

THE DEFEAT

by Mercy Otis Warren
(1773)

Entered by hand by Richard Seltzer

Author of Parallel Lives (All Things Matter Press, 2020)

Spelling and punctuation has been updated for readability

Mssers. Edes and Gill, As many of your country readers have been out of the way of the theatrical amusements of the last season, it may perhaps be some entertainment to them to see a few extracts from **The Defeat**, a dramatic performance lately exhibited.

The author has thought proper to give as a prologue the following lines of a celebrated writer.

*O how I laugh when I a blockhead see
Thanking a villain for his probity,
Who stretches out a most respectful ear
With snares for wood-cocks in his holy leer,
It tickles through my soul to hear the cock's
Sincere encomium on his friend the fox,
Sole patron of his liberties and rights,
While graceless reynard listens -- till he bites.*

Dramatis Personae

Rapatio – Bashaw of Servia

Proteus – his general and one of his council

Honestus – virtuous senator

Cassius – virtuous senator

Rusicus – virtuous senator

Horiensius – virtuous senator

Lucius – virtuous senator

Helvidius Priscus – virtuous senator

Crito – a scribbler

Chronus, Impavidus, Executioner -- garretters, etc., etc., etc.

IN THIS ENTERTAINMENT, THE AUDIENCE IS PRESENTED A SCENE WITH THE SOLILOQUY OF RAPATIO, JUST LEAVING HIS APARTMENT, WITH A SPEECH IN ONE HAND FOR THE SENATE, IN THE OTHER A WARRANT ON THE REVENUE CHIEF -- SALARY, PENSION, PERQUISITES, ETC. SUMMED UP ON THE TABLE.

RAPATIO SOLUS.

Rapatio:

I've traversed over the records of the land,
Ransacked the musty volumes of the dead,
Researched the deeds of former infamy,
And traced each monument of early days.

Nor unexplored have left one useful line
To prove the darling purpose of my soul
And fix the shackles on an injured land.
The senate summoned shall prevent the assembling
The little states of every petty villa.
Should they convene throughout the commonwealth
And freely scan the rapid strides of power,
Feeling their strength, they'd route and crush the hydra
And dash my hopes beneath the dreaded wreck.
The trump of malice by my minions blown
Shall blast the laurels of the fairest name,
And stab the bosom of that patriot's fame,
Who dare oppose my arbitrary sway
Or scorn to tremble at a despot's frown.
A feather bribes all, but the virtuous few
I'll tinkle empty titles in their ears,
And browse the rattle for the crest of fools,
Lull the supine in thoughtless indolence.
And sink the claim of freedom with a nod:
Nor leave a trace of all their boasted rights,
For their depressed, their dropping sons to view,
And point them back to what their fathers were.
But should the genius of their sleeping fires,
With angered brow and threatened vengeance rise,
Demand the reason of my cruel deeds,
Bid me avow the black and guilty cause,
The traiterous purpose of my rankling mind,
That's hid behind a subtle meagre form,
The soft smooth grimace of a pander's smile,
The oily droppings of a courtier's tongue,
I'll point them there ---

[pointing to the sum counted up before time]

Say who the lure of such a bait could stand,
Or who the glittering sequins could refill,
Yet not an aspect of the ample treasure
Shall ever repair my shattered habitation.
For this I'll squeeze the laboring peasant's brow
And reap the ruined honest trader's spoils.
The orphans tears shall lend their wretched aid,
To rear a pile to glut my wild ambition:
Yet spite of pride, of avarice, or revenge,
I tremble at the purpose of my soul.
The wooden latchet of my door never clicks,
But that I start -- and ask does Brutus enter?
Or comes a Mucius in the form of Ludlow?

_____Ludlow_____

I hate that curst Cromwellian signature,

_____It augurs ill. _____

I'll haste, repair, and gently strive to soothe
The nobles of my court to base compliance,
To crush the brave, intrepid hero's zeal.
And still the pen of bold and dauntless truth.

*THE SCENE CHANGES TO THE SENATE HOUSE. ENTER PROTEUS. IN HIS HAND A SPIRITED
PARAGRAPH, JUST PUBLISHED, CENSURING THE MEASURES AND DISCLAIMING THE AUTHORITY BY
WHICH THE PEOPLE OF SERVA ARE OPPRESSED.*

Proteus:

Did mortal ever behold such worth abused?
Rapatio sure is virtue's first born son,
(I hold his slave at humble distance kept.)
No sordid views contaminate his soul.
No rank ambition lurks within his breast,
A generous ardor in his bosom glows,
To guard the sacred rights of Servia's sons
The Freedom purchased by their father's blood.

