

**JEPHTHA'S
DAUGHTER, A
DRAMATIC POEM**

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Jephtha's Daughter, a Dramatic Poem by M. J. Chapman

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M. J. CHAPMAN

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A

Dramatic Poem.

By M. J. CHAPMAN, Esq.

AUTHOR OF "BARBADOES, AND OTHER POEMS."

*ὦ πάτερ, κἀρεμί σοι,
τούμην δὲ σῶμα τῆς ἱμῆς ὑπὲρ πάτρας
θεῶναι δίδωμι ἑκούσῃ πρὸς βραμὴ Θεοῦ.*

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JAMES FRASER, REGENT STREET.

M.DCCC.XXXIV.

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SUCCESS only can justify an attempt of this kind; how I have succeeded it is not for me to determine. With more practice I hope to acquire more cunning on the instrument I have presumed to touch. It is my intention, should this attempt be successful, to write a trilogy on the houses of Saul and David; and to dramatise the history of Esther, and, perhaps, the book of Job. I have addressed myself in no irreverent spirit to these themes.

In the treatment of a Scripture subject, I have thought it but right, wherever I could, to make use of Scripture language and Syrian imagery.

The history is related in the 11th chapter of the book of Judges. Some persons have pretended that Jephtha's daughter was not sacrificed, and have attempted to explain the passage away, by supposing that she was devoted to celibacy. The sacred historian, explicitly declares that Jephtha did with her according to his vow; and that vow was, "If thou shalt without fail deliver the children of Ammon into mine hands, then it shall be, that whatsoever cometh forth of the doors of my house to meet me, when I return in peace from the children of Ammon, shall surely be the Lord's, and I will offer it up for a burnt-offering." He further states, that "it was a custom in Israel that the daughters of Israel went yearly to lament the daughter of Jephtha the Gileadite, four days in a year."

Josephus relates the history in the 9th

chapter of the 5th book of his Antiquities :
“ But before Jephtha took the field, he prayed to God in the most fervent manner to grant him success, and made a solemn vow, that, if he proved victorious, he would offer up to him, in sacrifice, the first living creature he should meet on his return to his family. . . .

“ The war being over, Jephtha returned to his family, when, lo ! instead of receiving that satisfaction he expected after so long an absence, a circumstance occurred that pierced him to the heart. On approaching his house, the first object that presented itself was his only daughter, who was flying with eager joy to receive and bid him welcome. When Jephtha saw his daughter, his soul almost sunk within him, and, for some time, he was unable to speak. Having a little recovered himself, he looked at her with tears trickling from his cheeks ; and, after blaming her for