

V I M O N D A

A

T R A G E D Y,

Lg 1274 (1)

B Y

A. M'DONALD;

PERFORMED AT THE

THEATRE-ROYAL, HAY-MARKET.

L O N D O N:

PRINTED FOR J. MURRAY, NO. 32, FLEET-STREET; J. WALTER, CHARING-CROSS; J. STOCKDALE, PICCADILLY; R. FAULDER, NEW BOND-STREET; AND J. SEWELL, NO. 32, CORNHILL.

M.DCC.LXXXVIII.

P R O L O G U E,

Spoken by Mr. B E N S L E Y.

A D V E R T I S E M E N T.

IN the representation, several passages are left out, and some variations made; for which the author is obliged to the judgment and good taste of Mr. COLMAN. They are not, however, distinguished; as they will easily be perceived, and their propriety acknowledged by persons acquainted with the nature of stage-effect.



'T IS hard to find, in this late laggard age,
A story yet unhackney'd on the stage.
Beaten by countless feet, th' Aonian field
Fresh walks, and springs untasted, scarce can yield;
But o'er its broad highway poor poets plod,
In the same steps their predecessors trod.

Yet to your view to-night our bard has brought
A tale, he hopes, with new adventures fraught;
Not stolen from Italy, purloin'd from France,
Founded on legend, ballad, or romance;
But in some silent solitary hour,
From "airy nothing" rais'd by Fancy's power,
Which in the poet's bosom holds the throne,
And "bodies forth the forms of things unknown."

This boast, this only boast supports our bard,
To stand the issue of your dread award.
Fuil well he knows your pow'r; he knows your doom
Decrees his bays to wither or to bloom;
Yet unappal'd his fame, his life can trust
To spirits generous as well as just,
Sole friends of those who yet, with thankless toil,
Dare cultivate Parnassus' barren soil;
Who, spurn'd and sunk among the vulgar fry,
Unheeded droop, and unprotected die.

O may ye pleas'd these artless scenes attend!
O may your rapt'rous tears with plaudits blend!
And bid Vimonda here in triumph claim
"A local habitation and a name!"

Dramatis Personæ.

M E N.

ROTHSAY, Mr. KEMBLE.
MELVILLE, Mr. BANNISTER, jun.
DUNDORE, Mr. BENSLEY.
BARNARD, Mr. AICKIN.

ATTENDANTS.

W O M E N.

VIMONDA, Mrs. KEMBLE.
ALFREDA, { Miss WOOLERT, 1787.
 { Mrs. BARRESFORD, 1788.

SCENE, a Baron's Castle, and its Environs, on
the Borders of England and Scotland.

V I M O N D A.

A C T I.

SCENE, a narrow Valley, surrounded with Rocks
and Woods; in the Bottom, a Tower, deco-
rated with Arms and sepulchral Figures.

Enter VIMONDA and MELVILLE.

VIMONDA.

HERE is the place, my Lord, 'tis finish'd now.
This deep recess, on which, at height of noon,
The sun scarce looks, I chose; the fittest scene
For secret woe, and awful meditation.

MELVILLE.

My lov'd Vimonda, Nature, kind and free,
Pours on her various children endless blessings,

B

And

And calls us daily to admire and thank her.
 Now are her vernal energies at work,
 Unseen by us, but in their sweet effect.
 She paints the rose-bud, and she paints thy cheek
 With tints from heaven. 'Tis at her word yon
 woods

Put on their verdure, and exhale their fragrance;
 While all their airy tenants fluttering round,
 Enjoy the genial sun and wanton gale.
 Is this a season for black melancholy?
 While life glows round us, shall we peevishly
 Muse over sad memorials of the dead?

VIMONDA.

This pile for noble Rothsay I have rear'd.
 My father there in marble seems to breathe;
 The silver lamp before him ceaseless burns;
 And martial-trophies deck the hollow tomb,
 Where lies his shining sword.

MELVILLE.

Now when I see
 This dreary work complete— wilt thou forgive
 me?
 I cannot think it aught but solemn mockery.

VIMONDA.

What cause for that discordant thought, my
 Lord?

