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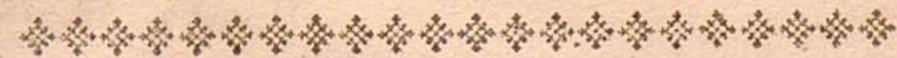
The Henriade

Voltaire

London, 1762

The Henriade. Canto the Tenth.

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THE
HENRIADE.

CANTO the TENTH.



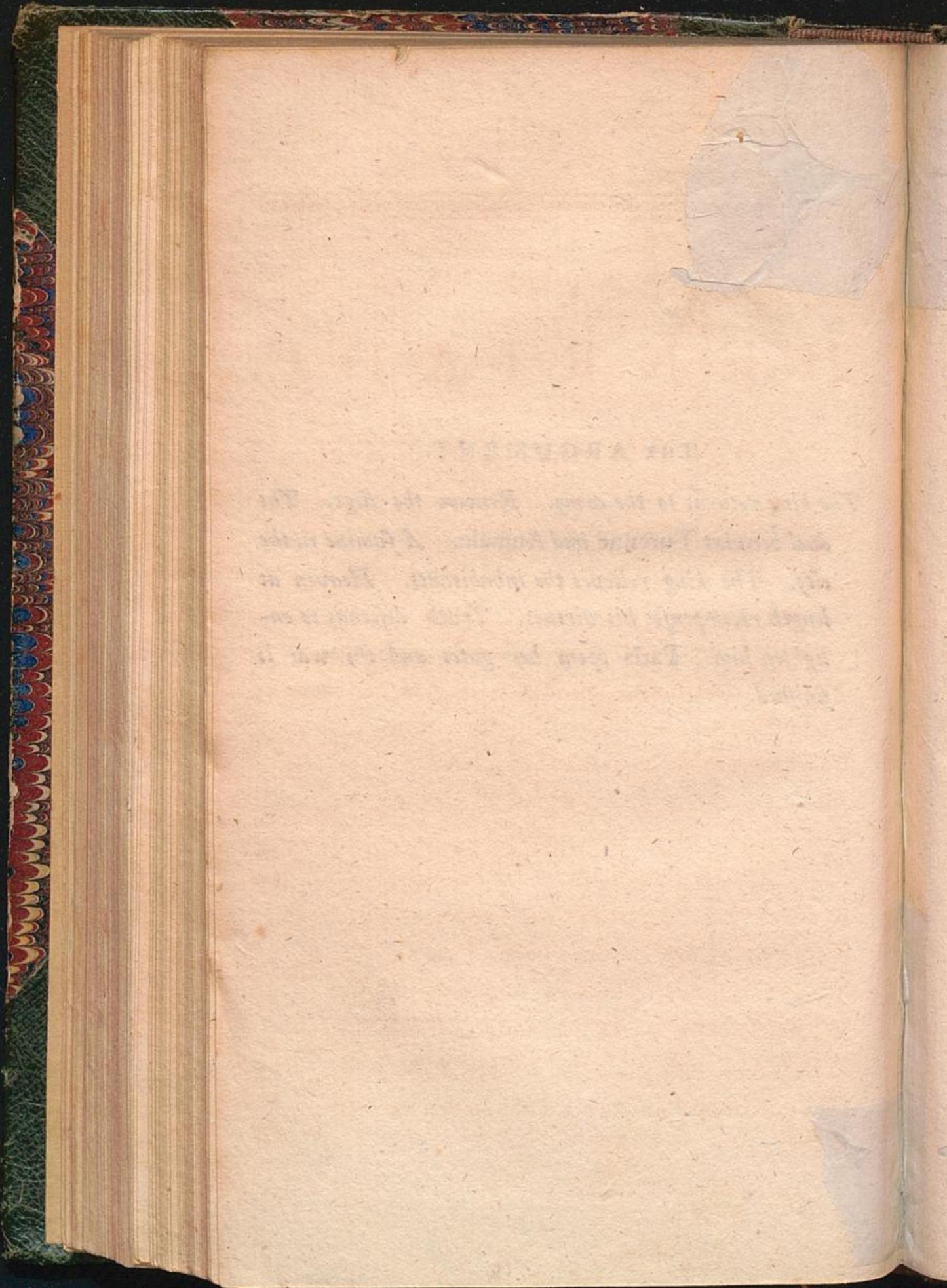
L 4

HENRI ADAM

CHANTRE

THE ARGUMENT.

