

# **THE FALL OF ROBESPIERRE, AN HISTORIC DRAMA**

Mystery, Suspense, History, Gothic, Literature, Books, Arts



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# THE FALL OF ROBESPIERRE, AN HISTORIC DRAMA

# THE FALL OF ROBESPIERRE, AN HISTORIC DRAMA

## **First Act by Coleridge Second and Third by Southey**

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- Act II
- Act III

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TO  
H. MARTIN, ESQ.  
OF  
JESUS COLLEGE  
CAMBRIDGE

DEAR SIR,  
Accept, as a small testimony of my grateful attachment, the following  
Dramatic Poem, in which I have endeavoured to detail, in an interesting  
form, the fall of a man, whose great bad actions have cast a disastrous  
lustre on his name. In the execution of the work, as intricacy of plot  
could not have been attempted without a gross violation of recent facts,  
it has been my sole aim to imitate the impassioned and highly figurative  
language of the French orators, and to develop the characters of the  
chief actors on a vast stage of horrors.  
Yours fraternally,  
S. T. COLERIDGE.  
JESUS COLLEGE

THE FALL OF ROBESPIERRE, AN HISTORIC DRAMA

**ACT I SCENE--The Thuilleries.**

**Barrere.** The tempest gathers--be it mine to seek  
A friendly shelter, ere it bursts upon him.  
But where? and how? I fear the Tyrant's soul--  
Sudden in action, fertile in resource,  
And rising awful 'mid impending ruins;  
In splendor gloomy, as the midnight meteor,  
That fearless thwarts the elemental war.  
When last in secret conference we met,  
He scowl'd upon me with suspicious rage,  
Making his eye the inmate of my bosom.  
I know he scorns me--and I feel, I hate him--  
Yet there is in him that which makes me tremble! [Exit.

Enter TALLIEN and LEGENDRE.

**Tallien.** It was Barrere, Legendre! didst thou mark him?  
Abrupt he turn'd, yet linger'd as he went,  
And towards us cast a look of doubtful meaning.

**Legendre.** I mark'd him well. I met his eye's last glance;  
It menac'd not so proudly as of yore.  
Methought he would have spoke--but that he dar'd not--  
Such agitation darken'd on his brow.

**Tallien.** 'Twas all--distrusting guilt that kept from bursting  
Th' imprison'd secret struggling in the face:  
E'en as the sudden breeze upstarting onwards  
Hurries the thundercloud, that pois'd awhile  
Hung in mid air, red with its mutinous burthen.

**Legendre.** Perfidious Traitor!--still afraid to bask  
In the full blaze of power, the rustling serpent  
Lurks in the thicket of the Tyrant's greatness,  
Ever prepared to sting who shelters him.  
Each thought, each action in himself converges;

## THE FALL OF ROBESPIERRE, AN HISTORIC DRAMA

And love and friendship on his coward heart  
Shine like the powerless sun on polar ice;  
To all attach'd, by turns deserting all,  
Cunning and dark—a necessary villain!

**Tallien.** Yet much depends upon him—well you know  
With plausible harangue 'tis his to paint  
Defeat like victory—and blind the mob  
With truth—mix'd falsehood. They led on by him,  
And wild of head to work their own destruction,  
Support with uproar what he plans in darkness.

**Legendre.** O what a precious name is Liberty  
To scare or cheat the simple into slaves!  
Yes—we must gain him over: by dark hints  
We'll shew enough to rouse his watchful fears,  
Till the cold coward blaze a patriot.  
O Danton! murder'd friend! assist my counsels—  
Hover around me on sad Memory's wings,  
And pour thy daring vengeance in my heart.

**Tallien!** if but tomorrow's fateful sun  
Beholds the Tyrant living—we are dead!

**Tallien.** Yet his keen eye that flashes mighty meanings—

**Legendre.** Fear not—or rather fear th' alternative,  
And seek for courage e'en in cowardice—  
But see—hither he comes—let us away!  
His brother with him, and the bloody Couthon,  
And high of haughty spirit, young St. Just. [Exeunt.

Enter ROBESPIERRE, COUTHON, ST. JUST, and ROBESPIERRE JUNIOR.

**Robespierre.** What? did La Fayette fall before my power?  
And did I conquer Roland's spotless virtues?  
The fervent eloquence of Vergniaud's tongue?  
And Brissot's thoughtful soul unbribed and bold?

ACT I SCENE—The Thuilleries.

## THE FALL OF ROBESPIERRE, AN HISTORIC DRAMA

Did zealot armies haste in vain to save them?  
What! did th' assassin's dagger aim its point  
Vain, as a dream of murder, at my bosom?  
And shall I dread the soft luxurious Tallien?  
Th' Adonis Tallien? banquet—hunting Tallien?  
Him, whose heart flutters at the dice—box? Him,  
Who ever on the harlots' downy pillow  
Resigns his head impure to feverish slumbers!

**St. Just.** I cannot fear him—yet we must not scorn him.  
Was it not Antony that conquer'd Brutus,  
Th' Adonis, banquet—hunting Antony?  
The state is not yet purified: and though  
The stream runs clear, yet at the bottom lies  
The thick black sediment of all the factions—  
It needs no magic hand to stir it up!

**Couthon.** O we did wrong to spare them—fatal error!  
Why lived Legendre, when that Danton died?  
And Collot d'Herbois dangerous in crimes?  
I've fear'd him, since his iron heart endured  
To make of Lyons one vast human shambles.  
Compar'd with which the sun—scorcht wilderness  
Of Zara were a smiling paradise.

