : There's your honour.

Come, stir these centuries : My old bones are aching

For one more battering, ere they fall to dust.

THE GLADIATOR 359

The reprobates must be put down, that's certain,

And by yourself, or Pompey. >

CRASS.

Now the gods rest him !

Is there no trouble can befall the state,

But men must cry for Pompey? As if Rome

Had whelped no other fit to do her service.

< Still is it Pompey, great and valiant Pompey,

Must all our state thorns conjure into laurels. —

Well, Crassus is not Pompey, but may serve

For the besom.

What, JaO Y b.e som?

CRASS.

Ay, to sweep away

This filthy blush out of Rome's cheek. > — These
varlets.

These fooled lanistes, that have trained slaves up
To fight their masters, shall to camp with me,
And of the evils they have caused, partake.

LENT.

I am willing.

I'll kill my Thracian, though he be a general.

BRACH.

It matters not how soon I am knock'd o' the head.

I have not now a gladiator left.—

The rogues have ruined me.

360 DRAMATIC WORKS OF ROBERT BIRD

CRASS.

Where is thy son?

This knave shall march too. Have you brought the
woman,

The wife o' the Thracian, here to Rome?

LENT.

I have sent for her.

My son has gone into Campania.

CRASS.

What, to Campania ? Now by Jupiter,

This fool will set me mad.

LENT.

I know not that.

He went with the band of youthful volunteers,
To the camp of Gellius, the consul.
jov. Bravely done.

That was in memory of our counselling.

But now for action. <You remember, prastor.

This consul prays immediate succours, being

But ill provided, should the Gladiator,

In contest with his colleague, prove victorious,

As there is ground to fear; for Lentulus,

At the last word, was at extremities.

Being deprived too by the angry senate

Of their authority, their mutinous troops

But scurvily obey them. > Should the rebels

Come near your country-seat —

THE GLADIATOR 361

CRASS.

No more of that :

The consul shall protect her. — Presently

Bring me six legions; which, being added to

The consular troops and the knights volunteers,

We'll have appointed to this service. Then

There shall be knocks enough, I promise you.

See that these people follow, and all men

Whose slaves have joined the rebels. It is reason.

The rogues should kill no masters but their own.

{Exeunt.)

SCENE II. A plain in Campania, after the battle.

Some corses lying about. March of trumpets. Enter,
sumptuously armed, Spartacus. Phasarius, Crixus,
. ^Enomaiis, and Attendants.

SPART.

So, we are victors, conquerors again.

The hotbrained boasters, that in mockery thought

To ape the angry Scythian, and subdue us

With whips, instead of warlike instruments.

Lie hush'd and gory; and, despite the claim

Of their high honours and nobility,

There is no slave too base to tread upon them.

There he's a Consul. — I have known that word

Fright men more than the name of gorgeous kings.

Say to barbaric States, A Consul comes,

A Roman Consul, and their preparation

Of war or welcome, speaks a demigod.

And yet lies he on the opprobrious earth,

A palmy Consul, by a slave's hand slain,

362 DRAMATIC WORKS OF ROBERT BIRD

No nobler than his horse — a thing to

Glut the starved hyena's maw. "

PHAS.

Ay — and there's another

Must lie beside him.

SPART.

Speak you of Gellius?

PHAS.

Ay, marry. I'll fight now nothing less than consuls.

There is another of them, and I say.

Another battle and another victory.

CRIX.

'Tis but to will, and we have won it.

SPART.

Ay;

But not today.

Our medly bands have earned

Their armour,

and are weary. — 'Tis full six leagues

To Gellius' camp.

CRIX.

My Germans will not fear it.

SPART.

It cannot be, and must not.

CRIX.

Must not, Spartacus?

'T he original reading, struck out in the MS., was, —

" — a thing to rot

In a hyena's paunch."

The reading I have adopted is written in a hand resembling

Forrest's, in pencil, and is probably his suggestion.

THE GLADIATOR 363

SPART.

Ay, man, I say so: this thing must not be.
When ye were few, with one consent, ye chose me
Your leader, with each man an oath to yield
To me sole guidance. This was little honour.
To be the chief of fourscore fugitives,
And none would have it, save myself. I took it,
And ye have prospered. Under my authority,
In a few days your ranks have been swell'd up
To fearful thousands ; and from a band of slaves.
Skulking in caves, you have become an army
Can fight a Roman Consul. This is proof,
I have deserved obedience; and therefore,
I still command it.

CRIX.

And my countrymen
Myself have made their leader; and they bid me
Lead them to Gellius.

SPART.

We are but one army,
With but one object, howsoe'er our ranks
Are filled with various nations. We are slaves,
All of us slaves, contesting for our freedom ;
And so far free, that we have arms and kill;
No further. We have yet to cut our way
Out of this tyrant empire; which to do.

We must destroy more armies, that are gathering
To hem us in. We do not fight for conquest.
But conquer for our liberties; and they
Are lost by rashness. Let us rest our troops,
And think of Gellius on the morrow.

364 DRAMATIC WORKS OF ROBERT BIRD

CRIX.

Today, today,
Ere he have rallied this fight's fugitives.

SPART.

The thousands that are crowding to our lines
Will, by the dawn, have trebled all his gain.

CRIX.

I will beat him with the Germans alone.

SPART.

You shall not;
I am your general, and forbid you.

CRIX.

Thracian,
I was a slave, but am not now.

PHAS.

Brother Crixus,
On second thoughts, 'tis better put this off,
According as the general commands.

CRIX.

I am sole leader of my countrymen.

PHAS.

Sirrah, thou art a mutineer. —

SPART.

Peace, brother. —

PHAS.

Defy the general ! If one beggar's rogue

Of all his Germans dare to leave the lines,

I'll have him spitted like a cur. .

THE GLADIATOR 365

SPART.

Peace, brother.

Contention will harm worse than this partition.

Gemaan, thou hast thy wish : d epart in peace,

But without hope of succour, if the Roman

Prevail above thee.

PHAS.

Pray the gods he do!

<And thwack them till they are skinless, all.

Base rascals

And mutineers! >

SPART.

Take all thy countrymen,

Or all that wish to follow thee.

{Exit Crixus.}

Rank mutiny!

PHAS.

Why did you let him go?

SPART.

To teach him, brother.

Him and some others of our lieutenants,

(For we are growing mad upon success,)

An humbling lesson. A defeat were now

Better than victory; and, in his Germans,

We best can bear it.

PHAS.

Let them go, and hang;

They are all villanous hotheads, and presumptuous

366 DRAMATIC WORKS OF ROBERT BIRD

Beyond all tolerance. And, to punish them,

They shall not share with us the fame and spoil

Of the sack'd city.

SPART.

Brother, I think thou art

Almost as madbrained as the rest.

PHAS.

I have

A kind of ardour, that, for aught I know.

May be a lunacy. But this is clear:

Rome is a city; cities may be sack'd;

So Rome may be.

SPART.

A city, that the world

Looks frightened at, even in her sleep of peace.

As gazers look at sleeping lions. I told

This German fool, we did not fight for conquest,

But for a passport to our several homes.

What care we then to waste our vigour on

The gates of fortified cities ?

PHAS.

But this city —

SPART.

Is as impregnable as the storm-arm'd sea.

Why should we talk of it ? Great Mithridates,

Though populous Asia followed at his back,

Should, were his frothy hopes to point at it,

Be laughed at for a kingly maniac.

THE GLADIATOR 367

What should be said of us, the mushroom warriors

Of Roman dunghills, should our arrogance

Mad us so far? I think, we do not fight

To make the world talk ?

PHAS.

I would have you do so ;

Fight now for glory; let ambition raise you

Among the deathless, now while fate invites you.

Rome has no greatness, but is now employed

In foreign climes: You have well tried yourself;

And consuls vanish, when your trumpet sounds.

March on the city, and there swear to die,
Or live its master, and you are its master.
Think, brother, think what glorious fame were ours,
As lasting as the eternal world, should we,
The upturned dregs of servitude, destroy.
As, by the inviting fates ! We may destroy.
This lair of lions, this den of conquerors.
This womb of heroes, whose boastings fright the earth.
And whose ambition (— look. Ambition*) — chains it!
< SPART.

This is a wild and most preposterous hope.
Even the fierce Hannibal, with veteran troops,
And all the towns of Italy at his feet,
Save this alone, here paused his hopes.
PHAS.

Hope thou
T' excel the vaunted African, and dare
Beyond his daring. Hast thou not a heart
Bigger than his, that, with a herd of slaves.
Hast wrought as much as all his veterans?

368 DRAMATIC WORKS OF ROBERT BIRD

Smiles heaven upon thee less, which, in an hour,
Has, from a dungeon, raised thee to an army,
Still growing, still victorious? Do this deed.
And live for ever. >

SPART.

Well, well, I'll think of it.