*The king returns to the army. Renews the siege. The
duel betwixt Turenne and Aumale. A famine in the
city. The king relieves the inhabitants. Heaven at
length recompenses his virtues. Truth descends to en-
lighten him. Paris opens her gates and the war is
finished.*



THE
HENRIADE.

CANTO the TENTH.

THOSE fatal moments lost in soft repose
Had waked the courage of the vanquish'd foes.
Rebellion breath'd again, and faction's schemes
Flush'd the deluded throng with golden dreams.
Yet vain their hopes, for smit with generous fame 5
And active zeal the martial Bourbon came,
Eager to reap the harvest he had sown
And make the field of conquest all his own.
Again his banners wav'd aloft in air,
And Paris saw them with renew'd despair. 10
Again the chief before her walls appears
Scarce yet recover'd from a siege's fears ;
Those very walls, where yet sulphureous smoke
With desolation marks the cannon's stroke,
Which now with ruins had bestrew'd the land 15
Had not compassion check'd the hero's hand ;
When

When the bright angel, whose obedience still
 Guardian of France, performs th' Almighty's will,
 Had his soft breast with tender mercies glow,
 Withheld his arm, and stopp'd the falling blow. 20
 Through the king's camp no voice was heard around
 But songs of mirth, and joy's tumultuous sound.
 While each brave warrior, anxious for the fray,
 With eyes impatient marks the destin'd prey.
 Mean time the haughty legions all dismay'd, 25
 Press'd round their prudent chief, and sued for aid;
 When thus Aumale, of brave impetuous soul,
 Abhorring counsel, and above controul;
 " We have not yet so learn'd our warfare here
 " To sneak to hiding-holes, and crouch for fear, 30
 " Curs'd be the man whose counsel thither tends;
 " The foe comes forward—let us meet them, friends.
 " Not tamely wait till other vantage calls,
 " And rust in sloth beneath these coward walls;
 " On then, and conquer—fortune oft will spare 35
 " A smile to crown the efforts of despair.
 " Frenchmen attack'd, already are o'erthrown—
 " Seek then your safeties from yourselves alone.
 " Ye chiefs, who hear me, haste where glory calls,
 " Know, soldiers, know your leaders are your walls. 40

He

He spoke — amaz'd the Leaguers heard each sound,
And turn'd their eyes in silence to the ground.

He blush'd with shame, and in each leaders face
Read their refusal, and his own disgrace.

“ Ye will not follow then, ye heroes tame, 45

“ Nor wish I basely to survive the shame ;

“ Well—shrink at dangers still—so shall not I —

“ Alone I go—to conquer or to die.”

He said ; and from the city gate in martial pride
Boldly advanc'd with firm impetuous stride. 50

Before his steps the shrill-tongued herald went,
To hurl defiance at each warrior's tent.

E'en to the king's abode the martial came,
And challeng'd combat in the hero's name.

“ Ye daring sons of glory, loud he cried, 55

“ Now be your valour with your fortune tried,

“ Aumale in single combat waits you here,

“ By me he calls to arms ;—stand forth, appear.”

The valiant chiefs the desperate challenge heard,
Their zeal rekindling at each haughty word, 60

Each warrior stern impatient for the fray,

Hoped the king's voice, and hail'd the glorious day.

Courage in all had form'd an equal right.

Turcotte alone found favour in his sight.

“ Go,

" Go, said the prince, chastise the daring foe, 65
 " France to thy hands shall all her glory owe;
 " Remember, soldier, 'tis a glorious cause,
 " Thy own, thy king's, thy country ~~and mine~~
 " I'll arm thee for the fight—the monarch said,"
 And from his girdle loos'd the shining blade. 70
 When thus Turenne — " by this good sword I swear,
 " By thee, my king, each subject's darling care,
 " Thus nobly honour'd in my prince's voice,
 " My ready zeal shall never shame thy choice."

