

**NERO, AN
HISTORICAL PLAY**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649241378

Nero, an historical play by W. W. Story

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Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
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W. W. STORY

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\$ 3.00 H. Matherson
Dec 27 '76

N E R O

AN HISTORICAL PLAY

BY

W. W. STORY

WILLIAM BLACKWOOD AND SONS
EDINBURGH AND LONDON
SCRIBNER, WELFORD, & ARMSTRONG
NEW YORK: MDCCCLXXV

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TO

MRS FRANCES ANN KEMBLE.

DEAR MRS KEMBLE,

This play, which was written in the summer of 1872, had been laid aside in my desk, when I had the pleasure of meeting you in Rome in the winter of 1873-74. The story of Nero, as recorded by ancient writers, and especially in the vivid sketch of Suetonius, and the more elaborated and highly-coloured pages of Tacitus, had long haunted my mind as a powerful subject for dramatic treatment, and I could not rest till I had tried my hand at it. But the enthusiasm of writing once over, many were the doubts that assailed me as to my own success in treating it, and as to the interest it might have for the public. A man's judgment upon his own work is a blind one; and having confidence in your critical ability, as well as in your frank honesty, I asked you to do me the favour to hear me read it, determined in my own mind to abide by your decision as to whether I should publish it or not. You kindly consented to my request; and a small company of friends (fit, though few) met in your apartment in Rome to hear it. It was a winter's evening—the key was turned in the door against all the world—and the reading began. You will remember

how it was suddenly interrupted by a shock of earthquake, which rattled the windows and shook the house in strange accord with the story. At its conclusion you encouraged me to print it. It belongs, therefore, to you; for without your kind words it is doubtful whether it would ever have been given to the public. I hope you will allow me to connect your name with it, and at the same time to express my high sense of your genius, and my warm appreciation of your constant friendship and kindness to me and mine. I do not, however, mean to make you responsible for it, knowing well how the best judgment is warped by friendship; nor do I mean to intimate that I have yielded to friendly pressure against my own judgment. I accept the responsibility myself,—while cordially thanking you for your kindness.

In writing this play I have striven to preserve historical truth, and to present a picture of a period characterised by cruelties and crimes which would not now be tolerated, and by passions so violent and unrestrained, that they seem to bear the brand of insanity. How far I have succeeded others must decide; but I should have less question of the success of this play if it could be read or acted by you, for by the mastery of your art you could throw over it a glamour which would conceal its defects, vivify its dullness, and heighten its merits.

Your faithful and obliged

W. W. STORY.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

NERO.

BRITANNICUS.

OTHO.

GALBA.

C. JULIUS VENDEX, *Proceptor in Spain.*

L. ANNEUS SENECA,

AFRANIUS BURRIUS, *Prefect of Guard's,* } *Tutors of Nero,*

SOPHONIUS TIGELLINUS, *Favourite of Nero,*

TITUS VINIUS, *Proconsul of Spain.*

CORN. LACO, *Friend of Galba.*

NYMPHIDIUS SABINUS, *Prefect of Priest, Guards,*

ANICETUS, *Admiral of Fleet.*

GALERIUS TRICHALUS, } *Const's.*

SILIUS ITALICUS,

HELIUS.

GRANIUS, *Tribune.*

C. CALP. PISO, *Leader of Conspirators.*

FENIUS RUFUS, *Senator,*

SUBRIUS FLAVUS, *Tribune of Guard,*

FLAVIUS SCEVINUS, *Senator,*

ANTONIUS NATALIS, *Roman Knight,*

PLAUT. LATERANUS, *Senator,*

LUCAN.

ANNEUS STATIUS, } *Physicians.*

XENOPHON,

} *Conspirators against
Nero.*

MILICUS, Freedman of Severus.

AGERINUS, Freedman of Agrippina.

SPORUS,

EPAPHRODITUS,

MENECEATIS,

PHAON,

} Freedmen of Nero.

AGRIPPINA, Mother of Nero.

OCTAVIA, Wife of Nero.

POPPEA, Mistress, afterwards Wife of Nero.

ACERRONIA, Friend of Agrippina.

POMPEIA PAULINA, Wife of Seneca.

GUARDS, SOLDIERS, ATTENDANTS, SERVANTS, &c.

N E R O.



ACT I.

SCENE I.—*Ante-chamber of Imperial Palace.*

NARCISSUS *and* BURRHUS.

Bur. Welcome, Narcissus! You are then returned!
And is your health restored?

Nar. Of body—yes;
But not of mind. Unwillingly I went,
Foreboding evil, and in this short month
What changes!—what disasters! Claudius dead!—
Worse—murdered, as men say; and in his place
Young Nero seated: while with iron hand