Perhaps Senona's there: — ^Ah, would to heaven,

Phasarius,

I were with her now and my smiling boy,

In Thrace again, beside our mountain cot,

Or in those vales, where babbling Hebrus tumbles

Along his golden sands ; and dreamt no more

Of sacks and battles.

PHAS.

Whilst this city stands.

This ne'er can be ; f or just so long our country

Remains a Roman province. Tear it down,

And you enfranchise Thrace, and half the world.

SPART.

We'll think of this again, when we are stronger,

And when we have Senona sent to us.

Meanwhile we must the final effort make

To ransom her. < Did you secure a guide.

To lead us through the mountains ? I have seen

The camp most strongly guarded, and fear not

To trust it with the trusty ^nomaiis.

When the tired troops have slept an hour, I'll order

To bring them after us, to see indeed

How we may end, what Crixus may begin,

Disastrously for him, on Gellius,

In the confusion of the Consul's triumph. >

THE GLADIATOR 369

Pick me an hundred of our swiftest horses,

And have them presently in wait for me.

I shall fight better, when I know, each blow

Strikes a protection for my family.

{Exeunt.}

SCENE III. A room in Crassus's Villa. Enter

Julia and Florus.

I am glad to see thee. The terrible din

Of the near battle made a sparrow of me.

I was afraid to breathe, lest I should swallow

Some of your horrid missiles; for I ran

Unto the housetop, to look on the fight.

But the moon was more coward than myself.

And hid her pale face in a cloud : so nothing

I saw. But I could hear the brazen trumps,

The conchs and cornets, the shouts and yells of fury,

The clang of arms, and whistling in the air

Of stones and arrows. But, come tell me now.

My general, have you killed a foe tonight?

FLOR.

And won a civic crown, by saving a friend.

JUL. That's good; I am glad to hear it. >

FLOR.

But I am sorry

To find you here among these fears and perils.

I would you were in Rome.

370 DRAMATIC WORKS OF ROBERT BIRD

JUL. There is no peril.

Have you not beaten these wild gladiators?

A shepherd flying from his pastures, told me,

That Gellius had the victory, and had taken

Or killed the insurgent, bloody Spartacus.

FLOR.

I know not that. 'Tis true, that we have beaten

A band of mad rogues, that assaulted us ;

And 'tis believed, their general, Spartacus,

Is dead upon our trenches ; for whose body

Search is now made. But one poor prisoner,

< I think, the only one whose life was spared, >

Declared these troops to be but a small band

Of mutinous runagates, that had left their leader.

Being thereto moved by their late victory

Over the consul Lentulus.

JUL. What, Florus!

A victory over Lentulus ?

FLOR.

'Tis even so:

His army has been vanquished, himself slain

By the late bondman. And those, who give faith

To the assurance of our prisoner.

Fear for our consul, should the Thracian march.

After his mutineers, upon us now;
Our camp being all a confused festival
Of drunken triumph, — ^half our soldiers scattered
In search of spoil and fugitives. —

THE GLADIATOR 371

sPARTAcus {within}

Guard the doors :

Let none go out.

FLOR.

What voice is that ? By heaven,

We are betrayed !

(Ew/erSPARTACUs, VnAsx-Bxus, and others, .^nomaiis.)

SPART.

< Sold, lost, and dead ! > — Look to the maiden.

< What, flourishing fool, > drop thy sword's point, or
die.

FLOR.

A thousand times, ere thou, malicious rebel.

Touch this endangered lady.

SPART.

Straw, I say !

{He disarms Florus.)

Know I not this boy's face?'

FLOR.

I think thou should'st.

Spare thou the lady, rich will be her ransome.

And for myself, I know, thy deadly fury

Grants never quarter.

» There are the following notes in Bird's hand, evidently in answer to Forrest's suggested cuts.

" Think you had better keep these expressions particularly the flourishing fool and straw. They express, in a very lofty and furious style, the contempt which such a man as Spartacus would feel at finding himself resisted by a younker. "

"The term boy's was meant as a substitute for boyish; not, as if asking the question of others, the face of this boy. "

372 DRAMATIC WORKS OF ROBERT BIRD

SPART.

By the stripes not yet

Fled from mine outraged limbs, thou art the son

Of Lentulus the scourger !

PHAS.

Ay, the same.

Let him atone his rascal father's sins :

Scourge him to death.

FLOR.

Give me a soldier's death :

Let me die by the sword. I never scourged thee.

SPART.

Thou ! Miserable boy !

FLOR.

And well thou knowest.

Thou fierce and fiendish man, this tongue of mine
Was oft thy intercessor.

SPART.

I do know.

One of thy blood did give me to the scourge —

Me, a free son of a free sire, and imaged

After the semblance of the Only Master —

Gave me to thongs and whips, as a poor beast.

Till I became one. This I know; know thou.

From that shamed hour, when first my body writhed

Under the merciless lash, I did devote

THE GLADIATOR 373

The scourger and his household to the furies,

To quick and murderous death. And thinkest thou,

Thy whining kindness took away a pang?

Thou art the Roman's son, and thou shalt die.

FLOR.

Let it be so —

SPART.

It shall be so. Thou seest,

Conomand and dignities have not wiped out

The memory of wrongs; and Roman blood,

Running in rivers ever at my feet.

Sates not the thirst for more! — Take him away;

Scourge him to death.

JUL. {To Spart.}

Thou horrible monster, spare him,
And name whate'er thou wilt for ransome.

SPART.

Ransome !

Drachmas for stripes !

FLOR.

Beseech him not, fair Julia.

Think of thyself, or let me think for thee.

He never did thee hurt. JXL.

SPART.

Let her be ta'en away.

374 DRAMATIC WORKS OF ROBERT BIRD

FLOR.

Let her be ransomed, and for thine own wife.

SPART.

Ay, so I will: 'twas e'en for that I took her.

FLOR.

Then may'st thou instantly exchange them. —

How!

SPART.

FLOR.

Thy wife is in the consul's camp —

SPART.

In the consul's camp?

FLOR.

There driven by the fright of her conductors.

And thou may'st instant ransom her.—

SPART.

Ha, ha!

Now does Jove smile. What, ransom her? Ay,
ransome;

But with the steel. — I can almost forgive thee,
For this good news. — Praetor, I have thee now
In the same trap thou set'dst for me! — What, sirrah,
Ye have beaten my refractory lieutenant,
The German Crixus?

FLOR.

Ay, I thank the gods.

THE GLADIATOR 375

SPART.

And so do I ; i t wins me victory,
And puts the second consul in my hands. —
Antistheus, see these captives safely guarded. —
Brother, the troops must now be nigh upon us. —
Take thou the Thracian cohorts, and in secret
Steal to the heights that overhang his rear.
Posting a strong guard on the river. Let none 'scape,
And let none live. Myself will force the camp.
And drive the rioting fools upon your swords. —
I say, spare none.

PHAS.

'Twere much too troublesome

To imitate them, and build crucifixes

For the prisoners.

SPART.

Let not a moment's rashness

Bring us a limping victory. Stand fast

Upon your post, and every rogue is dead. —

Roman, thou shalt see how I'll ransom her!

{Exeunt}

SCENE IV. The Tent of Gellius, the Consul

Gellius discovered, with Scrophia, Senona and her
child, and attendants.

gel.

There is no doubt, this foolish German lies.

'Twas the main body of the rebels surely.

No mere detachment would have impudence

To march upon a consul. Now this victory.

376 DRAMATIC WORKS OF ROBERT BIRD

Which, on the morn, I'll follow up, will change

The tone o' the angry Senate, and restore me

To my full rank, and, what is better, send

The scheming Crassus empty-handed back.

This is a man should fight in the Velabrum,

Among the cheating mongers, and not bring

His brains of a broker to a glorious camp.

This woman here, the wife o' the Gladiator,

That cutthroat caitiff-^

SENO.

Why dost thou slander him?

Has he not fought a consul ?

GEL.

Pr'ythee, be silent.

He's a brave rebel, and will be renowned. —

Now, as I said, with this same woman here,

The Greek-brained Crassus did design some trick,

Some scurvy plot upon the Gladiator —

(Alarums.)

SCROPH.

Hark!

GEL.

A device of the rejoicing drunkards. —

This thing meant Crassus, this —

SCROPH.

The clang increases !

{A great shout is heard.}

THE GLADIATOR 377

GEL.

The knaves are noisy. —

{Enter a Centurion, wounded.}

CENT.

Fly for your lives ! The camp is forced —

GEL.

What camp ?

CENT.

Your own. The Gladiators are upon us:

We are surprised, and all is lost.

{Exit.}

GEL.

My armour !

What ho, my armour!

{Exeunt all but Senona and child.}

Enter Spartacus, .^Enomaiis, and Gladiators.

SPART! Victory! Ha! ha!

Romans are sheep — search every tent — ah ! Jove !

I have found ye wife, aye, and have ransomed ye.

What did you think I had deserted you?

' I have followed the reading probably suggested by Forrest.

