GOTHIC BOURNES

THE RUIN OF THE HOUSE OF ALBERT (1800)

TRANSCRIPTION BY

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THE STORY OF

FITZALAN:

THE ADVENTURE

JAMES III. OF SCOTLAND

HAD WITH THE

WEIRD SISTERS,

IN THE DREADFUL

WOOD OF BIRNAN:

THE STORY OF

RAYMOND CASTLE:

THE

RUIN OF THE HOUSE OF ALBERT:

AND

MARY, A FRAGMENT.

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THE RUIN OF *THE HOUSE OF ALBERT*

[42]

From Ryan's Reliques of Genius

Adela was the only daughter of a powerful baron of Aquitaine. Her father sprung from an illustrious family and added to hereditary honours the glory of heroic atchievements [sic]. In his youth, he accompanied the flower of the European chivalry, who fought under the banner of Godfrey, and recovered the holy sepulchre from the hands of the infidels. He returned [43] to his country, crowned with victory and fair renown; and inherited the rich domains of his ancestors.

Adela was in the prime of beauty and possessed a susceptible heart. In her air and aspect, dignity was mingled with sweetness: for in the disposition of her mind, conscious elevation of sentiment was softened by amiable and mild affections.

Edwin, a gallant youth, animated with the generous love of arms, smit [sic] with the renown of Albert's Prowess, and ambitious of profiting by the narrative of his exploits, repaired with other warriors to his hospitable castle. His eye, keen and piercing, indicated a fiery, vigorous, and active spirit. His form was well fitted to kindle desire in the bosom of tender maids: and the heart of Adela was not insensible to his merit. Their passion was mutual. He gazed on her unaffected charms with astonishment; for, till then, he had never felt the tender anxiety, the restless longing and languishment of love. Ambition had been the governing passion of his soul: but the fierceness of ambition now yielded to a softer though no less ardent desire. He no longer discoursed in keen rapture of marshalled hosts, of listed fields, and feats of venturous daring; but languished on the ineffable attractions of a roseate complexion, and a tender melting eye. The vehement impatience of the warrior was lost in the complacency and pensiveness of the lover.

Albert, perceiving this change in his deportment, demanded the cause. Edwin replied in candid and respectful guise:[1] he told him, without reserve, of the impression made on his soul by the peerless beauty of Adela; and, with the ardency of youthful passion, besought him to ratify his sincere attachment by wedlock. "And who art thou," said the haughty baron, "who pretends to the love of Adela? What feats of heroic prowess hast thou atchieved? Or is thy ancestry distinguished among the chieftains of the south? Thy shield is inscribed with no

[1] Guise: 'manner'.

valorous atchievement: nor are thy deeds, nor the deeds of thy fathers, rehearsed by [44] recording minstrels. Gain thee a name in arms, and then aspire to the envied alliance of the house of Albert."

These words, like an arrow, penetrated the heart of Edwin. Love and ambition, hitherto at variance, were now united; they concurred in the same pursuit, and their vehemence was irresistible. Accordingly the youthful warrior prepared for his departure, and took a tender farewel [sic] of Adela. "Farewel!" she replied, the tears gushing from her radiant eyes. "Heaven knows, no gallant youth but thee ever shared my affections. May the holy angels, who regard true and virtuous love with esteem, grant thee protection! Speedy be thy return! And O! remember me. Gay and courtly dames, skilled in seducement and cunning device, may strive to allure thee; but their love will not equal mine." They plighted vows of mutual fidelity, and exchanged tokens of unshaken attachment. Then Edwin, clad in complete armour, a gay undaunted warrior, mounted a steed proudly caparisoned, and bent his course to the plans[2] of Catalonia, where the Saracen waded in the blood of Spain.

