

The Prose Marmion eBook

The Prose Marmion

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A TALE OF THE SCOTTISH BORDER

ADAPTED FROM

Scott's "Marmion"

BY

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Ithaca, N.Y.

Author of the Prose "Lady of the Lake," etc.

1903

[Illustration: *Sir Walter Scott. (Bust.)*]

[Illustration: *Sir Walter Scott. (From painting by Wm. Nicholson.)*]

INTRODUCTION.

Sir Walter Scott, poet and novelist, was born in Edinburgh, Scotland, five years before the Declaration of Independence in America. Unlike most little Scotch boys, he was not sturdy and robust, and in his second year, a lameness appeared that never entirely left him. Being frail and delicate, he received the most tender care from parents and grandparents. Five consecutive years of his life, from the age of three to the age of eight, were spent on his grandfather's farm at Sandyknow. At the end of this period, he returned to Edinburgh greatly improved in health, and soon after, entered the high school, where he remained four years. A course at the university followed the high school, but Scott never gained distinction as a scholar. He loved romances, old plays, travels, and poetry too well, ever to become distinguished in philosophy, mathematics, or the dry study of dead languages.

In his early years, he had formed a taste for ballad literature, which very significantly influenced, if it did not wholly determine, the character of his writings. The historical incidents upon which the ballads were founded, their traditional legends, affected him profoundly, and he wished to become at once a poet of chivalry, a writer of romance. His father, however, had other plans for his son, and the lad was made a lawyer's apprentice in the father's office. Continuing, as recreation, his reading, he gave six years to the study of law, being admitted to the bar when only twenty-one. For years, he cultivated literature as a relaxation from business.

At the age of twenty-six he married, and about this time accepted the office of deputy sheriff of Selkirkshire, largely moved to do so by his unwillingness to rely upon his pen for support. Nine years later, 1806, through family influence he was appointed, at a good salary, to one of the chief clerkships in the Scottish court of sessions. The fulfillment of his long-cherished desire of abandoning his labors as an advocate, in order to devote himself to literature, was now at hand. He had already delighted the public by various early literary efforts, the most important being the "Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border," parts of which had occupied him since childhood. This was followed by "Sir Tristrem" and the "Lay of the Last Minstrel." Scott was now enrolled among the poets of the day, and while never neglecting the duties of office, he entered upon his literary career with unflagging industry. "Marmion," "The Lady of the Lake," "Don Roderick," and "Rokeby" reflected his romantic fervor.

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Lord Byron now had entered the field of letters, and Scott, conscious of the power of his rival, determined to seek fame in other than poetic paths. This determination produced “Waverly,” whose success gave birth to Scott’s desire to be numbered among the landed gentry of the country. Under the influence of this passion, the novels now associated with his name followed with startling rapidity, and their growth developed in the author an unwillingness to be known as a penman writing for fortune. Literary fame was less dear to him than the upbuilding of a family name. The novels went for a time fatherless, but the baronial mansion, still one of the most famous shrines of the curious, grew into the stately proportions of Abbotsford.

In 1820. George IV. conferred upon Scott the baronetcy, dearer than all the plaudits of the public. But

“Giddy chance never bears,
That mortal bliss shall last for years,”

and the failure of banker and of publisher disclosed that the landed baronet had been a silent partner in the house of his printer for a quarter of a century, for whose debts Scott was liable to the extent of one hundred thousand pounds and to his bankers for enough more to make the entire debt one hundred fifty thousand pounds. Unappalled by the loss, Scott refused all offers of release from his creditors, and began to pay the debt by means of his pen, determined to preserve Abbotsford to his children’s children. At a dinner given in 1827, he threw off all disguise, and acknowledged the authorship of the Waverly novels.

His great exertions brought on paralysis. A visit to Italy failed to improve his condition, and he returned to die on the banks of the Tweed, and to be laid at rest in Dreyburg Abbey. He had paid one hundred thousand pounds of the debt, and the publishers of his works had sufficient confidence in their sale to advance the remaining fifty thousand pounds, the estate thus being left free of encumbrance.

Of his four children, two sons and two daughters, none left male issue. A grandchild, the wife of Robert Hope, was permitted by Parliament to assume the name of Scott, and her son Walter, at the age of twenty-one, was knighted by Queen Victoria.

Edinburgh has erected to his memory a most graceful monument, and Westminster Abbey a memorial. Visitors, under certain limitations, are permitted to visit the mansion, to see the enchanted library, and the famous study, to stray about the grounds where the famous writer spent the happiest, as well as the saddest, years of his life.

[Illustration: *Abbotsford*.]

THE PROSE MARMION.

CHAPTER I.

In all the border country that lies between England and Scotland, no castle stands more fair than Norham. Fast by its rock-ribbed walls flows the noble Tweed, and on its battled towers frown the hills of Cheviot.

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Day was dying, St. George's banner, broad and gay, hung in the evening breeze that scarce had power to wave it o'er the keep. Warriors on the turrets were moving across the sky like giants, their armor flashing back the gleam of the setting sun, when a horseman dashed forward, spurred on his proud steed, and blew his bugle before the dark archway of the castle. The warder, knowing well the horn he heard, hastened from the wall and warned the captain of the guard. At once was given the command, "Make the entrance free! Let every minstrel, every herald, every squire, prepare to receive Lord Marmion, who waits below!" The iron-studded gate was unbarred, the portcullis raised, the drawbridge dropped, and proudly across it, stepped a red roan charger, bearing the noble guest.

Lord Marmion was a stalwart knight, whose visage told of many a battle. The scar on his brown cheek spoke of Bosworth Field, and the fire that burned in his eye showed a spirit still proud. The lines of care on his brow, and the threads of silver in his black curling hair, spoke less of age than of toil. The square-turned joints, the evident strength of body and limb, bespoke not a carpet-knight, but a grim champion. From head to foot, he was clad in mail of Milan steel. His helmet of embossed gold hung at the saddle-bow. A falcon hovered in the crest, and soared on the azure field of the noble lord's shield, above the motto, "Who checks at me, to death is dight!"