The original Unes, crossed out in the MS., are:

"Victory! ha, ha.

Romans are sheep. — Search every tent — Ah, Jove!

I have found ye, wife, and in a noble hour.

When we met last, I was a slave; and now.

In a consul's camp, I stand a conqueror!

" (Drop.) "

378 DRAMATIC WORKS OF ROBERT BIRD

Look, I have found you in a noble hour :

When last we met I was a slave : and now

In a Consul's camp I stand a conqueror !

(Curtain.)

end of act iii.

ACT IV

< SCENE // The Camp of Crassus. Enter

Crassus, Mummius, Jovius, Lentulus, Bracchius,
and Attendants.

CRASS.

And Gellius beaten too? both consuls beaten?

This is some demigod that hath ta'en man's shape,

To whip us for our sins. — Both consuls beaten?

I would I had those Macedonian legions.

Have them thou shalt; ay, and the Spanish too;

The senate, in their terror, (for the victories

Of this great savage now add fright to shame,)

Bid Pompey and Lucullus, with their troops,

Instant embark for Rome.

CRASS.

Why should they send

For Pompey too? — Perhaps it may be better. —

See that the fugitives from the consular camps

Be decimated, and so punished. The cowards should

Be slain by duplates rather than by tithes:

I'll make example of them. — Jovius,

' This scene is struck out in the MS. and, according to a note in
Bird's handwriting, was "omitted in the representation. "

380 DRAMATIC WORKS OF ROBERT BIRD

Lay not this consul near my villa? I would not

My niece should come to harm; and it is horrid

To think her in the hands of the barbarians.

I am sorry, praetor- jov.

CRASS.

What, man, is it so ?

A herdsman, fled that night from the estate,

Just on the eve of battle, saw the house

Beset by numerous slaves. —

CRASS.

The gods be with her:

I loved her well. — Sirrah, where is that woman,

I bade thee bring me?

But on the road.

LENT.

Not yet reached the camp.

CRASS.

Let her be hastened hither.

I did intend to use her as a check

On the uxorious chief. Now shall she ransom me

My Julia from him. — Where lies the enemy?

He is advancing on us. JOV.

CRASS.

What, advancing?

THE GLADIATOR 381

With countless multitudes he overtakes his heels.-

Intrench, intrench.

CRASS.

What! come,

RathJeOrV . march out to meet him.

Shall it be said, that Crassus, the lieutenant

Of valiant Sylla, hid behind a trench,

When bondmen menaced him?

CRASS.

Shall it be said,

Crassus, the praetor, like a hair-brained fool,

Helped these same bondmen to a victory?

Spear me these cowards; and intrench, I say. —

What, sirrah?

{Enter a Messenger, who speaks with Jovius.}

Happy tidJiOnVg. s ! Marcus LucuUus

Hath landed his army at Brundisium; —

CRASS.

The gods be thank'd. —

. JOV.

And legion'd Pompey too

At Ostia.

382 DRAMATIC WORKS OF ROBERT BIRD

CRASS.

Still thaiiks. Let messengers

Be sent o' the instant to both generals,

Praying them, as they love the gods and Rome,

Their march to hasten.

{Exit Messenger.}

Good centurion,

I will employ thee in a difficult office,

Wherein thou may'st the state and me do service.

Let it be honest then and soldier-like.

CRASS.

So it shall be. I'll have thee an ambassador

To this mad Thracian, to propose a ransom

For my unhappy niece, if niece I have;

Or to exchange for her his wife and brat,

Now in our hands. If she be living, have her

At any ransom; stick not at the sum. —

And hark ye, use your eyes and wisdom well.

Look me out, as a soldier, what 'twould profit

A soldier to have known; and if thou find'st

A man among his officers to be bribed

To any treason may advantage us.

Make him what gain thou wilt. — But see thou bring

My Julia with thee. — If thou find'st a man.

That may be bought, at any price, to murder

The Thracian, buy him for that act.

JOV. Not I:

No foul and dastard blows i' the back.

THE GLADIATOR 383

CRASS.

For honest enemies ; but felon foes Ay, none

E'en crush feloniously. — ^Away: heaven speed thee.

Kill we the chief, and I will end the war,

Ere Pompey conies to share with me the honour.

{Exeunt.}

ACT IV

SCENE I. The Camp of Spartacus. Enter Sen-

ONA, Julia, Florus, and ^nomaiis.

SENO.

Weep not, poor lady. —

WhJyU L. bid'st thou me not weep?

Hadst thou no tears, when thou didst find thyself

The slave of strangers? Yes, thou hadst, although

In bond of the merciful, who were never used

To aught but gentleness with woman. Yet me.

The lily-cradled daughter of great nobles.

Brought to the slavish ' thrall of slaves, exposed

To all their brutal cruelty, thou bid'st

To weep no more.

SENO.

It is thy fright, that conjures

These shapes of danger. Thou art here as safe

As woman may be in a troubled camp.

Thou art no slave; but, I am sure, art held

To timely ransome. Pray be comforted: —

I know, thou art safe.

■ There is a query in Bird's hand, — "Shall I substitute vile,

odious, degrading, or some other word?"

384

THE GLADIATOR 385

JUL. I have, I know, that safety

That may be found in den of wolves or bears. —

Would I had died or e'er my fate had thrust me

Among these dreadful murderers.

SENO.

They are such

To none my husband favours.

JUL. Is not he

As fierce and pitiless as the rest, who seeks

To venge his wrongs upon the innocent ?

He that has madly doomed that hapless captive

His father's crime in blood to expiate?

SENO.

He has not doomed him; nay, if he said so,

It was in wrath; and he will pardon him.

The heart that throbs beneath his bloody mail.

Can melt to pity quickly as thine own.

I think, he'll free him ; f or thyself, I know.

Thou art protected.

Am JU LI. from his brother,

The insolent Phasarius?— Heard I not

What claim that villain made to me? Alas,

Thou art a woman, and can pity me.

SENO.

Thine ears deceived thee; did they not, .^Enomaiis?

386 DRAMATIC WORKS OF ROBERT BIRD

MHO.

I think so, lady.

SENO.

Did not this argument

Point to some claim of war?

A bold proposal

Made by Phasarius, by the chief denied:

This was their argviment.

{Enter Spartacus.)

JUL.A las, behold

How frowns the angry fury on his face !

Bodes this no ill to Florus or to me ?

SENO.

What is the matter, husband, that you look

So sad and heavy?

SPART.

Sad and heavy, am I ? —

{Aside.) And shall I, for this face of snow provoke

A threatening ruin ? Out of foolish pity

For one that loves me not, drive from my heart.

The heart that loves me well ?

SENO.

What say'st thou, Spartacus ?

THE GLADIATOR 387

SPART.

{Aside.} To save her girlish body from the shame,
Her baby bosom from the pang, — to rescue
From a short dream of sorrow, one young fool
Out of the million millions of the mourning.
Kill mine own coming glory and the hopes
Of a wrong'd world ?

SENO.

I fear me, thou art angry.

SPART.

Hark ye, my girl — that fool that trembles yonder —

SENO.

I pity her.

SPART.

Dost thou indeed? And art thou
Assured she is worth thy pity? Were the world
A jot the worse, were she removed from it?

SENO.

Alas, you will not harm her? She has indeed
A kind and foolish heart.

SPART.

Has she indeed?

Well, she shall to her father.

SENO.

She has none.

388 DRAMATIC WORKS OF ROBERT BIRD

SPART.

What, wife, an orphan? Now the incensed heaven
Smite my hard heart ! A poor and feeble child
Left struggling fatherless in the world, and I
Consent to wrong her!

SENO.

What is't you say?

SPART.

Not I,
Though forty thousand unjust brothers storm'd. —
One day mine own child will be fatherless. —
We'll ransom her.

SENO.

I'm glad to hear you say so.

SPART. {To Julia.}

What, foolish maid, why dost thou weep? Come,
smile,
I'll send thee to the praetor — and the boy too. —
I think 'twould break her heart to kill him. —

(Enter Phasarius.)

Brother, I hope thou hast forgot this folly. Brother —
phas.

I claim the captive.

SPART.

Thou shalt have a thousand;

But not these twain.

THE GLADIATOR 389

PHAS.

I care not for the boy. —,

The girl is mine, — captured by mine own hands ;

Therefore mine own.

FLOR.

Base caitiff !

SPART.

Sirrah, begone. —

PHAS.

Deny me her, and, by the fates, thou art

No longer brother of mine. 'Twas I that helped thee

To this high station; and the troops thou rulest,

Are but my lending ; f or that hour I leave thee.

They leave thee to.

SPART.

Come, — ^look me in the face,

And let me see how bad desires have changed thee.

I claim the captive.

PHAS.

SPART.

Set thine eye on her:

Lo you, she weeps, and she is fatherless.

Thou wouldst not harm an orphan? What, I say.

