

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. *[Exit.*

END OF THE FIRST ACT.

ACT

ACT II.

SCENE, *A Gallery of the Castle.*

Enter VIMONDA.

VIMONDA.

BLEST shepherdes, that on yon silent hill
 Sleep'st to the murm'ring 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

The waving moon-light stream'd athwart the valley,
Mixt with long shadows of the tow'rs and trees;
The wind blew softly—*[bell tolls]* Hark! Alfreda,
hark!

It comes again—O Heaven!

ALFRED A.

Heav'n is thy guard,
My dearest lady. Innocence like thine,
Secure, may brave all terror.—This alarm
I soon will quiet, and its cause explore.
Fear nothing. *[Exit.]*

VIMONDA.

Leave me not, Alfreda, stay!
She's gone—distracted!—O here Seyton comes.
Seyton, what hast thou seen?

Enter Servants in confusion with torches.

FIRST SERVANT.

If I'm alive,
I saw Lord Rothsay, my lov'd noble master,
Now cross the lower court.

VIMONDA.

How did he look?

FIRST SERVANT.

He had his cuirass and his helmet on,
Under his arm a sword, and slow he stept.

VIMONDA.

VIMONDA.

Was all secure? for this perchance may be
Some artful cheat.

FIRST SERVANT.

Impossible, my Lady.
The iron gate was bolted, firm as rock,
The draw-bridge up, and the portcullis down,
The moat brimful;—sure no corporeal form
Could work its way through such impediments.

Enter DUNDORE.

VIMONDA.

Go get more lights. Sit in the hall together,
And watch the night out. Half my land I'd give,
To know the cause of this distracting sight.

[Exit Servants.]

DUNDORE.

This awful visitation is most strange.
Inglorious oft the great and brave have fallen,
By chance disastrous, and by hands obscure,
Yet slept profoundly, ev'n as they had died
Grasping at vict'ry on the battle's edge.
'Tis but to open some dark treachery,
Or bar th' assassin from his hop'd reward,
And guard the innocent, that Heav'n permits

D

Those

Those restless shades to roam this world again.
Of Rothfay's death, black treason was the cause—

VIMONDA.

How know'st thou that?

DUNDORE.

Of certainty I speak not.
I have my doubts, perchance; but what are they
To charge an honourable man withal?
All view not things alike. And harden'd guilt,
Shelter'd by cunning, may defy detection.

VIMONDA.

If thou hast any scope in these dark words,
More than to magnify thy wisdom, tell it,
And boldly. Canst thou doubt my strong desire
For justice? or the pow'ful sacred rev'rence,
Which for my father's memory I bear?

DUNDORE.

What sword is that which lies on Rothfay's
tomb?

VIMONDA.

His fav'rite one, of old Damascan steel,
And golden hilt. It was the fatal proof
Of his sad end.

DUNDORE.

How?

VIMONDA.

VIMONDA.

Melville's hand did wield it,
When from the plund'ring band he rescued me.

DUNDORE.

Amazement! Whence could Melville have
that sword?

VIMONDA.

He found it on Tweed's bank, with no one
near,
But all the grass around it stain'd with blood.

DUNDORE.

Most wonderful! And yet it serv'd him well;
For fame reports, the battle was unequal.

VIMONDA.

Himself against a troop. They sunk before
him
Like air-form'd shadows. Sure some guardian
pow'r,
With more than mortal force, had nerv'd his arm.

DUNDORE.

I've heard of men, who, to enhance their
prowess,
Have subtly contriv'd an opposition;
And glorious fame in chivalry acquir'd
By crafty policies; redressing wrongs

D 2

Them-

Themselves had caus'd; deliv'ring captive damsels
From their own villains.—Didst thou love thy
father?

'Twas but a dull affection.

VIMONDA.

Ha—no more!

No more, I charge thee! Whither wouldst thou
hurry me?

If this were so—then what a wretch were I!
The very thought is frenzy.—But 'tis false;
Melville is noble.

DUNDORE.

Said I otherwise?

