

**GOD'S SCOURGE: A
DRAMA IN
FOUR ACTS**

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God's Scourge: A Drama in Four Acts by Moreton Hall

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MORETON HALL

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FOUR ACTS**

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GOD'S SCOURGE

*A DRAMA IN
FOUR ACTS*

By
MORETON HALL



LONDON: T. FISHER UNWIN
PATERNOSTER SQUARE. 1902

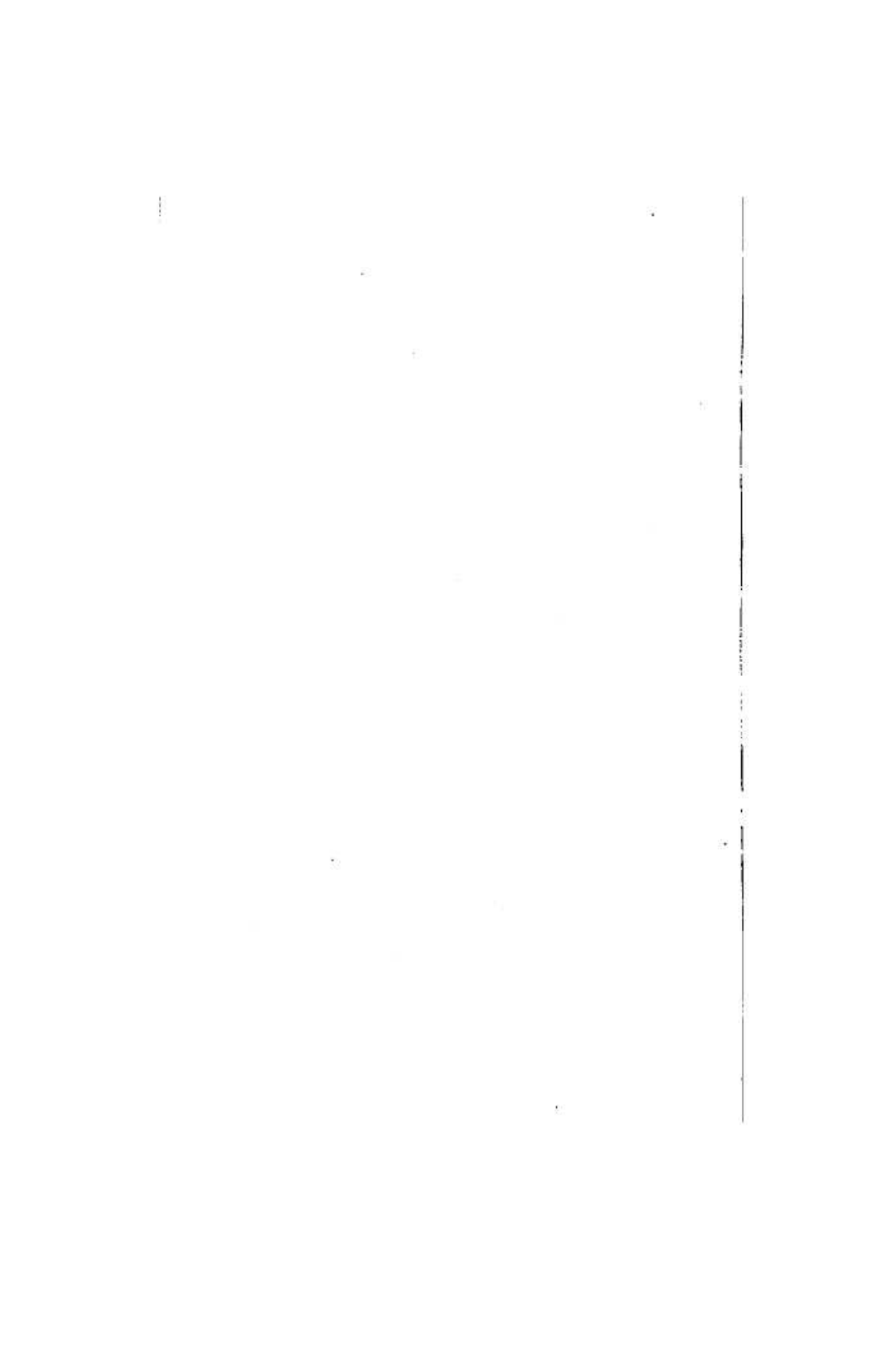
DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