The horse was as richly clad as its rider. The reins were embroidered in blue, and ribbons of the same color decked the arched neck and mane. The housings were of blue trapped with gold.

Behind the leader, rode gallant squires of noble name. Though still a squire, each had well earned knighthood. Each could tame a war horse, draw a bow, wield a sword, dance in the hall, carve at the board, frame love ditties, and sing them to fair ladies.

Next in the train, came four men-at-arms: two carried halbert, bill, axe, and lance; a third led the sumpter mules and the ambling palfrey, which served to bear Lord Marmion when he wished to relieve his battle steed; the most trusty of the four held on high the pennon, furled in its glossy blue streamers. Last were twenty yeomen, two and two, in blue jerkins, black hose, and wearing falcons embroidered on each breast. At their belts hung quivers, and in their hands were boar-spears, tough and strong. They knew the art of hunting by lake or in wood, could bend a six-foot bow, or, at the behest of their lord, send far the cloth-yard spear.

To welcome Marmion, the Flower of English Chivalry, the soldiers of the guard of Norham stood in the castle yard, with reversed pike and spear. Minstrels and trumpeters were there, the welcome was prepared, and as the train entered, a clang sounded through turret and tower, such as the old castle had seldom heard.

Trumpets flourished, the martial airs rang out as Marmion crossed the court, scattering angels among the ranks. Loud rose the cry:

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"Welcome to Norham, Marmion!
Stout heart and open hand!
Thou flower of English land!"

Two pursuivants stood at the entrance to the donjon, and hailed the guest as Lord of Fontenaye, of Lutterward, Scrivelbaye, of "Tamworth tower and town." To requite their courtesies, Marmion, as he alighted, hung about the neck of each a chain of twelve marks.

"Largesse, largesse, knight of the crest of gold!" cried the heralds, in acknowledgment of the bounty received;

"A blazon'd shield in battle won,
Ne'er guarded heart so bold."

As they marshalled him to the castle hall, the guests stood aside, and again the trumpets flourished, and the heralds cried:

"Room, lordlings, room for Lord Marmion,
With the crest and helm of gold!
Full well we know the trophies won
In the lists at Cottiswold:
There, vainly Ralph de Wilton strove
'Gainst Marmion's force to stand;
To him he lost his lady-love,
And to the King his land.
Ourselves beheld the listed field,
A sight both sad and fair;
We saw Lord Marmion pierce the shield,
And saw the saddle bare;
We saw the victor win the crest
He wears with worthy pride;
And on the gibbet-tree, reversed,
His foeman's scutcheon tied.
Place, nobles, for the Falcon-Knight!
Room, room, ye gentles gay,
For him who conquered in the right,
Marmion of Fontenaye!"

As the welcome died away, forth stepped Sir Hugh, lord of the castle. He led his visitor to the raised dais and placed him in the seat of honor, while a northern harper chanted a rude hymn. The ear of Marmion could scarcely brook the barbarous sound, yet much he praised, well knowing that,

“Lady’s suit, and minstrel’s strain,
By knight should ne’er be heard in vain.”

As the weird strains died away, the host pressed the English lord to bide long as a guest, promising rest for horse, and refreshment and pleasure for man, with many a joust, or feat at arms, for those who wished to learn northern ways.

At this the brow of Marmion grew dark and stern. Sir Hugh marked the changed look, and pouring out a bowl of sparkling wine, said:

“Now pledge me here, Lord Marmion:
But first I pray thee fair,
Where hast thou left that page of thine,
Whose beauty was so rare?
When last in Raby towers we met,
The boy I closely eyed,
And often marked his cheeks were wet
With tears he fain would hide.”

Lord Marmion ill concealed his rising anger, yet he made a calm reply.

“The lad was too frail to endure the northern climate, and I have left him at Lindisfarne. May I ask, Lord Heron, why the lady of the castle disdains to grace the hall to-day? Is it because Marmion of Fontenaye is present?”

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The Knight replied:

“Norham Castle is a grim, dull cage for a bird so beautiful as the lady of Heron, and with my consent she sits with the noble and fair Queen Margaret, the bride of royal James.”

“Ah!” replied the Heron’s noble guest, “if this be so, I will gladly bear to her your tender messages. I am now, by the request of our good English King, on my way to the court of Scotland, to learn why James is gathering troops, why making warlike preparations, and, if it be possible, I am to persuade him to maintain the peace. From your great goodness, I make bold to ask for myself and for my train a trusty guide. I have not ridden in Scotland since James backed Richard, Duke of York, in his pretensions to the throne of England. Then, as you remember, I marched with Surrey’s forces, and razed to the ground the tower of Aytoun.”

“For such need, my lord, trust old Norham gray. Here are guides who have spurred far on Scottish ground, who have tasted the ale of St. Bothan, driven off the beeves of Lauderdale, and fired homes that the inmates might have light by which to dress themselves.”

“In good sooth,” replied Lord Marmion, “were I bent on war, a better guard I could not wish, but I go in form of peace, a friendly messenger to a foreign King. A plundering border spear might arouse suspicious fears, and the deadly feud, the thirst for blood, break out in unseemly broil. More fitting as guide, would be a friar, a pardoner, traveling priest, or strolling pilgrim.”

Sir Hugh musingly passed his hand over his brow, and then replied: “Fain would I find the guide you need, but, though a bishop built this castle, few holy brethren resort here. If the priest of Shoreswood were here, he could rein your wildest horse, but no spearsman in the hall will sooner strike or join in fray. Friar John of Tilmouth is the very man! He is a blithesome brother, a welcome guest in hall and hut. He knows each castle, town and tower in which the ale and wine are good. He now seldom leaves these walls, but, perchance, in your guard he will go.”