Honestus:

Why all this waste of words -- why labors thus
Thy supple tongue -- who has aspersed thy master?

Proteus:

The good Honestus -- art thou Rapatio's friend?
And calmly ask -- why all this fervid warmth?
Feel you no kindlings for Rapatio's honor?

Honestus:

I feel for Servia's wrongs.

Proteus:

See there the darlings of licentious pens!
Shall we behold such excellence traduced?
The great, the wise, the brave, discreet Rapatio
Let us support, or order's at an end.
The bands of government are loosed at once,
Confusion, rage, and riot, hand in hand,
With dire revenge, and anarchy, succeed.

Honestus:

These frightening bugbears gendered at Neponsett
Dealt out by Proteus or Crito's pen,
Can't push the virtue of this noble senate,
To an illegal step, to save a wretch
Who checks the murmurings of a falling state,
Deaf to the groanings of despairing worth,
Forbids the comfort of a mingled sigh.

Proteus:

Some gratitude is sure Rapatio's due
For all the labors of his anxious days,
The constant watchings of his sleepless nights,
To prove _____

Hortensius:

_____us born the slaves to distant lords.
But Servia's noble senate has repelled
His futile labored subtle eloquence,
And freedom like Zenobia led in chains
Still spurns the victor, though she grace the triumph.

Proteus:

I'll hasten hence. I see the rising storm.

Honestus:

I from my soul detest these base designs,
Go tell thy master he deceives no more.
The covered sting, the half disguised plan
Peeps through the veil and shows the abject man,
Who for a place, a grasp of shining earth,
Has stabbed the vitals that first gave him birth.
Shall Servia bleed and shan't her sons complain,
While traitors revel over her children slain?
Go dirtiest dupe of all the venal race
Who sell their country for a pensioned place,
Who barter conscience for a gilded straw,
Riot on right, and trample on the law.

EXIT

End of the second act

THE SCENE CHANGES, DISCOVERS PROTEUS IN HIS OWN APARTMENT IN A TREMBLING ATTITUDE.

PROTEUS ALONE.

Proteus:

I've shifted, trimmed and veered to either side,
As changing fortune smiled on either party,
Till neither trusts or can in me confide.
My future game shall be to fawn on power
And gain a smile on which depends my fate.
I'll cringe and court each ministerial tool.
With zeal redoubled, I'll extol each measure,
So keep my seat when a mandamus comes,
Procured by serpentine maneuvers of one man,
To sort the sycophant from men of worth.

THE SCENE CLOSES ON PROTEUS, AFTER WHICH SEVERAL TRAGICAL SCENES ARE EXHIBITED; BUT WE REFER THE CURIOUS TO THE WHOLE REPRESENTATION, AS ACTED AT THE HEAD QUARTERS OF THE BASHAW OF SERVIA, AND PROCEED TO THE THIRD ACT, WHICH OPENS:

Scene I

Drums, trumpets and several warlike instruments without ____ A battle ensues, in which Rapatio, his abettors and creatures are totally defeated, after which freedom and happiness are restored to the inhabitants of Servia, by the prudent and spirited conduct of Honestus, Hortensius, Cassius Rusticus, and others.

BUT AS THIS ENTERTAINMENT IS CROWDED WITH A VARIETY OF INTERESTING EVENTS, WE SHALL OMIT ANY FURTHER EXTRACTS OF THIS TIME, EXCEPT THE CONCLUDING SCENE OF THE FOURTH ACT, WHERE THE CURTAIN DRAWS UP AND PRESENTS RAPATIO TO THE AUDIENCE IN DEEP MOURNING.

SCAFFOLD, BLOCKS, ETC. ETC.

Rapatio:

Oh the reverse, the sad reverse of fortune!
Stript of my plumes, my plunder, and my peace.
Peace I did say! that gentle heavenly guest,
Has not resided in my cankered breast
Ever since my native land I basely sold,
For flattering titles and more sordid gold.
The dreadful curses of the slaughtered dead,
Full vengeance pour on my devoted head.
I fall unpitied not one weeping eye
Shall wail my fate or heave a tender sigh.
Had faithful Hazlerod survived my fate,
He would deplore my truly wretched state.
But he, with all my faithful favored band,
Who swarmed as lice over Egypt's blasted land,
And sucked the blood of their devoted prey,
As Egypt's locusts, now are swept away.
I now detested, shunned by every friend,
A monument to after times I stand.
I plunge, I sink. Oh save me from despair.
What -- do I hear? -- is fierce Cerberus there?
The portals of the yawning pit he guards,
Where traitors doomed receive their just rewards.
Bold Hercules who dove to Pluto's deep
To fetch him out or lull that fiend asleep
Bids him attend when ever a tyrant falls
Who ruined millions and their race enthralls.

