

Tamburlaine the Great, Part 1

by

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Introduction	3
The Prologue and Dramatis Personae	6
ACT I.....	7
ACT II.....	20
ACT III.....	35
ACT IV.....	48
ACT V	60
Notes.....	74

Introduction

EDITED BY THE REV. ALEXANDER DYCE

Tamburlaine the Great. Who, from a Scythian Shepherde by his rare and woonderfull Conquests, became a most puissant and mightye Monarque. And (for his tyranny, and terrour in Warre) was tearmed, The Scourge of God. Deuided into two Tragicall Discourses, as they were sundrie times shewed vpon Stages in the Citie of London. By the right honorable the Lord Admyrall, his seruautes. Now first, and newlie published. London. Printed by Richard Ihones: at the signe of the Rose and Crowne neere Holborne Bridge. 1590. 4to.

The above title-page is pasted into a copy of the FIRST PART OF TAMBURLAINE in the Library at Bridge-water House; which copy, excepting that title-page and the Address to the Readers, is the impression of 1605. I once supposed that the title-pages which bear the dates 1605 and 1606 (see below) had been added to the 4tos of the TWO PARTS of the play originally printed in 1590; but I am now convinced that both PARTS were really reprinted, THE FIRST PART in 1605, and THE SECOND PART in 1606, and that nothing remains of the earlier 4tos, except the title-page and the Address to the Readers, which are preserved in the Bridge-water collection.

In the Bodleian Library, Oxford, is an 8vo edition of both PARTS OF TAMBURLAINE, dated 1590: the title-page of THE FIRST PART agrees verbatim with that given above; the half-title-page of THE SECOND PART is as follows;

The Second Part of The bloody Conquests of mighty Tamburlaine. With his impassionate fury, for the death of his Lady and loue faire Zenocrate; his fourme of exhortacion and discipline to his three sons, and the maner of his own death.

In the Garrick Collection, British Museum, is an 8vo edition of both PARTS dated 1592: the title-page of THE FIRST PART runs thus;

Tamburlaine the Great. Who, from a Scythian Shepheard, by his rare and wonderfull Conquestes, became a most

puissant and mightie Mornarch [sic]: And (for his tyrannie, and terrour in warre) was tearmed, The Scourge of God. The first part of the two Tragical discourses, as they were sundrie times most stately shewed vpon Stages in the Citie of London. By the right honorable the Lord Admirall, his seruautes. Now newly published. Printed by Richard Iones, dwelling at the signe of the Rose and Crowne neere Holborne Bridge.

The half-title-page of THE SECOND PART agrees exactly with that already given. Perhaps the 8vo at Oxford and that in the British Museum (for I have not had an opportunity of comparing them) are the same impression, differing only in the title-pages.

Langbaine (ACCOUNT OF ENGL. DRAM. POETS, p. 344) mentions an 8vo dated 1593.

The title-pages of the latest impressions of THE TWO PARTS are as follows;

Tamburlaine the Greate. Who, from the state of a Shepheard in Scythia, by his rare and wonderfull Conquests, became a most puissant and mighty Monarque. London Printed for Edward White, and are to be solde at the little North doore of Saint Paules-Church, at the signe of the Gunne, 1605. 4to.

Tamburlaine the Greate. With his impassionate furie, for the death of his Lady and Loue fair Zenocrate: his forme of exhortation and discipline to his three Sonnes, and the manner of his owne death. The second part. London Printed by E. A. for Ed. White, and are to be solde at his Shop neere the little North doore of Saint Paules Church at the Signe of the Gun. 1606. 4to.

The text of the present edition is given from the 8vo of 1592, collated with the 4tos of 1605-6.

TO THE GENTLEMEN-READERS[1] AND OTHERS THAT TAKE PLEASURE IN READING HISTORIES.[2]

Gentlemen and courteous readers whosoever: I have here published in print, for your sakes, the two tragical discourses of the Scythian shepherd Tamburlaine, that became so great a conqueror and so mighty a monarch. My hope is, that they will be now no less acceptable unto you to read after your serious affairs and

studies than they have been lately delightful for many of you to see when the same were shewed in London upon stages. I have purposely omitted and left out some fond^[3] and frivolous gestures,

digressing, and, in my poor opinion, far unmeet for the matter, which I thought might seem more tedious unto the wise than any way else to be regarded, though haply they have been of some vain-conceited fondlings greatly gaped at, what time they were shewed upon the stage in their graced deformities: nevertheless now to be mixtured in print with such matter of worth, it would prove a great disgrace to so honourable and stately a history.

