

**ATTILA, MY
ATTILA! A PLAY**

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Attila, My Attila! A Play by Michael Field

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MICHAEL FIELD

**ATTILA, MY
ATTILA! A PLAY**

Attila, My Attila!

UNIV. OF
CALIFORNIA

ATTILA, MY ATTILA!

A PLAY BY MICHAEL FIELD



LONDON: ELKIN MATHEWS

1896

P R E F A C E

TRAGEDY is the conflict of man with the indifference of nature. For all forces of life sweep on their regenerating way, and disregard obstruction or break it down; yet mortals strive presumptuously to withstand this impetus, and to subject it to their own thought and need. Then there is a death-struggle, and the human combatant disappears, sometimes recognising his schism, sometimes unconscious of it to the end.

Our interest in each case is due to the very vitality that a man turns against life when he fights it in vain with its own weapon, as Prometheus fought Zeus, as Satan fought Jehovah, as Lear withstood Cordelia, and Hedda Gabler her own motherhood. What indeed is necessity but the unfaltering energy of existence to which even the strongest and most rebellious of living creatures must bow, so that the triumph of life, and not the triumph of death, becomes the proper subject of all tragedy.

When, in spite of his overthrow, a sinner repents, and in his contrition worships the power he has with-

PREFACE

stood in its own might, then his tragedy has tonic virtue. If, on the contrary, he remain impenitent and blind, his fate prostrates us with terror: yet since there are such tragedies it is well sometimes to face them, and learn how they came to be so desolate, and why the sorrow in them has no life.

Little Honoria, whose yielding "to the impulse of nature" Gibbon chronicles with such sympathy—a sympathy pregnant with the feelings of our age that was to follow—sought to give freedom to her womanhood by unwomanly audacities; and although the importunate desire *to be herself* was fair and natural, its perversion was revenged by the blight with which nature curses.

To be vitally stirred, yet go blindly on the way of death; to be urged by nature, and yet outrage her through very obedience is a tragedy of tragedies, and one not remote; for Honoria is the *New Woman* of the fifth century: and to any who shall read her story in these pages the author says, as clearly as a certain Prologue when it declared—

"This man with lantern, dog, and bush of thorn,
Presenteth Moonshine"

that this play presents Irony.

M. F.

PERSONS OF THE PLAY

VALENTINIAN III	Emperor of the West
THEODOSIUS II	Emperor of the East
SATYRUS	{ An Armenian, Chamberlain to Galla Placidia
EUGENIUS	{ A young Chamberlain of the Palace, waiting on Honoria
ANTHEMIUS	{ A young Roman of Consular rank
GALLA PLACIDIA	{ Empress of the West, Valen- tinian's Mother
HONORIA	Valentinian's only Sister
PULCHERIA	{ Empress of the East, Theo- dosius' eldest Sister
ARCADIA MARINA	} His younger Sisters
ATHENAIS	{ A Greek Girl under Pulcheria's protection
MARSA	Anthemius' Wife
A Priest, Chamberlains, Courtiers, Women, Slaves, Soldiers of the Guard	

SCENE—IN ACTS I, II AND IV, AT *Ravenna*
IN ACT III AT *Byzantium*

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ACT I