**St. Just.** Rightly thou judgest, Couthon! He is one  
Who flies from silent solitary anguish,  
Seeking forgetful peace amid the jar  
Of elements. The howl of maniac uproar  
Lulls to sad sleep the memory of himself.  
A calm is fatal to him—then he feels  
The dire upboilings of the storm within him.  
A tiger mad with inward wounds!—I dread  
The fierce and restless turbulence of guilt.

**Robespierre.** Is not the Commune ours? The stern tribunal?  
Dumas? and Vivier? Fleuriot? and Louvet?  
And Henriot? We'll denounce an hundred, nor  
Shall they behold to-morrow's sun roll westward.

**Robespierre Junior.** Nay—I am sick of blood; my aching heart

ACT I SCENE—The Thuilleries.



## THE FALL OF ROBESPIERRE, AN HISTORIC DRAMA

Reviews the long, long train of hideous horrors  
That still have gloom'd the rise of the Republic.  
I should have died before Toulon, when war  
Became the patriot!

**Robespierre.** Most unworthy wish!  
He, whose heart sickens at the blood of traitors,  
Would be himself a traitor, were he not  
A coward! 'Tis congenial souls alone  
Shed tears of sorrow for each other's fate.  
O thou art brave, my brother! and thine eye  
Full firmly shines amid the groaning battle—  
Yet in thine heart the woman-form of pity  
Asserts too large a share, an ill-timed guest!  
There is unsoundness in the state——To-morrow  
Shall see it cleans'd by wholesome massacre!

**Robespierre Junior.** Beware! already do the sections murmur—  
'O the great glorious patriot, Robespierre—  
The tyrant guardian of the country's freedom!

**Couthon.** 'Twere folly sure to work great deeds by halves.  
Much I suspect the darksome fickle heart  
Of cold Barrere!

**Robespierre.** I see the villain in him!

**Robespierre Junior.** If he—if all forsake thee—what remains?

**Robespierre.** Myself! the steel-strong Rectitude of soul  
And Poverty sublime 'mid circling virtues!  
The giant Victories my counsels form'd  
Shall stalk around me with sun-glittering plumes,  
Bidding the darts of calumny fall pointless.

[Exeunt caeteri. Manet COUTHON.]

## THE FALL OF ROBESPIERRE, AN HISTORIC DRAMA

**Couthon** (solus). So we deceive ourselves! What goodly virtues  
Bloom on the poisonous branches of ambition!  
Still, Robespierre! thou'lt guard thy country's freedom  
To despotize in all the patriot's pomp.  
While Conscience, 'mid the mob's applauding clamours,  
Sleeps in thine ear, nor whispers—blood—stain'd tyrant!  
Yet what is Conscience? Superstition's dream,  
Making such deep impression on our sleep—  
That long th' awakened breast retains its horrors!  
But he returns—and with him comes Barrere. [Exit COUTHON.

Enter ROBESPIERRE and BARRERE.

**Robespierre.** There is no danger but in cowardice.—

**Barrere!** we make the danger, when we fear it.  
We have such force without, as will suspend  
The cold and trembling treachery of these members.

**Barrere.** 'Twill be a pause of terror.—

**Robespierre.** But to whom?  
Rather the short-lived slumber of the tempest,  
Gathering its strength anew. The dastard traitors!  
Moles, that would undermine the rooted oak!  
A pause!—a moment's pause?—'Tis all their life.

**Barrere.** Yet much they talk—and plausible their speech.

**Couthon's** decree has given such power, that—

**Robespierre.** That what?

## THE FALL OF ROBESPIERRE, AN HISTORIC DRAMA

**Barrere.** The freedom of debate—

**Robespierre.** Transparent mask!

They wish to clog the wheels of government,  
Forcing the hand that guides the vast machine  
To bribe them to their duty—English patriots!  
Are not the congregated clouds of war  
Black all around us? In our very vitals  
Works not the king-bred poison of rebellion?  
Say, what shall counteract the selfish plottings  
Of wretches, cold of heart, nor awed by fears  
Of him, whose power directs th' eternal justice?  
Terror? or secret-sapping gold?  
The first Heavy, but transient as the ills that cause it;  
And to the virtuous patriot rendered light  
By the necessities that gave it birth:  
The other fouls the fount of the republic,  
Making it flow polluted to all ages:  
Inoculates the state with a slow venom,  
That once imbibed must be continued ever.  
Myself incorruptible I ne'er could bribe them—  
Therefore they hate me.

**Barrere.** Are the sections friendly?

**Robespierre.** There are who wish my ruin—but I'll make them  
Blush for the crime in blood!

**Barrere.** Nay—but I tell thee,  
Thou art too fond of slaughter—and the right  
(If right it be) workest by most foul means!

**Robespierre.** Self-centering Fear! how well thou canst ape Mercy!  
Too fond of slaughter!—matchless hypocrite!  
Thought Barrere so, when Brissot, Danton died?  
Thought Barrere so, when through the streaming streets  
Of Paris red-eyed Massacre o'erwearied  
Reel'd heavily, intoxicate with blood?  
And when (O heavens!) in Lyons' death-red square  
Sick Fancy groan'd o'er putrid hills of slain,  
Didst thou not fiercely laugh, and bless the day?

ACT I SCENE—The Thuilleries.

