

PREFACE

THE words of the Martyr of Antioch are selected from the Drama of that name by the late Very Rev. H. H. Milman, Dean of St. Paul's.

The responsibility of the selection, and of the alteration in the manner of Margarita's death, rests with the composer. To his friend Mr. W. S. Gilbert is due the change which in one or two cases (marked with an asterisk) has been necessary from blank verse to rhyme; and for these and many valuable suggestions, he returns Mr. Gilbert his warm acknowledgments.

The action of the piece is laid at Antioch, in Syria, in the latter part of the third century. The persons represented are

Heathens.

OLYBIUS, the Roman Prefect.

CALLIAS, the Priest of Apollo.

JULIA, and other maidens and youths, worshippers of the Sun.

THE POPULACE of Antioch.

Christians.

FABIUS, Bishop of Antioch.

MARGARITA, daughter of Callias, Priest of Apollo.

THE CHRISTIAN CONGREGATION.

The plot may be briefly described. Olybius is in love with Margarita, and she returned his love. This, however, was in her heathen days. She is now a Christian, and with her conversion, of which both her lover and her father are ignorant, she, though still not indifferent to him, rejects all idea of union with a heathen. The piece opens with a chorus of Sun-worshippers, preliminary to a solemn sacrifice. The Prefect calls for Margarita to take her accustomed place, and lead the worship. During her non-appearance the Priest charges him with lukewarmness in the cause of Apollo, and he avows his firm intention to put all Christians to death.

The scene changes to the Christian cemetery, where one of the brethren is buried, and a hymn is sung over him. After the funeral, Margarita remains behind and pours forth her feelings in adoration of the Saviour. Her father finds her thus employed, and learns for the first time of her conversion.

The scene again changes to the Palace of the Prefect. The maidens of Apollo sing their evening song. Olybius and Margarita are left together; he begins his old endearments, and dilates on the glories which will be hers when they are united. She then confesses that she is a Christian; he curses her religion, and she leaves him for prison.

The final action takes place outside the Prison of the Christians, on the road to the Temple of Apollo. The maidens of Daphne chant the glories of the god, while from within the prison are heard the more solemn and determined strains of the Christians. Margarita is brought out and required to make her choice. She proclaims her faith in Christ. Her lover and her father urge her to retract but in vain; and she dies with the words of rapture on her lips :

The Christ, the Christ; commands me to his home ;
Jesus, Redeemer, Lord, I come ! I come ! I come !

THE MARTYR OF ANTIOCH.

SCENE I. — THE TEMPLE OF APOLLO. CHORUS OF SUN-WORSHIPPERS.

Youths.

Lord of the golden day !
That hold'st thy fiery way,
Out-dazzling from the heavens each waning star
What time Aurora fair,
What loose dew-dropping hair,
And the swift hours have yoked thy radiant car.

Thou mountest heaven's blue steep.
And the universal sleep
From the wide world withdraws its misty veil ;
The silent cities wake,
Th' encamped armies shake
Their unfur'd banners in the freshening gale.

The basking earth displays

Her green breast in the blaze
And all the gods upon Olympus' head
In haughty joy behold
Thy trampling courses bold
Obey thy sovereign rein with stately tread.

Maidens.

Lord of the speaking lyre !
That with a touch of fire
Strik'st music which delays the charmed spheres ;
And with a soft control
Doth steel away the soul,
And draw front melting eyes delicious tears.
Thou the dead hero's name
Dost sanctify to fame,
Embalm'd in rich and ever-fragrant verse :
In every sunlit clime,
Through all eternal time,
Assenting lands his deathless deeds rehearse.

Solo—Julia.

The love-sick damsel. Laid
Beneath the myrtle shade,
Drinks from thy cup of song with raptured ear ;
And, dead to all around,
Save the sweet bliss of sound
Sits heedless that her soul's beloved is near.

Youths.

Lord of th' unerring bow,
Whose fatal arrows go
Like shafts of lightning from the quivering string,
pierced through each scaly fold,
Enormous python roll'd.
While thou triumphant to the sky didst spring :

And scorn and beauteous ire
Steep'd with ennobling fire
Thy quivering lip and all thy beardless face !
Loose flew thy clustering hair,
While thou the trackless air
Didst walk in all thy own celestial grace.