In the pause that followed, young Selby, nephew of the Earl of Norham, respectfully said, “Kind uncle, unhappy we, if harm came to Friar John. When time hangs heavy in the hall, and the snow lies deep at Christmas tide, when we can neither hunt nor joust, who will sing the carols, and sweep away the stake at bowls? Who will lead the games and gambols? Let Friar John in safety fill his chimney corner, roast hissing crabs, or empty the flagons. Last night, there came to Norham Castle a fitter guide for Lord Marmion.”

“Nephew,” said Sir Hugh, “well hast thou spoke. Say on.”



“There came here, direct from Rome, one who hath visited the blessed tomb, and worshipped in each holy spot of Arabia and Palestine. He hath been on the hills where rested Noah’s Ark; he hath walked by the Red Sea; in Sinai’s Wilderness, he saw the mount where Moses received the law. He knows the passes of the North, and is on his way to distant shrines beyond the Forth. Little he eats, and drinks only of stream or lake. He is a fit guide for moor and fell.”

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“Gramercy!” exclaimed Lord Marmion. “Loth would I be to take Friar John, if this Palmer will lead us as far as Holy-Rood. I’ll pay him not in beads and cockle shells, but in ‘angels’ fair and good. I love such holy rambles. They know how to charm each weary hill with song or romance.

“Some jovial tale, or glee, or jest,
They bring to cheer the way.”

“Ah! sire,” said young Selby, as he laid his finger on his lip in token of silence, “this man knows more than he has ever learned from holy lore. Last night, we listened at his cell, and strange things we heard. He muttered on till dawn. No conscience clear and void of evil intent remains so long awake to pray.”

“Let it pass,” cried Marmion. “This man and he only shall guide me on my way, though he and the arch fiend were sworn friends. So, please you, gentle youth, call this Palmer to the castle hall.”

Little did Marmion dream that the Palmer was Ralph de Wilton, his deadliest foe, in disguise—Ralph de Wilton, his rival in love, whom Marmion had accused of treason, had caused to be sent into exile, and whom he supposed dead.

A moment later the Palmer appeared, clad in a black mantle and cowl, and wearing on his shoulders the keys of St. Peter cut in cloth of red. His cap, bordered with scallop shells, fitted close to his head, and over all was drawn the cowl. His sandals were travel-worn. In his hands he bore a staff and palm branch, emblems of the pilgrim from the holy land. No lord or knight was there in the hall who had a more stately step, none who looked more proud. He waited not for salutation, but strode across the hall of state, and fronted Marmion, as peer meets peer. Beneath the cowl was a face so wan, so worn, a cheek so sunken, and an eye so wild, that the mother would not have known her child, much less Marmion, his rival.

Danger, travel, want, and woe soon change the form. Deadly fear can outstrip time; toil quenches the fire of youth; and despair traces wrinkles deeper than old age.

“Happy whom none of these befall;
But this poor Palmer knew them all.”

Lord Marmion made known his request, and the Palmer took upon himself the task of guide, on condition that they set out without delay, saying:

“But I have solemn vows to pay
And may not linger by the way;
Saint Mary grant that cave or spring

May back to peace my bosom bring,
Or bid it throb no more!”

Then the page, on bended knee, presented to each guest in turn the massive silver bowl of wassail, “the midnight draught of sleep,” rich with wine and spices. Lord Marmion drank, “Sound sleep to all”; the earl pledged his noble guest; all drained it merrily except the Palmer. He alone refused, although Selby urged him most courteously. The feast was over, the sound of minstrel hushed. Nought was heard in the castle but the slow footsteps of the guard.

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At dawn the chapel doors unclosed, and after a hasty mass from Friar John, a rich repast was served to knight and squire.

“Lord Marmion’s bugles blew to horse:
Then came the stirrup-cup in course;
Between the Baron and his host
No point of courtesy was lost;
Till, filing from the gate, had passed
That noble train, their Lord the last.
Then loudly rang the trumpet call;
Thundered the cannon from the wall,
And shook the Scottish shore;
Around the castle eddied slow,
Volumes of smoke as white as snow,
And hid its turrets hoar;
Till they rolled forth upon the air,
And met the river breezes there.”

[Illustration: *The library, Abbotsford.*]

CHAPTER II.

The breeze which swept away the rolling smoke from Norham, curled not the Tweed alone. Far upon Northumbrian waters, it blew fresh and strong, bearing on its wings a barque from the Abbey of Whitby on the coast of Yorkshire, sailing to St. Cuthbert’s at Lindisfarne, on Holy Isle.

“The merry seamen laugh’d to see
Their gallant ship so lustily
Furrow the green sea-foam.
Much joy’d they in their honor’d freight;
For, on the deck, in chair of state,
The Abbess of Saint Hilda placed,
With five fair nuns, the galley graced.

“‘T was sweet to see these holy maids,
Like birds escaped to green-wood shades,
Their first flight from the cage;
How timid, and how curious, too,
For all to them was strange and new,
And all the common sights they view,
Their wonderment engage.”



Light-hearted were they all, except the Abbess and the novice Clare. Fair, kind, and noble, the Abbess had early taken the veil. Her hopes, her fears, her joys, were bounded by the cloister walls; her highest ambition being to raise St. Hilda's fame. For this she gave her ample fortune—to build its bowers, to adorn its chapels with rare and quaint carvings, and to deck the relic shrine with ivory and costly gems. The poor and the pilgrim blessed her bounty and shelter.

Her pale cheek and spare form were made more striking by the black Benedictine garb. Vigils and penitence had dimmed the luster of her eyes. Though proud of her religious sway and its severity, she loved her maidens and was loved by them in return.

The purpose of the present voyage was most unhappy, and to the Abbess most painful. She came to Lindisfarne upon the summons of St. Cuthbert's Abbot, to hold with him and the Prioress of Tynemouth an inquisition on two apostates from the faith, if need were, to condemn them to death.

