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***GOTHIC BOURNES***

**THE CASTLE ON THE BEACH,  
OR A SEASIDE STORY  
(1802)**

TRANSCRIPTION BY  
Cristina Arufe Moares

**EDITING GOTHIC TEXTS  
EIGHTH SERIES, 2021  
Nº2**

ENGLISH NIGHTS  
ENTERTAINMENTS

CONSISTING OF A SELECTION OF  
HISTORIES, ADVENTURES, LIVES, &C.

BY THE

MOST CELEBRATED AUTHORS.

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VOL. II

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CONTAINING

BLACK VALLEY; OR CASTLE OF ROSENBURG.  
HAUNTED CASTLE; OR, CHILD OF MISFORTUNE.  
IVAR AND MATILDA.  
HISTORY OF RINALDO RINALDINI.  
RUINS OF THE ABBEY OF FITZ-MARTIN.  
BLEEDING NUN OF ST. CATHERINE'S.  
CASTLE ON THE BEACH; OR, A SEA-SIDE STORY.  
MYSTERIOUS MONK; OR, THE CAVE OF BLOOD.  
COURTNEY CASTLE; OR, THE ROBBER'S CAVERN.  
CASTLE OF HOSPITALITY; OR, THE SPECTRE.  
EDMUND AND ALBINA; OR, GOTHIC TIMES.  
CHILDREN OF THE PRIORY, OR, WARS OF OLD.

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WITH ELEGANT ENGRAVINGS

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Pages 21-24

## **THE CASTLE ON THE BEACH, OR A SEA-SIDE STORY.**

Terrifying dreams destroyed the repose of the guilty Albert; visionary forms haunted his chamber, and surrounded his bed of state; lights and attendants, placed in adjoining rooms, could not dissipate the pale phantoms, could not still the piercing groans they uttered, could not soften their looks of threatening anger, which filled his tortured soul with horror and dismay. The numerous tapers which his fears had commissioned to be placed around him, became as torches in the grasp of demons; and his disturbed imagination pictured his attendants as so many murderers in the act of bursting the doors they were commanded to guard: and now their avenging daggers enter his heart; a heart harrowed by remorse, and bleeding with its awful workings!

Such were the horrors of each revolving night, such were the horrors which Albert's power could not dissipate. The hours of day, indeed, were varied by amusements fabricated to steal him from himself; and to divert his mind, dark and perturbed, from the agonies of reflection.

A long and mournful month had thus passed over the devoted head of this child of guilty greatness, when, in the dead of night, from the chamber adjoining to his own, he heard a voice exclaim, "Albert, awake! or you sleep your last." Instantly he started from his bed, and quitting his apartment, met in the gallery, the aged monk Ernesto. "Ernesto!" faintly uttered the alarmed Albert, "is it thee? — Good old man, thou wilt not harm thy master. But where are my attendants, commanded to keep watch in this gallery?" "Your attendants, Sir! Alas! They are become your guards; but not to preserve you from outrage. No longer your defenders — murder is their horrid purpose. Inquire not, defer not: if you lose this moment, life will answer for the delay. Put on a disguise which I have prepared, and follow me, the humble instrument destined to preserve you."

Albert, with looks of fear, and trembling with suspicion, which even rested upon Ernesto himself, put on the disguise, which was that of a monk, saying, "If your holy garb, Ernesto, corresponds not with your heart better than mine does with that of its wretched wearer, I shall still be apprehensive of perfidy. Lost and bewildered as I am, I cannot reward your services. Leave me then to perish; and endanger not your life in the cause of the wretched Albert!

Ernesto replied, "If my lord must perish, his servant will die with him : but not before exhausted strength renders the powers of defence of no avail, will Ernesto behold the son of his early patron fall beneath the daggers of his enemies."

[22] "What sound is that?" exclaimed the shuddering Albert. "It proceeds from the shield just touched by the glittering blade: hear it as the first awful signal. Lose not a moment: enter again your chamber, and depend on me alone."