Messieurs printers,

Some of the old performers of our Grand Provincial Concert, who are somewhat dubious of being rechosen for the year ensuing, in their old state fiddling station, have for some days past caused much amusement to several speculative geniuses about town; an amazing difference being observed in their deportments; -- aided with the greatest assiduity in scattering about several excrescences of liberty with many dark insinuations (when within a circle of what they esteem Sons of Liberty) against their first fiddler!! -- But it needs little penetration to know, should they be continued in their favorite seats, that we should have our ears dinged to death with their old favorite tunes and Harrison's corant, -- Billy Turtle's. Oho!! and _____ Whispers! _____ Country Dantes that have been so repeatedly scrpped over by those adepts in political gingle! as to render both the performers and their compositions absolutely disgusting to even the lobster-sellers and fish-criers belonging to this metropolis. It is therefore humbly requested that those respectable members, in whose power it is to remove such nuisances, would be pleased to turn their eyes toward some new performers; it being known to exceed the art of man to induce those riveted veterans to alter their tunes. A continuance of which intolerable discordance may possibly bring on some epidemical disorders of the most pernicious nature to the subscribers in general.

Catgut. Boston May 24

As an additional affront to the feelings of his countrymen; as an aggravated outrage on the sensibility, humanity, virtue, and justice of this people; as a master stroke of rancorous enormity, to put in the rack the most obstinate quietist: Be it known; that the cringing, smiling, fawning, bowing Charles Froth, Esq., a wretch, who from his earliest puppy-hood, through the lingering progress of a too long protracted life, to a period when he withers on the crutch of decrepitude, might challenge his recording angel to produce one single action, that sifted to its motive, would not effectually consign him to eternal infamy; has, O! unparalleled effrontery! O! the detestable parricide! has appointed that execrable villain, the condemned vagabond, the rank, bloody, and as yet unhangd Ebenezer Richardson, an officer in the Customs of the Port of Philadelphia. And what is infinitely aggravating and renders the transaction much more atrocious: the murderer is distinguished by a particular recommendation to the collector and comptroller of that port; declaring the miscreant to be a distinguished friend to government, a proper person to be employed in the revenue, and ordering them to reward him with a guinea per week. As the said Ebenezer Richardson is now placed on the ladder of promotion, we may expect him one of the Honorable Board of Commissioners in a few years; where he may probably make as distinguished a figure as the rest of his brethren.

Friday last, Mr. Hutchinson returned from his tour to Hartford. We do not learn his missed his way on his return, though we are credibly informed his coachman did some six or eight miles in or near Needham on his journey hence. Now Needham is about 14 miles beyond Sheep Alley, which is about 5 miles from Boston, where his lieutenant some few years since was seen wandering.

Some time last week Ebenezer Richardson, Esq., who lately had such a fortunate and surprising escape from the gallows for the murder of young Seider, through the extraordinary clemency of our pious and gracious monarch, set out for the City of Philadelphia, being appointed an officer in the Customs, for his notable exertions in behalf of government --- Balf, McQuirk & Kennedys are not the only instances of the unexampled goodness of George the Third.

At the general election at Hartford on Thursday the 13th instant, the Governor, Deputy Governor, and Assistants were chosen the same as last year.

*HAVING HERETOFORE ENTERTAINED OUR READERS WITH SOME EXTRACTS FORM A LATE DRAMATIC EXHIBITION CALLED **THE DEFEAT**, WE NOW OFFER THEM ANOTHER FROM THE SAME WORK.*

Act III Scene 2

Rapatio:

Hah -- Betrayed -- Dear Limp can it be?
Original! -- --- ---
The hand! The signature -- Why these reprints?
What sad, what dreadful tidings do I hear?
Is the game up? Can I deceive no more?
Could not my art, my sophistry and guile,
All my precaution to conceal my plan
Prevent the busy quick-eyed Patriot's search?
Have they the broad Atlantic traveled over
From Albion's bosom! fetched the guilty proofs
Of our perfidious, bold and black designs?

Limpit:

Yes, all is out, but how I cannot learn,
Though I my timid, trembling form laid by
To gain the clue: paraded the Exchange
With shameless front, and an assured brow
As if no pangs my goaded conscience felt,
Nor did I leave deception's ragged veil,
But patched it up, and sent it my few friends
To call before the beauteous face of truth,
When they no longer can her charms resist.