Art thou, whom I have carried in my arms

To mountain-tops, to worship the great God,
Art thou a man to plot a wrong and sorrow
(And thou a man!) against a feeble orphan?
Wilt thou now ask her?

390 DRAMATIC WORKS OF ROBERT BIRD

PHAS.

Ay.

SPART.

Thou art a changeling !
My father ne'er begot so base a heart. —
Brother, I do conjure thee, for I love thee.
Forget this thing.

PHAS.

Farewell.

SPART.

Thou wilt not go ?

PHAS.

Ay, by great Jove, I will. Play thou the tyrant
On those that follow thee.

SPART.

My younger brother : — Nay, I'll not call thee such, — but a hot fool
And heartless enemy. —

PHAS.

Call what thou wilt :

I am a man not to be mock'd and wrong'd.
Nor flouted in my counsels. I did ask you.

Now that you had the wind of the fooled praetor.

Now when rich Rome is emptied by her levies,

Now when the eager troops cry all, for Rome,

To march upon it, ere the joining armies

Of Pompey and Lucullus should prevent you.

THE GLADIATOR 39i

This I did ask, and this you did deny,

Though, by a former promise, pledged thereto.

I promised not.

SPART.

PHAS.

By heaven, you did — when stronger.

This you refuse ; and when, forgiving this,

I ask my captive, you deny me her,

With many a sharp and contumelious word,

Such as is fitter for a dog than me.

SPART.

Forgive me, if my anger used such shame;

I knew not what I said.

PHAS.

March then to Rome.

SPART.

It cannot be. We should but set us down

Under her walls, where the three generals,-

Ere we could force the gates, would hedge us in.

We cannot stand against them all even here;

But, when in Sicily, are invincible.

PHAS.

Rome, or the captive: no more Sicily.

SPART.

To Sicily:

There, by the ocean fenced, rouse up and gather

The remnants of those tribes by Rome destroyed,

392 DRAMATIC WORKS OF ROBERT BIRD

Invited to their vengeance. Then will come,

Arm'd with retributive and murderous hate,

The sons of fiery Afric, — Carthaginians

Out of their caves, Numidians from their deserts;

The Gaul, the Spaniard, the Sardinian;

The hordes of Thessaly, Thrace, and Macedon,

And swarming Asia ;— all at last assembled

In vengeful union 'gainst this hell of Rome.

Then may we crush, but now we crush ourselves.

Let us to Sicily.

PHAS.

Those that will. Farewell.

SPART.

Will you desert me ?

PHAS.

I did think thee meant

For the most godlike enterprise of earth :

Thou fail'st. Farewell; protect thyself.

Remember Crixus.

SPART. Mad boy.

PHAS.

And his thousand Germans !

I go with Gauls and Thracians, and fifty thousand .-

A Roman girl was worth this coil !— Farewell :

Learn to be juster.

{Exit.}

THE GLADIATOR 393

SPART.

Gone! Alas, alas,

Am I unjust ? I did not think my brother

Could e'er desert me.

/ENO.

Spartacus —

SPART.

.iEnomaiis,

Dost thou remain ? Why dost thou stay with me ?

For that I know thee wiser than thy brother.

I will stand, fight, or die with thee. But look;

If thou speak not, the army to a man,

Will follow this young madman.

SPART.

Mad and ungrateful all ! Will none remain?

SENO.

Beseech you, speak with them, my honoured husband.

SPART.

And he endanger'd thee too ! By the heavens,
I'll ne'er forgive him. — Nay, go to your couch.
I'll speak with them. They will not all desert me.
{Exeunt.}

394 DRAMATIC WORKS OF ROBERT BIRD

SCENE II. The Camp of Crassus. Enter Crassus
and Lentulus.

CRASS.

Thy son was kill'd then? I am sorry for him.
I heard, he bore him soldier-like, and I,
Upon this promise, did intend him favour.

LENT.

I know not that he certainly was killed ;
But, I thank Jove, he did not fly his post.
Enter Bracchius.

CRASS.

What of the enemy? does he still approach?

BRAC.

No, he is flying.

LENT.

Flying! thou art mad.

BRAC.

That may be, for my slaves have ruined me.
Why should brains stick where gold will not?
CRASS.

Come, sirrah.

What didst thou mean by saying the foe fled ?

< How flies he?

THE GLADIATOR 395

BRAC.

As a hound, that having coursed

A stinking brock, upon a sudden turns,

To chase a noble stag. — Ourselves the badger,

And Rome the worthier quarry.

CRASS.

Tedious fool, >

What dost thou mean ?

BRAC.

That the fierce Gladiators

Instead of dinging us, as seemed designed.

Are now upon the highway to the city.

CRASS.

To Rome?

BRAC.

Yes, flying to Rome.

CRASS.

Prestunptuous fools!

< Now may we build a forest of crucifixes.

Bid the men cast away their picks, and arm. >

We'll after them.

BRAC.

I think there's some division

Among the leaders; for the herds afoot,

March in disorder.

396 DRAMATIC WORKS OF ROBERT BIRD

CRASS.

Separated ! Jove,

I thank thee for this boon. — Another Crixus!

To arms, I say. Send out the cavalry,

<To gain their flanks and front, letting them get

Beyond the leader's camp. > — This is a triumph. —

To arms, I say.

(Exeunt.)

SCENE III. The Camp of Spartacus. Enter

Spartacus and Enomaiis.

SPART.

Seven thousand true? A handful, but enough.

Being staunch and prudent, for the enterprise. —

Desert me! Well, well, well. — ^Among the hills

Are many paths that may be safely trod ;

Whereby we'll gain the sea, and so pass o'er

To safer Sicily. — Perhaps I spoke

Too roughly, — but no matter. — Did you send

To hire the shipping of those pirates? Well. —

And all prepared to march at nightfall?— .(Enomaiis,

Do you not think they'll beat him?

^NO.

I doubt it not;

Phasarius being a soldier, but no leader.

< SPART.

An excellent leader, but that he is rash.

That is the misery. He will fight you hotly

An army of lions ; b ut a troop of foxes

THE GLADIATOR 397

May easily beat him. Now the praetor's brain

Is all o' the fox's colour. >

SPART.

Well, I care not :

We will to Rhegium. — Think you, .<^nomaiis,

I might not, while the praetor steals upon him,

Steal on the praetor, and so save the army?

What say'st thou?

iENO.

Hang them, no. This brings Lucullus

On our seven thousand. Let the mutineers

Look to themselves.

SPART.

Right, very right, right, .^Enomaiis.

Let them look to themselves. He did desert me;

My father's son deserted me, and left me

Circled by foes. I say, 'tis very right.

< He shall no help from me; not though they beat
him

An hundred times ; n o, no, no help from me. >

iENO.

Lo you, a messenger!

SPART.

From Phasarius! —

Perhaps he is sorry. —

Enter Jovius.

398 DRAMATIC WORKS OF ROBERT BIRD

MNO.

Chief, an embassy

From Crassus.

SPART.

And what would Crassus with the Gladiator,

The poor base slave, and fugitive, Spartacus?

Speak, Roman : wherefore does thy master send

Thy gray hairs to the cutthroat's camp?

JOY. Brave rebel, —

SPART.

Why that's a better name than a rogue or bondman;

But, in this camp, I am call'd general.

Brave general ; f or, thoughj o va. rogue and bondman,

As you have said, I'll still allow you general,

As he that beats a consul surely is, —

SPART.

Say two, — two consuls; and to that e'en add

A proconsul, three praetors, and some generals.

Why 'tis no more than true —. Are you a Thracian ?

SPART.

Ay.

There is something in the air of Thrace

Breeds valour up as rank as grass. 'Tis pity

You are a barbarian.

THE GLADIATOR 399

SPART.

Wherefore?

JOV. Had you been born

A Roman, you had won by this a triumph.

SPART.

I thank the gods I am barbarian;

For I can better teach the grace-begot

And heaven-supported masters of the earth,

How a mere dweller of a desert rock

Can bow their crown'd heads to his chariot wheels.

Man is heaven's work, and beggar's brats may inherit

A soul to mount them up the steeps of fortune,

With regal necks to be their stepping-blocks. —

But come, what is thy message?

JOV.

O' the praetor, is thy captive.

SPART.

Julia, niece

Ay.

JOV.

For whom

Is offered in exchange thy wife, Senona,

And thy young boy.

SPART.

Tell thou the prastor, Roman,

The Thracian's wife is ransomed.

400 DRAMATIC WORKS OF ROBERT BIRD

jov. How is that?

SPART.

What ho, Senona!

(Senona appears with the child at a tent door.)

Lo, she stands before you,

Ransomed, and by the steel, from out the camp

Of slaughtered Gellius.

{Exit Senona.}

JOV. This is sorcery! — •

But name a ransom for the general's niece.

SPART.

Have I not now the praetor on the hip ?

He would, in his extremity, have made

My wife his buckler of defence; perhaps

Have doomed her to the scourge! But this is Roman.