No, Heav'n forefend! I love thy peace too well,
To brand thy favour'd lover for a villain.
I spoke of what has been, and what thou know'st.
It were discourteous, and uncharitable,
To think a lady of such filial virtue
Should take her father's murd'rer to her arms;
Allow his hands, scarce wash'd from Rothsay's
blood,
To—

VIMONDA.

Villain! fly—begone—see me no more!
Scarce wash'd from blood!—O that I had a dagger,
For

For thee and for myself!—My heart burns—
burns—
Infernal fire is here.—

DUNDORE.

Subdue this rage,
And then bethink thee what thy state requires.

{*Going.*

VIMONDA.

Dundore, the only friend hard fate has left me,
Wilt thou abandon me, ev'n in distraction?
O be my guide! Tell me, what shall I do?

DUNDORE.

Canst thou resolve to arm thy trembling heart
Against the pleadings of a guilty passion?
Canst thou resolve to vindicate thy fame,
By one bold act of justice?

VIMONDA.

Doubt it not.
I can be just—and die.

DUNDORE.

Then take this dagger,
And plunge it in the sleeping villain's heart.

VIMONDA.

What I?—and sleeping too?—kill him
asleep!

Dreaming

Dreaming perchance of me—murm'ring my
name—

In fancy pressing even the cruel hand
That bears his death—

DUNDORE.

I cry you mercy, Madam.
I find he is the noble Melville still,
Slumb'ring at ease in dreams of happy love.
I took him for a bloody dark assassin,
Haunted with horrid visions, ghastly fiends
On black wings flitting round him, all impatient
To catch his soul, and bear it howling hence.

VIMONDA.

Attend me to the hall. This rage for blood
Suits not the unimpassion'd claims of justice.
Too much, I fear, there may be fatal truth
In thy suspicions: but there's malice too.
I will not in a frantic moment act
What I for ever may in vain repent.
Joy thou, alas, hast banish'd from this breast!
But never shalt thou tear it with remorse. [*Exeunt,*

Enter ALFREDA.

ALFREDA. [*Sola.*]

Around I search in vain to find this phantom,
Some villain, I suspect him; on some purpose
Fatal to Melville, to his fame and love.

Ye pow'rs of Heav'n, propitious still to truth,
To you I look; and in the strong belief
Of your protection near in ev'ry peril,
As I have fearless trod the fields of death,
And slept secure amid th' alarms of war;
So now I'll meet this form of fancied terror,
And unapall'd—Ha—there he stalks along—
How sad and solemn!—Gracious spirits guard me!
This is indeed most awful.—Can it be?
Yes—sure 'tis he—that face I know full well.
Away, vain fear!

[*ROTHSAY enters slowly, and stands first.*

— Why stand'st thou frowning so,
As if thy presence could affright ev'n me?
For shame, old man, cast off this vain delusion,
And be thyself again!

ROTHSAY.

Ha—Piercy's daughter!

ALFREDA.

To whom thy life and liberty thou owest;
And who with friendship's voice now charges thee
To quit this poor deception, and assert
Thy proper state.

ROTHSAY.

O noble, gen'rous maid!
What dost thou here? How camest thou?

ALF.

ALFREDA

How I came,
And what I do, concerns not thee to know;
I serve the gentle lady of this place,
Whose peace by thee no more shall be disturb'd.
Depart in silence, and be seen no more;
Or ev'n this moment I'll discover thee.

ROTHSAY

Wilt thou discover what thou dost not know?
Thou tak'st me for the brother of Lord Douglas,
Assuming here the garb and arms of Rothsay.
I am the very man I seem, whose death,
With real or painted sorrow, now they mourn.

ALFREDA

Rothsay alive! Good Heav'n!—then all is
well.
Happy Vimondá, Melville now is thine! [*Afide.*]
But why, my Lord, didst thou deceive me? Why
Wouldst thou deceive us still?

ROTHSAY

I'll tell thee all.
While I did in thy father's prison languish,
And thou, my better angel, didst restore
My fleeting strength with wond'rous remedies,
The recollection of that curst attempt
Made on my life, employ'd my anxious mind.