Rapatio:

Truth, sacred truth, none longer can resist.
Conviction clear
Strikes every honest undesigning heart.
Resentment kindles in the offended senate.
The citizens alarmed. The world's convinced
That we're the miscreants that have sold their rights,
Yet cheated many with a false pretense
That we alone the public welfare sought.
The mask is off, and my detested form
Is known to those who have been most deceived.

Limpit:

Few thought that we so black a part could act,
That we behind the curtain played the wires,
Pushed on our English to disturb the peace,
To make the face complete pretended fear,
Implored as aid that curse of every state;

That bane of freedom, and the badge of slavery,
the nurse of vice, of rapine and distress:
A standing army;
To subdue the spirits of a brave people,
And riot on their spoils
Though some suspected, many disbelieved
For thy reputed virtue stood so high,
"Twas deemed impossible the just Rapatio
Should plead necessity for an abridgement
Of native freedom to a British race;
And urge that scourge, that cruel scourge of nations,
An armed force to plunder and destroy
But only this could have procured the place,
An over balance for the patriot's flame.
Let nations sink. posterity be thrall'd.
And tenfold plagues may still bring up the rear;
And unmolested, we despotic rule.

Rapatio:

My solemn, gloomy aspect long has hid
The traiterous lurkings of ambitious lust,
A soul deformed by avarice and pride,
And all the tumult of discordant fears,
Lest hope (who oft a sly deceiver proves)
Should change her face and cheat the sanguine wish
And disappointment, with a look severe
Should bid defiance to our artful plan.
While resolution promising success
Might save a people whom we've striven to ruin.

Limpit:

I greatly fear the hand of vengeance nigh,
Guilt pallid guilt, fits hovering over my brow,
And gnawing vipers twine about my heart:
Is there no hope? Pray what led Gracchus here?

Rapatio:

He scatters bounties with such liberal hand
So great his influence, with the vulgar herd
[missing words] I thought to gain him with a feather.
[missing words] firm; and foolishly adheres
[missing words] though he gain naught thereby,
[missing words] , and popular applause.
[missing words] rumored that we were betrayed,
[missing words] of tumultuous rage,
[missing words] Gracchus, to learn by him more sure
[missing words] of this injured people.
[missing words] though often they've been duped.

[missing words] tricks of statesmen
[missing words] to a George's reign,
[missing words] the game I early learned;
[missing words] but my lucky cards.
[missing words] mounted high in their esteem,
[missing words] me honest, wise, and good,
[missing words] from step to step I rose,
[missing words] repenting but too late,
[missing words] confidence reposed in me.
[missing words] the goal I sought,
[missing words] shackle and oppress,
[missing words] I drew my vital breath.

Limpit:

How many fortunate events concurred
To help us onward to this splendid height,
Not Brundo's malice, or Rapatio's art,
Nor weak harangue from adulating tongues,
By creatures placed in justice's solemn seat,
Nor feeble efforts of our small cabal,
Would ever have availed if Britain had been wise,
Nor lent her ear to avarice disguised
In the same mantle worn by virtue's friends,
Who ever have their country's good at heart.

Rapatio:

Talk not of fortune or her pleasing smiles,
To one distracted with corrosive care;
The vigorous states in yonder senate met,
Will not uncensured pass these daring strokes.
The hated Cassius' soft pathetic tongue
Pleads virtue's cause, which calls for my destruction,
And every vice with each, just the doom.
While a sincere and patriotic glow,
And ardor free from each low private wish
Bids Rusticus precipitate my fate
With fearless courage and undaunted zeal.
There's naught can bribe or shake his Roman soul.
But if the conscript fathers should unite
With their plebeian Ch[?]eis, then all is over.
Britannia's lords must know they've been deceived,
Withdraw the pensions, and strip off the plume,
And leave us helpless, lost in sad despair.
But let me haste, I've yet some power left.
I will prevent additions to their order:
Know it thou the new auxiliaries they've chosen?
They're cool, deliberate, honest, brave, and wise,
Benevolent, humane, rejoicing most

When happiness is most diffused to Man
Renowned for virtue as for hate of tyrants,
Their influence such they must not grace the Senate.
Yet if I should reject the good Helvidius,
I've no pretext to justify the deed.
His deep researches into nature's laws,
Not more his duty than his chief delight
Have kept him ever from the lazy path
Of busy courtiers and their public wiles
There's naught in him to ground an accusation.