Soon after his departure, Edgar, a proud and wealthy chieftain, with a numerous retinue of knights and retainers, came to the castle of Albert. He was received with pomp and hospitable welcome. He cast amorous glances on the reserved, unrivalled charms of Adela. He preferred [sic] his courtship with studied smiles, and speeches devised with cunning. She heard him at first with indifference; he persisted, and she requited him with contempt. He then addressed his suit to the baron: he boasted of the high renown of his ancestors, and the wide extent of his domain; he expatiated on the number of his vassals; and insisted, in magnificent terms, on the mutual honour and security that would accrue from so seemly an alliance. Albert listened to him with partial and pleased attention; he repented of the hopes he had encouraged in the soul of Edwin; and endeavoured to persuade his daughter to forget her attachment to the valiant youth. In vain the astonished [45] Adela lamented, wept, entreated; in vain she threw herself at her father's feet, and tore her dishevelled tresses, and in anguish smote her breast. Her opposition, instead of mitigating his rigour, augmented his resentment, and confirmed him in his ungenerous purpose. He mingled menaces and unkind reproach with his persuasions. "By the holy rood," said he, with a fastidious and wrathful aspect, "the honour of my house shall not be stained by the pretensions of a low-born boy. Degenerated as thou art, the meanness of thy sentiments shall not sully the splendour of thine ancestry, nor load my respected age with dishonour. Receive the addresses of Edgar with suitable regard, and the deference due to my commands. Mean time [sic] preparations shall be made for the bridal solemnity, in a manner becoming the dignity of this alliance."

Adela, after remonstrating in vain against the severity of his commands, intreated, with an humble and dejected air, that the marriage ceremony might be delayed. "Can Edgar," said she, "prize the cold and constrained embraces of a heart that throbs for another? Will the sighing and anguish of a broken spirit accord with the fond caresses of a bridegroom? To Edwin my faith was plighted, and on him my imagination hath dwelt. Give me time, therefore, to divert the

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[2] 'Plains'.

current of an affection too violent to be suddenly opposed; to discourage the reveries of fancy, animated by a legal and habituated passion; and to reconcile myself to the addresses of Edgar." As her reasoning was plausible, the nuptial solemnity was deferred. But, as soon as she had retired from her father's presence, she summoned a page in whom she confided, and spoke to him in the following manner: "Prepare thee for a long journey: saddle the fleetest of my father's steeds, and during the obscurity of the night depart. Hie thee to the banks of the Ebro; find Edwin; tell him of the perils that beset me; tell him that a wealthy and powerful rival, with costly parade, and glittering show of blazonry, hath imposed on my father, and insinuated [46] himself into his esteem." The menial bowed with humble obeisance, and with professions of diligence and fidelity departed.

Meantime Edgar pressed his suit with courteous phrase and dalliance. Daily tournaments were exhibited at the castle of Albert. The knights and barons of the neighbouring domains attended: but Edgar purpassed[3] them in the splendor [sic] of his armour, and the pomp of his retinue. The hall resounded with revelry and rejoicing; and minstrels, clad in gaudy apparel, celebrated the praises of warlike chiefs, or sung the power and pleasures of love. Adela arrayed her countenance with smiles and courtesy; but her bosom was distracted with anguish. "O when," she cried, "shall I be delivered from the importunity of a detested suitor, and the bondage of feigned complacency? When will Edwin return, adorned with conquest, and confident with success? His merit shall shine unrivalled; and Edgar shall be covered with shame."

At length the page returned; and, repairing to the apartment of his mournful mistress, "Now heaven forefend," [sic] said he, "most gracious lady, that the tidings I bring should injure thy tender frame more than thou art able to endure! May the saints and ministring angels uphold thee!"—"Hath he perished?"—cried Adela, with a look of terror and amazement. "In what bloody field hath he fallen? Where lies the lifeless body? What barbarous adversary hath mangled and insulted his graceful form?"—"He hath not perished," replied the attendant. "But, O gentle lady! foul arts have been practiced; shameful perfidy hath been committed. Edwin lives, but not for thee; he hath given his hand to another!"—"Peace! peace!" interrupted Adela, with a faultering [sic] utterance, and looks of astonishment mixed with anger, "restrain thy blasphemous speech, nor with base calumny asperse the fame of a true and gallant warrior."—"When," answered the menial, "have I been guilty of deceit or infidelity toward my gentle mistress? Full sore it grieveth me to [47] be the messenger of evil tidings."—"Rehearse them unreservedly", cried Adela, with a tone of anxious impatience.