He spoke; while manly valour flush'd his face, 75
 And his heart sprung to meet the king's embrace;
 Then to the field, impetuous as a flood,
 Rush'd where Aumale the daring champion stood.

To Paris' walls ran all the Leaguer-bands,
 While round their king his faithful army stands. 80
 With stedfast eye, which anxious care reveal'd,
 Each side beheld their champion take the field.
 While voice and gesture on each part unite
 To warm each hero for the dreadful fight.

Mean time a cloud the vaulted sky deforms, 85
 Pregnant it seem'd with more than common storms,

While

While from its womb of darkness, strange to tell,
 Burst forth in flames the monstrous brood of hell.
 There was hot zeal, which frantic leaps all bounds,
 And Discord feiling on her thousand wounds, 90
 There artful policy designing fly,
 With heart of falsehood and with scowling eye;
 There the mad dæmon too of battles stood,
 All Leaguer-gods and drunk with human blood.
 Hither they haste, and land on Paris walls, 95
 Aumale, their League, the cause, their interest calls.

When lo! an angel from the azure sky,
 The faithful servant of the God on high,
 Descended — round his head in splendour play
 Beams that eclipse the lustre of the day. 100
 On wings of fire he shaped his chearful flight,
 And mark'd his passage with a train of light.
 A fruitful olive-branch one hand sustain'd,
 Prefage of happy days and peace regain'd.
 His other hand upheld a flaming sword, 105
 And shook the terrors of th' eternal Lord;
 That sword with which th' avenging angel arm'd
 Smote the first-born — confounded and disarm'd
 Aghast at once shrunk all the friends of hell,
 While to the ground their pointless weapon's fell. 110

And

And resolution sicken'd all o'erthrown
 By some resistless force from hands unknown.
 So Dagon worshipp'd on Philistia's shore,
 Whose purple altars ran with human gore,
 Before the ark with tott'ring ruin nods, 115
 And the fall'n idol owns the God of Gods.

Paris, the king, the army, heav'n and hell
 Witness'd the combat ;—at the trumpets swell
 On to the field the ready warriors came,
 Conscious of valour, and a thirst for fame. 120
 Their hands unus'd the cumbrous weight to wield,
 Disdain'd to fight beneath the glittering shield,
 The specious armour of inglorious knight
 Proof 'gainst all blows, and dazzling to the fight ;
 They scorn'd th' equipment of such coward dress, 125
 Which lengthening combat, made all danger less.
 In courage firm advanc'd each haughty lord,
 Man against man, and sword oppos'd to sword.
 “ O God of kings, the royal champion cried,
 “ Judge thou my cause, and combat on my side ; 130
 “ Courage I vaunt not of, an idle name,
 “ When heav'nly justice bars the warrior's claim ;
 “ Not from myself, I dare the glorious fight,
 “ My God shall arm me who approves my right.”

To

To whom Aumale, "in deeds of valour known 135
 " Be my reliance on this arm alone.
 " Our fate depends on us, the mind afraid
 " Prays to his God in vain for needful aid.
 " Calm in the heav'ns he views our equal fight,
 " And smiling conquest proves the hero's right. 140
 " The God of wars is valour—stern he cry'd,"
 And with a look of fell contemptuous pride
 Gaz'd on his rival, whose firm modest mind
 Spoke in his face, couragious and resign'd.

Now sounds the trumpet, to the dubious fray 145
 Rush the brave chiefs impatient of delay.
 Whate'er of skill, whate'er of strength is known,
 By turns each daring champion proves his own.
 While all around the troops with anxious fight,
 Half pleas'd, half frighted, view the desperate fight. 150
 The rushing swords cast forth promiscuous rays,
 Blinding the eye-fight with their trembling blaze,
 As when the sun athwart the silver streams
 Darts his strong light, and breaks in quivering beams.
 The thronging crouds around with eyes intent 155
 Look on amaz'd, and wait the dread event.
 With nervous strength and fury uncontrouled,
 Full of himself, and as a lion bold

Seems

Seems stern Aumale ; the whiles his rival brave,
 Nor proud of strength, nor passions headlong slave, 160
 Collected in himself awaits his foe,
 Smiles at his rage, and wards each furious blow.