Limpit:

Lucius, my former friend, dost thou approve?
A friend indeed till he surveyed my heart,
The vacant seat of verity appeared,
And rectitude no more residing there,
Lucius recoiled and bid a last adieu.

Rapatio:

His first integrity thou knowest well,
His upright dealings, and his pious care
To guard his heart from each immoral stain.
His close attachment to the people's cause
Prevents a thought of giving rank to Lucius.
But for Hortensius -- (whose name I hate)
He talks, he writes, regardless of my wrath:
From pale-faced perjury, he strips the veil,
Declaims aloud, and points him to the world,
In secret thirsting after human blood,
A crime for which he never shall be forgiven.
How oft his eye has spoken the indignation
That filled his soul, when fawning sycophants
With labored lip and as an audacious front,
Call virtue vice and giving truth the lie
Have held me up the patron, friend and father
Of this abused, oppressed, deluded people.
I'll rase his name, as I'd blot out the memory
Of all who struggle for that native freedom,
The grant of heaven to our pious fathers,
Transmitted down in characters of blood.
With this command, _____
_____ Die or preserve it sacred:
But pure religion, -- Nor a heart sincere,
Not men of virtue, -- Nor the man of birth,
Nor merit marked with literary fame,
Will I forgive, if once they dare oppose
My lust of gain, and eager grasp for power,

And yet they spurn the favors I confer,
And deem it honor when disproved by me!

Limpit:

We must call in to aid the tottering cause
Some wretched scribbler, bartering for gold,
Truth, freedom, peace, and honor, sacred ties
Confounding all things with the sceptics art,
And what so fit for such a base design,
As Philalethes prostituted pen,
Long hackneyed in venality's low walks,
He's crafty, docile, ready or for vice,
Or if it would serve his mercenary view,
Would draw it even in virtues hated cause.
Virtue that state machine, for naught designed,
But just to keep the vulgar fools in awe.
Who as a ladder lend their galled necks
To lift the knave up to his gilded height,
When on the pinnacle he drops the guise,
Looks down and smiles to see the cheat succeed.

Rapatio:

Yes! Philalethes long ago broke down
The guard of conscience, and that strong defense
By foolish priests and prophets of old time,
Plagued round her portals to secure her rights,
This moral sovereign boldly he's renounced.
Lucre now reigns his deity and guide.
His penetrating genius proves it clear,
precepts divine are but a worn out tale
No revelation can exist at all,
Denies his savior, and rejects St. Paul.

Limpit:

He's a minion for the vilest deeds,
Another curio, bought with Caesar's gold,
Alike he'll write, for Brundo, or for thee,
Distorting truth to hide the leopard's spots,
He'll undertake a talk still more severe,
And rashly strive to wash an Ethiop white,
Thou knowst the errors of mean Brundo's reign,
A Tyrant's heart, but no Machiavil's head.
He wanted oft an oculist expert,
To clear the sight or to draw over a film.
He cogged the die, and turning up a knave,
Philanthrop's name was written there at large,
He took him up from penury and want,
A genius fit to serve his dirty view,

And as a reptile round the poisonous weed,
Emerged from earth and crawling for support
Clings round the thorny stalk till it supplies
Nutritious dew to save the restless worm,
He hung upon the shameless Brundo's arm,
Till wealth rolled in the wages of his guilt
An ample price for lost integrity.

Rapatio:

But not his windings, or ten thousand wreaths
Conceal the rancor of his venom'd sting,
That stabs alternate -- Brutus -- or his country.
'Tis not the changing signature can hide
A base, duplicit, narrow, servile soul,
Subtle, all natural, treacherous, insincere.
Dissimulation rest upon his tongue.
Can and grimace! Bespeak a pander's heart,
Proud and ungrateful, no restraints can bend,
False to his friends, and faithless to his God.

Limpit:

He may affect simplicity of style,
And lurk beneath Aminadab's broad brim,
Philanthrop, Philalethes or long J.
Yet still he's known to be the dangerous foe
Of liberty, of truth, and of mankind.
Who undermines their happiness below,
Then knocks away the props of future peace,
Ranks rationals with insects of an hour.
A fit expedient for a tyrant's plan
To hush his fears and soothe his soul to rest,
If after all the lenient hand of time
With Philalethes aid should not compose
The rising storm, the maddening people's rage
That's nigh wrought up to fury and despair.
A lifeless effigy won't long suffice,
But you and I as forfeiture must pay,
Our hoary heads to this much injured state.