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On the galley's prow sat the unhappy sister Clare, young and beautiful, lovely and guileless, as yet a nun unprofessed. She had been betrothed to Ralph de Wilton, whom she supposed now dead, or worse, a dishonored fugitive. After the disgrace brought upon her lover, Clare had been commanded by her guardians to give her hand to Lord Marmion, who loved her for her lands alone. Heartbroken at the fate of her true-love, and to escape this hateful marriage, she was about to take the vestal vow, and in the gloom of St. Hilda hide her blasted hopes, her youth and beauty.

As the vessel glided over the waters, she gazed into their depths, seeing only a sun-scorched desert, waste and bare, where no wave murmured, no breeze sighed. Again she saw a loved form on the burning sands: the dear dead, denied even the simplest rites of burial.

Now the vessel skirted the coast of mountainous Northumberland. Towns, towers, and halls, successive rose before the delighted group of maidens. Tynemouth's Priory appeared, and as they passed, the fair nuns told their beads. At length the Holy Island was reached. The tide was at its flood. Twice each day, pilgrims dry-shod might find their way to the island; and twice each day the waves beat high between the island and the shore, effacing all marks of pilgrim's staff and sandalled foot.

As the galley flew to the port, higher and higher, the castle and its battled towers rose to view, a huge, solemn, dark-red pile. In Saxon strength the massive arches broad and round, row on row, supported by short, ponderous columns, frowned upon the approaching visitor. It stood at the very water's edge, and had been built long before the birth of Gothic architecture. On its walls the tempestuous sea and heathen Dane alike had vainly poured their impious rage. For more than a thousand years, wind, wave, and warrior had been held at bay. The deep walls of the old abbey still stood worn but unsubdued.

As they drew near, the maidens raised St. Hilda's song. Borne on the wind over the wave, their voices met a response of welcome in the chorus which arose upon the shore. Soon, bearing banner, cross, and relic, monks and nuns filed in order from the grim cloister down to the harbor, echoing back the hymn. Among her maidens, conspicuous in veil and hood, stood the Abbess, even then engaged in holy devotion.

When the reception at harbor and hall was over, and the evening banquet ended, the vestal maidens and their visitors, secure from unhallowed eyes, roamed at will through each holy cloister, aisle, gallery, and dome. Though it was a summer night, the evening fell damp and chill, the sea breeze blowing cold, and the pure-minded girls closed around the blazing hearth, each in turn to paint the glory of her favorite saint.

While, round the fire, legends were rehearsed by the happy group, a very different scene was taking place in a secret underground aisle, where a council of life and death was being held. The spot was more dark and lone than a dungeon cell. Light and air

were excluded, as it was a burial place for those who, dying in sin, might not be laid within the Church. It was also a place of punishment, whence if a cry pierced the upper air, the hearer offered a prayer, thinking he heard the moaning of spirits in torment.

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Few save the Abbot knew the place, and fewer still, the devious way by which it was approached. When taken there, victims and judge were led blindfold. The walls were rude rocks, the pavement, gravestones sunken and worn. The noxious vapor, chilled into drops, fell tinkling on the floor. An antique lamp, hanging from an iron chain, gave a dim light, which strove with darkness and damp to show the horrors of the scene. Here the three judges were met to pronounce the sentence of doom.

In the pale light sat the Abbess of St. Hilda. Closely she drew her veil to hide the teardrops of pity. Near her was the Prioress of Tynemouth, proud and haughty, yet white with awe. Next was the aged Abbot of St. Cuthbert, or, as he was called, the "Saint of Lindisfarne." Before them, under sentence, stood the guilty pair. One was a maiden who, disguised in the dress of a page, had been taken from Marmion's train. The cloak and hood could not conceal or mar her beauty. On the breast of her doublet was Lord Marmion's badge, a falcon crest, which she vainly attempted to conceal.

At the command of the Prioress, the silken band that fastened the young girl's long, fair hair was undone, and down over her slender form fell the rich golden ringlets. Before them stood Constance de Beverley, a professed nun of Fontevraud. Lured by the love of Marmion, she had broken her vow, and fled from the convent. She now stood so beautiful, so calm, so pale, that but for the heaving breast and heavy breathing, she might have been a form of wax wrought to the very life.

Her companion in misery was a sorry sight. This wretch, wearing frock and cowl, was not ashamed to moan, to shrink, to grovel on the floor, to crouch like a hound, while the accused frail girl waited her doom without a sound, without a tear.

Well might she grow pale! In the dark wall were two niches narrow and high. In each was laid a slender meal of roots, bread, and water. Close to each cell, motionless, stood two haggard monks holding a blazing torch, and displaying the cement, stones, and implements with which the culprits were to be immured.

Now the blind old Abbot rose to speak the doom of those to be enclosed in the new made tombs. Twice he stopped, as the woeful maiden, gathering her powers, tried to make audible the words which died in murmurs on her quivering lips. At length, by superhuman effort, she sent the blood, curdled at her heart, coursing through every vein. Light came to her eye, color to her cheek, and when the silence was broken, she gathered strength at every word. It was a strange sight to see resolution so high in a form so weak, so soft, so fair.

"I speak," she said, "not to implore mercy, for full well I know it would be vain. Neither do I speak to gain your prayers, for a lingering, living death within these walls will be a penance fit to cleanse my soul of every sin. I speak not for myself, but for one whom I have wronged though he never did me wrong; one who, if living, is now an exile under the ban of the King. I speak to clear the fair name of Ralph de Wilton, and to accuse

Lord Marmion of Fontenaye, the traitor, to whose false words of love I listened when I left my veil and convent dear.

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“Long, weary days, I bowed my pride, and humbled my honor, to ride as squire to this false knight, who daily promised me marriage. To be his slave, hoping to be his wife, I forfeited all peace on earth, all hope beyond the grave; but when he met the betrothed of Ralph de Wilton, the Lady Clare, when he learned of her vast wealth and broad lands, when he saw her face more fair than mine, he foreswore his faith. I, Constance, was beloved no more. It is an old story, often told.

