

**ALASCO: A  
TRAGEDY,  
IN FIVE ACTS**

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Alasco: A Tragedy, in Five Acts by Martin Archer Shee

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**MARTIN ARCHER SHEE**

**ALASCO: A  
TRAGEDY,  
IN FIVE ACTS**



A L A S C O :

A TRAGEDY,

IN FIVE ACTS,

By MARTIN ARCHER SHEE, Esq. R. A.

EXCLUDED FROM THE STAGE,

BY THE

AUTHORITY OF THE LORD CHAMBERLAIN.

LONDON :

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TO

MISS TUNNO,

TAPLOW-LODGE, BUCKS

MY DEAR MADAM,

IT WAS at your suggestion I first conceived the idea of writing a Tragedy; I have, therefore, some claim to be allowed the liberty which I now take, in thus publicly addressing to you the following attempt in that species of composition.

I should, perhaps, hesitate to offer to you a production which makes its appearance under the discredit of official censure, if I did not know that to all the gentler virtues and graces which can adorn your own sex, you add the firmness which belongs to ours: "ALASCO" will not find less favor in your eyes, because he is an object of persecution.

If, under the impulse which you communicated, I have been guilty of offence, it will have been the first instance

DEDICATION.

in which your influence has failed to rectify the spirit over which it was exercised, or to purify what it inspired.

Your taste will, I fear, find as little to commend in the poetical, as your candor will have to reprove in the moral qualities of my work. Your kindness, however, will accept it with indulgence, as a testimony of the respect, regard, and admiration, which your virtues, your talents, and your acquirements have excited in,

My Dear Madam,

Your most sincerely devoted

And obliged friend and servant,

MARTIN ARCHER SHEE.

*Camden Square, March, 1824.*

## P R E F A C E.

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THE Tragedy which is offered to the inspection of the Public, in the following pages, has been excluded from the stage, by the authority of the Lord Chamberlain. This circumstance will, I trust, be considered as sufficient, not only to excuse, but to require some observations from him who has avowed himself to be the author of a production thus officially stigmatized.

How far the existence of such an engine of authority as that which has been on this occasion so energetically employed, may be consistent with the spirit of a free government, or



with the dignity and independence of dramatic literature in this country, is a consideration which touches matters too high to be meddled with by me. I leave that question, therefore, in the hands of those who are competent to examine it without partiality, and to decide on it without presumption.

A few comments, however, on the manner in which the power here spoken of has been recently displayed, will not, perhaps, be thought unbecoming in him whose feelings and whose interests have so severely suffered by its exercise.

It is always irksome to a man of any sensibility or delicacy, to be obliged to speak of himself;—to an artist of retired and studious habits, this task becomes doubly disagreeable. Indeed, were there no other interests concerned than those which relate to so unimportant an individual as the author of "ALASCO," I should hardly have supposed that I was warranted in obtruding myself or my play on the

public attention ; and, professionally engaged as I am, in a different pursuit, I might possibly have submitted, in silent indignation, to an act of authority which I conceive to be not more unusual than unprovoked.

But the case appears to involve a question of no small public interest—a question of no less importance, than whether the English drama shall be allowed to preserve the high character which it has hitherto maintained ;—whether it shall continue to be the fearless reflector of our national spirit and characteristic independence, or sink at once, beneath the vigorous vigilance of the new censor, to be the dull, muddy medium of interested servility and abject adulation ;—whether, in short, the British Theatre shall, in future, afford an intellectual enjoyment worthy of a free people ;—whether it shall be a scene to which honest and honorable minds may resort, to hear the sentiments of honor and virtue uttered in language springing from the heart of integrity, and

breathing the vigor of truth; or whether it shall be degraded to a place, where we may expose everything but public vice, and inculcate anything but public virtue;—a place, which the vile and the venal may visit, without the fear of being put out of countenance;—where the slave and the sycophant may see themselves reflected in flattering similitude, and sit in all the complacency of self-admiration.

I am not unaware, that a strong sense of the injustice which I think I have experienced,—an honest indignation, on finding myself forced before the bar of the public, to answer for my production and my principles,—may possibly give to my remarks the tone of resentment. I have been shut out from a fair field of honorable ambition,—obstructed in the honest exertion of my feeble powers, to sustain my character and station in society, with such little credit and consideration as may be attainable in my humble sphere. Thus circumstanced, when the official stigma which has