Now the barbarian is instructed. Look,

I hold the praetor by the heart; and he

Shall feel how tightly grip barbarian fingers.

Men do not war on women. J O V . Name her ransome.

SPART.

Men do not war on women! Look you:

One day I clomb upon the ridgy top

Of the cloud-piercing Hsemus, where, among

The eagles and the thunders, from that height,

I look'd upon the world — or, far as where.

THE GLADIATOR 401

Wrestling with storms, the gloomy Euxine ch&fed

On his recoiling shores; and where dim Adria

In her blue bosom quenched the fiery sphere.

Between those surges lay a land, might once

Have served for paradise, but Rome had made it

A Tartarus. — In my green youth I look'd

From the same frosty peak, where now I stood,

And then beheld the glory of those lands,

Where peace was tinkling on the shepherd's bell

And singing with the reapers ; < or beneath

The shade of thatch eaves, smiled with grey old men,

And with their children laughed along the green. >

Since that glad day, Rome's conquerors had past

With withering armies there, and all was changed :

Peace had departed ; h owling war was there,

Cheered on by Roman hunters: then, methought.

Even as I looked upon the altered scene.

Groans echoed through the valleys, through which ran

Rivers of blood, like smoking Phlegethons ;
Fires flashed from burning villages, and famine
Shriek'd in the empty cornfields. Women and children,
Robb'd of their sires and husbands, left to starve —
These were the dwellers of the land !— Say'st thou
Rome wars not then on women ?

This is not to the matter. Jov.

SPART.

Now, by Jove,
It is. These things do Romans. But the earth
Is sick of conquerors. There is not a man.
Not Roman, but is Rome's extremest foe;

26

402 DRAMATIC WORKS OF ROBERT BIRD

And such am I, sworn from that hour I saw
These sights of horror, while the gods support me,
To wreak on Rome such havock as Rome wreaks,
Carnage and devastation, woe and ruin.

Why should I ransom, when I swear to slay? —

Begone : this is my answer !

<JOV.

With your leave

This prattling scares no Romans ; and these threats
Come weakly from a chief of mutineers.

SPART.

Of mutineers ?

JOY. Ay, marry, 'tis well known,
Your cutthroats have deserted you. Content you,
Crassus will punish the foul traitors.

SPART.

Crassus !

Ay, Crassus. — Hercules, JhOoYw. men will talk!
Wreak wo on Rome !— I tell you, your lieutenant
Will hang upon a cross before the morrow.
So name your ransome, while 'tis offered you.

SPART.

Begone, I say.

{Exit JoYius.)

Alas, my ^nomaiis,

THE GLADIATOR 403

Should we not strike now? Now while we might fall
Upon their rear, and take them by surprise?

^NO.

Let them be punished, castigated well.

And they'll return to wisdom and obedience.

SPART.

Right, right. Let them be punished, hack'd to the
bones :

This will speak better than my words. Prepare
For Rhegium. He'll return to us tomorrow.

{Exeunt.) >

END OF ACT IV.

ACT V

SCENE I. The Peninsula of Rhegium. The Camp
of the Gladiators. Enter Spaktacus and Enomaiis.

SPART.

Routed and cut to pieces !— Said I not ?

Did I not tell them? — -Utterly destroyed!

Scattered like chaff! — Now by the eternal fates,

They did provoke high heaven, deserting me. —

How many slain ?

Enomaiis.

Indeed it is not known.

SPART.

Many, I'm glad; I should be very glad:

Did I not lead them ever on to victory ?

And did they not forsake me ? Wretched fools,

This was my vengeance, yea, my best of vengeance.

To leave them to themselves, that Roman praetors

Might whip them for me. Art thou not rejoiced?

Art thou not, Enomaiis, glad of this?

Glad, very glad?

Enomaiis.

I shall be, when I see

Half of them back again.

404

THE GLADIATOR 405

SPART.

I'll decimate them:

Even as the Romans punish, so I'll punish. —

Ruin me all these grand and glorious hopes?

Nay they were certainties. — An excellent army,

That might have fought with Pompey, broke and
ruined

By their mad mutiny ! An excellent army

Indeed, an excellent.

SPART.

Foolish jEnomaiis,

Why did'st thou stay me, when I would have saved
them?

HDeasde r vtheids ' bite e onf twhelele?? Had their ingratitude

SPART.

Ay, ingratitude.

Did I oppress them ? Did I tyrannise? >

^NO.

'Tis rumoured that Phasarius fell.

SPART.

My brother,

My foolish brother — why did he part from me ? —

Nay, I'll not mourn him.

4o6 DRAMATIC WORKS OF ROBERT BIRD

MNO.

This evil news must now

Hasten our embarkation. The pirate ships

Already are launching from the shore.

SPART.

Why now

You are too fast. Bid them be beached again. —

< Alas, that foolish boy ! We'll rest awhile,

And see what fugitives may come to us. >

Art sure Phasarius was slain? — ^the pride

Of his dead mother's heart; and, I do know.

Though prone to anger, of a loving spirit. —

We'll rest awhile here on this promontory.

E^ch moment has a peril. For these pirates

They are most treacherous hounds, and may set sail

Without us; and the praetor, thou know'st well.

Is trenching us in on this peninsula.

SPART.

What care I for the prastor and his trenches ?

< This is a boy's trick, and a boy might meet it. >

Trenches to stop a Thracian !— Look you now

What drooping slave is that? By all the gods,

It is my brother! — But I'll not be glad.

Lo you, how humbled, spiritless he looks !

Where are his troops ?

{Enter Phasarius.}

Sirrah, why comest thou here?

Didst thou not part from me, and take mine army ?

THE GLADIATOR 407

Did'st thou not teach my followers mutiny,
And lead them to destruction? Thou whipp'd fool,
Why comest thou here?

PHAS.

To ask thy pardon, and to die.

SPART.

Couldst thou not die with those thou led'st to death.
That men, who after should have called thee madman,
Might not have called thee craven?

PHAS.

I am no craven ;
A wretch, I grant you, but no craven.

SPART.

Where are thy troops? that throng'd and valiant
army

Thou stol'dst from me?

I am alone of all.

PHAS.

With Pluto. Why demand me?

SPART.

Most wretched man.

Thou hast murder'd fifty thousand men, destroyed
Thy brother and thy country, and all hope
Of the earth's disenthralment.

PHAS.

I have ruined

My brother, that's enough.

4o8 DRAMATIC WORKS OF ROBERT BIRD

SPART.

Ay, look, behold;

But yestermorn, I was a conqueror.

On the high verge and pinnacle of renown ;

Today a skulking, trembling, despised man,

Thrust in a pit. Whose traitorous hand was it,

Pluck'd me from my high seat, and sunk so low?

Who did this thing, this foul, felonious thing ?

PHAS.

Myself, that was thy brother.

SPART.

PHAS.

Ay, that was !

Why shouldst thou stab me with thy words? O

brother.

Strike me with thy sharp sword, but speak no more:

Give me to punishment, or drive me forth

To die by Romans ; b ut upbraid no more.

SPART.

Shall I forgive him ? Look, he is penitent.

^NO.

But he has lost them all.

SPART.

Ay, so he has. —

Ask'st thou for pardon, when thou hast slain all? Away ! thou didst discard me from thy heart : I banish thee from mine.

THE GLADIATOR 409

PHAS.

It is but just.

Why should I live, when I have ruined thee?

I should have died before. Farewell.

SPART.

Come back :

I will forgive thee: nay, I have. — O brother,

Why didst thou do this wrong? But I'll forget it. —

Let the ships now be launched, now, .^Enomaiis;

Now cross to Sicily.

{Exit ^NOMAIIS.}

With these fifty thousand —

But I've forgot it. — What, were all destroyed?

PHAS.

All, all.

SPART.

A disciplined army! — But no matter. —

All slain upon the field?

PHAS.

Six thousand wretches

Yielded them prisoners to the praetor.

SPART. Well,

He took six thousand prisoners. These will now

Suffer a double wretchedness.

PHAS.

Never fear it :

They will not.

410 DRAMATIC WORKS OF ROBERT BIRD

SPART.

How is that, Phasarius?

Did not the praetor, in his proclamations,

Threat us with bondmen's deaths by crucifixion?

PHAS.

And he will keep his word — nay, he has kept it.

SPART.

What!

PHAS.

Are men beasts, that life should count no more

Than a beast's sob ?

SPART.

Thou fill'st my soul with terror.

Are they condemned? All?

PHAS.

Executed.

SPART.

Horror !

Six thousand men, and crucified!

PHAS.

Crucified.