Great folly were it in me to commend unto your wisdoms either the eloquence of the author that writ them or the worthiness of the matter itself. I therefore leave unto your learned censures^[4] both the one and the other, and myself the poor printer of them unto your most courteous and favourable protection; which if you vouchsafe to accept, you shall evermore bind me to employ what travail and service I can to the advancing and pleasuring of your excellent degree.

Yours, most humble at commandment,

R[ichard] J[ones], printer.

The Prologue and Dramatis Personae

THE PROLOGUE.

From jiggling veins of rhyming mother-wits,
And such conceits as clownage keeps in pay,
We'll lead you to the stately tent of war,
Where you shall hear the Scythian Tamburlaine
Threatening the world with high astounding terms,
And scourging kingdoms with his conquering sword.
View but his picture in this tragic glass,
And then applaud his fortunes as you please.

DRAMATIS PERSONAE.

MYCETES, king of Persia.

COSROE, his brother.

MEANDER,]

THERIDAMAS,]

ORTYGIUS,] Persian lords.

CENEUS,]

MENAPHON,]

TAMBURLAINE, a Scythian shepherd.

TEHELLES,]

USUMCASANE,] his followers.

BAJAZETH, emperor of the Turks.

KING OF FEZ.

KING OF MOROCCO.

KING OF ARGIER.

KING OF ARABIA.

SOLDAN OF EGYPT.

GOVERNOR OF DAMASCUS.

AGYDAS,]

MAGNETES,] Median lords.

CAPOLIN, an Egyptian.

PHILEMUS, Bassoes, Lords, Citizens, Moors, Soldiers, and
Attendants.

ZENOCRATE, daughter to the Soldan of Egypt.

ANIPPE, her maid.

ZABINA, wife to BAJAZETH.

EBEA, her maid.

Virgins of Damascus.

ACT I

SCENE I.

Enter MYCETES, COSROE, MEANDER, THERIDAMAS, ORTYGIUS,
CENEUS, MENAPHON, with others.

MYCETES. Brother Cosroe, I find myself agriev'd;
Yet insufficient to express the same,
For it requires a great and thundering speech:
Good brother, tell the cause unto my lords;
I know you have a better wit than I.

COSROE. Unhappy Persia,--that in former age
Hast been the seat of mighty conquerors,
That, in their prowess and their policies,
Have triumph'd over Afric,[5] and the bounds
Of Europe where the sun dares scarce appear
For freezing meteors and congealed cold,--
Now to be rul'd and govern'd by a man
At whose birth-day Cynthia with Saturn join'd,
And Jove, the Sun, and Mercury denied
To shed their[6] influence in his fickle brain!
Now Turks and Tartars shake their swords at thee,
Meaning to mangle all thy provinces.

MYCETES. Brother, I see your meaning well enough,
And through[7] your planets I perceive you think
I am not wise enough to be a king:
But I refer me to my noblemen,
That know my wit, and can be witnesses.
I might command you to be slain for this,--
Meander, might I not?

MEANDER. Not for so small a fault, my sovereign lord.

MYCETES. I mean it not, but yet I know I might.--
Yet live; yea, live; Mycetes wills it so.--
Meander, thou, my faithful counsellor,
Declare the cause of my conceived grief,
Which is, God knows, about that Tamburlaine,
That, like a fox in midst of harvest-time,
Doth prey upon my flocks of passengers;
And, as I hear, doth mean to pull my plumes:
Therefore 'tis good and meet for to be wise.

MEANDER. Oft have I heard your majesty complain
Of Tamburlaine, that sturdy Scythian thief,
That robs your merchants of Persepolis
Trading by land unto the Western Isles,
And in your confines with his lawless train
Daily commits incivil[8] outrages,
Hoping (misled by dreaming prophecies)
To reign in Asia, and with barbarous arms
To make himself the monarch of the East:
But, ere he march in Asia, or display
His vagrant ensign in the Persian fields,
Your grace hath taken order by Theridamas,
Charg'd with a thousand horse, to apprehend
And bring him captive to your highness' throne.

