

**AND BACCHUS AND
ARIADNE,
A DRAMA**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649322367

And Bacchus and Ariadne, a drama by Cavaliere Mereweather

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Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
Cover @ 2017

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CAVALIERE MEREWETHER

**AND BACCHUS AND
ARIADNE,
A DRAMA**

BACCHUS AND ARIADNE

& Drama

BY
REV. (CAVALIERE) MEREWETHER

KNIGHT OF THE ORDER OF THE CROWN OF ITALY
EX-CHAPELAIN AT VENICE
AUTHOR OF 'SERBIC: A VENETIAN TALK'



LONDON

J. T. HAYES, 17 HENRIETTA STREET, COVENT GARDEN
SIMPKIN, MARSHALL, HAMILTON, KENT & CO. LTD.

1891

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

THESEUS, Son of Ægeus, King of Athens.

ARIADNE, Daughter of Minos, King of Crete, and Pasiphaë.

EGLA, Daughter of Panopeus, King of Naxos.

BACCHUS.

ATTENDANT of Theseus, an Athenian.

NURSE of Ariadne, a Cretan.

ANGELOS, Nuntius.

CHORUS of Naxian Vine-dressers.

TIME: *A few hours.*

PLACE: *Garden of the King of Naxos. Interior of the Palace of the King of Naxos. Summit of hill overlooking the sea inclosed in the grounds of the Palace of the King of Naxos.*

ACTION: *Simple.*

ARIADNE

ACT I.

Nurse of Ariadne. Hard is the lot of those whom duty
calls

To leave their well-belovéd Fatherland,
And dwell with strangers. Hard is it to leave
The roof where first we drew our infant breath,
The fields where first we played our childish plays ;
But harder yet it is to leave for aye
Friends and acquaintance, kinsfolk, parents—all
With whom we've lived in fond companionship.
Farewell, farewell, I ne'er shall see ye more.
And thou, dear Crete, my wave-encircled home

Rich with all beauty, lost art thou to me !
Never again is given to me to climb
Thy foliaged steeps, O Ida, thence to gaze
With gaze untiring on the scene below,
Where sea and river, wood and pasture mead,
Corn-field and clustering vine and peasant's cot,
And lordly pile and grove-encircled shrine,
And populous city with its busy port,
Mingle in beauty-breathing brotherhood ;
Mingle—until the haze of far away
Shroud all in indistinctness—O farewell !
Strange that the gods should launch us into life
In torture, not in joyousness, to dwell !

Attendant of Theseus. Blame not the immortal gods,
woman of Crete ;

By them an equal share of good and ill
Is meted out to all ; with us it lies
To lessen or increase the original store.
I, too, at duty's stern command, have lived
An exile from my home for many a day ;
Now haste I to adore my household gods,

And greet with joy the loved ones of my youth.

Yet much I marvel wherefore tarrieth here
In Naxos' isle so many weary days,
Theseus my lord, great Ægeus' mighty son,
From Crete departing, blessed by favouring winds,
We sailed direct for Athens as thou know'st ;
And there had soon arrived, had not the gods
Neptune and Æolus, with wrath divine
Moved, or indulging in some strange caprice,
Poured on our bark their concentrated rage,
And driven her reeling through the foamy brine,
Of sails and oars bereft, with rifted sides,
Tracked by sea monsters glaring on their prey ;
Till on our lee this friendly port appeared,
And like a tutelar goddess oped its arms
To take us in, the tempest-tossed. Since then
Full many a weary month has come and gone.
Our gallant ship refitted, crew refreshed,
The Lady Ariadne yearning, too,
Her new Athenian home to greet with joy,

What keeps my lord an idler on this strand,
Him the destroyer of fell beasts of prey
And slayer of the Marathonian bull?

Nurse. What keeps thy lord an idler on this strand?
Go ask the Lady Egla, blind of sight!
Go ask the Circe of this vine-clad isle,
Daughter of Panopæus, Naxos' King.
Seest thou not how this wanton Naxian girl
Folds in her nets the stout Athenian heart,
And lulls him with her subtle sorceries?
Whilst he, forgetful of the loving form
That safely brought him forth from Cretan toils,
The Labyrinth and loathsome Minotaur,
Hotly responds to her illicit lust,
And, slave to her entreaties, still delays
To hoist his ship's broad mainsail, and conduct
The pining Ariadne to her home.
This keeps thy lord an idler on this strand;
This makes him faithless to his guiding star.
In this dark world of ours one thing is clear:
Playthings are we to men, mere children's toys,

Loved, petted, played with, shattered, swept away.

Attendant. Cease thy sinister tattle; know'st thou not
Masters in servants' eyes should be as gods;
And we should have nor eye, nor ear, nor tongue
To scan and criticise their faults. But see
The Lady Ariadne this way moving,
With faltering steps and eyes that dream of love.

Ariadne. Where is my lord? O! who hasseen my lord?
My Theseus, sole possessor of my thoughts?
I seek him everywhere and find him not.
Through the recesses of yon lordly pile,
And through these happy gardens, fitter far
For gods, than mortals; where our kingly host
Anticipates Elysium; far and near
I seek my Theseus but I find him not.
O sweetly bitter love! O bitter sweet!
How hast thou leaped on me, and filled my heart
With joy and anguish, peace and war! For when
I have him present, my concentered being,
Wrapt in tranquillity ineffable,
Floats in the ether of a passive bliss,