MEL-

MELVILLE.

Buried in silent dust thy father sleeps.
 The turf blooms over him; the daisy there,
 And sweetest violet, nod their gentle heads:
 The lambkin and the bounding fawn pass by,
 Sportive, and heedless of the mighty dead.
 Ev'n thou, if chance convey'd thee to the place,
 Wouldst trip as gaily over Rothsay's bones,
 As when to strains of joy thy airy feet
 Fly thro' the wheeling dance. If sweet oblivion
 Envelope with a flow'ry mantle thus
 The hero's real grave, why here condemn
 A guiltless spot of earth to bear a load
 Of shapes lugubrous, of heart-chilling emblems,
 And be the hated haunt of gloom and horror?

VIMONDA.

Yet what is left me else to soothe that grief
 Which now thou blamest? why frequent flows
 the tear,
 So cold and heavy, from my pensive eyes?
 Why do I toils each night in shudd'ring dreams,
 And rave of bloody swords, and ghastly wounds?
 'Tis the dread phantom of my murder'd father
 That haunts yon towers, that tears my heart
 with terror,
 That cries revenge! and frowns—and vanishes.
 His monument shall be my oratory;
 There shall my constant knees the marble wear,

B 2

There

There will I cry for vengeance on the wretch
Who wrought the deed accurs'd of Heaven, and
there
I'll pray the restless spirit to repose.

MELVILLE.

There too I'll join in all thy soul's requests,
And add my own, that pitying Heav'n restore
Peace to Vimonda's heart. Yet sure her grief
Is fanciful.—Who saw this awful spectre?

VIMONDA.

Seyton, my Lord, who knew the Baron well;
Good Isabel my nurse; my women too.

MELVILLE:

Poor, tim'rous, brain-sick fools,
Who from the shadows of the moonshine fly,
Start when the night-breeze sobs among the
turrets,
And if an owl scream—horror—'tis the ghost!

VIMONDA.

Myself then.

MELVILLE.

Thyself! when? where?

VIMONDA.

Last night,
As at the window of my bow'r I stood,

What

What time the moon, behind yon mountain's
ridge

Descending, gave the vale a farewell glance,
Close by the margin of the moat it came
Slow-gliding; once it paus'd, and seem'd to look
Up to the battlements. My blood ran cold.
Frantic, I would have spoke to it; but Horror
With grasp convulsive seiz'd me, choak'd my
breath,

And turn'd my limbs to marble. Thus I stood,
In ecstasy of dread, till in yon grove,
Beyond the postern gate, its form was lost.

MELVILLE.

Ev'n this was but the creature of thy fancy,
Work'd up to phrenzy by sad thoughts and so-
litude.

Had Love and I been in thy bow'r, sweet
trembler,

No dim and dismal form had cross'd thy view;
The moon had smil'd, and ev'ry star in heav'n
Shone like Vimonda's eyes; mine arms around
thee,

And on this faithful breast thy lovely head—

VIMONDA.

O Melville, talk not thus; nor now attempt,
With sounds of love and tender joy, to charm me.
Can I sit now by Tweed's enchanting stream,

While

While summer breezes, and the setting sun,
The echoing forest, and my lover's voice,
Lull me in soft delicious languor? No!
Terror and gloom hang o'er these once gay
towers,

And the sweet fields around us smile no more.
Some dread event is near. This spirit comes
To tear the mask from smiling villany,
And give Revenge her due. Ask of Dundore,
Yonder he comes; it is his favourite theme:
He'll tell thee of black deeds discover'd thus,
And subtle reasons shew——

MELVILLE.

Subtle, I doubt not.
He is not what he was. Open as air,
I knew him ere to Palestine I went,
And lov'd him well. On Cheviot's heights to-
gether,
From their green dens we oft arous'd the deer,
Headed the chase in cheerful woods all day,
And in the hall first led the dance at night.
Now he is grave and subtle, as thou say'st,
And wears a visage of solemnity,
And weighs his words.—I will not talk with him.
[Going.]

VIMONDA.

O slight him not, my Lord! Both as my
kinsman,

7

And

And as a man from better fortunes fallen,
He claims thy generous notice.