“The King approved the scheme of Marmion. Vainly de Wilton pleaded his right to the hand of Clare, and when all fair means were exhausted, Ralph was accused of treason. By my woman’s unworthy hand, at the command of Marmion, was forged the papers which sealed de Wilton’s fate. The two men fought in mortal combat.

“‘Their prayers are prayed,
Their lances in the rest are laid.’

“The result was told by the loud cry, ‘Marmion! Marmion! De Wilton to the block!’ Justice seemed dead, for he, ever loyal in love and in faith, was overthrown by the falsehearted. This packet will prove de Wilton innocent of treason, how innocent, these letters alone can tell, and I now give them to the sacred care of the Abbess of St. Hilda. Guard them with your life, till they rest in the hands of the King.”

She paused, gathered voice and strength and proceeded:

“The Lady Clare hated the name of Marmion, mourned her dishonored lover, and fled to the convent of Whitby. The King, incensed at her action, declared she should be his favorite’s bride even though she were a nun confessed. Marmion was sent to Scotland and I, cast off, determined to plan a sure escape for Clare and for myself. This false monk, whom you are about to condemn with me, promised to carry to Clare the drugs by means of which she would soon have been the bride of heaven. His cowardice has undone us both, and I now reveal the story of the crime, that none may wed with Marmion, that his perfidy may be made known to the King, who, when he reads these letters, will see his favorite deserves the headsman’s axe. Now, men of death, do your worst. I can suffer and be still.

“‘And come he slow, or come he fast,
It is but death who comes at last.’”

The old Abbot raised his sightless eyes to heaven and said:

“‘Sister, let thy sorrows cease;
Sinful brother, part in peace!’”

Up from the direful place of doom, to the light of day and to the fresh air, passed those who had held this awful trial. Shrieks and groans followed the winding steps. The



peasant who heard the unearthly cries bowed his head, the hermit told his beads, the brother crossed himself, even the stag on Cheviot hills bounded to his feet, listened and then trembling lay down to hide among the mountain ferns.

[Illustration: *The study, Abbotsford.*]

CHAPTER III.

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We now return to Lord Marmion, who, led by the Palmer, was hastening on to Holyrood. When the heights of Lammermoor were reached, noon had long passed, and at early nightfall, old Gifford's towers lay before them. Here they had expected hospitality, but the lord of the Castle had gone to Scotland's camp, where were gathered the noblest and bravest of her sons. No friendly summons called them to the hall, for in her lord's absence, the lady refused admittance alike to friend and foe.

On through the hamlet rode the train until it drew rein at the inn. Now down from their seats sprang the horsemen. The courtyard rang with jingling spurs, horses were led to the stalls, and the bustling host gave double the orders that could be obeyed. The building was large, and though rudely built, its cheerful fire and savory food were most welcome to the weary men. Soon by the wide chimney's roaring blaze, and in the place of state, sat Marmion. He watched his followers as they mixed the brown ale, and enjoyed the bountiful repast. Oft the lordly warrior mingled in the mirth they made.

“For though, with men of high degree,
The proudest of the proud was he,
Yet, trained in camp, he knew the art
To win the soldier's hardy heart.
Boisterous as March, yet fresh as May,
With open hand and brow as free,
Lover of wine and minstrelsy.”

Directly opposite, resting on his staff, stood the Palmer, the thin, dark visage half seen, half hidden by his hood. Steadily he gazed on Marmion, who by frown and gesture gave evidence that he could ill bear so close a scrutiny.

As squire and archer looked at the stern, dark face of the Pilgrim, their bursts of laughter grew less loud, less frequent, and gradually their mirth declined. They whispered one to another: “Sawest thou ever such a face? How pale his cheek! How bright his eye! His heart must be set only on his soul's salvation.”

To chase away the gloom gradually stealing over the company, and to draw from himself the sullen scowl of the Palmer, Marmion called upon his favorite squire:

“Fitz-Eustace, knows't thou not some lay
To speed the lingering night away?”

The youth made an unhappy choice. He had a rich, mellow voice, and chose the wild, sad ballad often sung to Marmion by the unfortunate Constance de Beverley. When all was quiet, quiveringly the notes fell upon the air:

Song.



“Where shall the lover rest,
Whom the fates sever
From his true maiden’s breast,
Parted forever?
Where early violets die
Under the willow.

“There through the summer day,
Cool streams are laving
There while the tempests sway,
Scarce are boughs waving;
There thy rest shalt thou take,
Never again to awake,
Never, O never!

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"Where shall the traitor rove,
He, the deceiver,
Who could win maiden's love,
Win and then leave her?
In the lost battle,
Borne down by the flying,
Where mingles war's rattle
With groans of the dying.

"His warm blood the wolf shall lap,
Ere life be parted.
Shame and dishonor sit
By his grave ever;
Blessing shall hallow it—
Never, O never!"

The melancholy sound ceased. The song was sad, and bitterly it fell on the false-hearted Marmion. Well he knew that at his request the faithful but misguided Constance had been taken to Lindisfarne to be punished for crime committed through her mistaken love for him. As if he already saw disgrace for himself and death for her, he drew his mantle before his face, and bent his head upon his hands. Constance de Beverley at that moment was dying in her cell.

The meanest groom in all the train could scarce have wished to exchange places with the proud Marmion, could his thoughts have been known. Controlling himself, and raising his head, he said:

"As you sang, it seemed that I heard a death knell rung in mine ear. What is the meaning of this weird sound?"

Then for the first time the Palmer broke his silence, and said in reply: "It foretells the death of a loved friend."

Utterance, for once, failed the haughty Marmion, whose pride heretofore could scarcely brook a word even from his King. His glance fell, his brow flushed, for something familiar in the tone or look of the speaker so struck the false heart that he was speechless.