Maidens.

Lord of the holy spring,
Where the Nine sisters sing,
Their dearest haunt our Syrian Castany :
There oft the entranced maid,
By the cool waters laid,
Feels all her labouring bosom full of thee.

Both.

The kings of earth stand near
In pale religious fear ;
The purple sovereign of imperial Rome
In solemn awe hath heard
The wild prophetic word,
That spake the cloud-wrapt mystery of his doom.

Lord of the cypress grove,
That here in baffled love
The soft Thessalian maid didst still pursue ;
Until her snowy foot
In the green earth took root,
And in thine arms a verdant laurel grew.

And still thy tenderest beams
Over our falling streams
At shadowy eve delight to hover long ;
They to Orontes' tide
In liquid music glide
Through banks that blossom their sweet course along.

And still in Daphne's bower
Thou wanderest many an hour,
Kissing the turf by her light footsteps trod ;
And nymphs in noontide deep
Start from their dreaming sleep.

And in their glory see the bright-haired god.
Phœbus Apollo, hear !
Great Lycian king, appear !
Come from thy Scythian steep or Xanthus' shore,
Here to thy Scythian home,
In visible godhead come.
And o'er our land thy choicest influence pour !

Callias. Break off the hymn. And now the solemn rites
Are duly paid ; the hundred steers have bled ;
O'er all the temple the rich incense curls
In clouds of fragrance, and the golden cups
in generous libations have poured forth
The honied wine ; and all along the shade
Of sacred Daphne hath your pomp been led,
Waking the slumbering echoes from their caves,
To multiply the adoring Io Pæan
To great Apollo.

(Enter OLYBIUS)

Olybius. Where is the crown and palm-like grace of all,
The sacred virgin-priestess, Margarita ?

* Come, Margarita, come,
Come in thy zoneless grace ;
Take thine appointed place,
And strike thy holy lyre or silver string ;
Come, Margarita, come !

Come, Margarita, come ;
For this delay of thine
Thou wilt the fairer shine—
Even as a late long-looked-for flower in spring—
Come, Margarita, come !

For when her living lyre outsings,
The shamèd birds do fold their wings
And all upon whose ear it falls
Stand breathless as the listening walls
That, as they tower in space above,
Themselves seem touched to light and love !
Come, Margarita, come !

Callias. Great Olybius.
'Tis said that here in Antioch, the high place
And chosen sanctuary of those Galileans,
Who with their godless and incestuous rites
Offend the thousand deities of Rome ;
'Tis said, that even here Olybius hath let sleep
The thunders of the law, which should have smitten
With the stern frequency of angry Jove,
When with fierce storms he darkens half the world.

Olybius. It is most true that I have sought to stay
This frenzy, not with angry fire and sword,
But with a lofty and contemptuous mercy.
That scorn'd too much to punish. But, Callias,
I am not one that wears a subject's duty
Loose, and cast off whene'er a changeful will
Would clothe itself in solid authority.
The edict of the Emperor is to me
As the unrepealed word of fate. To death
It doth devote these Christians, and to death
My voice shall doom them.

The Multitude. Long live the Christians' scourge !
Long live Olybius !
Go on thy flower-strewn road.
The Champion of our god,
By Phœbus' self his chosen chief confessed ;
His brightest splendours bask
Upon thy glowing casque,
And gild the waving glories of thy crest.

FUNERAL ANTHEM.

Brother, thou art gone before us, and thy saintly soul is flown
Where tears are wiped from every eye, and sorrow is unknown ;
From the burden of the flesh, and from care and fear released,
Where the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest.
The toilsome way thou'st travell'd o'er, and borne the heavy load.
But Christ hath taught thy languid feet to reach His blest abode.
Thou'rt sleeping now, like Lazarus upon his father's breast,
Where the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest.

“Earth to earth” and “dust to dust,” the solemn priest hath said,
So we lay the turf about thee now, and we seal thy narrow bed ;
But thy spirit, brother, soars away among the faithful blest,
Where the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest.