In vain Aumale his utmost efforts tries,
 His arm no more its wonted strength supplies,
 While cool Turenne the combat's rage renews, 165
 Attacks with vigour, and with skill pursues,
 Till proud Aumale sinks baffled to the ground,
 And his hot blood flows reeking from the wound ;
 The champion falls ; hell echoes with despair,
 And dreadful sounds affright the troubled air. 170

“ League, thou art all o'erthrown, the prize is won,
 “ Bourbon, thou hast it now—our reign is done.”

The wretched people with lamenting cries
 Attest their grief, and rend the vaulted skies ;
 Aumale all weak, and stretch'd upon the sand, 175
 His glitt'ring sword fall'n uselefs from his hand,
 Fainting, yet strives fresh vigour to regain,
 And seems to threaten still, tho' all in vain.
 Fain would he speak, while deep-fetcht lab'ring breath
 Denies him utterance in the pangs of death. 180

Shame's quick'ning sense augments his furious air,
 And his red eyeballs flash extreme despair.

He

He heaves, he sinks, he struggles all in vain,
 His loosen'd limbs fall lifeless on the plain;
 Paris' walls he lifts his closing eye, 185

Then dies indignant with a desperate sigh.
 Mayenne, thou saw'st him die, and at each look
 Thy trembling nerves with shudd'ring horrors shook,
 Then to thy mind thy own approaching fall
 Came full, and thou wast conquer'd with Aumale. 190

The soldiers now to Paris gates repair,
 And with slow steps their breathless hero bear.
 Entranc'd with woe, all silent, and amaz'd
 Upon the bleeding corpse the people gaz'd,
 That deep-gash'd wound, that front with gore be-
 spread, 195

That mouth now fallen, and that unpropp'd head.
 Those eyes which e'en in death tremendous stare,
 While the fixt sight cast forth a livid glare,
 They saw—compassion, shame, disgrace and fear
 Choak'd up each cry, and dry'd the falling tear. 200

'Twas solemn stillness all. When lo, a sound
 Which teem'd with horror pierc'd the wellkin round.
 For now th'affailants with tumultuous cries
 Demand th'attack, and hope the promis'd prize.

Mean

Mean-time the king, whom milder thoughts engage, 205
 Calm'd their high transports, and repress'd their rage.
 Stubborn howe'er, and adverse to his will,
 Howe'er ungrateful, 'twas his country still ;
 Hated by subjects whom he wish'd to save,
 The mercies they denied, his virtue gave ; 210
 Pleas'd if his bounty could their crimes efface,
 And force the wretched to accept of grace.
 All desperate means he shudder'd to employ,
 He fought to conquer Paris not destroy,
 Famine perhaps, and lengthen'd scenes of woe 215
 Might bend to law a proud mistaken foe ;
 Brought up in plenty, with abundance fed,
 To ease and all the train of pleasures bred ;
 His people prest by want's impulsive sting
 Might seek for mercy from their patriot king. 220

Rebellion's sons, whom vengeance fain would spare,
 Mistook for weakness Henry's pious care.
 His valour all forgot, in stubborn pride
 They brav'd their master, and the king defied.

But when no more along the silver Seine 225
 The frieghted vessels bear the golden grain,

When

When desperate famine with her meagre train
 With death her consort spreads her baneful reign,
 In vain the wretch sends forth his piteous cries,
 Looks up in vain for food and gasping dies. 230

The rich no more preserve their wasting health,
 But pine with hunger in the midst of wealth.
 No sound of joy th'afflicted city knows,
 No sound, but such as witness'd direful woes.

No more their heads with festive chaplets crown'd, 235
 In songs of joy they send the goblet round.

No wines provoke excess, no favoury meats
 Quicken the jaded appetite. Thro' the lone streets,
 Emaciate, pale, with dead dull ghastly glare
 They wander victims of the fiend Despair. 240

The weak old man worn out with hunger's rage
 Sees his child perish in its cradled age ;
 Here drops a family entire, and there
 Groveling in dust, and worn with meagre care,

The hagg'd wretches in life's latest stage 245
 Fight for an offal with relentless rage.
 Fain would the living prey upon the dead,
 While the dry bones are kneaded into bread.