MYCETES. Full true thou speak'st, and like thyself, my lord,
Whom I may term a Damon for thy love:
Therefore 'tis best, if so it like you all,
To send my thousand horse incontinent[9]
To apprehend that paltry Scythian.
How like you this, my honourable lords?
Is it not a kingly resolution?

COSROE. It cannot choose, because it comes from you.

MYCETES. Then hear thy charge, valiant Theridamas,
The chiefest[10] captain of Mycetes' host,
The hope of Persia, and the very legs
Whereon our state doth lean as on a staff,
That holds us up and foils our neighbour foes:
Thou shalt be leader of this thousand horse,
Whose foaming gall with rage and high disdain
Have sworn the death of wicked Tamburlaine.
Go frowning forth; but come thou smiling home,
As did Sir Paris with the Grecian dame:
Return with speed; time passeth swift away;
Our life is frail, and we may die to-day.

THERIDAMAS. Before the moon renew her borrow'd light,
Doubt not, my lord and gracious sovereign,
But Tamburlaine and that Tartarian rout[11]
Shall either perish by our warlike hands,
Or plead for mercy at your highness' feet.

MYCETES. Go, stout Theridamas; thy words are swords,
And with thy looks thou conquerest all thy foes.

I long to see thee back return from thence,
That I may view these milk-white steeds of mine
All loaden with the heads of killed men,
And, from their knees even to their hoofs below,
Besmear'd with blood that makes a dainty show.

THERIDAMAS. Then now, my lord, I humbly take my leave.

MYCETES. Theridamas, farewell ten thousand times.

[Exit THERIDAMAS.]

Ah, Menaphon, why stay'st thou thus behind,
When other men press[12] forward for renown?
Go, Menaphon, go into Scythia,
And foot by foot follow Theridamas.

COSROE. Nay, pray you,[13] let him stay; a greater [task]
Fits Menaphon than warring with a thief:
Create him pro-rex of all[14] Africa,
That he may win the Babylonians' hearts,
Which will revolt from Persian government,
Unless they have a wiser king than you.

MYCETES. Unless they have a wiser king than you!
These are his words; Meander, set them down.

COSROE. And add this to them,--that all Asia
Lament to see the folly of their king.

MYCETES. Well, here I swear by this my royal seat--

COSROE. You may do well to kiss it, then.

MYCETES. Emboss'd with silk as best beseems my state,
To be reveng'd for these contemptuous words!
O, where is duty and allegiance now?
Fled to the Caspian or the Ocean main?
What shall I call thee? brother? no, a foe;
Monster of nature, shame unto thy stock,
That dar'st presume thy sovereign for to mock!--
Meander, come: I am abus'd, Meander.

[Exeunt all except COSROE and MENAPHON.]

MENAPHON. How now, my lord! what, mated[15] and amaz'd
To hear the king thus threaten like himself!

COSROE. Ah, Menaphon, I pass not[16] for his threats!
The plot is laid by Persian noblemen
And captains of the Median garrisons
To crown me emperor of Asia:
But this it is that doth excruciate
The very substance of my vexed soul,
To see our neighbours, that were wont to quake
And tremble at the Persian monarch's name,
Now sit and laugh our regiment[17] to scorn;
And that which might resolve[18] me into tears,
Men from the farthest equinoctial line
Have swarm'd in troops into the Eastern India,
Lading their ships[19] with gold and precious stones,
And made their spoils from all our provinces.

MENAPHON. This should entreat your highness to rejoice,
Since Fortune gives you opportunity
To gain the title of a conqueror
By curing of this maimed empery.
Afric and Europe bordering on your land,
And continent to your dominions,
How easily may you, with a mighty host,
Pass[20] into Graecia, as did Cyrus once,
And cause them to withdraw their forces home,
Lest you[21] subdue the pride of Christendom!
[Trumpet within.]

COSROE. But, Menaphon, what means this trumpet's sound?

MENAPHON. Behold, my lord, Ortygius and the rest
Bringing the crown to make you emperor!

Re-enter ORTYGIUS and CENEUS,[22] with others, bearing a
crown.

ORTYGIUS. Magnificent and mighty prince Cosroe,
We, in the name of other Persian states[23]
And commons of this mighty monarchy,
Present thee with th' imperial diadem.

CENEUS. The warlike soldiers and the gentlemen,
That heretofore have fill'd Persepolis
With Afric captains taken in the field,
Whose ransom made them march in coats of gold,
With costly jewels hanging at their ears,
And shining stones upon their lofty crests,

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