## THE FALL OF ROBESPIERRE, AN HISTORIC DRAMA

Why, thou hast been the mouth-piece of all horrors,  
And, like a blood-hound, crouch'd for murder! Now  
Aloof thou standest from the tottering pillar,  
Or, like a frightened child behind its mother,  
Hidest thy pale face in the skirts of—Mercy!

**Barrere.** O prodigality of eloquent anger!  
Why now I see thou'rt weak—thy case is desperate!  
The cool ferocious Robespierre turn'd scolder!

**Robespierre.** Who from a bad man's bosom wards the blow  
Reserves the whetted dagger for his own.  
Denouncéd twice—and twice I saved his life! [Exit.

**Barrere.** The sections will support them—there's the point!  
No! he can never weather out the storm—  
Yet he is sudden in revenge—No more!  
I must away to Tallien. [Exit.

SCENE changes to the house of ADELAIDE.

ADELAIDE enters, speaking to a Servant.

**Adelaide.** Didst thou present the letter that I gave thee?  
Did Tallien answer, he would soon return?

**Servant.** He is in the Thuilleries—with him Legendre—  
In deep discourse they seem'd: as I approach'd  
He waved his hand as bidding me retire:  
I did not interrupt him. [Returns the letter.

**Adelaide.** Thou didst rightly. [Exit Servant.  
O this new freedom! at how dear a price  
We've bought the seeming good! The peaceful virtues  
And every blandishment of private life,  
The father's cares, the mother's fond endearment,  
All sacrificed to liberty's wild riot.  
The wingèd hours, that scatter'd roses round me,  
Languid and sad drag their slow course along,

ACT I SCENE—The Thuilleries.

## THE FALL OF ROBESPIERRE, AN HISTORIC DRAMA

And shake big gall—drops from their heavy wings.  
But I will steal away these anxious thoughts  
By the soft languishment of warbled airs,  
If haply melodies may lull the sense  
Of sorrow for a while. [Soft music.

Enter TALLIEN.

**Tallien.** Music, my love? O breathe again that air!  
Soft nurse of pain, it soothe the weary soul  
Of care, sweet as the whisper'd breeze of evening  
That plays around the sick man's throbbing temples.

### SONG

Tell me, on what holy ground  
May domestic peace be found?  
Halcyon daughter of the skies,  
Far on fearful wing she flies,  
From the pomp of scepter'd state,  
From the rebel's noisy hate.

In a cottag'd vale she dwells  
List'ning to the Sabbath bells!  
Still around her steps are seen,  
Spotless honor's meeker mien,  
Love, the sire of pleasing fears,  
Sorrow smiling through her tears,  
And conscious of the past employ,  
Memory, bosom—spring of joy.

**Tallien.** I thank thee, Adelaide! 'twas sweet, though mournful.  
But why thy brow o'ercast, thy cheek so wan?  
Thou look'st as a lorn maid beside some stream  
That sighs away the soul in fond despairing,  
While sorrow sad, like the dank willow near her,  
Hangs o'er the troubled fountain of her eye.

**Adelaide.** Ah! rather let me ask what mystery lowers  
On Tallien's darken'd brow. Thou dost me wrong—  
Thy soul distemper'd, can my heart be tranquil?

ACT I SCENE—The Thuilleries.

## THE FALL OF ROBESPIERRE, AN HISTORIC DRAMA

**Tallien.** Tell me, by whom thy brother's blood was spilt?  
Asks he not vengeance on these patriot murderers?  
It has been borne too tamely. Fears and curses  
Groan on our midnight beds, and e'en our dreams  
Threaten the assassin hand of Robespierre.  
He dies!—nor has the plot escaped his fears.

**Adelaide.** Yet—yet—be cautious! much I fear the Commune—  
The tyrant's creatures, and their fate with his  
Fast link'd in close indissoluble union.  
The pale Convention—

**Tallien.** Hate him as they fear him,  
Impatient of the chain, resolv'd and ready.

**Adelaide.** Th' enthusiast mob, confusion's lawless sons—

**Tallien.** They are aweary of his stern morality,  
The fair—mask'd offspring of ferocious pride.  
The sections too support the delegates:  
All—all is ours! e'en now the vital air  
Of Liberty, condens'd awhile, is bursting  
(Force irresistible!) from its compressure—  
To shatter the arch chemist in the explosion!

Enter BILLAUD VARENNES and BOURDON L'OISE.  
[ADELAIDE retires.

**Bourdon l'Oise.** Tallien! was this a time for amorous conference?  
Henriot, the tyrant's most devoted creature,  
Marshals the force of Paris: The fierce Club,  
With Vivier at their head, in loud acclaim  
Have sworn to make the guillotine in blood  
Float on the scaffold.—But who comes here?

Enter BARRERE abruptly.

## THE FALL OF ROBESPIERRE, AN HISTORIC DRAMA

**Barrere.** Say, are ye friends to freedom? I am her's!  
Let us, forgetful of all common feuds,  
Rally around her shrine! E'en now the tyrant  
Concerts a plan of instant massacre!

**Billaud Varennes.** Away to the Convention! with that voice  
So oft the herald of glad victory,  
Rouse their fallen spirits, thunder in their ears  
The names of tyrant, plunderer, assassin!  
The violent workings of my soul within  
Anticipate the monster's blood!

[Cry from the street of—No Tyrant! Down with the Tyrant!

**Tallien.** Hear ye that outcry?—If the trembling members  
Even for a moment hold his fate suspended,  
I swear by the holy poniard, that stabbed Caesar,  
This dagger probes his heart! [Exeunt omnes.