What will not misery do? This curst repast
 Promotes the work of death, and proves their last. 250

Mean

Mean time the priests, those rev'ren'd sons of pray'r
 Who preach up fasting which they never share,
 Batten'd in plenty, deaf to hunger's cries,
 Which from their bounty met no wish'd supplies:
 Yet went they forth with true fanatic zeal 255
 To preach those virtues which they could not feel.
 To the poor wretch, death hanging on his eyes,
 Their liberal hand would ope the friendly skies;
 To some they talk'd of vengeance sent from God,
 And Henry punish'd with th'Almighty's rod; 260
 Of Paris fav'd by heav'n's immediate love,
 And manna dropping from the clouds above;
 O'eraw'd by pow'r, by artful priests deceiv'd,
 The croud obsequious what they taught believ'd;
 Submissive, half content, resign'd their breath, 265
 Nay, happy too, they triumph'd in their death.

With foreign troops, to swell affliction's tide
 The famish'd city swarm'd on every side;
 Their breasts where pity never learn'd to glow
 Lusted for rapine, and rejoic'd in woe. 270
 These came from haughty Belgia's plains, and those
 Helvetia's monsters, hireling friends or foes.
 To mercy deaf, on misery's sons they press
 And snatch the little from extreme distress.

Not

Not for the soldier's plunder, hidden store, 275
 And heap'd up riches, useful now no more ;
 Not urg'd by lust, and lured by beauty's charms,
 To force the virgin from her mother's arms ;
 Their murd'rous torments rag'd for food conceal'd
 Supports laid up, and pittance unrevea'd. 280

A woman — God ! must faithful memory tell
 A deed which bears the horrid stamp of hell !
 Their flinty hearts which never felt remorse
 Robb'd of her little all with brutal force.
 One tender infant left, her late fond care 285
 The frantic mother eyed with fell despair.
 Then furious all at once, with murd'rous blade
 Rush'd where the dear devoted offspring lay'd ;
 The smiling babe stretch'd forth its little arms ;
 It's helpless age, sweet looks, and guileless charms 290
 Spoke daggers to her, whilst her bosom burns
 With madd'ning rage, remorse, and love by turns.
 Fain would she backward turn, and strives to shun
 The wretched deed which famine wishes done.
 Thrice did she rear the sword, and all dismay'd 295
 Thrice did she trembling drop the bloodless blade.
 Till furious grown in hollow voice she cries
 " Curs'd be the fruitful bed, and nuptial ties,
 " And

“ And thou unhappy offspring of my womb,
 “ Brought into being to receive thy doom, 300
 “ Didst thou accept this idol boon of life
 “ To die by famine, or these tyrant’s strife ?
 “ Should’st thou escape their unrelenting rage
 “ Will pinching hunger spare thy softer age ?
 “ Then wherefore should’st thou live ? to weep in
 vain 305
 “ A wretched wanderer o’er thy parent slain.
 “ No, die with me, ’ere keen reflection knows
 “ With bitter anguish to augment thy woes.
 “ Give me — thou shalt — nor wait the formal grave,
 “ Give back the blood thy helpless mother gave. 310
 “ I will entomb thee, and the world shall see
 “ A desperate crime unheard of yet in me.”
 She said, and frantic with extreme despair
 Plung’d the keen poinard in her darling heir.

Hither by hunger drawn, the ruffians sped 315
 Whilst yet the mother on her infant fed.
 Their eyes with eager joy the place survey
 Like savage tigers gloating on their prey.
 With furious wish they scan the mansion o’er,
 Then rush in rage and burst the jarring door. 320

When

When, dreadful sight! a form with horror wild,
 That seem'd a woman, o'er a murder'd child
 Set all aghast, and in his reeking blood
 Bath'd her fell hands, and sought a present food.
 "Yes, cried the wretch, the bloody deed is done, 325
 Look there, inhuman monsters—'tis my son.
 These hands had never worn this purple hue,
 Nor this dear offspring perish'd but for you.
 Now, ruffians, now with happy transport strike,
 Feed on the mother and the babe alike. 330
 Why heaves your breast with such unusual awe?
 Have I alone offended nature's law?
 Why stare you all on me? such horrid food
 Befits ye best, ye lustful sons of blood."

