

**THE STRANGER:  
A PLAY**

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The Stranger: A Play by B. Thompson

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**B. THOMPSON**

**THE STRANGER:  
A PLAY**





MRS SIDDONS.

AS MRS HALLER.

*Engraved by J. Thomson from a painting by Sir Thomas Lawrence, P. A.*

Published 1820, by Simpkin & Marshall Stationers C & Chappell, Pall Mall.

Oxberry's Edition.

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THE STRANGER,

A PLAY;

By B. Thompson.

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WITH PREFATORY REMARKS.

THE ONLY EDITION EXISTING WHICH IS FAITHFULLY MARKED

WITH THE STAGE BUSINESS, AND STAGE DIRECTIONS,

AS IT IS PERFORMED AT THE

Theatres Royal.

BY W. OXBERRY, Comedian.

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London.

PUBLISHED FOR THE PROPRIETORS, BY W. SIMPSON, AND  
R. MARSHALL, STATIONERS' COURT, LUDGATE-STREET,  
AND C. CHAPPEL, 66, Pall-mall.

1820.



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W. Osberry, and Co. Printers,  
8, White Hart Yard.

## Remarks.

### THE STRANGER.

THAT the Stranger has merit of some kind is sufficiently clear, from the effect it always produces on the audience; the precise nature of this merit, however, is not very obvious; it is not in the language, for that never by any accident rises above mediocrity; it is not in the drawing of the characters, for they are remarkable for nothing but insipidity; it is not in the general conduct of the plot, for it is of the most common-place kind:—We suppose then, it must be in the subject, which finds an echo in the bosom of all married people; and consequently, of half society; so powerful indeed is the subject, that there is less reason to wonder that Kotzebue has done so much with it, than that he has not done more; but he seems to have formed no very incorrect estimate of his own powers; we find him afraid to grapple with the deep pathos of his matter, and leaving its expression entirely to the actor, but in doing this he has always arranged every thing with an accurate view to Stage effect; the parodists have amused themselves mightily with the dumb meeting of the Stranger and his fugitive wife, yet we know not that it has hitherto lost any of its influence in the minds of the Spectators.

Kotzebue seems to have taken up the idea that the Drama is an imitation of nature in a most literal sense; accordingly he discarded blank verse and wit, and elevated expressions, because they are not usually to be found in real life; in so doing he has deserved the praise of the critics, if he have deserved nothing else, for the burden of the critical song from the days of Aristotle up to the present hour has been nature; the worst of it is, that each one has set up a standard in his own mind, and it is yet upon record that a Scotch critic pronounced sentence of utter excommunication against the Author of Rob Roy the Gregarach for having made the sturdy



robber in love with a woman, a thing, which the reviewer, judging from his own feelings, gravely declared to be impossible of a Highlander; and thus, innocently enough, libelled a whole nation.

The moral of this play has been often—and justly—reprobated; yet it must be owned, that it is not worse than that of Greek or English Tragedy; except inasmuch as it is of a more domestic nature, and likely to have a more pernicious influence. Besides, the admirers of Kotzebue might defend it by the example of scripture; “Go, and sin no more,” were the words of that authority, which few would be inclined to dispute.—It is, indeed, by no means improbable that this text suggested the ground-work of the Play.

Of the language we have already spoken; it is quite bad enough to be extremely natural; of the characters we say nothing, for they stand in that blessed state of mediocrity which is too good for censure, and too indifferent for praise.

Benjamin Thompson was the son of Benjamin Blaydes Thompson, Esq., a most respected merchant and magistrate of Kingston-upon-Hull. He was educated to follow the profession of the law, but this destination not exactly coinciding with his inclinations, the plan was abandoned, and he was sent by his father, on commercial affairs, into Germany, where he became enamoured of the beauties, real or imaginary, of Kotzebue's writings, and contracted an intimacy with their author; to this circumstance may be ascribed the marked predilection he ever after felt for the German drama, and which he evinced by giving to the world translations of many of the most popular plays in that language. Mr. Thompson remained in Germany several years, cultivating his acquaintance with the language and the most eminent of the literati of that country. On his return to England, he settled at Nottingham, having married Miss Jane Bourne, daughter of the Rev. Mr. Bourne of Chesterfield, in Derbyshire. Of late, we believe, he has resided in London.