And when the Lord shall summon us, whom thou hast left behind,
May we, untainted by the world, as sure a welcome find ;
May each, like thee, depart in peace to be a glorious guest.
Where the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest.

Fabius. Brother, thou slumberest ; silent as yon stars,
And silent as the failing dews around thee,
We leave thy verdant grave. Hold we all prepared,
Like him beside whose hallowed grave we stand,
To give the last and awful testimony
To Christ our Lord. Hark ! hark ! they are behind us !
They come to drag us to their judgment hall,
Pale lights are gleaming through the dusky night.
And hurrying feet are trampling to and fro.
Disperse ! Disperse, my brethren to your homes !
Farewell ! we meet, if not on earth, in heaven !

(They go. MARGARITA remains alone.)

Margarita. Yet once again I touch thy golden strings,
my silent and forgotten lyre. I too.
Like thee, was hallowed to an impious service,
Even till a touch from heaven waked my soul's music,
And poured it forth in ecstasy to Him
Who died for men. And shalt not thou, my partner
In mine unholy worship mingle now
Thy sweetness with my purer vows. Oh, fountain
Of sounds, delicious ! shall I not unseal thee ?
Dwell not within thy secret wreathed shell
Sounds full of chaste and holy melancholy,
Even sounds accordant to the weary steps
Of Him, that loaded with the ponderous cross,
Toiled up the steep of Calvary ?

HYMN.

For thou didst die for me, O Son of God !
By Thee the throbbing flesh of man was worn ;
Thy naked feet the thorns of sorrow trod,
And tempests beat Thy houseless head forlorn —
Thou that were wont to stand
Alone, on God's right hand,
Before the ages were, the Eternal, eldest born.

Low bow'd Thy head convulsed, and droop'd in death
Thy voice sent forth a sad and wailing cry ;
Slow struggled from Thy breast the parting breath.
And every limb was wrung with agony.
That head, whose veil-less blaze
Fill'd angels with amaze.
When at that voice sprang forth the rolling suns on high.

For us, for us, thou didst endure the pain ;
And Thy sweet spirit bowed itself to shame,
To wash our souls from sins infecting stain,
T' avert the Father's wrathful vengeance flame
Thou that could'st nothing win
By saving souls from sin,
Nor aught of glory add to Thy all-glorious name.

(Enter **CALLIAS**.)

Callias. My own, my loved, my beauteous child, once more
Thou art thyself?

Margarita (*aside*). How t' unbarb the dart
Which I must strike into his inmost soul!
Oh Heaven, have mercy on him in Thy mercy!
His love surpasses every love but Thine.

Callias. Why dost thou tremble, child? The altar waits

Margarita. I cannot sacrifice.

Callias. Are mine cars false to me? Dar'st thou deny
Thy god—thy father's god—the god of Antioch?

Margarita. No god is he—but mortal as thyself;
Withering before the all-enlightening Lamb,
Whose radiant throne shall quench all other fires.

Callias. * Behold in yonder space
Thy king enthroned,
As god adored by man—
By thee disowned!
See his eternal might
And shade thy brow—
Is he not life and light?
What sayest thou?

Margarita. To yonder orb I say—
Bridegroom, gold-crowned
Sent forth to cast thy ray
On man earth-bound,
Thy golden lustre shed,
Shine thou on high
Till time itself be dead,
Then shalt thou die!

SCENE III.— THE PALACE OF THE PREFECT.

EVENING SONG OF THE MAIDENS.

Come away with willing feet,
Quit the close and breathless street:
Sultry court and chamber leave;
Come and taste the balmy eve,
Where the grass is cool and green,
And the verdant laurels screen
All whose timid footsteps move.
With the quickening stealth of love;
Where Orontes' waters hold
Mirrors to your locks of gold,
And the sacred Daphne weaves
Canopies of trembling leaves.

Come away, the heavens above
Just have light enough for love;
And the crystal Hesperus
Lights his dew-fed lamp for us.
Come, the wider shades are falling,
And the amorous bird are calling
Each his wandering mate to rest
In a close and downy nest,
And the snowy orange flowers,
And the creeping jasmine bowers
Front their swinging censers cast
Their richest odours, and their last.