On to Act Two

**ACT II SCENE--The Convention.**

**Robespierre** mounts the Tribune. Once more befits it that the voice of Truth,  
Fearless in innocence, though leaguered round  
By Envy and her hateful brood of hell,  
Be heard amid this hall; once more befits  
The patriot, whose prophetic eye so oft  
Has pierced thro' faction's veil, to flash on crimes  
Of deadliest import. Mouldering in the grave  
Sleeps Capet's caitiff corse; my daring hand  
Levelled to earth his blood-cemented throne,  
My voice declared his guilt, and stirred up France  
To call for vengeance. I too dug the grave  
Where sleep the Girondists, detested band!  
Long with the shew of freedom they abused  
Her ardent sons. Long time the well-turn'd phrase,  
The high-fraught sentence and the lofty tone  
Of declamation, thunder'd in this hall,  
Till reason midst a labyrinth of words  
Perplex'd, in silence seem'd to yield assent.  
I durst oppose. Soul of my honoured friend,  
Spirit of Marat, upon thee I call--  
Thou know'st me faithful, know'st with what warm zeal  
I urg'd the cause of justice, stripp'd the mask  
From faction's deadly visage, and destroy'd  
Her traitor brood. Whose patriot arm hurl'd down  
Hébert and Rousin, and the villain friends  
Of Danton, foul apostate! those, who long  
Mask'd treason's form in liberty's fair garb,  
Long deluged France with blood, and durst defy  
Omnipotence! but I it seems am false!  
I am a traitor too! I--Robespierre!  
I--at whose name the dastard despot brood  
Look pale with fear, and call on saints to help them!  
Who dares accuse me? who shall dare belie  
My spotless name? Speak, ye accomplice band,  
Of what am I accus'd? of what strange crime  
Is Maximilian Robespierre accus'd,  
That through this hall the buz of discontent  
Should murmur? who shall speak?

**Billaud Varennes.** O patriot tongue  
Belying the foul heart! Who was it urg'd  
Friendly to tyrants that accurst decree,



## THE FALL OF ROBESPIERRE, AN HISTORIC DRAMA

Whose influence brooding o'er this hallowed hall,  
Has chill'd each tongue to silence? Who destroyed  
The freedom of debate, and carried through  
The fatal law, that doom'd the delegates,  
Unheard before their equals, to the bar  
Where cruelty sat throned, and murder reign'd  
With her Dumas coequal? Say—thou man  
Of mighty eloquence, whose law was that?

**Couthon.** That law was mine. I urged it—I propos'd—  
The voice of France assembled in her sons  
Assented, though the tame and timid voice  
Of traitors murmur'd. I advis'd that law—  
I justify it. It was wise and good.

**Barrere.** Oh, wonderous wise and most convenient too!  
I have long mark'd thee, Robespierre—and now  
Proclaim thee traitor—tyrant! [Loud applauses.

**Robespierre.** It is well.  
I am a traitor! oh, that I had fallen  
When Regnault lifted high the murderous knife,  
Regnault the instrument belike of those  
Who now themselves would fain assassinate,  
And legalise their murders. I stand here  
An isolated patriot—hemmed around  
By faction's noisy pack; beset and bay'd  
By the foul hell-hounds who know no escape  
From Justice' outstretch'd arm, but by the force  
That pierces through her breast.  
[Murmurs, and shouts of— Down with the Tyrant!

**Robespierre.** Nay, but I will be heard. There was a time  
When Robespierre began, the loud applauses  
Of honest patriots drown'd the honest sound.  
But times are chang'd, and villainy prevails.

**Collot d'Herbois.** No—villainy shall fall. France could not brook  
A monarch's sway—sounds the dictator's name  
More soothing to her ear?

## THE FALL OF ROBESPIERRE, AN HISTORIC DRAMA

**Bourdon l'Oise.** Rattle her chains  
More musically now than when the hand  
Of Brissot forged her fetters; or the crew  
Of Hébert thundered out their blasphemies,  
And Danton talk'd of virtue?

**Robespierre.** Oh, that Brissot  
Were here again to thunder in this hall,  
That Hébert lived, and Danton's giant form  
Scowl'd once again defiance! so my soul  
Might cope with worthy foes.  
People of France,  
Hear me! Beneath the vengeance of the law  
Traitors have perish'd countless; more survive:  
The hydra-headed faction lifts anew  
Her daring front, and fruitful from her wounds,  
Cautious from past defects, contrives new wiles  
Against the sons of Freedom.

**Tallien.** Freedom lives!  
Oppression falls—for France has felt her chains,  
Has burst them too. Who traitor-like stept forth  
Amid the hall of Jacobins to save  
Camille Desmoulins, and the venal wretch  
D'Eglantine?

**Robespierre.** I did—for I thought them honest.  
And Heaven forefend that Vengeance e'er should strike,  
Ere justice doom'd the blow.

**Barrere.** Traitor, thou didst.  
Yes, the accomplice of their dark designs,  
Awhile didst thou defend them, when the storm  
Lower'd at safe distance. When the clouds frown'd darker,  
Fear'd for yourself and left them to their fate.  
Oh, I have mark'd thee long, and through the veil  
Seen thy foul projects. Yes, ambitious man,  
Self-will'd dictator o'er the realm of France,  
The vengeance thou hast plann'd for patriots  
Falls on thy head. Look how thy brother's deeds  
Dishonour shine! He the firm patriot,  
Thou the foul parricide of Liberty!

