

GOTHIC BOURNES

**THE WANDERER OF THE WOLD.
AN OLD ENGLISH TALE.
(1801)**

TRANSCRIPTION BY
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TALES
OF
TERROR AND WONDER

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Etymonline - *Online Etymology Dictionary*. (2021). Retrieved 6 November 2021, from <https://www.etymonline.com/>

[23] THE WANDERER OF THE WOLD¹

AN OLD ENGLISH TALE

Oh! my offence is rank! it smells to Heaven,
It hath the primal eldest curse upon it. —HAMLET.

“ WHY wanders that stranger with faltering pace?
All bare are his feet, and all muffled his face!
Why seeks he to climb, at this dark dismal hour,
The crackling old staircase of Ethelbert's tower?

“ Explain now, my father, and tell me, I pray,
Why seeks he in caverns to mourn the long day?
[24] Why seeks he, at midnight, to wander the wold,
And mutter his prayer, while the wind it blows cold?”

“Oh! hush thee, my child, nor thus shrink with affright,
The evening is foul, and approaches the night;
Let's speed to yon hut, and, while there we remain,
To your anxious ears I'll the story explain.

“ Oh! see you yon castle dismantled by time?
And hear you the bells from the abbey that chime?
Oh! see you the streams through the forest that glide,
Where the light from the chapel gleams bright on the tide?

¹ Derived from the Old English wald meaning “unforested rolling plain, a moor.”

“There Ethelbert dwelt, and two sons graced his board,
A baron he was, by the peasants adored;
And down in the dale dwelt a lady so fair,
An orphan was she, in the abbess’s care.

“ The eldest, Sir Bertrand, was wealthy and vain,
In castles, in gold, and in spacious domain;
The youngest, Sir Edric, was handsome and bold,
But no castles had he, and no riches in gold!

“ Sir Bertrand the virtue of valour possessed,
While each uncontrolled passion raged high in his breast;
Sir Edric each passion so meek could reprove,
Save the soft-thrilling force of the passion of love.

[25] “Full oft he at eve through the forest would steal,
And oft to the abbess his suit would reveal;
But Bertrand he bribed her, and flattered her charms,
Till the abbess she gave the fair charge to his arms.

“ And now in the marriage the priest they employ;
Mirth shakes the tall turrets with echoes of joy;
And see in the dance how the nobles they move,
Save Edric, poor Edric, who mourns his lost love.

“ Full oft near the wall where the deep moat it rolled,
With tears he'd exclaim—‘She has left me for gold !
And oh ! she is fickle !’—Sir Edric he cried,
‘ Ah, no ! I am faithful,’—a soft voice replied.

“ Sir Edric he gazed first below, then above,
And high on the ramparts beheld his true-love.
And—‘Oh ! thou art fickle !’—Sir Edric he sighed ;
‘ Ah, no! I am faithful,’ the fair lady cried.

“ ‘Then if thou art faithful, oh! fly to yon boat,
That's moored in the rushes that wave o'er the moat.’ —
‘To yon boat will I hasten so blithsome and free,
And far o'er the world will I travel with thee!’ —

“ ‘And ah !’ cried Sir Edric, while clasping her hand,
We our safety must seek in some far-distant land;
Say, wilt thou repent? will thy love be the same?
When thunders roll round thee, and blue lightnings flame?’ —

[26] “ ‘ Oh ! if thou art true,’ the fair lady replied,
‘ Sir Edric alone my affections shall guide ;
Your frown shall surpass the dark tempests that rise,
And no lightning so keen as a flash from those eyes.’

“ Thus spoke the fond couple in love's playful dream,
While the boat bore them swift down the rippling stream,
Now far from the bounding of Britain they'll flee,
And seek an asylum beyond the wide sea.

“But why does Sir Bertrand from slumber refrain?
And why do the torches illumine the plain?
And why does Sir Ethelbert, hoary and old,
This night leave his castle, and wander the wold?

“Sir Bertrand despises both banquet and rest,
To bring the fair Emmeline back to his breast;
But as soon as he learns with his brother she’s fled,
Despair through his bosom her agonies spread.

“ Sir Ethelbert sickened, Sir Ethelbert died ;
Sir Bertrand forsakes all his riches and pride :
A sad gloomy monk in yon convent he'll stay,
And leave his old castle to fall to decay.

“ Now mourn you, Sir Edric, and mourn you anew,
For Emmeline fickle can never be true.
Now mourn you, Sir Edric, and mourn her lost charms,
For Emmeline's fled to Sir Ferdinand's arms

[27] “ And now will he seek his fond brother again,
His envy in joy, now his partner in pain ;
Yet home as he wandered, his friends were unkind,
But the greatest disaster still tarried behind:

“ For as he ascended the mountain so high,
The swift flashing lightning gleamed pale through the sky,
The hollow-toned thunder rolled awfully round,
And the bellowing caverns re-echoed the sound.

“ But strange to relate, ere the summit he passed,
All hushed was the thunder, and silent the blast;
The lightning it ceased, and the pattering rain,
While the moon bursting forth silvered bright on the plain.

“ Oh ! then saw Sir Edric, with horror and dread,
His father's old castle with dark ivy spread,
No noise struck his ear, save the owls screeching note,
Or where weeds choked the waters that brawled in the moat.

“ No mortal he saw, save a monk in his cowl,
Who sought the drear arch while the tempest should howl ;
His deep-wrinkled cheek proved a bosom distressed,
And his beard it waved white o'er his long sable vest.

“ ‘Now tell me, grey father, and tell me, I pray,
How came this strong castle to fall to decay?’—
[28] ‘The parent, and brother, and all were undone,
Heaven's wrath shall descend on Sir Edric the son!’—

“ ‘Now tell me, I pray, what Sir Ethelbert said
Of Edric, his son, ere his vexed spirit fled?’—
‘ He cried, that with pleasure from life he would part,
Could he pardon and clasp his lost son to his heart.’—

“ ‘Now tell me, old friar, nor hide what is worse,
Oh! what did Sir Bertrand exclaim in his curse?’—
‘In yon lonesome abbey he groaned out his breath,
But Sir Edric he blessed at the moment of death.’—

“ ‘Now tell me, grey father, and tell me, I pray,
Oh! what said Sir Edric, ere² he fled away?’—
‘ He cursed his fond brother, and bore off his wife,
And revels in Paris a libertine's life!’—

² Derived from Old English *ær* (adv., conj., & prep.) meaning “soon, before (in time)”.

“ ‘Thou liest ! hoary sinner !’ Sir Edric he cries,
While vengeance flashed bright through the tears in his eyes;
This blade speaks my feelings—in vain is your prayer,
For what now is left but revenge and despair!’

“ ‘The groans of the friar sound deep through the pile,
While falling he cried, with a sad ghastly smile,
‘ Defaced by Care’s wrinkle, my worn visage view,
And see thy fond brother still faithful to you.’—

“ Sir Edric he tore from his bosom the vest,
And beheld, with dismay, a known sign on his breast,
[29] ‘ My brother !’ he cried, ‘ I forgiveness implore ;’—
Bertrand gasped to forgive him, but word spake³ no more!

“ Where the ivy spreads wide o'er yon huge heap of stones,
There Eldric has buried his dead brother's bones,
And each damp dismal eve will he stalk through the gloom,
To wail, 'midst the storm, his sad plaint at the tomb.

“ Then fear not, my child, though the false legend tells,
That far o'er the country he deals his dark spells,
Nor shake with affright, when the curfew hath tolled,
To meet the grim stranger who wanders the wold.”

³ Archaic or poetic past tense of speak.