Before his troubled imagination rose a vision of the lovely Constance, beautiful and pure as when, trusting his treacherous words, she left the peaceful walls of her convent. He knew she was now a captive in convent cell, and the strange words of the Palmer, added to the song of the squire, had made him unhappy. "Alas!" he thought, "would that I had left her in purity to live, in holiness to die." Twice he was ready to order, "To horse," that he might fly to Lindisfarne and command that not one golden ringlet of her

fair head be harmed, and twice he thought, "They dare not. I gave orders that she should be safe, though not at large."

While thus love and repentance strove in the breast of the lord, the landlord began a weird tale, suggested by the speech of the Palmer. As Marmion listened, he gathered from the legend that not far from where they sat, a knight might learn of future weal or woe. He might, perchance, meet "in the charmed ring" his deadliest foe, in the form of a spectre, and with it engage in mortal combat. If victorious over this supernatural antagonist, the omen was victory in all future undertakings.

"Marmion longed to prove his chance;
In charmed ring to break a lance."

The yeomen had drunk deep; the ale was strong, and at a sign from their master, all sought rest on the hostel floor before the now dying embers. For pillow, under each head, was quiver or targe. The flickering fire threw fitful shadows on the strange group. Marmion and his squires retired to other quarters. Where the Palmer had disappeared, none knew or cared.

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Alone, folded in his green mantle and nestling in the hay of a waste loft, lay Fitz-Eustace, the pale moonlight falling upon his youthful face and form. He was dreaming happy dreams of hawk and hound, of ring and glove, of lady's eyes, when suddenly he woke. A tall form, half in the moonbeams, half in the gloom, stood beside him; but before he could draw his dagger, he recognized the voice of Marmion, who said:

"Fitz-Eustace, rise, and saddle Bevis! I cannot rest. The air must cool my brow. I fain would ride to view the elfin scene of chivalry of which we heard to-night. Rouse none from their slumbers, for I would not have those prating knaves know that I could credit so wild a tale as our landlord has told."

Softly down the steps they stole. Eustace led forth the steed arrayed for the ride, and Marmion, armed to meet the elfin foe, sprang into the saddle. The young squire listened to the resounding hoof-beats as they grew more and more faint, and wondered as he fell asleep that one held to be so wary, so wise, so incredulous, should ride forth at midnight to meet a ghost in mail and plate.

The moon was bright, and as Marmion reached the elfin camp, halting, he fearlessly blew his bugle. An answer came, so faint and hollow, that it might have been an echo; but suddenly he saw a distinct form appear, a mounted champion. The sight of the unexpected foe made to tremble with horror him who never had feared knight or noble. His hand so shook, he could scarce couch spear aright. The combat began; the two horsemen ran their course; and in the third attack Marmion's steed could not resist the unearthly shock—he fell, and the flower of England's chivalry rolled in the dust.

High over the head of the fallen foe, the supposed spectre shook his sword. Full on his face fell the moonlight, a face never to be mistaken. It was the wraith of Ralph de Wilton, who had been sent by Marmion to exile and to death. Thrice over his victim did the grim, ghast spectre shake his blade, but when Marmion, white with terror, prayed for life, the seeming vision dashed his sword into its sheath, sprang lightly to his saddle, and vanished as he came. The moon sank from sight, and the poor, shivering, wretched English knight lay groveling on the plain. Could it be his mortal enemy had left the grave to strike down a living foe, and to stare in derisive hatred from a raised visor? Whether dead or alive, the elfin foe had little reason to spare the life of so dastardly an enemy!

Sweetly sleeping, or patiently listening, Eustace waited for the return of his knight, waited till he heard a horse coming, spurred to its utmost speed. The rider hastily threw the rein to his squire, but spoke not a word. In the dim light the youth plainly saw that the armor and the falcon crest on his lord's helmet were covered with clay, that the knees and sides of the noble charger were in sad plight. It was evident the beast and his rider had been overthrown. To broken and brief rest Eustace returned and never did he more gladly welcome the light of day.

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"Eustace did ne'er so blithely mark
The first notes of the morning lark."

CHAPTER IV.

"The lark sang shrill, the cock he crew,
And loudly Marmion's bugles blew,
And with their light and lively call,
Brought groom and yeoman to the stall."

Light of heart they came, but soon their mood was changed. Complaint was heard on every side. One declared his armor had been used, another that his spear had been taken. Young Blount, Marmion's second squire, found his steed covered with foam, though the stable boy swore he had left the beautiful creature well groomed on the previous evening.

While the impatient squire raged and fumed, old Hubert cried:

"Ho, comrades, help! Bevis lies dying in his stall! To our lord this will bring sorrow indeed. Who will dare tell him of the horse he loved so well?"

Fitz-Eustace, who knew of the midnight ride, of the condition of horse and rider on their return, offered to bear the unwelcome message. Marmion, sitting plunged in deep thought, received the tidings unmoved, gave little attention, passed the matter as if it were a mere accident and ordered the clarions sound "To horse."

Young Blount was less easily dealt with. He declared he would pay no fee for food or care. Man or demon, he said, had ridden his steed all night and left him in sorry condition for the day's journey. Marmion gave the signal to set forth, and led by the calm, gloomy Palmer, they journeyed all the morning.

Who can picture the thoughts of Palmer and of knight? Could one have looked beneath the Palmer's cowl there might have been seen a smile almost sardonic playing upon his features. In passing Blount's horse the pious man's thin brown hand stole from beneath the long gown and lovingly caressed the animal, while he muttered the words, "Noble, noble beast!"

On rode the train through the lovely country, over the smooth greensward, and under the vaulted screen of branches.

"'A pleasant path,' Fitz-Eustace said,
'Such as where errant-knights might see
Adventures of high chivalry;
Might meet some damsel flying fast,

With hair unbound, and looks aghast;
And smooth and level course were here,
In her defence to break a spear.”

He spoke to cheer Lord Marmion’s mind, but spoke in vain, for no reply was given.