I then

I then suspected, what I now hold certain,
That for my wealth and power the blow was giv'n.
Impatient of such doubt, soon as my wounds,
By heav'nly influence, and thy care, were clos'd,
I with a suppliant's trembling voice, in secret,
Told thee I was the uncle of young Douglas,
Thy fiery brother's foe. That, as I hop'd,
Soon mov'd thy gen'rous soul to set me free.
Disguis'd I halted hither, and have lurk'd,
With an old follower, in a cottage near.
Nightly I walk my melancholy rounds
About the castle; or by a dark passage,
Under the moat, unknown to all but me,
Securely enter.

ALFREDA

And, by these devices,
What is discover'd? Whom dost thou suspect?

ROTHSAY

All. Every one. Melville—Dundore, my
kinsman—
And ev'n my daughter. But I soon shall know.
They take me for a ghost; at some fit moment,
I'll start among them; then surprise and terror
The guilty shall betray.

ALFREDA

Ah! shun, my Lord,

E

This

This meanness of the mind. When things appear
well,

Believe them so; nor mar one moment's joy,
By fears of lurking undiscover'd danger.

Look on this night—how mild, how calm; how
lovely!

Wouldst thou enjoy it, court the fanning breeze,
Run o'er with raptur'd eyes the clear blue vault,
Hail the sweet moon curtain'd in rolling clouds,
And welcome each bright planet as it rises?
Or wouldst thou rather sit dejected down,
In deep suspicion of a sudden storm,
Watching till night's cold Queen shall burst in
flame

And burn the skies, while all her glorious train
Stop in affright, and backward wheel their orbs?
What hast thou more? What canst thou here per-
ceive

To ground thy doubts upon?—A noble youth,
From distant regions, crown'd with glory, comes;
Rescues from death thy daughter; gains her heart;
And, after decent space to sorrow given,
Had gain'd her hand too, but for thy appearance
Thus wrapt in gloom. 'Tis dotage, folly, frenzy,
But to surmise that they could plot thy death,
Who deeply mourn it; who delay to reap
The fruit of ardent love, till thou shalt rest;

Who

Who rear sad tombs, and weary Heav'n with
prayers
For thy unquiet ghost.

ROTHSAY.

Dost thou know Melville?

ALFREDA.

Ay, well, and love him.

ROTHSAY.

Love him, say'st thou?

ALFREDA.

Love him,
With such a faithful, such a fixt affection,
As guardian spirits bear to favour'd mortals.
I would be always near him; do him service,
Unseen, unknown; shield him in ev'ry peril;
Follow his steps, ev'n in the rage of war;
And nightly watch his slumbers. This I've done
Four pleasing years; and 'tis a task so sweet,
I'll quit it but with life,

ROTHSAY.

What canst thou mean?
Wast thou with him in Palestine?

ALFREDA.

I was.

But yet he knows not that. It was my fate,

To lose my mother, ere I knew the worth
Of a fond mother's tender care. Earl Piercy,
Whose life was war, eternally in arms,
Scarce knew he had a daughter. And my brother,
Fierce Edward, would have scorn'd to waste an
hour

In idle converse with a feeble girl.
His chosen friend and pattern was Lord Clifford,
Whom, in my childhood, I was wont to shud-
der at,

And whom, as years advanced, I still beheld
With fixt abhorrence. This detested man
Did cruel Edward bring me for a lover;
And charged me, as I fear'd my father's frown,
To give him kind reception. Half distracted,
I threw myself at Piercy's feet; adjured him,
By Heav'n and all things holy, by the memory
Of my dear mother, not to doom me thus
To misery for ever. Stern he look'd,
And roll'd his eyes in rage; yet could I spy
A little trembling tear steal down his cheek.

ROTHSAY.

Thy father there I know. He was not savage.
His fierceness was assumed; his nature, mild.
What follow'd thy request?

ALFREDA.

He bade me go,
And trust my fortune to a father's kindness.