Furious she spoke, and staring, desperate wild, 335
 Plung'd home the sword, and died upon her child.
 The dreadful sight all pow'r of speech controuls,
 And harrows up e'en these barbarian souls.
 In dire amaze they cast their eyes around,
 And fear an angry God in every sound; 340
 While the whole city, at the scene dismay'd,
 Call'd loud for death, the wretches last kind aid.
 E'en to the king the dreadful rumour ran,
 His bowels yearn'd—he felt himself a man.

M

At

At each recital tender passions rose, 345
 And tearful mercy wept a nation's woes.

O God, he cried, to whom my thoughts are bare,
 Who knowest all I can, and all I dare,
 To thee I lift these hands unstain'd with blood,
 Thou know'st I war not 'gainst my country's good. 350
 To me impute not nor their crimes nor woes,
 Let Mayenne say, from whence the ruin flows.
 For all these ills let him advance the plea,
 Which tyrants only use, necessity ;
 To be thy country's foe, Mayenne, be thine, 355
 To be its father, be that duty mine.
 I am their father, and would wish to spare
 Rebellious children with a father's care.
 Should my compassion then but madly arm
 A desperate rebel to extend his harm? 360
 Or must I lose my regal crown to shew
 Indulgent mercy on a subject foe ?
 Yes—let him live, and if such mercy cost
 So dear a price as all my kingdoms lost,
 Let this memorial dignify my grave, 365
 To rule o'er foes I fought not, but to save.

He said, and bad the storms of vengeance cease,
 And hush'd the tumults with returning peace.

Paris

Paris again her chearful accents heard,
 And willing troops obey'd their Henry's word. 370
 Now on the walls the throng impetuous swarms,
 And all around, pale, trembling, wasted forms,
 Stalk like the ghosts, which from the shades of night,
 Compell'd by magic force, revisit light,
 When potent magi with enchantments fell 375
 Invoke the pow'rs below, and startle hell.
 What admiration swell'd each happy breast
 To find a guardian in their foe profess'd !
 By their own chiefs deserted and betray'd,
 An adverse army lent a willing aid. 380
 These pikes, which late dealt slaughter all around,
 With desperate force no longer rear'd to wound,
 Now kindly rais'd to second Henry's care,
 On their stain'd points the cheering nurture bear.
 " Are these, said they, the monsters of mankind ? 385
 " Are these the workings of a tyrant mind ?
 " This the proud king, sad outcast of his God,
 " His passions easy slave, and people's rod ?
 " No, 'tis the image of that pow'r above,
 " Who acts with justice, and delights in love ; 390
 " He triumphs, yet forgives, nor seeks to shew
 " Revenge's malice on a conquer'd foe.
 " Nay

“ Nay more, he comforts, and with royal grace
 “ Extends assistance to a rebel race.
 “ Be Discord banish’d from this glorious hour, 395
 “ And our blood flow but to cement his pow’r ;
 “ And steady zeal, no longer faction’s slave,
 “ For him employ that life, he wish’d to save.”

Such was the language Paris’ sons express’d,
 While soft emotions fill’d each grateful breast. 400
 But who ^{alas} ! can strong assurance ground
 On sickly friendship, which exhales in sound ?
 What hopes from such a race so light and vain,
 Who only idly rise to fall again ?
 For now the priests, whose curst designing arts 405
 Had rais’d the flames of discord in their hearts,
 Flock’d round the people—O ye sons of shame,
 “ Cowards in war, and christians but in name,
 “ Is’t thus your weakness from your God would fly,
 “ Think on the martyrs and resolve to die ; 410
 “ Think on the paths their holy army trod,
 “ Nor for preserving life, offend your God.
 “ Think of the crown religion’s sure to bring,
 “ Nor wait for pardon from a tyrant king.
 “ Fain would he lead your steady faith astray, 415
 “ And warp your conscience to his dangerous way.

With

“ With zeal defend religion’s holy laws,
 “ Death has no terrors in a christian cause.”