Come, the busy day is o'er,
Flying spindle gleams no more;
Wait not till the twilight gloom
Darken o'er the embroidered loom.
Leave the toilsome task undone,
Leave the golden web unspun;
Hark I along the humming air
Home the laden bees repair:
And the bright and dashing rill
From the side of every hill,

With a clearer, deeper sound,
Cools the refreshing air around.

(**OLYBIUS—MARGARITA**.)

Olybius. Sweet Margarita,
Give me thine hand—for once—oh snowy treasure
That shall be mine thus fondly clasped for ever!
* See what Olybius' love prepares for thee—
A palace tuneful with Assyrian choir,
The wealth of Indian looms beyond the sea
And all th' enslaved breezes waft to Tyre.
When sated with the purple of parade,
In summer gardens thou shalt pass thy day
On sunny lawn or in secluded shade,
Where silver-dashing fountains idly play.
A throne whereon the Asiarch holds his state,
There shalt thou rule our army and our fleet—
While subject-prince and vassal-potentate,
Pour forth their lavish homage at thy feet.
By all the world of orient kings adored,
Arm'd panoplies obedient at thy side—
Thou fairer for the lustre of thy lord,
Thy lord more glorious for his lovely bride.

Margarita. O hear me. Olybius!
I know thy spirit pants for glory;
There is a thirst within thine inmost soul
Which triumphs cannot satiate, nor the sway
Of earth. I'll tell thee how to win a record
That shall be registered by flaming hands
In the adamantine heavens.

Olybius. But can'st thou win me
An immortality of thee?

Margarita. I can.

Olybius. Name then the price; be it the forfeit life
Of the most hardy in yon Christian crew,
'Tis given.

Margarita. I ask thine own eternal soul—
Believe in Jesus Christ, and I am thine;
For I would quit my cloudless course on high
To wander in the darkling world with thee.
Learn thou this faith, and then
Thy bride will bring to thee a nobler dowry
Than her poor beauty.

Olybius. Curse upon this faith,
That thus hath wrung the love from thy pure soul
Curse on thy—

Margarita. Ha, thou shalt not curse the Saviour!
So now farewell for ever, proud Olybius;
Though my voice fail, I'll weep a last farewell.

Olybius. Now whether goest thou?

Margarita. To my prison, sir.

SCENE IV.— THE ROAD TO THE TEMPLE OF APOLLO. OUTSIDE
THE PRISON OF THE CHRISTIANS.

Heathen Maidens. Now glory to the god who breaks,
The monarch of the realms on high;
And with his trampling chariot shakes
The azure pavement of the sky.

Christians (*from the prison*). Now, glory to the God whose throne.
Far from this world obscure and dim,
Holds its eternal state alone,
Beyond the flight of seraphim.

Julia. The maids lift up their hymn around the temple;
Now lead the priestess forth to hear her doom—
To worship at Apollo's shrine, or die.

Io Pæan ! as We sing
Light our smoking censers swing,
And each laden basket showers
All its painted store of flowers ;
Io Pæan ! Clarian god !
Come and fill thy proud abode.
Chorus.—Io Pæan, etc.

Io Pæan ! we behold
Naught but walls that flame with gold ;
Long retiring colonnades,
Crowded with the sacred maids ;
Io Pæan— Youth divine.
Open thou the sacred shrine !
Chorus.—Io Pæan, etc.

Io Pæan ! we adore thee
Phœbus, low we bow before thee,
Io Pæan! Lycian king !
Syria's crowding myriads sing
Io Pæan; heaven and earth
Mingle in our holy mirth.
Chorus.—Io Pæan, etc.

Julia, Olybius, Callias. Great is Olybius, and his mercy great.
Maiden, upraise thy voice.
Olybius' throne or a blasphemer's fate
Is thine ; make thou thy choice.

Margarita. 'Tis made !—the funeral pyre !