ACT II SCENE—The Convention.

## THE FALL OF ROBESPIERRE, AN HISTORIC DRAMA

**Robespierre Junior.** Barrere—attempt not meanly to divide  
Me from my brother. I partake his guilt,  
For I partake his virtue.

**Robespierre.** Brother, by my soul,  
More dear I hold thee to my heart, that thus  
With me thou dar'st to tread the dangerous path  
Of virtue, than that Nature twined her cords  
Of kindred round us.

**Barrere.** Yes, allied in guilt,  
Even as in blood ye are. O, thou worst wretch,  
Thou worse than Sylla! hast thou not proscrib'd,  
Yea, in most foul anticipation slaughter'd  
Each patriot representative of France?

**Bourdon l'Oise.** Was not the younger Caesar too to reign  
O'er all our valiant armies in the south,  
And still continue there his merchant wiles?

**Robespierre Junior.** His merchant wiles! Oh, grant me patience, heaven!  
Was it by merchant wiles I gain'd you back  
Toulon, when proudly on her captive towers  
Wav'd high the English flag? or fought I then  
With merchant wiles, when sword in hand I led  
Your troops to conquest? fought I merchant-like,  
Or barter'd I for victory, when death  
Strode o'er the reeking streets with giant stride,  
And shook his ebon plumes, and sternly smil'd  
Amid the bloody banquet? when appall'd  
The hireling sons of England spread the sail  
Of safety, fought I like a merchant then?  
Oh, patience! patience!

**Bourdon l'Oise.** How this younger tyrant  
Mouths out defiance to us! even so  
He had led on the armies of the south,  
Till once again the plains of France were drench'd  
With her best blood.

## THE FALL OF ROBESPIERRE, AN HISTORIC DRAMA

**Collot d'Herbois.** Till once again display'd  
Lyons' sad tragedy had call'd me forth  
The minister of wrath, whilst slaughter by  
Had bathed in human blood.

**Dubois Crancé.** No wonder, friend,  
That we are traitors—that our heads must fall  
Beneath the axe of death! when Caesar—like  
Reigns Robespierre, 'tis wisely done to doom  
The fall of Brutus. Tell me, bloody man,  
Hast thou not parcell'd out deluded France,  
As it had been some province won in fight,  
Between your curst triumvirate? You, Couthon,  
Go with my brother to the southern plains;

**St. Just,** be yours the army of the north;  
Meantime I rule at Paris.

**Robespierre.** Matchless knave!  
What—not one blush of conscience on thy cheek—  
Not one poor blush of truth! most likely tale!  
That I who ruined Brissot's towering hopes,  
I who discover'd Hébert's impious wiles,  
And sharp'd for Danton's recreant neck the axe,  
Should now be traitor! had I been so minded,  
Think ye I had destroyed the very men  
Whose plots resembled mine? bring forth your proofs  
Of this deep treason. Tell me in whose breast  
Found ye the fatal scroll? or tell me rather  
Who forg'd the shameless falsehood?

**Collot d'Herbois.** Ask you proofs?

**Robespierre,** what proofs were ask'd when Brissot died?

**Legendre.** What proofs adduced you when the Danton died?  
When at the imminent peril of my life

ACT II SCENE—The Convention.

## THE FALL OF ROBESPIERRE, AN HISTORIC DRAMA

I rose, and fearless of thy frowning brow,  
Proclaim'd him guiltless?

**Robespierre.** I remember well  
The fatal day. I do repent me much  
That I kill'd Caesar and spar'd Antony.  
But I have been too lenient. I have spared  
The stream of blood, and now my own must flow  
To fill the current. [Loud applauses.  
Triumph not too soon,  
Justice may yet be victor.

Enter ST. JUST, and mounts the Tribune.

**St. Just.** I come from the Committee—charged to speak,  
Of matters of high import. I omit  
Their orders. Representatives of France,  
Boldly in his own person speaks St. Just  
What his own heart shall dictate.

**Tallien.** Hear ye this,  
Insulted delegates of France? St. Just  
From your Committee comes—comes charg'd to speak  
Of matters of high import, yet omits  
Their orders! Representatives of France,  
That bold man I denounce, who disobeys  
The nation's orders.—I denounce St. Just. [Loud applauses.

**St. Just.** Hear me! [Violent murmurs.

**Robespierre.** He shall be heard!

**Bourdon l'Oise.** Must we contaminate this sacred hall  
With the foul breath of treason?

**Collot d'Herbois.** Drag him away!  
Hence with him to the bar.

ACT II SCENE—The Convention.

## THE FALL OF ROBESPIERRE, AN HISTORIC DRAMA

**Couthon.** Oh, just proceedings!

**Robespierre** prevented liberty of speech—  
And Robespierre is a tyrant! Tallien reigns,  
He dreads to hear the voice of innocence—  
And St. Just must be silent!

**Legendre.** Heed we well  
That justice guide our actions. No light import  
Attends this day. I move St. Just be heard.  
Freron. Inviolable be the sacred right of man.  
The freedom of debate. [Violent applauses.