During Mr. Thompson's sojourn in Germany, he transmitted to his friends in England several translations from the works of Kotzebue, but at this period he had not the slightest intention of presenting them to the public; at the instigation, however, of a friend, he offered the “Stranger” to the managers of Drury-lane theatre; it was immediately accepted, and on its production re-

ceived with extraordinary success, a success which has occasioned the stage to be inundated with German dramas.

His last dramatic production was entitled "Oberon's Oath," and first performed at Drury-lane theatre on the 21st of May 1816; he meditated several material alterations in the construction of this piece, which would have increased its interest and popularity, but on Sunday, the 28th of May, a fatal attack of apoplexy terminated his existence, in the forty-first year of his age.

Mr. Thompson, although a gentleman of indefatigable industry, was, as too many literary men have been, the victim of pecuniary misfortune. In his prosperity, he so warmly patronised the provincial members of the histrionic art, that he was known throughout the profession by the title of "The Actor's Friend;" in the hour of adversity he experienced much unkindness from persons of his own rank and connexion, but we have reason to believe that his Thespian friends remembered his kindness to the last.

The following is a list of Mr. Thompson's dramatic works:—

*The German Theatre*, in 6 vols. 8vo. 1800 and 1801. This work was published in monthly parts, and contains translations of nineteen dramas from the German of Kotzebue, Goethe, Lessing, Schiller, &c. &c.

*Ignaz de Castro*, a tragedy, translated from the Portuguese of Don Domingo Quiza. 8vo. 1800. Never acted.

*Godolphin*; or, *The Lion of the North*, a Drama, produced at Drury Lane, October 12, 1813. Not printed.

*Oberon's Oath*; or, *The Paladin and the Princess*, a Romance. 8vo. 1816.

## PROLOGUE.

SPOKEN BY MR. BARRYMORE.

WHEN first the Comic Muse with forceful art,  
Essayed to triumph o'er the yielding heart,  
With trembling zeal at Fancy's awful shrine  
Graceful she bent, and claim'd the wreath divine.  
"To me," she cried, "the mingled powers belong  
Of wit, of humour, dance, and social song;  
Mine the glad task to check the rising sigh,  
And wipe the glistening drop from Beauty's eye;  
On me the blooming loves and graces smile,  
And crown with eager praise my cheerful toil.  
The Tragic Muse, too oft thy favourite care,  
May sanction, still, th' unobtruding tear;  
May wake to passion, or to pity move,  
Rouse to despair, or melt the soul to love;  
But oh! how sweetly beaming through the maze  
Of fiction'd grief, Thalia darts her rays!  
With double zest she feeds the listening ear,  
And rapture dawns thro' Pity's transient tear."  
"Equal in power" (th' impartial goddess cried)  
"Ye both are suitors, both to be denied;  
Nor can the wreath on either head be wove,  
When both have equal claim to grace and love;—  
But go; collect your powers, that path explore;  
Which leads to Albion's still united shore!  
There, if near Drury's walls you chance to stray,  
And meet a timid *Stranger* on his way,  
Give to my fearful charge your equal aid,  
Protect and guide him through the scenic shade;  
And as my favourite Shakspeare struck the lyre,  
Warm'd by an equal portion of your fire,  
Still with impartial zeal your force employ,  
And ope to him the source of grief and joy."  
Thus Fancy spoke—each Muse reclin'd her head,  
A hesitating blush their cheeks o'erspread.  
Have they then deign'd to prop our Author's cause?  
What's to decide the question?—Your applause.