Enter DUNDORE.

DUNDORE.

Noble lady,
An ancient servant of thy valiant sire
This night within thy castle comes to rest;
Earnard his name: he follow'd Rothsay's steps,
In prime of youth, beneath the Christian banner,
To glory, on the vale of Askalon.
This letter from him, giv'n me by a horseman,
From the Lord Warden, posting to the court,
Informs me of his purpose.

VIMONDA.

My best welcome
Shall he receive: I long to see this man,
And hear him tell my father's great achieve-
ments,
Contending with the bloody Saracen.
He must be near at hand; for in the west
The sun is low. I would myself await him.
Lord Melville, come: the humblest friend of
Rothsay
To me is dear.

[Exeunt VIMONDA and MELVILLE.]

DUNDORE. [solus.]

At hand indeed he is,

And

And nearer than she thinks. In this deep glen,
At sunset, I appointed him to meet me;
And in these thickets now I hope he lurks.
The subject we must talk on would not suit
The presence of yon damsel and her champion.
They disappear behind the cliff.—Ho, woodman!
The sky is clear—arise—woodman, I say!

Enter BARNARD.

My Barnard—friend—brother in all my
dangers,
Welcome once more to Caledon!

BARNARD.

In guilt,
We once indeed were brothers. Thou enjoy'st
The fruits; my harder lot has been the pain.
Ev'n thy reward appears but pitiful.
Where are thy boasted glories? Art thou yet
Lord of yon castle, and divine Vimonda?
What is thy life? 'Tis but to breathe and eat.
Alas, Dundore! was it for this poor pittance
Thou play'd'st the midnight murderer?

DUNDORE.

Have patience.
Where hast thou lurk'd so long?

BARNARD,

On that black night,

When

When in old Rothfay's heart we plung'd our dag-
gers,
As cross the country different ways we fled,
A troop of Piercy's plunderers surpris'd me.
'Ten months I've in a narrow prison groan'd,
Dark and alone, till sickness seiz'd the Earl:
A monk, whom Heav'n reward, was brought to
shrieve him,
And spoke so well of mercy and compassion,
That forthwith all our dungeon doors flew open.
In pain I've dragg'd my weary carcase hither.
Where to go next, I know not; for I think,
Thou canst not here afford me safe repose.

DUNDORE.

Yet still have patience.
'Tis not in man to govern fickle Chance;
And Chance alone defeated my designs.
On that same night thou spok'st of, when we left
Old Rothfay freed from every mortal care,
I hied me home, and in close privacy
Kept me some weeks.

BARNARD.

And that delay was fatal?

DUNDORE.

It was. Yet thou shalt own it was most
politic.

C

From

From friendly visitation at my hall,
 Returning homeward, Rothsay found his death.
 Had I with instant step pursued my purpose;
 Flown to this castle with the dismal tale,
 Would there have been no place for cold suspi-
 cion?

BARNARD.

There might.

DUNDORE.

Aware of this, I took my way.
 When the first gulf of grief might be abated,
 Fraught with kind greetings, sweet condolences, all
 That I could hope would touch a female heart
 Soften'd by sorrow; hoping for the maid,
 Not only from my right of nearest kinsman,
 But from some sparks of tender inclination,
 Which in her speaking eyes I long had seen.
 Secure, in thought, I clasp'd her in my arms,
 Risting her heav'nly beauties—curst event!
 I seem but come to give the prize to Melville!

BARNARD.

Thou giv'st her?

DUNDORE.

No! 'twas fate, or chance, or some vile
 demon,

7

That

That rules this nether world. The fierce North-
 umbrians,
 Perchance the same who took thee, had attack'd
 This castle, while its baron breath'd his last,
 Borne all away, and for their richest spoil,
 Vimonda. Lo, at that eventful hour,
 This Melville, whom I reckon'd safe asleep
 For ever in Judea's sacred earth,
 Returning from his wars, prank'd up with trophies,
 Rous'd by the cry of woe, and true to knighthood,
 Assail'd the band with reckless frantic valour.
 Favour'd by dread and darkness, his fierce sword
 Clear thro' the tumult hew'd a bloody way,
 Thro' which, secure beneath his shelt'ring shield,
 He bore Vimonda.