So spake they vengeful, and with purpose dire
 Blacken’d the king, ’till fell rebellion’s fire 420
 Flam’d out afresh, and full of desperate strife
 They scorn to own the debt of forfeit life.
 Midst all these clamour’s Henry’s virtue known
 Pierc’d thro’ the skies to God’s eternal throne.
 Louis, from whom the Bourbon race begun, 425
 Saw now the roll of time completely done,
 When his son’s error should be purg’d away,
 And pure religion beam her certain ray.
 Then from his breast fled all the train of fears,
 And faith establish’d dried up all his tears.
 Then soothing hope, and fond paternal love, 430
 Prov’d his sure guides to heav’nly paths above.

Before all time, in pure effulgence bright,
 The God of Gods had plac’d his throne of light ;
 Heav’n is beneath his feet ; pow’r, wisdom, love, 435
 Compose his essence ; while the saints above,
 Triumphant hosts, partake unfading joys,
 Which neither grief disturbs, nor time destroys.
 He speaks, the earth is chang’d, and frail mankind,
 The sport of error, and in councils blind, 440

Events perceiv'd, but causes undescried,
 Accuse God's wisdom in their selfish pride.
 Such were the Goths of old, and barb'rous Huns
 The numerous Turk, and Afric's tawny sons.
 All nations have their mighty tyrant, all 445
 Rise in their turns, and hasten to their fall.
 Yet not for ever tyrants sway their land,
 Oft falls the scepter in more favour'd hands,
 And heav'n's vice-regents, in their actions known,
 Dispense God's favour's from a royal throne. 450

Now Louis, sire of Bourbon's glorious race,
 In plaintive words address'd the throne of grace.
 Lord of the world, if from these azure skies
 Thou look'st on mortals with considering eyes,
 See how rebellion's hateful treason stains 455
 The generous sons on fam'd Lutetia's plains.
 If all unmindful of a subject's awe,
 They spurn their king, nor heed the royal law,
 'Tis for thy faith their ardent bosoms feel,
 And disobedience springs from holy zeal. 460
 Behold the king, of tried illustrious worth,
 The terror, love, example of the earth,
 With so much virtues could'st thou form his mind,
 To leave him pathless, and in errors blind?

Must

THE HENRIADE. 247

Must thy most perfect work forego all blifs, 465

And only Henry thank his God amifs?

Let him henceforth mistaken notions shun,

Give France a master and the church a son.

The ready subjects to their monarch bring

And to his subjects restore the king. 470

So in thy praise may all our hearts unite,

And a whole city worship God a-right.

His humble pray'rs th'eternal maker heard,

And spoke assent; earth trembled at his word:

The Leaguers stood amaz'd, and Henry's breast 475

Glow'd with that faith which God himself imprest.

When from her mansion, near th'eternal throne,

Truth dear to mortals, tho' sometimes unknown,

Descends a veil of clouds, with ample shade

Conceal'd from mortal ken the lovely maid, 480

Till by degrees, as at th'approach of day,

The shadowy mist melt all dissolv'd away:

Full to the sight now all the goddesses shone,

Clear as heav'n's light, and chearful as the sun.

Henry, whose bosom from his early youth 485

Had felt the longing of eternal truth,

With

With faith avow'd, and pure religion glows,
 Which baffles man, and reason darkly knows;
 With will convinc'd reveres the holy see,
 Which always one, howe'er dispers'd and free; 490
 Beneath one chief adores in every place,
 In all her happy fairs, God's wond'rous grace.
 Christ, for our sins who shed his purest blood,
 Now, for his chosen flock, the living food,
 To the king's self who bows with secret dread,
 Shews his true godhead in the hallow'd bread;
 The monarch, deep impress'd with holy awe,
 Adores the wonders of the sacred law.