Suddenly distant trumpets were heard in prolonged notes over hill and dale. Each ready archer seized his bow, and Marmion ordered all to spur on to more open ground. Scarce a furlong had they ridden, when, from an opposite woodland, they saw approaching a gallant train.

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First on prancing steeds came the trumpeters,
“With scarlet mantle, azure vest;
Each at his trump a banner wore,
Which Scotland’s royal scutcheon bore:
Heralds and pursuivants, by name
Bute, Islay, Marchmount, Rothsay, came,
In painted tabards, proudly showing
Gules argent, or, and azure glowing,
Attendant on a king-at-arms,
Whose hand the armorial truncheon held,
That feudal strife had often quelled,
When wildest its alarms.”

The king-at-arms was of grave, wise, and manly appearance, as became him who bore a king’s welcome, but his expression was keen, sly, and penetrating.

“On milk-white palfrey forth he paced;
His cap of maintenance was graced
With the proud heron-plume.
From his steed’s shoulder, loin, and breast,
Silk housings swept the ground,
With Scotland’s arms, device, and crest,
Embroidered round and round.
The double treasure might you see,
First by Achaius borne,
The thistle and the fleur-de-lis,
And gallant unicorn.
So bright the King’s armorial coat,
That scarce the dazzled eye could note.
In living colors, blazoned brave,
The Lion, which his title gave;
A train, which well beseemed his state,
But all unarmed, around him wait.
Sir David Lindesay of the Mount,
Lord Lion, King-at-arms!”

Marmion sprang from his horse, and as soon as their mutual greetings had been made, Sir David delivered his message:

“As King-at-arms, I have been sent by James’s command to meet you, Lord Marmion, and to provide fit lodging, until the King himself shall find time to see the famed, the honored Lord of Fontenaye, the flower of English chivalry.”

Though angry at this reception, Marmion disguised his feelings. The Palmer, seeing his place as guide taken by the King's messenger, begged to be permitted to leave the service. But orders had been strictly given that no one following Marmion should be permitted to separate from the English band. They therefore set forth together and at length halted before a noble castle on the side of the valley of the Tyne. It was Crichtoun Hall, near the city of Edinburgh, and was a lodging meet for one of highest rank. Tower after tower rose to view, each built in a different age and each displaying a different style of architecture.

“A mighty mass that could oppose,
When deadliest hatred fired its foes.”

Through the gate rode the English ambassador, but met by none of the rank and file usual on such occasions. Only women, old men, and children occupied the castle. The sorrowing mistress of the hall gave welcome, and a stripling of twelve years offered his best service. Every man that could draw a sword had marched that morning to conquer or to die on Flodden Field. Long would the lady look in vain to see her husband and his gallant band return.

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Here Marmion and his men rested for two days, attended as became a King's guest, yet practically a prisoner. This was by the royal command. James did not choose that English eyes should look upon Scotland's gathering forces until they were ready to march against the foe. When Marmion was moody Lindesay's wit cheered; policies of war and of peace were discussed, and the lore of Rome and Greece was reviewed.

The second night, as they walked by the fading light on the battlements of Crichtoun Castle, Lindesay carelessly remarked that the journey of Marmion, the toil of travel, might as well have been spared, for no power on earth or from heaven could dissuade James from war. A holy messenger sent by divine command had appeared in spirit, and vainly counselled the King against the impending conflict.

More closely questioned, Sir David told the following tale:

"When the King was but a lad, a thoughtless prince, traitors had set the boy in the army hostile to his royal father. The King, seeing his own banner displayed against him, and his son in the opposing faction, lost courage, fled from the field, and in fleeing fell and was slain. After the battle, James returned to Stirling Castle, seized with deep remorse. Ever after, he inflicted upon himself most severe penance.

"While engaged one day in self-imposed penitential devotions, there appeared to him, in the chapel of Linlithgow, a vision. At the time, around him in their stalls, sat the Knights of the Thistle, chanters sung, and bells tolled. The monarch in sackcloth, and wearing the painful iron belt which constantly reminded him of his father's death, was kneeling in prayer, when there appeared the loved disciple, John, who in these words warned the King against warfare:

"Sir King, to warn thee not to war—
Woe waits on thine array;
James Stuart, doubly warn'd, beware,
God keep thee as he may!"

"When the King raised his head, the monitor had vanished.

"The Marshal and myself had cast
To stop him as he outward pass'd;
But, lighter than the whirlwind's blast,
He vanish'd from our eyes,
Like sunbeam on the billow cast
That glances but, and dies."

While telling the strange story, Sir David had not marked in the dim twilight the pallor that had overspread the countenance of Marmion, who, after a pause, said:

“Three days ago, I had judged your tale a myth, but since crossing the Tweed, I have seen that which makes me credit the miracle you relate.”

He hesitated, and evidently wished his remark unmade, but pressed by the strong impulse that prompts man to reveal a secret to some listening ear, he told of the midnight ride and the tilt with the elfin knight at Gifford’s Court. The same sly expression crept over the face of the King-at-arms as he asked, “Where lodged the Palmer on that fateful night?”

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Here their conversation was interrupted. By the King's command, each train on the following day was to proceed by its own way to Scotland's camp, near Edinburgh. Early they set out for the moor surrounding the city, where lay the Scotch hosts.

From the crown of Blackford, Marmion gazed on the martial scene. It was a Kingdom's vast array. Thousands on thousands of pavilions, white as snow, dotted the upland, dale, and down, and checkered the heath between town and forest. The relics of the old oaks softened the glaring white with a background of restful green.