I

A short

A short, and a deceitful calm succeeded.
One summer morn, as was my wont, I rode
Forth to the forest, with a single maid.
There, from a darksome grove, two horsemen
arm'd,
Quick-rushing, seiz'd and hurried us away,
Thro' vales remote, where I had never been.
Our cries were fruitless in the lonely wild.
At length a plain we reach'd, where o'er the turf
A solitary Knight came pacing slow.
His form was noble, and his burnish'd arms
Flamed to the rising sun. He heard our cries,
And with the speed of thought flew to our rescue;
Calling the villains to forbear their outrage,
While they with scoffs address'd them to the fight.
The fight was short; for soon the stranger's spear
Had laid them both on earth. And this was Mel-
ville.

ROTHSAY.

O gallant youth! it was a deed of glory!

ALFREDA.

Earl Piercy then was at the Scottish court.
Ardent to cross the seas, the valiant stranger
By no entreaty might be mov'd to stay,
But on the morrow with the dawn departed.
'Tidings soon came, that Clifford and my brother
Lay sorely wounded. 'Twas not difficult

To

To guess th' unnatural cause. Without protector,
 And dreading farther insult, I resolv'd
 My brave deliv'rer's fortunes to pursue.
 Hid in the habit of a wand'ring boy,
 I overtook him ready to embark,
 Told him a piteous tale; and to my wish
 The gen'rous youth receiv'd me for his page.

ROTHSAY.

But why didst thou resume thy sex's garb?
 Why leave th' exalted state of Piercy's daughter,
 Here in obscurity to lose thyself?

ALFREDA.

Following my master grac'd with early honors,
 From eastern climes, still as a page I came:
 Not far from hence, as we approach'd his home,
 In a dark night, a sword upon the ground
 Startled his steed. Alighting to examine,
 Cries of distress were heard; and soon a tumult
 Arm'd, but furcharg'd with booty, pour'd
 around us.

Melville I saw no more. Fierce strokes I heard,
 Clashing of arms, loud groans, and deafening
 shouts.

But soon defeat ensued, and I was hurried
 I know not whither; till the sun arose,

And

And shew'd my wond'ring sight the walls of Aln-
 wick,
 And my own brother leader of this band.

ROTHSAY.

Then first thou saw'st me too, in dismal plight.
 Lur'd by my splendid dress, another troop
 Had borne me bleeding from that cursed spot
 Where lay my sword. How did thy haughty
 brother
 Receive thee so disguised?

ALFREDA.

Of him I thought not.
 My lov'd, my venerable father lay
 Stretch'd on the bed of death. To him I flew,
 Found a fond welcome, told him all my wan-
 d'rings,
 And vow'd no more to leave him. Fate soon broke
 The obligation. Piercy's last breath blest me.
 Two words shall tell the rest. Clifford still liv'd,
 And Edward still was cruel.

ROTHSAY.

So thou fled'st
 For safety hither?

ALFREDA.

Yes. But ere I came,

Thy

Thy happy daughter had secured my hero
 In filken bands of love. Their hearts were one,
 Their destinies by strong affection link'd
 Inseparably. Glory now no more
 Had charms for Melville. In the hall his arms
 Forgotten hung, and love was all his care.
 To serve his love was, therefore, serving him.
 My proper dress retaining, I found means
 To gain protection from the favour'd maid.
 I serve—I love—and go to end her sorrows,
 To tell her that thou liv'st—that thou art here.

R O T H S A Y.

Thou dar'st not. Hark, Alfreda, wouldst thou
 wish,
 That Melville and my daughter knew this tale,
 Which thou hast now told me?

A L F R E D A.

Not for the world.

R O T H S A Y.

Then keep my secret safe, or by the rood!
 They shall know all.

A L F R E D A.

Ungen'rous! What I've said,
 Was but to free them from thy false suspicions.

R O T H S A Y.

R O T H S A Y.

For that it shall be weigh'd. Two days, at
 least,
 Yet undiscover'd I'll remain. Mark well
 That of this conference no hint escape thee.

[*Exeunt.*]

END OF THE SECOND ACT.

F

A C T