I saw a sight last night, that turned my brain,
And set my comrade mad. The Roman highway
Is, each side, lined with crosses, and on each cross
Is nailed a gladiator. — Well, 'twas night,
When, with a single follower, I did creep
Through the trenched army to that road, and saw

THE GLADIATOR 411

The executed multitude uplifted
Upon the horrid engines. Many lived:
Some moaned and writhed in stupid agony;
Some howled, and prayed for death, and cursed the
gods;
Some turned to lunatics, and laughed at horror;
And some with fierce and hellish strength, had torn
Their arms free from the beams, and so had died.
Grasping, headlong, at air. And, oh the yells.
That rose upon the gusty sighs of night.
And babbled hideously along the skies,
As they were fiU'd with murder!

SPART.

Say no more:

This is too dreadful for man's ear. I swear
For this to make Rome howl. What, .^nomaiis.

(Reenter .^Enomaiis.)

Are the ships all afloat?

iENO.

And gone.

SPART.

What, gone?

.IENO.

These same perfidious pirates, with their hire,

Have set their sails, and fled.

SPART.

The ocean god

Meet them with hurricanes, sink their ships, and feed

Sea-monsters with their corpses!

412 DRAMATIC WORKS OF ROBERT BIRD

JENO.

All is finished:

This is the fruit of mercy for deserters.

SPART.

Be that forgot.

^NO.

What now remains for us,

But to sit down and die?

SPART.

I'll tell thee, what:

To fight the praetor.

Ten times our own !

^NO.

Though his troops outnrun

SPART.

Ay; our despair will make us
Each ten times stronger than his foe. Fill up
This schoolboy ditch with disregarded plunder.
And when the watchdogs sleep, like wolves, steal on
them
And take them by the throat. I have no fear,
But we shall find a pathway through their camp.
Then to Tarentum; there we'll find us ships.
Or, if that fail, with a despairing fury,
Turn upon Rome, and perish there.
(Enter Senona, with the child.)

What now?

Com'st thou to mourn o'er our mishaps, Senona?

Be not dismayed : I'll find thee safety yet.

THE GLADIATOR 413

SENO.

Thou wouldst conceal these newer perils from me;

But well I know, that every hour now brings

A menacing cloud about thee.

SPART.

Clouds, ay, clouds:

A cloud is on my path, but my ambition

Sees glory in't : as travellers who stand

On mountains, view upon some neighbouring peak,

Among the mists, a figure of themselves.

Traced in sublimer characters ; s o l

Here see the vapory image of myself,
Distant and dim, but giantlike — I'll make
These perils glories.

SENO.

And the ships have left thee?

SPART.

Thou art a soldier's wife, and wilt not tremble
To share his danger. Look, through yonder camp
Our path lies.

SENO.

I will walk it by thy side.

SPART.

Not so ; for though unharmed by steel, the sight
Of the near fray would kill thee. I have discovered
A path almost unguarded; where, whilst I
Assault the Roman in his sleep, thyself
And my war-cradled boy, with my Phasarius
To guard thee, shall in safety pass, and join me
After the battle.

414 DRAMATIC WORKS OF ROBERT BIRD

SENO.

Why not lead your army
By that unguarded path?

SPART.

Trust me, dear wife,
I'll make it such for thee, but cannot have it

Safe for an army. The surprised distraction

Of the attack will call the guards away.

This is the safest.

SENO.

Let me go with thee.

I do not fear the horrors of the storm.

SPART.

It cannot be. What, brother —

PHAS.

Let some one else

Be made her guard; while I, in fight, find vengeance,

And reparation of my faults.

SPART.

Wilt thou

Refuse me this, Phasarius?

PHAS.

Am not I

A rash and witless fool ? Trust not to me

What thou so valuest.

THE GLADIATOR 415

SENO.

I beseech you, hear him.

Let me not leave you, Spartacus : my heart

Is full of dismal and of ominous fear,

If I do leave you now, I leave for ever.

If I must die, let me die where thou art.

SPART.

Why talk'st thou now of death? I say, I'll make
This path most safe for thee. How could I fight,
Or play the leader in a bloody storm,
With thy pale visage ever in my eye?

PHAS.

I do beseech you, make not me her guard.

SPART.

It must be so. And hear me now, Phasarius;
I put into thy hands more than my soul :—
See, my dear wife, and here my innocent boy. —
These are the very jewels of my heart.
Protect them for me. Be not rash; steal softly.
With the small faithful troop I'll send with thee.
Through glens and woods; and when the alarm is
sounded,
March fast but wisely. For thy life, and mine.
Avoid all contest, shouldst thou meet a foe;
Nay, though thou know'st thou hast advantage, fight
not.

Join me, with these in safety, and assure me
No man has drawn his sword. — And now farewell.

4i6 DRAMATIC WORKS OF ROBERT BIRD

Farewell, Senona: I pray you do not speak. —
Thou art very safe. Farewell.

(Exeunt Senona, child, and Phasarius.)

/ENO.

He is too rash.

SPART.

Rash, had I given him a command in battle;

But will not be with them. — Rouse up the troops.

Fill up the ditch with baggage, as I told thee. —

< I'll see that all be schooled for this assault. >

(Exeunt.)

SCENE II. Before the tent of Crassus. Enter

Crassus, Mummius, Jovius, Lentulus and Brac-

CHIUS.

CRASS.

Now I lament me, on this overthrow

Of the chief army of the enemy,

I prayed for Pompey and LucuUus. If

I end not instant, by another blow.

The war I have so maimed, comes me a colleague

To chouse me of my triumphs.

JOY. You must be quick then.

The dawn will show you Pompey by your side;

Or rather, dashing with a Roman scorn,

Amongst the ruffians you have trapp'd.

THE GLADIATOR 417

CRASS.

I think,

Ourselves may do it. — ^And this hell-dog holds

The girl to doom ?

He jsoavy.s , he is instructed

By your fore-thought intentions with his spouse.

CRASS.

But dost thou think he'll slay her?

JOV. Not while he

May purchase mercy with her.

CRASS.

Shall I take her

Out of his camp by force? or send thee back,

To offer mercy and receive submission ?

Propose him life and liberJtOyV,. and make him

A Roman citizen.

CRASS.

What, a rebel slave!

In these rough, rotten timeJsO,V . we do not scruple

To raise our rogues to honour. Why then blush,

To anoint a slave, that's capable and honest?

4i8 DRAMATIC WORKS OF ROBERT BIRD

The genius of this Thracian, had it been

In honourable trust display'd, had quell'd

A score of barbarous nations ; a nd may yet,

Make but the man a Roman.

CRASS.

We will make him

A captive first. — Were my poor Julia free! —

(Loud alarums.)

What is the matter?

Thej o v .r ats are out ! By Jove,

The slaves have pass'd the trenches, and assault us!

CRASS.

Thou art mad! They dare not — What, to arms, to
arms!

Nay, if they will, let them into the camp,

But let not out. — To arms, to arms !

{Exeunt.}

SCENE III. Another part of the Roman Camp.

Enter Crassus, Jovius, Mummius, and Lentulus.

CRASS.

Mischiefs and plagues, and slavish stripes disgrace

These shameless cowards ! What, ope their ranks, and
give A path to these few madmen

! Let them scape us !

Nay, they are gone, that'JsO V .c ertain,— but will drop
Into the jaws of Pompey.

Follow them.

THE GLADIATOR 419

CRASS.

Bid the legions

When thej o dv.a y breaks; but not now.

CRASS.

Shall I let Pompey take them, and have Rome

Laugh at my shame ? Have Pompey join the scorners,
And mock me too? Hie thee away, good Jovius;
Follow the Thracian; of! Eer pardon, freedom,
Whate'er thou wilt. Do but delay his march :
Let him not come near Pompey — Quick, away !
{Exeunt.}

SCENE IV. The Camp of Spartacus, among the
hills. Enter Spartacus and .^nomaiis.

SPART.

Was not this well ? When desperate men contend,
The brave will fly from them. To fight for life.
Fights surest for a victory. Fought we well ?
I would not give these seven thousand poor rogues,
For a whole herd of angry Gauls. We'll win
The highway to Tarentum yet. — Lieutenant,
Should they not now be here?

/ENO.

Who?

SPART.

Who ! Phasarius

And his care-chosen guard — my brother and my wife.

420 DRAMATIC WORKS OF ROBERT BIRD

iENO.

They tread a rough and tangled path.

SPART. 'Tis true;

And finding there more guards than I had word of,

Their caution journeys them the slower. I
Am almost grieved, I brought them not with me. —
How fare the captives ? Bring me to Tarenttmi,
I'll send that girl unransomed to the praetor. —
Would they were here !— Bring in the prisoner,
And find how march the coming generals.

(Bracchius is brought in, guarded.)

MNO.

This fellow was the master of thy brother.
Question him, and then hang him, for a baser,
More heartless master never yet struck slave.

SPART.

I am sick of blood. — Is not the sun yet up ?
If they be seen — but I'll not think of that. —
Be not afeard: hadst thou been worth a blow,
I had not spared thee. Speak, and truly speak.
Or thou shalt fat the kites : When looks the praetor
For Pompey and his Spanish troops ?

BRAC.

He looks
Not for, but at him.

SPART.