THEODOSIUS *the younger, Emperor of the East.*
ATTILA, *King of the Huns.*
ADRIAN, *a Christian fanatic.*
MARCIAN, *a Senator.*
CHRYSAPHIUS, *Chamberlain to THEODOSIUS.*
PRISCUS *of Thrace, an historian.*
VIGILIUS, *a Syrian gentleman.*
VALENS, *son to VIGILIUS.*
ORESTES, *a gentleman of Pannonia,* } *ATTILA'S Ambassadors*
EDECON, *Chief of the Scyrri,* }
ANATOLIUS, *Patriarch of Constantinople.*
A CITIZEN *of Constantinople.*
ERNAC, *a child, son of ATTILA.*
ESLAM, } *Scythian bards.*
RONA, }
SCOTTA, *a Scythian augur,*
PULCHERIA, *sister to THEODOSIUS.*
CLAUDIA, *wife to PRISCUS.*
ILDICA, *daughter to PRISCUS.*
CERCA, *wife to ATTILA.*

*Roman senators, priests, citizens, soldiers, attendants;
Scythian warriors, boys, women; slaves; a Moorish and
a Scythian buffoon, &c.*

TIME: *Middle of the Fifth Century.*

PLACES: *Constantinople and ATTILA'S Royal Village in
the Plains of Dacia.*



ACT I

SCENE I.—*Audience chamber in the Palace at Constantinople, with raised dais on the left. Doors right and left and at back of stage.*

(Enter PRISCUS and VIGILIUS from opposite sides.)

Priscus. Well met, Vigilius, you come betimes
To attend the council which the Emperor
Doth hold this day, to weigh the stern demands
Of Attila's ambassadors.

Vigilius. My heart,
A foundering ship, o'erfreighted with grave
care,
Gives me no rest. What think you of our
case?
The Roman name cannot have sunk so low
That this rude Hun dare unavenged deride it?
Are we indeed thrown prostrate from that
height
To which our wisest rulers lifted us—

GOD'S SCOURGE

Great Constantine, the founder of this city,
And Theodosius, brave and generous,
Our bulwark 'gainst the inroads of the Goths?
I go not back in my account beyond
The first foundation of Constantinople.

Priscus. By History's faint light I should say
"Yes";

But I am somewhat doubtful on the point.
My trade makes me suspicious, for I know
That I myself do often smooth events
To tickle nicely Theodosius' ear
Bent graciously to catch my written tale.
Blind Prejudice is innate in man's nature,
E'en care he little for the fact discussed;
Its action is increased for minute things,
Since men, like dogs, will snarl and fight
the more

The smaller be the bone of their contention.
As wreathing mists upon a hill's high slope
Augment and render fully visible
Far scenes beyond the ken of human vision,
So prejudice doth see and picture forth
What is a credit unto him who paints;
The bleared, uncertain sight of age alone

GOD'S SCOURGE

Reviews his subjects of humiliation.

We must remember this important point :

'Tis Romans who have mostly sketched the
pace

Of matters in their own dominions.

Vigilius. The kindly, studious Theodosius

Hath not the warrior's arm, the statesman's
craft

To free his Empire from this strange bar-
barian.

Great Attila possesseth the fierce courage

Owned by half-savage peoples, in him coupled
With that beguiling, subtle management

Which only marks those men bred up by
Fortune

In sleek Civilisation's artifice.

Priscus. It is a mischance when a reigning father

Succumbs ere his succeeding son attaineth

Man's firm estate. It seems pursuing Fate

Doth make cut such for weakness and decay.

Pulcheria, wise princess as she is,

Declared Augusta by her dying father,

Hath kept her younger brother in subjection.

'Tis she who sways the Empire of the East.

GOD'S SCOURGE

Vigilius. Far better would it be for us were't so.

She hath renounced the vanities of life,
And comes forth only from her close retire-
ment

In times of peril, to uphold the State.
To Chrysaphius, whom he calls his chamber-
lain,

The gentle Theodosius late hath lent
His ear too much.

Priscus. The base, unmanly cur!

His creeping step, his crafty, withered face
Stir up my bile to ebullition.

The way this slave with stealthy, vile ex-
tortions

Hath grossly wronged his fellow-citizens
Will finish his career. The populace
Cry death upon the vampire, by whose lips
Their very blood is drawn.

*(A Trumpet call is sounded without, followed
by martial music.)*

Vigilius. Softly; the Emperor

Approaches with his sister and his train.

*(Enter MARCIAN and Senators in groups,
conversing. MARCIAN joins PRISCUS and*