

LINE FIELDS

**SIR EDMUND,
A GOTHIC FRAGMENT**

**Anon.
(1796)**

TRANSCRIPTION BY
María Villar de Sande

**EDITING GOTHIC TEXTS
FIRST SERIES, 2014
Nº 8**

The European Magazine and London Review.

Containing the Literature, history, politics, arts, manners,
amusements of the Age.

By the Philological Society of London Vol 29.
From Jan to June 1796. London. Printed for J.Sewell,
Cornhill, 1796

May, 1796.

Vol. 29, pp: 372-374

<http://goo.gl/rsfpH5>

**SIR EDMUND,
A GOTHIC FRAGMENT.**

BY degrees the sky became serene, and after the dreary darkness of the storm, the pale moon rose with double splendour. Sir Edmund now left the cave, and as his steed was too weak to support him, he slowly led him across the heath. He had not advanced many paces before he saw a light, which appeared to be situated on some eminence. Animated with the hope of meeting a person in this desart [sic] country, he hastened his steps towards it, and as his weary horse only retarded him, he tied his faithful Veloce to a tree, and proceeded forward.

The wind now began to increase, and the moon was again shrowded [sic] in darkness. Flashes of lightning illumed the sky, and the rattling peals of thunder reechoed tremendously from the distant mountains; the trees cracked with the violence of the storm, and incessant torrents of rain deluged the earth.

Sir Edmund now lost sight of the light, but wishing to find his horse, he returned to the spot where he had left him, and found him still there. Scarce had the Knight grasped the reins, when a flash of lightning laid the noble animal lifeless at his feet.

Sir Edmund again went in search of the light, and braving the violence of the storm, he at length recovered a view of it, and to his great joy found it to proceed from a lofty turret, which he perceived, by the lightning, formed part of a majestic and towering castle. A row of lofty pines led to the gate, and the Knight had frequent occasion for his sword, to clear his passage through the briars and underwood which had choaked [sic] up the avenue.

At length Sir Edmund arrived at the moat; the draw-bridge was down, and the porch gate was half open. The Knight, eager to gain shelter from the fury of the tempest, seized a large bugle which hung to a ponderous chain, and after several unsuccessful efforts, forced a blast. A solemn silence ensued, and even the raging elements [373] seemed to respect this earnest and sacred appeal to hospitality. Thrice did Sir Edmund sound in vain—when, tired and vexed at the inattention of the watch, he boldly ventured across the bridge, whose aged and crazy planks threatened to precipitate him into the moat

below. Exerting his strength on the huge and sullen gate, he soon forced an entrance, but scarce was he within the porch when an earthquake seemed to shake the whole building;—the gates were closed with violence—the bridge flew up—and when the Knight attempted to return, he, to his amazement, found himself stopt [sic] by an immense portcullis. This Sir Edmund strove in vain, with all his strength, to raise, but no sooner had he touched it, than a second clap of thunder shook the hoary structure.

The Knight, ever a stranger to fear, drew his sword, and resolved to await the arrival of morning under the porch; but the moment he had unsheathed his blade, a loud shriek pierced his ears, and every part of the edifice seemed to groan. Sir Edmund's hair rose beneath his helmet, but his honour now roused urged him to proceed. Short was his prayer, but fervent, when closing his vizor [sic], and with his rosary in his left hand, he boldly advanced across the court. The Knight now endeavoured to find the entrance to the mansion, and after a short search found it, seemingly shut; a slight effort, however, threw it open, and the creaking hinges yielded to the strength of Sir Edmund's arm with a doleful jar, which the vaulted roof dreadfully re-echoed. The Knight now found himself in the fabric, and the almost incessant flashes of lightning discovered to his view a large and lofty hall, the oaken pannels [sic] of which, blackened by the corrosive breath of time, were covered with suits of armour and other implements of war. The fretted roof was decorated with the remains of banners and standards, which proved the warlike prowess, as the armorial bearings in the shattered windows did the nobility, of the ancient lords of this decayed castle. While Sir Edmund was thus remarking the different parts of the hall, a suit of armour near him gave way, and with a tremendous crash fell at his feet. The Knight, from his youth accustomed to arms, took up the breast plate, but what could equal his horror when he discovered fresh traces of blood on the outside. Sir Edmund threw it down—a hollow groan froze the blood within his veins—the other armour fell to the ground—ghastly phantoms appeared to threaten him with their withered haggard looks, and the rolling thunder seemed to threaten the universe with destruction. Now all again was silent—the Knight left the hall, which conducted him to a stair-case, and from thence into a suite of once magnificent rooms. Sir Edmund now entered the gallery, where reigned an awful silence, interrupted only by the howling tempest, or the hollow sounding footsteps of the Knight, who arrived at another staircase, by which he descended into the second court.