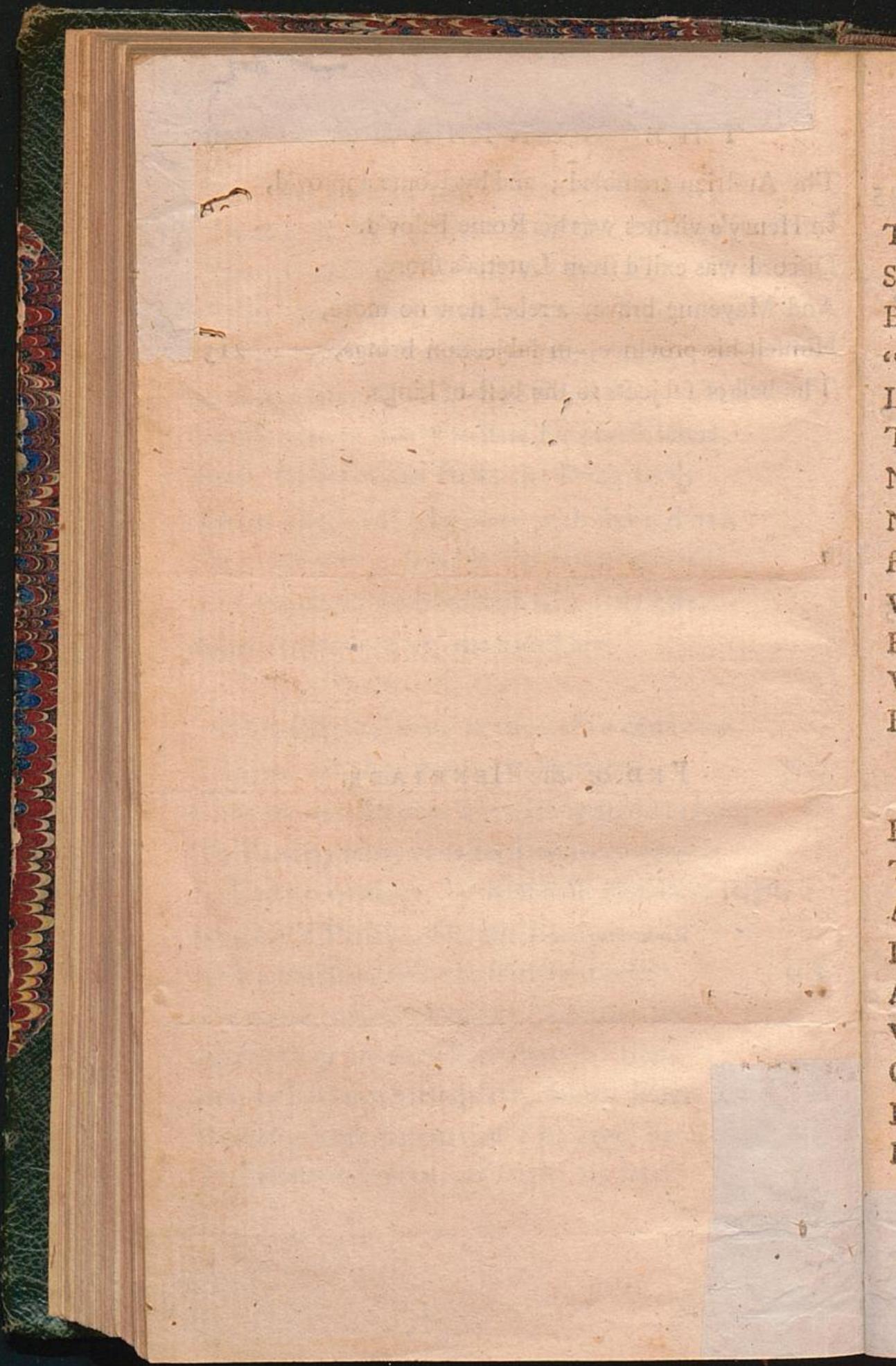
Now fainted Louis, at the Lord's command,
 The peaceful olive waving in his hand, 500
 Came down from heav'n; a ready guide to bring
 To Paris op'ning walls their convert king.
 In God's own name, by whom all monarchs reign,
 He enter'd Paris; while the Leaguer train
 Bow submissive, e'en the meddling priests 505
 Are dumb, and all around with jocund feasts
 And cries of joy the vaulted heav'n's ring,
 And hail at once a conqu'rer, father, king.
 Henceforth all' nations own'd his regal state,
 Too soon determin'd, as began too late. 510

The

T H E H E N R I A D E. 249

The Austrian trembled ; and by Rome approv'd,
In Henry's virtues was his Rome belov'd.
Discord was exil'd from Lutetia's shore,
And Mayenne brave, a rebel now no more,
Himself his province, in subjection brings, 215
The best of subjects to the best of kings.

E N D of the H E N R I A D E.



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