



# Herculaneum & Sardanapalus: Two Opera Libretti

*Joseph Méry*

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## **Herculaneum & Sardanapalus: Two Opera Libretti** Joseph Méry

Two opera libretti focusing on the theme of the fiery sacrifice of the protagonists. HERCULANEUM, by Joseph Méry, a friend of Alexandre Dumas, is set in 79 A.D. in the doomed city of Herculaneum. Olympia, an oriental queen, sister of the Proconsul Nicanor, falls in love with Helios, a Christian. The queen seduces Helios and takes him from his betrothed, Lilia. Nicanor then tries to seduce and rape Lilia, but is thwarted when Mount Vesuvius erupts. The Christians die happy, believing that they are saved. SARDANAPALUS, by Henri Becque, is a powerful retelling of the fall of Assyria, and the immolation of its last king in the ruins of his capital city. Two French tragedies of love and life in the classical period.

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