The Multitude. Blasphemy ! Blasphemy !
Hear what the priestess saith !
She doth profane our faith,
Our god—the god of day !
Away with her—away !
Away with her !
Blasphemy ! Blasphemy !

Margarita. God, at whose word the vast creation sprang,
Exulting in its light and harmony,
From the blank silence of the void abyss ;
That God had spoken by His Son. He came
From the dark ages of the infant world
Foretold—the prophet's everlasting burthen.
The Virgin bare the Son, the angelic hosts
Burst out in song—the Father from His clouds
Declared him. And again he comes, again,
But not as then, not clad in mortal flesh,
To live the life, or die the death of man ;
Girt with his own omnipotence, His throne
The wreck of worlds ; the glory of his presence
Lighting infinity. He comes to assume
The eternal judgment seat. Then thou and I
Shall meet once more
Before the face of Him, whose awful brightness
Shall be the sun of that dread day, in which
The thousand thousands of the angelic hosts,
And all the souls of all mankind shall bask,
Waiting their doom eternal. Thou and I
Shall then give an account of this day's process
And Christ shall render each his own reward.
Now, sir, your sentence.

The Multitude. Blasphemy! Blasphemy !
Hear what the priestess saith !
She doth profane our faith !
Our god's the god of day !
Away with her—away !
Blasphemy! Blasphemy !

Margarita. The Lord my God is with me, and I fear not !
The world is but His chamber, and this earth
Is but the footstool of His throne—the heavens
Hang in their folds of light to canopy
The Omnipresent.

Olybius. How doth the rapture or her speech enkindle
The brightness of her beauty ! Never yet
Looked she so lovely, when her loosed locks
Flowed in the frantic grace of inspiration
From the burst fillet down her snowy neck.

Callias. Have mercy, unrelenting heaven !
Oh ! child of mine, have mercy thou !
Was it to curse thy father's brow
That thou, my child, to him wast given ?

Olybius. Have mercy, unrelenting heaven !
Oh love of mine, have mercy thou !
To thee my aching heart I bow ;
For thee alone this heart hath striven.
Have mercy, unrelenting heaven !

Margarita Have mercy, oh forgiving heaven,
and On those I love have pity Thou ;
Julia. Shed Thou Thy pardon on them now:
They know not how my heart is riven !
Have mercy, oh forgiving heaven !

The Multitude. The hour of mercy's o'er—or sacrifice or die !

Olybius. What means she !
Why does she look to yon bright heaven ? What seest
That makes her full eyes kindle as the gaze
Undazzled, on the fiery sky ?

Margarita. What means yon blaze on high !
The empyrean sky
Like the rich veil of some proud fane Is rending !
I see the star-paved land
Where all the angels stand,
E'en to the highest height in burning rows ascending ;
Some with their wings dispread,
And bow'd the stately head,
As on sonic mission of God's love departing,
Like flames from midnight conflagration starting ;
Behold I the appointed messengers are they,
And nearest earth they wait to waft our souls away.

Higher and higher still,
More lofty statutes fill
The jasper courts of the everlasting dwelling ;
Cherub and seraph pace
The illimitable space,
While sleep the folded plumes from their white shoulders swelling.
From all the harping throng
Bursts the tumultuous song,
Like the unceasing sounds of cataracts pouring,
Hosanna o'er Hosanna louder soaring ;
That, faintly echoing down the earthly ears,
Hath seem'd the consort sweet of the harmonious spheres.

Again— I see again
The great victorious train,
The martyr army from their toils reposing !
The blood-red robes they wear,
Empurpling all the air,
Even their immortal limbs the signs of wounds disclosing
Beyond ! Ah, who is there,
With the white snowy hair ?
'Tis He—'tis He, the Son of Man appearing !
At the right hand of One
The darkness of whose throne
That sun-eyed seraph host behold with awe and fearing.
Hark !—thunders from His throne,
Like steel-clad armies marching !
The Christ, the Christ, commands me to His home,
Jesus ! Redeemer ! Lord ! I come, I come, I come !

Christians. Glory, glory, glory—the Lord Almighty reigneth,
He who forfeits earthly life a life celestial gaineth.
Hallelujah.