**St. Just.** I may be heard then! much the times are chang'd,  
When St. Just thanks this hall for hearing him.

**Robespierre** is call'd a tyrant. Men of France,  
Judge not too soon. By popular discontent  
Was Aristides driven into exile,  
Was Phocion murder'd. Ere ye dare pronounce

**Robespierre** is guilty, it befits ye well,  
Consider who accuse him. Tallien,  
Bourdon of Oise—the very men denounced,  
For that their dark intrigues disturb'd the plan  
Of government. Legendre the sworn friend  
Of Danton, fall'n apostate. Dubois Crancé,  
He who at Lyons spared the royalists—

**Collot d'Herbois**—

**Bourdon l'Oise.** What—shall the traitor rear  
His head amid our tribune—and blaspheme  
Each patriot? shall the hireling slave of faction—

## THE FALL OF ROBESPIERRE, AN HISTORIC DRAMA

**St. Just.** I am of no one faction. I contend  
Against all factions.

**Tallien.** I espouse the cause  
Of truth. Robespierre on yester morn pronounced  
Upon his own authority a report.  
To-day St. Just comes down. St. Just neglects  
What the Committee orders, and harangues  
From his own will. O citizens of France  
I weep for you—I weep for my poor country—  
I tremble for the cause of Liberty,  
When individuals shall assume the sway,  
And with more insolence than kingly pride  
Rule the Republic.

**Billaud Varennes.** Shudder, ye representatives of France,  
Shudder with horror. Henriot commands  
The marshall'd force of Paris. Henriot,  
Foul parricide—the sworn ally of Hébert,  
Denounced by all—upheld by Robespierre.  
Who spar'd La Valette? who promoted him,  
Stain'd with the deep dye of nobility?  
Who to an ex-peer gave the high command?  
Who screen'd from justice the rapacious thief?  
Who cast in chains the friends of Liberty?

**Robespierre,** the self-stil'd patriot Robespierre—

**Robespierre,** allied with villain Daubigné—

**Robespierre,** the foul arch-tyrant Robespierre.

**Bourdon l'Oise.** He talks of virtue—of morality—  
Consistent patriot! he Daubigné's friend!  
Henriot's supporter virtuous! preach of virtue,  
Yet league with villains, for with Robespierre  
Villains alone ally. Thou art a tyrant!  
I stile thee tyrant, Robespierre! [Loud applauses.

## THE FALL OF ROBESPIERRE, AN HISTORIC DRAMA

**Robespierre.** Take back the name. Ye citizens of France—  
[Violent clamour. Cries of—Down with the Tyrant!]

**Tallien.** Oppression falls. The traitor stands appall'd—  
Guilt's iron fangs engrasp his shrinking soul—  
He hears assembled France denounce his crimes!  
He sees the mask torn from his secret sins—  
He trembles on the precipice of fate.  
Fall'n guilty tyrant! murder'd by thy rage  
How many an innocent victim's blood has stain'd  
Fair freedom's altar! Sylla—like thy hand  
Mark'd down the virtues, that, thy foes removed,  
Perpetual Dictator thou might'st reign,  
And tyrannize o'er France, and call it freedom!  
Long time in timid guilt the traitor plann'd  
His fearful wiles—success emboldened sin—  
And his stretch'd arm had grasp'd the diadem  
Ere now, but that the coward's heart recoil'd,  
Lest France awak'd should rouse her from her dream,  
And call aloud for vengeance. He, like Caesar,  
With rapid step urged on his bold career,  
Even to the summit of ambitious power,  
And deem'd the name of King alone was wanting.  
Was it for this we hurl'd proud Capet down?  
Is it for this we wage eternal war  
Against the tyrant horde of murderers,  
The crown'd cockatrices whose foul venom  
Infects all Europe? was it then for this  
We swore to guard our liberty with life,  
That Robespierre should reign? the spirit of freedom  
Is not yet sunk so low. The glowing flame  
That animates each honest Frenchman's heart  
Not yet extinguish'd. I invoke thy shade,  
Immortal Brutus! I too wear a dagger;  
And if the representatives of France,  
Through fear or favour, should delay the sword  
Of justice, Tallien emulates thy virtues;

**Tallien,** like Brutus, lifts the avenging arm;

**Tallien** shall save his country. [Violent applause.]



## THE FALL OF ROBESPIERRE, AN HISTORIC DRAMA

**Billaud Varennes.** I demand  
The arrest of all the traitors. Memorable  
Will be this day for France.

**Robespierre.** Yes! Memorable  
This day will be for France—for villains triumph.  
Lebas. I will not share in this day's damning guilt.  
Condemn me too. [Great cry— Down with the Tyrants!

(The two ROBESPIERRES, COUTHON, ST. JUST, and LEBAS are led off.)

On to Act Three

THE FALL OF ROBESPIERRE, AN HISTORIC DRAMA

**ACT III. SCENE CONTINUES.**

**Collot d'Herbois.** Caesar is fall'n! The baneful tree of Java  
Whose death—distilling boughs drops poisonous dew,  
Is rooted from its base. This worse than Cromwell,  
The austere, the self—denying Robespierre,  
Even in this hall, where once with terror mute  
We listen'd to the hypocrite's harangues,  
Has heard his doom.

**Billaud Varennes.** Yet must we not suppose  
The tyrant will fall tamely. His sworn hireling  
Henriot, the daring desperate Henriot,  
Commands the force of Paris. I denounce him.  
Freron. I denounce Fleuriot too, the mayor of Paris.  
Enter DUBOIS CRANCÉ.

**Dubois Crancé.** Robespierre is rescued. Henriot at the head  
Of the arm'd force has rescued the fierce tyrant

**Collot d'Herbois.** Ring the tocsin—call all the citizens  
To save their country—never yet has Paris  
Forsook the representatives of France.

