

**THALABA THE
DESTROYER: A
RHYTHMICAL ROMANCE**

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Thalaba the Destroyer: A Rhythmical Romance by R. Southey

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R. SOUTHEY

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DESTROYER: A
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THALABA
THE DESTROYER.

A Rhythmic Romance.

BY R. SOUTHEY.

Παιδικὸν ἀρχαῖον κ' εὐνοῦργον, καὶ τέρμα εἰς
τὸ δεῖξαι τὸ σάτυρον.

Lucian, Quomodo Hist. Scribenda.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

BOSTON:

Published by T. B. Wait and Co. and Charles Williams.

1812.

CONTENTS OF VOL. I

CASE

3



	Page.
Preface	5
Book I.	7
Notes	37
Book II.	65
Notes	83
Book III.	103
Notes	127
Book IV.	169
Notes	197
Book V.	225
Notes	249

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PREFACE.

IN the continuation of the Arabian Tales, the Domdaniel is mentioned; a Seminary for evil magicians, under the Roots of the Sea. From this seed the present Romance has grown. Let me not be supposed to prefer the rhythm in which it is written, abstractedly considered, to the regular blank verse; the noblest measure, in my judgment, of which our admirable language is capable. For the following Poem I have preferred it, because it suits the varied subject; it is the *Arabesque* ornament of an Arabian tale.

The dramatic sketches of Dr. Sayers, a volume which no lover of poetry will recollect without pleasure, induced me, when a young versifier, to practise in this rhythm. I felt that while it gave the poet a wider range of expression, it satisfied the ear of the reader.

PREFACE.

It were easy to make a parade of learning, by enumerating the various feet which it admits; it is only needful to observe, that no two lines are employed in *sequence* which can be read into one. Two six-syllable lines, it will perhaps be answered, compose an Alexandrine: the truth is, that the Alexandrine, when harmonious, is composed of two six-syllable lines.

One advantage this metre assuredly possesses,—the dullest reader cannot distort it into discord: he may read it prosaically, but its flow and fall will still be perceptible. Verse is not enough favoured by the English reader: perhaps this is owing to the obtrusiveness, the regular Jews-harp *twing-twang*, of what has been foolishly called heroic measure. I do not wish the *improvisatore*'s tune;—but something that denotes the sense of harmony, something like the accent of feeling,—like the tone which every Poet necessarily gives to Poetry.

Cintra, October, 1800.

TILALABA THE DESTROYER.

THE FIRST BOOK.

... Worse and worse, young Orphan, be thy payne,
If ^{thou} thou dost vengeance doe forsake,
Till guiltie blood her guerdon doe obtayne.

Faery Queen, B. 2. Can. 1.

How beautiful is night !
A dewy freshness fills the silent air,
No mist obscures, nor cloud, nor speck, nor stain,
Breaks the serene of heaven :
In full-orb'd glory yonder Moon divine
Rolls through the dark blue depths,
Beneath her steady ray
The desert-circle spreads,
Like the round ocean, girdled with the sky.
How beautiful is night !
Who at this untimely hour
Wanders o'er the desert sands !
No station is in view,

Nor palm-grove islanded amid the waste,
 The mother and her child,
 The widowed mother and the fatherless boy,
 They at this untimely hour
 Wander o'er the desert sands,

Alas! the setting sun
 Saw Zeinab in her bliss,
 Hodeirah's wife belov'd.
 Alas! the wife belov'd,
 The fruitful mother late,
 Whom when the daughters of Arabia nam'd,
 They wished their lot like her's;
 She wanders o'er the desert sands
 A wretched widow now,
 The fruitful mother of so fair a race,
 With only one preserv'd,
 She wanders o'er the wilderness.

No tear reliev'd the burden of her heart;
 Stann'd with the heavy wo, she felt like one
 Half-waken'd from a midnight dream of blood.
 But sometimes when the boy
 Would wet her hand with tears,
 And, looking up to her fix'd countenance,

Sob out the name of *Мотья*, then did she
Utter a feeble groan.

At length collecting, Zeinab turn'd her eyes
To heaven, exclaiming, "Praised be the Lord!
He gave, he takes away!
The Lord our God is good!"

"Good is he!" cried the boy,
"Why are my brethren and my sisters slain?
Why is my father kill'd?
Did ever we neglect our prayers,
Or ever lift a hand unclean to heaven?
Did ever stranger from our tent
Unwelcom'd turn away?
Mother, he is not good!"

Then Zeinab beat her breast in agony;
"O God forgive my child!
He knows not what he says!
Thou know'st I did not teach him thoughts like these,
O Prophet, pardon him!"
She had not wept till that assuaging prayer,—
The fountains of her eyes were open'd then,
And tears relief'd her heart.
She rais'd her swimming eyes to Heaven,