"I pursued my journey," said he, "many days, without any adventure, till I came within sight of a stately castle. It stood on the brow of a woody hill; was garnished with towers and battlements; and commanded a wide prospect of cultivated fields and forests. As I advanced, mine ear was suddenly surprised with the din of hounds and horns, mingled with the cries of the huntsmen. I soon descried a gallant show of knights and splendid dames, mounted on milk white coursers, and pursuing the rapid deer. When the chace[4] was ended, they stopped by the side of a chrystal [sic] brook; and a comely youth, arrayed in shining apparel, alighted from his foamy

[3] 'Surpassed'
[4] "Chase".

steed, and with courtly obeisance presented the prey to a fair and smiling lady. I mingled in their company, and in the lineaments of the courteous youth recognized the inconstant Edwin. O gentle lady, may heaven so help me in my utmost need, as I now speak the words of truth! And may the saints and holy angels so succour thee as thy mishap requires! The faithless youth hath committed treason against thy love. Seduced by the blandishment of an artful dame, he hath become forgetful of thy peerless beauty."

The heart of Adela throbbed with anguish during the recital. "Valorous heroic warrior!" she exclaimed, "are these thy deeds of hardy prowess, to betray the innocent credulity of an easy maid? Stain to manhood, and the honoured profession of arms, be thou henceforth banished from my remembrance!"

Meantime Edgar advanced his suit with redoubled ardour. Albert, unable to brook any longer delay, insisted on having the bridal ceremony solemnized; and Adela, incited by secret pride and resentment, submitted to the will of her father. The report of this noble alliance was published through the land; and the kindred of Albert and Edgar, with the neighbouring barons, were assembled to grace the solemnity. Already were [48] the parties betrothed; the holy benediction was also pronounced; and for ever was Adela to be the wedded spouse of Edgar. Now, with pompous show and attendance, the banquet was served up to dames and knights, the flower of courtesy and valour. The castle resounded with minstrelsy and the dance; when a stranger, in the simple garb of a pilgrim, entered the hall. He cast his eyes around on the goodly company, and wit an air of sanctity and respect implored a blessing on their fellowship. He was received with hospitable welcome, and the reverence due to his holy semblance. He spake in meek and modest guise; his eyes were often fixed on Adela; they were sometimes dimmed with a glistening tear; and ever and anon his bosom heaved with involuntary sighs. He took the harp of a minstrel; he touched the strings with masterly cunning, and accompanied the notes with a melodious voice. Tuneful, but melancholy, was the strain: he sung the sorrows of those that are forsaken; the anguish of a desponding spirit; and the wounds inflicted on a faithful heart, by inconstancy and proud disdain. He desisted, with marks of grief and inward contention. "Holy pilgrim," said Albert, the sense of calamity devours thy spirit. Inform us of thy mishap, that, if possible, we may administer comfort. Nor think it incompatible with bridal festivity, to indulge compassion, and assuage the torment of heartfelt care."

"I am the son of a freeman," replied the stranger; "and though my birth was not ennobled by splendid titles, nor my ancestry distinguished by the parade of blazonry, my bosom burned with the love of arms, and my heart was upright. In an unlucky hour I became enamoured of a gentle dame, the only daughter of a noble baron. My sincere though presumptuous suit seemed not displeasing to that peerless beauty; and with the ardent, intemperate boldness of a lover, I asked her in marriage of her sire. "Go," said he, "gain thee a name in arms, and then aspire to the envied alliance of my house." I departed, not without tender interchange [49] of vows and tokens of affection with the beloved idol of my heart. I hastened to the plans of Catalonia, where the Saracen was waging fierce battle against the banner of the holy cross. I proffered my service to the chief of the Christians; and that my sword was not idle, and that I was not backward in the strife of arms, my honourable wounds can testify. Neither were my services, nor my thirst after martial fame, unrewarded. Fair recompence [sic] have I received, and the sun of glory hath gilded the obscurity of my birth. Rejoicing in my success, I hastened my return. But what power

of utterance can express the agony of my soul, when I learned that the faithless and inconstant fair had yielded to the vows of another? I who was so true and loyal to my love and plighted troth, to be so soon forgotten, so soon forsaken!"—