**Tallien.** It is the hour of danger. I propose  
This sitting be made permanent. [Loud applauses.

**Collot d'Herbois.** The National Convention shall remain  
Firm at its post.

Enter a Messenger.

## THE FALL OF ROBESPIERRE, AN HISTORIC DRAMA

**Messenger.** Robespierre has reach'd the Commune. They espouse  
The tyrant's cause. St. Just is up in arms!

**St. Just**—the young ambitious bold St. Just  
Harangues the mob. The sanguinary Couthon  
Thirsts for your blood. [Tocsin rings.

**Tallien.** These tyrants are in arms against the law:  
Outlaw the rebels.

Enter MERLIN OF DOUAY.

**Merlin.** Health to the representatives of France!  
I past this moment through the arméd force—  
They ask'd my name—and when they heard a delegate,  
Swore I was not the friend of France.

**Collot d'Herbois.** The tyrants threaten us as when they turn'd  
The cannon's mouth on Brissot.

Enter another Messenger.

**Second Messenger.** Vivier harangues the Jacobins—the Club  
Espouse the cause of Robespierre.

Enter another Messenger.

**Third Messenger.** All's lost—the tyrant triumphs. Henriot leads  
The soldiers to his aid.—Already I hear  
The rattling cannon destined to surround  
This sacred hall.

**Tallien.** Why, we will die like men then,  
The representatives of France dare death,

ACT III. SCENE CONTINUES.

## THE FALL OF ROBESPIERRE, AN HISTORIC DRAMA

When duty steels their bosoms. [Loud applauses.

**Tallien** (addressing the galleries). Citizens!  
France is insulted in her delegates—  
The majesty of the Republic is insulted—  
Tyrants are up in arms. An arméd force  
Threats the Convention. The Convention swears  
To die, or save the country! [Violent applauses from the galleries.

**Citizen** (from above). We too swear  
To die, or save the country. Follow me. [All the men quit the galleries.

Enter another Messenger.

**Fourth Messenger.** Henriot is taken! [Loud applauses.  
Three of your brave soldiers  
Swore they would seize the rebel slave of tyrants,  
Or perish in the attempt. As he patroll'd  
The streets of Paris, stirring up the mob,  
They seiz'd him. [Applauses.

**Billaud Varennes.** Let the names of these brave men  
Live to the future day.

Enter BOURDON L'OISE, sword in hand.

**Bourdon l'Oise.** I have clear'd the Commune. [Applauses.  
Through the throng I rush'd,  
Brandishing my good sword to drench its blade  
Deep in the tyrant's heart. The timid rebels  
Gave way. I met the soldiery—I spake  
Of the dictator's crimes—of patriots chain'd  
In dark deep dungeons by his lawless rage—  
Of knaves secure beneath his fostering power.  
I spake of Liberty. Their honest hearts  
Caught the warm flame. The general shout burst forth,  
'Live the Convention—Down with Robespierre!' [Applauses.  
(Shouts from without—Down with the Tyrant!)

## THE FALL OF ROBESPIERRE, AN HISTORIC DRAMA

**Tallien.** I hear, I hear the soul-inspiring sounds,  
France shall be saved! her generous sons attached  
To principles, not persons, spurn the idol  
They worshipp'd once. Yes, Robespierre shall fall  
As Capet fell! Oh! never let us deem  
That France shall crouch beneath a tyrant's throne,  
That the almighty people who have broke  
On their oppressors' heads the oppressive chain,  
Will court again their fetters! easier were it  
To hurl the cloud-capt mountain from its base,  
Than force the bonds of slavery upon men  
Determined to be free! [Applauses.

Enter LEGENDRE—a pistol in one hand, keys in the other.

**Legendre.** (flinging down the keys). So—let the mutinous Jacobins meet now  
In the open air. [Loud applauses.  
A factious turbulent party  
Lording it o'er the state since Danton died,  
And with him the Cordeliers.—A hireling band  
Of loud-tongued orators controull'd the Club,  
And bade them bow the knee to Robespierre.  
Vivier has 'scaped me. Curse his coward heart—  
This fate-fraught tube of Justice in my hand,  
I rush'd into the hall. He mark'd mine eye  
That beam'd its patriot anger, and flash'd full  
With death-denouncing meaning. 'Mid the throng  
He mingled. I pursued—but stay'd my hand,  
Lest haply I might shed the innocent blood. [Applauses.  
Freron. They took from me my ticket of admission—  
Expell'd me from their sittings.—Now, forsooth,  
Humbled and trembling re-insert my name.  
But Freron enters not the Club again  
'Till it be purged of guilt:—'till, purified  
Of tyrants and of traitors, honest men  
May breathe the air in safety. [Shouts from without.

**Barrere.** What means this uproar! if the tyrant band  
Should gain the people once again to rise—  
We are as dead!

**Tallien.** And wherefore fear we death?  
Did Brutus fear it? or the Grecian friends  
Who buried in Hipparchus' breast the sword,

ACT III. SCENE CONTINUES.

## THE FALL OF ROBESPIERRE, AN HISTORIC DRAMA

And died triumphant? Caesar should fear death,  
Brutus must scorn the bugbear.

(Shouts from without—Live the Convention!—Down with the Tyrants!)

**Tallien.** Hark! again  
The sounds of honest Freedom!

Enter Deputies from the Sections.