Wretch

THE GLADIATOR 421

BRAC.

And so may'st thou,

Yonder among the heights upon thy left.

SPART.

Wretch, if thou mock me, I will strike thee dead.

Know I not well the praetor's craft? These eagles

That spread their golden pinions on the hills,

Were wing'd by Crassus thither, to affright me.

Are they not Crassus's standards ? Own me that,

Or look tonight to sup in Acheron.

BRAC.

To sup on earth, then, I'll agree to this;

But I shall lie.

SPART.

Rogue, answer me again :

Are those troops Pompey's.

BRAC.

Ay.

SPART.

The gods forbid !

They are in motion too ! Now I begin

To feel my desolation, and despair.

What, Mnora&iis, send me out a scout

To view those hill-perched foes, and quick prepare

The army for the march. And my poor wife!

Why did I trust her with Phasarius?

< Send out a cunning guide to hunt the path. >

{Exit /Enomaiis.}

422 DRAMATIC WORKS OF ROBERT BIRD

Roman, if thou speak false, I'll have thee slain. —

Where rests Lucullus?

BRAC.

In no place he rests.

Save nightly on the highroad from Tarentum.

<SPART.

Villain, thou liest ! The gods have not so left me.

I say, thou speak'st not true.

BRAC.

Well, I speak false;

But notwithstanding, he is on that road. —

These are the bloodiest cutthroats! — >

SPART.

Now, out on me,

My heart is full of fear. The praetor on my rear,

Lucullus, Pompey on my front and left,

And naught but howling seas upon my right !

Seven thousand men against an hundred thousand !

If Crassus love the girl— He fears disgrace—

'Tis not infeasible — unless, alas.

My wife, perchance, be fain into his hands;

Then can the maiden buy me naught but her.

(Reenter Lucullus, with Jovius.)

/ENO.

The Roman praetor

Sends thee again an envoy.

THE GLADIATOR 423

SPART.

^ Speak, centurion;

What word sends Crassus?

jov. For the Roman lady,

A princely ransom; for thyself, an offer

Of mercy, pardon, Roman denization.

And martial honour and command; provided —

SPART.

Ay, provided!

Thou instantly, ere Pompey . leave the hills.

Surrender up these maleficious slaves

To whips and crosses. Therefore, most valiant

Thracian,

Put by the frenzy, that would fight against

Three circling armies, and accept this boon

Generous and great.

SPART.

I am unfortunate,

Thou know'st that well; but not being Roman yet,

I scorn the foul condition, that makes me

To my true friends a traitor. Give them freedom.

And they lay down their arms; but talk of crosses.

And they have yet the arms that cut a path

Through the proud praetor's camp.

JOV. Why shouldst thou care.

Thou, who hast such a Roman soul, for these

424 DRAMATIC WORKS OF ROBERT BIRD

Vile runagate rogues, who, at an opportunity,

Thee would betray as freely as their masters ?

Let them be hanged, and be thou made a Roman.

Perhaps thy word may save the least offending ;

But let the sornies be punished.

SPART.

They shall die,

Like soldiers, on the field, or live in freedom.

But hearken, Roman:

I know the praetor, that he loves his niece,

But honour more; I know, if Pompey strike

At me one blow, the honour all is his.

And nothing left for Crassus, but comparison

Between what Pompey does, and what he could not.

He will not then have Pompey strike me, and

He would have back his niece. While I lie here

On this impregnable and fortified hill,

Pompey approaches and sits down beside him.

Now he'll consent himself to lose the honour

Of the hunted gladiator's overthrow,

So Pompey wins it not.

JOY. That may be true,

For Crassus loves not Pompey. But on that

What project found you?

SPART.

This: Let him but wink.

While I steal darkly to Tarenttim, there

T' embark my army.

THE GLADIATOR 425

Hajho!v .

SPART.

I'll find a way

To cozen Pompey and pass by LucuUus,

Provided he not follow at my heels.

Gage me but this, and he shall have his niece

Unransomed back; deny me, and by Pluto,

Pompey alone shall gain the laurel.

JOV.

This is a mad proposal. Help you fly! Jove!

Will you surrender, or be cut to pieces ?

SPART.

Bring forth the captives.

(Julia and Florus are brought in.)

Lo, I'll march tonight:

If Crassus follow me, the girl shall die.

Art thou a savage? jov.

SPART.

Ay; or if you will,

A beast, whose nature not being fierce, the hunters

Have toil'd and goaded into fury. Nature
Makes fewer rogues, than misery. But yesterday,
I had saved that maiden's blood, at cost of mine;

426 DRAMATIC WORKS OF ROBERT BIRD

Now, with a cool ferocity, I doom her
To perish like a thing abhorred, whene'er
The praetor bids me.

OutJU, L. a las, alas!

Didst thou not swear thou wouldst not harm my life?
Thou didst, unto thy wife.

SPART.

Well, speak not of it. —

She is surely taken. — Roman, listen to me :

South of thy camp there liest a secret path,

Where, for a certain reason, I did send

A party, to escape the fears of conflict.

Have they been captured?

Who were they?

jov. I know not, but think so.

SPART.

Well, they are not taken then?

I'll not say that. A double guard was sent,

Under your one time master, Lentulus,

Last night, to watch that path.

SPART.

I have some prisoners,

I would exchange for them — Look, all but her.

But who were these ? jov.

THE GLADIATOR 427

SPART.

Some women and children. Yes,

Some helpless fools, not fit to look on battle. —

Not that I care for them; but I'll exchange them.

Some women and childrejn?v .

SPART.

Sirrah, wilt thou have it?

Why 'twas my wife then, and my child. If they

Be captured, I'll exchange them for my captives.

Crassus shall have his niece too. Nay, I'll send her.

Without the exchange, provided Crassus swear

To give them freedom, and send back to Thrace.

Let him swear this : l et them to Thrace, I say, — ■

Let them be safe, and I can die. — {Alarums.}

MNO.

Look, general!

We are attacked !

SPART.

By heavens, a troop of horse

Rushing against our hill ! Why these are madmen ? —

Soft you, they chase some mounted fugitive;

Nay, he has cleared them — Look, man look ! O gods,

Do I not know him? —

FoJOrV . t his proposed exchange —

SPART.

Look, look ! 'Tis he ! They are lost !

428 DRAMATIC WORKS OF ROBERT BIRD

MTSSO.

His horse has fallen :

He is bloody too.

SPART.

But where are they?

{Enter Phasarius, wounded.}

What, brother, brother.

Speak, speak. — Where are they? Ah!

PHAS.

My brother!

SPART.

Dost thou not know me ? By thy soul, I chargeS p tehaeke. !

Speak to me; tell me of my love, my boy!

Where hast thou left them ?

PHAS.

Strike me to the heart:

I have robbed thee, brother, of much more than life;

And all the blood these gaping wounds have left.

Will not repay thee.

SPART.

Art thou mad?

I ask thee of my wife, my boy, my loves !

And thou dost prate to me of wounds and blood !—

Speak !

PHAS.

I can better speak than thou canst hear. —

Why madest thou me their escort? Why, O fool !

THE GLADIATOR 429

Thou should'st have known that I would quickly lead
them

Through the first perils that invited me;

And where a Roman throat was to be cut,

Would drag them to the hideous spectacle.

SPART.

But thou did'st bear them off ! Come, say it, brother;

Thou wert imprudent, but still kind and true.

I'll not be angry — come, I know thou wert worsted,

Thy troops cut off — but thou hast saved them, brother !

PHAS.

I would have done it, let my wounds speak for me.

SPART.

They are captives then? O traitor! — my poor wife.

And my blithe boy !

The boy-

PHAS.

The troops were cut to pieces;

SPART.

What of him?

PHAS.

Cried for mercy to

A Roman soldier —

SPART,

Who spared him!

PHAS.

Struck him to the earth.

430 DRAMATIC WORKS OF ROBERT BIRD

SPART.

God! — And his mother?

PHAS.

She sprang upon the throat of the black monster —

Ask me no more — I faint.

SPART.

My wife! my wife!

Let furies lash thee into consciousness.

My wife, I say ! She sprang upon his throat ;

What then?

PHAS.

He slew her — but I clove him to the nave.

I could not save, but with my best avenged.

(Falls.)

SPART.

There are no gods in heaven;

Pity has fled, and htmian rage reigns there. —

Wretch, doth the earth still hold thee ? Murderer,

Most traitorous, fofol, unnatural murderer.

If the warm blood of thy thrice-martyred victims
Reach not thy soul, and strike it dead within thee,
My sword shall sacrifice thee to their fury. —
Hold, hold! Thou wilt not strike him? Look, he
dies!

(Phasarius dies.)

THE GLADIATOR 431

SPART.

What, is he dead? All dead? and I alone
Upon the flinty earth ? No wife, no child,
[No brother] All slain by Romans ? Yes, by Romans.