BARNARD.

O 'twas nobly done!

DUNDORE.

Vimonda thought so too.
 Yet, in my judgment, 'twas but lucky madness.
 But mark th' effect of this fool-hardiment:
 The weak poor trembling fair one, terrified
 Ev'n at her new deliverer, fancying him
 Some scarr'd, stern, grim, unpolish'd veteran,
 Finds him, when freed from his encumb'ring iron,
 A youth of shape and bloom to melt a vestal.

C 2

Bliss

Blest disappointment! Then, Sir, being told
The bloody tale of Rothfay's taking off,
She thinks, as 'twas most apt, this charming war-
rior
Sent her by Heav'n, commission'd her protector,
Her husband.

BARNARD.

Who inform'd her of the murder?

DUNDORE.

None; but from circumstances 'twas surmis'd.

BARNARD.

But since their purpos'd marriage, which cuts
off

Thy hopes for ever, why remain'st thou here?
I would have scorn'd, ev'n villain as I am,
To live a poor dependant on a lady,
Whose sire I murder'd.

DUNDORE.

I thought, old man, that thou hadst known
me better.
Crosses but rouse my hopes, whet my invention,
And spur me on to great and daring deeds.
What but the wreck and ruin of my fortunes,
Made me conspire old Rothfay's death, and view
His lands, and lovely daughter, mine secure?
What but the missing of that golden prize,

Made

Made me, in sullen mood, contrive a plot
Of mischief most refin'd and exquisite?
Which soon, from the abode of peace and joy,
Shall change yon castle to a den of horror.

BARNARD.

What new device?

DUNDORE.

Nay, now I do but build
On Fortune's ground-work. Lately hath arisen,
In yon wise household, a most strange belief,
That Rothfay's ghost appears.

BARNARD.

His ghost—amazement!

DUNDORE.

This fancy, true or false, I have confirm'd
In all, but chiefly in Vimonda. She,
All horror-struck, deferr'd th' appointed nuptials,
Banish'd her lover to his own demesne,
Till that fine tow'r was rais'd; and now admits
him,
But as the sad companion of her woe.
Vext and impatient, he derides it all;
Meets her with smiles; of love and rapture talks,
While she distracted thinks of death and ven-
geance.

Well

Well do I know her nature, gentle, generous;
 But credulous withal, and sometimes rash.
 Whatever passion rules her soul, it rules
 With sway tyrannical. If 'tis revenge,
 She is all fire; if pity or remorse,
 She melts in sorrow, bursts her heart with sobbing.
 Go to her, in her hours of foolish fondness,
 Tell her that Melville is the first of men,
 An angel, or a god,—she will believe thee.
 An hour perhaps may come, when I shall tell her,
 And be believ'd too, that he is a devil:
 —On to the castle, where she now expects thee.
 Closely observe them, and thou shalt perceive
 How fair my project stands. Its full extent
 Is undiscover'd yet. Some lucky moment
 Must give it birth; and such a one, be sure,
 I will not suffer unemploy'd to pass. *[Exeunt.]*

END OF THE FIRST ACT.

ACT

ACT II.

SCENE, *A Gallery of the Castle.*

Enter VIMONDA.

VIMONDA.

BLEST shepherds, that on yon silent hill
 Sleep'st to the murmur'ing groves and rushing wa-
 ters,
 Fast lock'd within thy faithful lover's arms,
 Fearless of plots unknown, or lurking traitors;
 How well could I resign my pompous cares
 For happiness like thine!—Come, my Alfreda—

Enter ALFREDA.

Have you instructed Seyton as I order'd?

ALFREDA.

I have—that if this thing appear to-night,
 He strike the castle-bell,—vain charge I hope.
 Good night, my noble mistress. *[Going.]*

VIMONDA.

Guilt I know not,
 And yet I tremble. Sleep with me, Alfreda.
 'Twas at this very hour last night I saw it.
 Come to my bow'r, Alfreda. Just as now,

The