**Citizen.** Citizens! representatives of France!  
Hold on your steady course. The men of Paris  
Espouse your cause. The men of Paris swear  
They will defend the delegates of Freedom.

**Tallien.** Hear ye this, Colleagues? hear ye this, my brethren?  
And does no thrill of joy pervade your breasts?  
My bosom bounds to rapture. I have seen  
The sons of France shake off the tyrant yoke;  
I have, as much as lies in mine own arm,  
Hurl'd down the usurper.—Come death when it will,  
I have lived long enough. [Shouts without.

**Barrere.** Hark! how the noise increases! through the gloom  
Of the still evening—harbinger of death,  
Rings the tocsin! the dreadful generale  
Thunders through Paris—  
[Cry without—Down with the Tyrant!

Enter LECOINTRE.

Lecointre. So may eternal justice blast the foes  
Of France! so perish all the tyrant brood,  
As Robespierre has perish'd! Citizens,  
Caesar is taken. [Loud and repeated applauses.  
I marvel not that with such fearless front  
He braved our vengeance, and with angry eye  
Scowled round the hall defiance. He relied  
On Henriot's aid—the Commune's villain friendship,  
And Henriot's boughten succours. Ye have heard

ACT III. SCENE CONTINUES.

## THE FALL OF ROBESPIERRE, AN HISTORIC DRAMA

How Henriot rescued him—how with open arms  
The Commune welcom'd in the rebel tyrant—  
How Fleuriot aided, and seditious Vivier  
Stirr'd up the Jacobins. All had been lost—  
The representatives of France had perish'd—  
Freedom had sunk beneath the tyrant arm  
Of this foul parricide, but that her Spirit  
Inspir'd the men of Paris. Henriot call'd  
'To arms' in vain, whilst Bourdon's patriot voice  
Breathed eloquence, and o'er the Jacobins

**Legendre** frown'd dismay. The tyrants fled—  
They reach'd the Hôtel. We gather'd round—we call'd  
For vengeance! Long time, obstinate in despair,  
With knives they hack'd around them. 'Till foreboding  
The sentence of the law, the clamorous cry  
Of joyful thousands hailing their destruction,  
Each sought by suicide to escape the dread  
Of death. Lebas succeeded. From the window  
Leapt the younger Robespierre, but his fractur'd limb  
Forbade to escape. The self-will'd dictator  
Plunged often the keen knife in his dark breast  
Yet impotent to die. He lives all mangled  
By his own tremulous hand! All gash'd and gored  
He lives to taste the bitterness of death.  
Even now they meet their doom. The bloody Couthon,  
The fierce St. Just, even now attend their tyrant  
To fall beneath the axe. I saw the torches  
Flash on their visages a dreadful light—  
I saw them whilst the black blood roll'd adown  
Each stern face, even then with dauntless eye  
Scowl round contemptuous, dying as they lived  
Fearless of fate! [Loud and repeated applauses.

**Barrere** mounts the Tribune. For ever hallowed be this glorious day,  
When Freedom, bursting her oppressive chain,  
Tramples on the oppressor. When the tyrant  
Hurl'd from his blood-cemented throne, by the arm  
Of the almighty people, meets the death  
He plann'd for thousands. Oh! my sickening heart  
Has sunk within me, when the various woes  
Of my brave country crowded o'er my brain  
In ghastly numbers—when assembled hordes,  
Dragg'd from their hovels by despotic power,  
Rush'd o'er her frontiers, plunder'd her fair hamlets,  
And sack'd her populous towns, and drench'd with blood  
The reeking fields of Flanders.—When within,

ACT III. SCENE CONTINUES.

## THE FALL OF ROBESPIERRE, AN HISTORIC DRAMA

Upon her vitals prey'd the rankling tooth  
Of treason; and oppression, giant form,  
Trampling on freedom, left the alternative  
Of slavery, or of death. Even from that day,  
When, on the guilty Capet, I pronounced  
The doom of injured France, has faction reared  
Her hated head amongst us. Roland preach'd  
Of mercy—the uxorious dotard Roland,  
The woman—govern'd Roland durst aspire  
To govern France; and Petion talk'd of virtue,  
And Vergniaud's eloquence, like the honeyed tongue  
Of some soft Syren wooed us to destruction.  
We triumphed over these. On the same scaffold  
Where the last Louis pour'd his guilty blood,  
Fell Brissot's head, the womb of darksome treasons,  
And Orleans, villain kinsman of the Capet,  
And Hébert's atheist crew, whose maddening hand  
Hurl'd down the altars of the living God,  
With all the infidel's intolerance.  
The last worst traitor triumphed—triumph'd long,  
Secur'd by matchless villainy—by turns  
Defending and deserting each accomplice  
As interest prompted. In the goodly soil  
Of Freedom, the foul tree of treason struck  
Its deep—fix'd roots, and drops the dews of death  
On all who slumber'd in its specious shade.  
He wove the web of treachery. He caught  
The listening crowd by his wild eloquence,  
His cool ferocity that persuaded murder,  
Even whilst it spake of mercy!—never, never  
Shall this regenerated country wear  
The despot yoke. Though myriads round assail,  
And with worse fury urge this new crusade  
Than savages have known; though the leagued despots  
Depopulate all Europe, so to pour  
The accumulated mass upon our coasts,  
Sublime amid the storm shall France arise,  
And like the rock amid surrounding waves  
Repel the rushing ocean.—She shall wield  
The thunder-bolt of vengeance—she shall blast  
The despot's pride, and liberate the world!

FINIS