Irresolute and trembling, Albert cast a glance of doubt upon Ernesto, and thus replied: "Depend on thee, Ernesto? And enter again my chamber? But I see your purpose: heaven demands retribution, and I am to fall a victim to treachery!" "Demands retribution! What retribution, my lord?" "O, good old man," continued Albert, "I perceive I have wronged thee; your ignorance of my horrid meaning confirms your innocence. Know then, that with a smile on my countenance, but with a poisoned draught in my hand, I gave the cup of death to the parched lips of the parent who adored me. He raised his head distracted with the burning fever, and said "Give me drink, my child, and thy father shall yet live.' He took the potion from my guilty hand; and, with inward exultation, I beheld him imbibe with eagerness<sup>1</sup> the beverage of oblivion."

The heart of Ernesto shrunk within him, on hearing the unexpected relation. At length he exclaimed, "Ah, wretch! And does a father's blood cry for vengeance? And such a father too! But proceed, parricide, proceed — Yet hold; this is not a time to hear or reproach you: for hark! A second signal! Again I repeat, enter your chamber; you will not mistrust me long. Your own perfidy, Sir, has made you suspect all. If you linger here, a speedy death awaits you; and you will dearly pay for your want of confidence in the man who begins to fear he opposes the will of heaven in attempting your preservation."

Although again entering his chamber appeared to the suspecting Albert no very successful means of avoiding his enemies, yet, with a mind full of doubt, a heart depressed by conscious guilt, and beating with coward fears, he put himself under the guidance of Ernesto.

To the astonishment of the agitated Albert, Ernesto removed a panel in the wainscot, which discovered a secret passage, leading to a winding way cut through the solid rock. Following the steps of his venerable conductor, in a little time they gained the verge of the immense ocean. Its waters were swelling to the approaching storm; and the murmuring waves appalled the heart of Albert. Ernesto surveyed the scene before him, and thus addressed the man of misery and guilt. "To this troubled element commit yourself. If you return, your terrors will only impel you to that death you wish to avoid. The hollow winds, sounding dreadful among the rocks; the atmosphere now hid in darkness, and now terribly illumined with bursting flames; the pealing thunder, which rocks the earth to its foundation, may well appal a heart like thine; a heart which *must*

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<sup>1</sup> In the source text spelled: 'eagerness'

bleed for its offences: and shall I presume to rob heaven of its right, to whom you owe penitence and sorrow?

[23]“My attention is only for your life; that by a proper use of its remainder, you may shun eternal death. Embark then, and, awful as the moment is, learn that the Power you have so deeply offended can alone destroy its creatures: surrounding terrors obey a commanding voice; and the Being who raised them into fury, can, with equal ease, subdue them into peace.

“But you tremble at the storm within: harassed by a guilty conscience, these forked flames, that threaten around you, seem as if commissioned to destroy; the artillery of heaven, now sounding its alarms, you picture as surcharged with its avenging bolts. I do not, I cannot, forbid your fears, for you have done too much to raise them — and as the instrument of the power to whom I bend — if I can probe to heal — if I can reprove to convince — it is a demand upon my duty. It is mine to feed, not dry, the tears of contrition.”

The boat which belonged to the vessel prepared for Albert, could not be brought to the rock on which they stood, owing to the tremendous agitation of the sea, which forbade the attempt. Ernesto would have plunged into the waves, and gained it by swimming: but Albert’s timidity forbade him to follow. Long would he have remained irresolute, had not the bursting flames from the window of Arpasia’s apartment, in one of the lofty towers of the castle, determined him to fly to her rescue.