— Look,

I will have vengeance,
fierce and bloody vengeance,
Upon the praetor's blood, upon the praetor's. —
Thou grey and hoary wretch, — ^for being Roman,
A wretch thou art — I'll send back to the praetor
His niece a corse, and thou shalt carry her. —

What ho, my Guards!

{Enter Guards.}

jSoavv.a ge fiend, forbear;

Shed not the blood o' the innocent.

SPART.

< Foolish man, >

Was not Senona's innocent, and my child's ?

Did they e'er harm a Roman ?— Blood for blood.

And life for life, and vengeance on the praetor!

FLOR.

Unhappy Spartacus, mar not thy glory

With this unnatural and unjust deed.

Let my head fall for her's.

SPART.

Thy head and her's — < Fools, ye are Romans, and shall die.

JOV. Forbear — >

432 DRAMATIC WORKS OF ROBERT BIRD

SPART.

Take them away-

JUL. Now may the heavens forgive thee.

SPART.

Off, foolish girl; there is no pity left:

My heart now thirsts for blood, and blood will have,

JUL.

I have your promise —

SPART.

Breath, that I revoke.

I have Senona's; pity me J UfLo.r her.

For she did love me; pity for your child,

Whom I have nestled in my arms, till it

Did love me too, and thou, whilst looking on,

Didst swear no harm should ever reach to me.

Yes, for thy babe and wife, thou didst swear this;

And while thou think'st of them, thou canst not kill
me.

SPART.

Well, thou art saved.

Wjiovt. thou, unlucky chief,

Now claim the praetor's mercy? Let thy people

Return to bonds, and have their lives.

THE GLADIATOR 433

SPART.

These twain

Shall go with you ; the rest is for my vengeance.

To show thee that the Thracian still defies, —

Even in his hour of misery and despair, —

Still cries for vengeance, still derides the mercy

Of the accursed Roman, thou shalt see

I court his fury. — Hang this Roman cutthroat

Upon a cross, and set it where the Romans

May see him perish.

(Bracchius is taken out; and the body of Phasarius.)

ThiJOsY . will steel all hearts.

And change all pity into murderous hate.

SPART.

It is for that I hang him to the tree :

There shall no life be spared in fight today.

Look — let the grooms there kill my horse. — 'Tis done :

There shall no flight be known; nothing but death.

Begone, centurion and prisoners. Begone or perish.

< FLOR.

I thought thee cruel, but I find thee kind.

Spare that man, and accept the praetor's pardon.

SPART.

Begone, thou foolish boy, while yet thou may'st.

Shall I not thank thee, ThJrUaLc. ian, for my life?

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434 DRAMATIC WORKS OF ROBERT BIRD

SPART.

Begone, or die, — and all the hearted griefs.

That rack more bitterly than death, go with you.

And reach your abhorred country: May the gods,

Who have seen Rome fill the earth with wo and death.

Bring worse than wo and death on Rome ; l ight up

The fires of civil war and anarchy,

Curse her with kings, imperial torturers;

And while these rend her bowels, bring the hosts

Of Northern savages, to slay, and feed

Upon her festering fatness; till the earth.

Shall know, as it has known no land so great.

No land so curst as miserable Rome! —

Begone, or perish. >

{Exeunt Jovius, Julia and Florus.)

Let the troops array.

And all that would not die upon the cross,

Slaying their horses, to the plain descend,

And die in battle.

<^NO.

You will not fight today ?

SPART.

This day, this hour, this minute, fight and die.

Why should we struggle longer, in this dream

Of life, which is a mocking lunacy.

With ever sunshine playing far ahead.

But thunderbolts about us? Fight I say.

There is no Orcus blacker than the hell

That life breeds in the heart. >

THE GLADIATOR 435

^NO.

Alas, dear general,

You are not fit for battle.

SPART.

Fit to make

The Roman mothers howl. — Spare not one life;

Shed blood, and laugh ; and if ye meet a woman

Hiding her babe in her scared bosom, slay her.

Slay both. — O ^Enomaiis, but to think

How lone I stand now on this pitiless earth !—

Had I n ot parted with them !— O ye heavens.

Could ye look on and see the merciless steel

Struck at their sinless hearts ?

<^NO.

Alas, alas,

Give not this way to grief.

SPART.

I will not, brother;

My grief is blackened into scowling vengeance. >

iENO.

Pray you, come to your tent.

SFART.

To tents no more;

I couch no more but on the corse-strown plain, —

Draw out the troops- — I say, upon the ground,

Pillow'd on death ; t hus shall my slumbers be.

Come, battle, battle.

{Exeunt.}

436 DRAMATIC WORKS OF ROBERT BIRD

SCENE V The Camp of Crassvs. Enter Crassvs,

MuMMius, Jovius, Lentulus, Florus, etc. Alarums.

CRASS.

Thus ends rebellious rage in lunacy ;

Despair hath set the gladiator mad.

Look, how with wild and impotent wrath, he rushes

Upon our ready spearmen! — Lentulus,

I am sorry thou didst slay his family.

LENT.

Nay, 'twas not L Perhaps, I am not sorry;

They were my slaves, punish'd as fugitives.

CRASS.

Detach the third rank and the cavalry,

On all sides to surround them. Take them prisoners :

This soldier death befits them not. Ten thousand

Greek drachmae to the man that brings alive

The leader Spartacus.

{Exit Lentulus.}

<jov.

That ne'er will be.

He slew his horse, and thus rejecting flight.

His life devoted to the infernal gods.

CRASS.

A valiant madman! — Had he held my girl —

Nay, but I should have storm'd his moxmtain camp.

Look, moves not Pompey from the hills ? What, friends,

Shall we stand staring at this handful foes.

Till Pompey comes to help us ? To the front.

Away, to the front! (Exeunt.) >

THE GLADIATOR 437

SCENE VI. Another part of the same. Enter

Spartacus, ^nomaiis, and others.

SPART.

Leave slaying in the ranks, and rush with me

Even to the forum and praetorium,

To strike the officers.

<.ENO.

See, the troops of Pompey,

Are following on our rear!

SPART.

What care I for the rear? I see alone

The inviting vengeance beck'ning to the front,

Where flows the blood that Rome may bitterest mourn.

Let me beside the praetor. Mark, no prisoners ;

Kill, kill, kill all! There's nothing now but blood

Can give me joy. Now can I tell how gore

Inspires the thirsty tiger, and gives strength

Unto the fainting wolf. — No prisoners !

On to the general ! >

{Enter Lentulus, with others.}

LENT.

Lo, the bloody chief!

Now yield thee, villain.

SPART.

Murder-spotted fiend,

Thou led'st the band that slew my wife and boy !

Kill, kill, kill all!

(He kills Lentulus, and exit with the rest fighting.)

438 DRAMATIC WORKS OF ROBERT BIRD

SCENE VII. The pratorium. Enter Crassus,

Jovius, Julia, etc.

CRASS.

Get thee away; thou wilt be slain.

JUL. I fear not:

Let me look on the battle, and perhaps

Return the gift of life to Spartacus.

CRASS.

Pr'3^hee, retire. This man has won more honour.

Than even the braggart Pompey; for all ages

Shall own there needed two united armies

To quell him, yea, two Roman armies.

What now? Why fliest thou?

{Enter Florus.}

FLOR.

He has broken through

The second rank. Give me more troops, and fresh,

To venge my father's death.

crass.

Nay, tarry here,

And mark, how like the timbers of a ship,

Crushed in the mighty seas, the sundered wrecks

Of this rebellion vanish from our eyes.

SPART.

{Within.} On to the general !

THE GLADIATOR 439

CRASS.

What is that cry ?

This is a victory, but Pompey shares it. —

What rout is this here at our tents ? By heaven,
My guards are reeling in confusion! — Lo,
What man is this, unbuckler'd and unhelm'd,
Gored with a thousand deaths, that waves so wildly.
A broken weapon?

{Enter Spartacus, wounded, etc.}

SPART.

All is lost; but cry
Victory! On: I'll reach the general.

CRASS.

Smite him ! 'tis Spartacus.

(Spartacus is wounded by several.)

SPART.

Hah! Victory!

Crassus, thou diest! I know thee very well. —
Romans are straws. — No prisoners. — Naught but
blood.

Why should there be night now ?—

{He falls.}

JUL. O dear uncle, strike not.

Let him be spared. — He gave me life. — ^Alas,

He dies, he dies !

440 DRAMATIC WORKS OF ROBERT BIRD

SPART.

Well — never heed the tempest-

There are green valleys in our mountains yet. —

Set forth the sails. — We'll be in Thrace anon. —

(Dies.)

< CRASS.

Thy bark is wreck'd, but nobly did she buffet

These waves of war, and grandly lies at last,

A stranded ruin on this fatal shore.

Let him have burial; not as a base bondman.

But as a chief enfranchised and ennobled.

If we denied him honour while he lived,

Justice shall carve it on his montmient. >

(Dead March, etc. Curtain.)

THE END.