"Enough, enough!" cried Adela, "O ill-requited lover! Pierce not my soul with deeper wounds. O Edwin! Edwin! never was I inconstant. Bear witness, ye holy angels! But traitorous guile hath been practised. Thy integrity hath been impeached, and my vexed heart betrayed into error".

The eyes of all were now turned on the stranger. He threw off his disguise, and, instead of a pilgrim's staff, he grasped a keen and trenchant weapon. Resentment glowed in his cheek, and flashed from his fiery eye. "And who," said he, "hath impeached mine integrity? Stand forth, thou proud, but dastard baron, whose glossing tales have betrayed the unwary heart of a maiden. It is Edwin demands reparation." Conscious fear was manifest in the disordered features, the pale cheek, and disconcerted air of Edgar. He nevertheless accepted the challenge: and the warriors, arraying themselves in complete armour, descended into the court of the castle. In the first onset, the well-tempered steel of Edwin cleft the crested helm of his adversary; he threw him to the ground, and disarmed him. "Confess thy guilt," said the conqueror, "and by what infamous arts thou hast accomplished thy design."—"By [50] gifts and glittering gold," he replied, "I corrupted the page of Adela, who, with counterfeited semblance of fidelity and regret, accused thee of inconstancy, and imposed falsehood on the ear of his mistress. I embraced the season of her excited resentment, and forwarded my suit with success. She is mine by the indissoluble ties of wedlock: and know, proud boy, that if thy hands be stained with my blood, it is the blood of Adela's husband; and if she receives thee to her bosom, she receives the slayer of her spouse."

Edwin started with apparent horror. He paused; but recollecting himself, "Arise," he cried, "and, by another trial, prove thyself worthy of that envied title." So saying, he raised him from the ground, and both warriors addressed themselves a second time to the fight. Edgar, burning with exasperated rancour, aimed his spear at his rival's breast. Edwin neither averted nor avoided the deadly blow. The keen weapon cleft his breast, and was tinged in the purple springs of his heart. He fell to the ground. "Farewel," he cried, "Adela! lady peerless! and dearly beloved. I have proved myself worthy of thy esteem. I die a sacrifice to thy repose. With my hands red with thy husband's blood, could I ever aspire to thy love? Could I survive and behold thee the wedded bride of another?" He heaved a sigh, and died. "Inhuman deed!["] cried Adela, tearing her lovely tresses, and beating her snow-white breast. She ran, she threw herself on the lifeless body. "O stay!" she exclaimed, "O leave me not in my woe! Return, fleeting spirit! Reanimate these pallid features! He heeds me not. —I heard a voice! a dreary voice! It was Edwin! He summons me away!—I come! I come! Let the nuptial bed be prepared! The clay-cold bed!"—So saying, she clasped the corps [sic], and expired.

Instantly the page, who had been corrupted by Edgar, seizing a dagger, rushed behind that treacherous baron, and pierced him to the heart. "Perish!" he cried, "author of my ruin, and of the ruin of the house or Albert." He grew immediately frantic: he ran forth [51] furious and screaming: the memory of his crimes pursued him, and his reason was never restored.

The obsequies of the deceased were celebrated with due solemnity: holy requiems were chanted over their remains; and pious priests preferred [sic] orisons for their eternal repose.

Albert, unable to sustain the weight of misfortune, forsook the habitation of his ancestors; and, exposing his old age to the fatigues of a pilgrimage, sought the holy land, and there passed the remainder of his days in a monastery.