To the beauty of Arpasia, Albert owed his ruin. Her ambition was unbounded, as her manners were alluring. Her arts were known to all, except her infatuated lord. But now the awful hour of reckoning proved to him the terrors of heaven’s vengeance, when it falls upon the daring offender. Ernesto, perceiving Albert’s intention, forcibly withheld him from rushing on instant destruction, in the vain attempt to save the already devoted. And now the screams of Arpasia pierced the heart of Albert, who beheld the object of his passion struggling with the flames commissioned to destroy her in their involving horrors. For a short space she clung to the bars of the widow; while Albert beheld her writhing in torture, until she dropped, bereft of life and motion, and was seen no more.

Albert uttered a piercing groan, and again attempted a return to his castle; but Ernesto prevented him; while, like another Mentor, he forced him on the roaring wave; exclaiming, “My arm, though aged, hath<sup>2</sup> not forgotten its strength, nor my heart its fortitude.” They were beheld by the crew, and by means of ropes gained the vessel in safety.

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<sup>2</sup> Old form of ‘has’

The ship made its way from the heart-rending scene; while Albert, lost and dejected, beheld, with a sinking heart, his castle involved in flames, reflected on the troubled ocean, and thus encreasing<sup>3</sup> its horrors.

In vain Ernesto endeavoured to remove him from his station on the deck. Wild and distracted, he exclaimed, "I will behold the ravages which yonder fires are making. Arpasia's screams are borne upon their curling spires; at least imagination conveys them [24] still to my hearing. Still to my sight appears her lovely form, struggling to free itself from the consuming enemy. — See, Ernesto! behold she clasps her hands — Her eyes are fixed on me — She gasps, the groans — she drops! — I must follow her: I cannot, will not, survive my lost Arpasia. — Hold me no longer."

Ernesto beheld his ravings with pity, and replied, "Not hold you, my lord? What! Suffer you to rush upon that fate, from which to preserve you, I am commanded by a Power which it shall be my endeavour to make you at length look up to. What are your punishments compared to your offences? Remember the dreadful secret you have consigned to my keeping, and be calm: let us remove from observing eyes: repose on me, and do not persevere in being an enemy to yourself."

Albert made no reply, but in sullen sadness retired to his cabin; where, throwing himself upon a couch, he at length sunk into a slumber, which the good priest watched over, in hopes that it would contribute to calm the agitation of a mind too deeply oppressed; and to which repose had been so long a stranger.

The storm soon subsiding, for some weeks they continued to sail on the bosom of the deep, while favoring winds accelerated the course of the vessel. At length uniting clouds, accompanied with a foreboding wind, made the mariners apprehensive of a tempest with all its horrors. Nor were they wrong in their conjectures; the thunder heard in the distance made swift and terrible approaches, and now seemed bursting over their heads. The black and rolling clouds emitted, in quick succession, large portions of their sulphury stores, while the sea presented a waste of horrors. The winds, too mighty for the control of man, soon dismasted the vessel; and it remained a naked hulk, driven to and fro by their remorseless fury. The rage of elements at length abated, but only to increase dismay: the shocks occasioned by its fury had shattered their floating mansion, that it was nearly on the point of going to the bottom, when they discovered land. Their powder was rendered unfit for use, so that it was impossible to make signals of distress; but while destruction threatened on every side, they beheld a crowd descending from the woody hills that graced the island; and several boats setting off to their assistance. By the time the boats came up, the vessel had sunk so low in the water, as to render a near approach extremely hazardous. But their humane preservers having

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<sup>3</sup> Obsolete spelling of 'increasing'

provided themselves with ropes, these were flung out to a proper distance; and thus the whole crew were saved from threatening destruction.

Albert and Ernesto were the last to quit the ship. The former expressed his resolve to go down with it, still under the fatal delusion, that in the inclosing wave he should be rocked to an eternal sleep. Ernesto forbade the desperate trial, and endeavoured to force him from the deck. While they were thus contending, as it were, on the brink of death, Ernesto grasped a rope; which Albert perceiving, plunged himself from the other side of the sinking bark; and , with all his sins upon his head, launched into an abyss of eternity.

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