The first object that here met Sir Edmund's eye was the light which on the heath had served him for a beacon, and his first resolution was to make towards it; but in vain did the Knight search for an entrance, the whole building seemed without either door or porch. Chance, at last, brought him to a kind of trap door, which opened into a long subterraneous passage. Sir Edmund descended—loathsome and pestilential air almost stopped his breath,

and the path itself was so rugged and broken, as to render it almost impervious. The small gratings above admitted the lightning in so faint a degree, as only to render the obscurity of the place still more horrible. Sir Edmund was at length stopped by a dark stone staircase, which he with difficulty ascended, as time and neglect had almost reduced it to ruins. Sir Edmund now entered a large spacious dungeon, whose present appearance gave sufficient signs of the dreadful horrors of its purpose.—Chains and broken fetters were scattered on the ground. The damp slimy walls exhaled a noxious vapour, and at every step the Knight crushed bones and skulls under his feet. Sir Edmund, whilst thus exploring his way, of a sudden stumbled over what he supposed a fragment of the ceiling, but which, on applying his hands, he found to be a cold and stiff corpse. Sir Edmund started—a momentary tremor shook his nerves, but a second stronger and more lamentable shriek than the former roused his attention. The Knight left this horrid receptacle of, perhaps, murdered innocence, and ascended into a long gallery, from whence he entered into a sumptuous apartment. Time had in vain endeavoured entirely [374] to spoil its former lustre; the splendid marble pavement, the grandeur of the decayed furniture, still contributed to give it a noble and rich aspect. Sir Edmund was proceeding, when a rustling noise, and the distant sound of feet, caught his ear, and gave direction to his course. The noise still approached;—hollow groans sometimes accompanied a murmuring sound.

The door now opened, and a long meagre figure made his entrance;—a silver beard descended to his breast, and united with his hoary locks. His form was noble, and his walk, though infirm, still retained traces of dignity; his vestment was white, but torn; in one hand he carried a torch, and in the other a long poignard. With his eyes fixed on the ground, and with a solemn step, he proceeded to the middle of the room: now his fierce eyes were fixed on the Knight; thrice he pointed with his poignard to an old door on the other side of the room, and vanished. Sir Edmund crossed himself, and was lost in amazement. He approached the door; it opened at his touch. A dark and narrow staircase presented itself to Sir Edmund, from the top of which a faint glimmering was just perceptible. Hitherto all was silent, but the Knight had not proceeded far before the most hideous yells, accompanied with groans and shrieks, almost rent the edifice; rustling noises and footsteps were heard on every part of the staircase; chains and fetters clanked round him; the turret was shaken to the foundation, and every part within seemed to tremble. Sir Edmund advanced with a firm and undaunted step; the higher he ascended the more terrible every thing appeared; sometimes the building appeared in flames; clashing of armour and swords accompanied the most horrid sounds, the stone staircase mouldered under his feet; the wind forcing itself through the loop-holes, created the most discordant notes; bats and owls buzzed round the Knight; toads and vipers spit their venom at him who thus explored their haunts, whilst poisonous and pestilential air almost

stupified [sic] every sense. Sir Edmund was near the top, which was enlightened by a solitary lamp—a gust of wind unroofed the building, and extinguished the light. Sir Edmund proceeded—he wanted to guide himself by the balustrade—on his approach it crumbled into atoms, and at the same time the lower part of the staircase gave way. The Knight found himself at the top; the remainder of the stairs fell in; a door impeded his progress; he forced it and entered.

Holy Virgin protect me! exclaimed a female voice. By the faint glimmering of a taper Sir Edmund perceived a man with an uplifted poignard aiming the fatal blow at a kneeling beauteous female. “Hold, impious villain!” exclaimed the Knight, whilst his sword laid the ruthless wretch headless on the floor. The Lady rose, and fixing her eyes on her deliverer, with the words “Oh, my Edmund,” sunk into his arms. “Agnes!” cried the Knight,

FREDERICSBERG GERMANICUS,
Eaton, May 17, 1796.