From north, from south, from east, from west, had gathered Scotland's warriors. All between the ages of sixteen and sixty, from king to vassal, stood ready to fight for the beloved land. Marmion heard the mingled hum of myriads of voices float up the mountain side. He saw the shifting lines, and marked the flashing of shield and lance. Nor did he mark less that in the air,

"A thousand streamers flaunted fair,
Various in shape, device and hue,
Green, sanguine, purple, red, and blue,
Broad, narrow, swallow-tailed, and square,
Scroll, pennon, pensil, bandrol, there
O'er the pavilions flew.
Highest and midmost, was descried
The royal banner floating wide;
The staff, a pine-tree, strong and straight,
Pitch'd deeply in a massive stone,
Yet bent beneath the standard's weight
Whene'er the western wind unroll'd,
With toil, the huge and cumbrous fold,
And gave to view the dazzling field,
Where, in proud Scotland's royal shield,
The ruddy lion ramped in gold.

"Lord Marmion view'd the landscape bright,—
He viewed it with a chief's delight,—
Until within him burn'd his heart,
As on the battle-day;
Such glance did falcon never dart,
When stooping on his prey.
'Oh! well, Lord Lion, hast thou said,
Thy King from warfare to dissuade
Were but a vain essay;
For, by St. George, were that host mine,
Nor power infernal, nor divine,
Should once to peace my soul incline,

Till I had dimmed their armor's shine
In glorious battle-fray!"

A bard near at hand replied:

"'Tis better to sit still, than rise, perchance to fall."

From this scene of preparation for battle, their eyes wandered to the fairest scene of peace. The distant city glowed in gloomy splendor. The sun's morning beams tinged turret and tower. The wreaths of rising smoke turned to clouds of red and gold. Dusky grandeur clothed the height where the huge castle stood in state. Far to the north, ridge on ridge, rose the mountains, the rosy morning light bathing their sides in floods of sunshine, and turning each heather bell at their feet into an amethyst. Yonder could be seen the shores of Fife, nearer Preston Bay and Berwick. Between them rolled the broad Firth, islands floating on its bosom like emeralds on a chain of gold.

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“Fitz-Eustace’ heart felt closely pent;
As if to give his rapture vent,
The spur he to his charger lent,
And raised his bridle hand,
And making demivolte in air,
Cried, ‘Where’s the coward that would not dare
To fight for such a land!’”

While they gazed the time arrived for King James to take his way to a solemn mass. The distant bells chimed the hour, the fife, the sackbut, the psaltery, the cymbal, the war-pipe, in discordant cry took up the note, and together the sounds rolled up the hillside.

Sir David sighed as he listened.

“I look,” he said, “upon this city, Empress of the North, her palaces, her castles, her stately halls, her holy towers, and think what war’s mischance may bring. These silvery bells may toll the knell of our gallant King. We must not dream that conquest is sure or easily bought. God is ruler of the battlefield, but when yon host begins the combat, wives, mothers, and maids may weep, and priests prepare the death service, for when such a power is led out by such a King, not all will return.”

[Illustration: *The grave of sir Walter Scott, DRYBURGH abbey.*]

CHAPTER V.

Lindesay now bade the guard open the palisade that closed the tented field, and as into its ample bounds Marmion passed, the warders’ men drew back. The Scottish warriors stared at the strangers, and envy arose at seeing them so well appointed. Such length of shaft, bows so mighty, had never been seen by northern eyes. Little did the Highlanders then think to feel these shafts through links of Scotch mail on Flodden Field.

No less did Marmion and his men marvel that one small country could marshal forth such hosts. Men-at-arms were heavily sheathed in mail. They were like iron towers on Flemish steeds. Young squires and knights practiced their chargers on the plain to pass, to wheel, to curvet, that the swords of their riders might not descend amiss on foeman’s casque. Hardy burghers were there, marching on foot. No waving plume, no crest they wore, but corselet, gorget, and brigantine, brightly burnished. The yeomen, too, were on foot, yet dressed in steel. Each at his back carried forty days’ provisions. His arms were the halbert, axe, or spear, a crossbow, a dagger, or a sword. Each seemed almost sad at leaving the dear cottage, the simple pleasures and duties of

home, to march into a foreign land. It was not cowardice, not terror, for the more they loved Scotland the more fiercely would they fight.

Quite another class was the Borderer, bred to war. He joyed to hear the roar of battle. No harp, no lute, could please his ear as did the loud slogan. Nobles might fight for fame, vassals might follow, burghers might guard their townships, but to a battle the Borderer joyfully took his way as to a game, scarce caring who might win the day.

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Marmion next viewed the Celtic race. Each tribe had its own chief, its belted plaid, its warpipes varying with the clan. Their legs were bare; the undressed hide of the deer gave them buskins, a plaid covered the shoulders, and a broadsword, a dagger, a studded targe, completed the outfit.

Through the Scottish camp, the English train had now passed, and the city gates were reached. The streets were alive with martial show. The Lion King led to lodgings that overlooked the town. Here Marmion, by the King's command, was to remain until the vesper hour and then to ride to Holy-Rood. Meanwhile Sir David ordered a banquet rich and rare.

At the hour appointed, Marmion, attended by the Lion-Lord, arrived at the palace hall, at Holy-Rood. In this princely abode James was feasting the chiefs of Scotland. The historic halls rang with mirth, for well the monarch loved song and banquet. By day the tourney was held, at night the mazy dance was trod by quaint maskers. The scene of this night outshone all others. The dazzling lights hanging from the galleries, displayed the grace of lords and ladies of the court. The "motley fool" retailed his jest, the juggler performed his feat, the minstrel plied his harp, and the lady touched a softer string.

All made room as through this throng the King came to greet his guest. And now, his courtesy to show,

"He doff'd to Marmion, bending low,
His broider'd cap and plume.
For royal was his garb and mien,
His cloak, of crimson velvet piled,
Trimm'd with the fur of martin wild;
His gorgeous collar hung adown,
Wrought with the badge of Scotland's crown,
The thistle brave, of old renown:
His trusty blade, Toledo right,
Descended from a baldrick bright;
White were his buskins, on the heel,
His spurs inlaid of gold and steel:
His bonnet, all of crimson fair,
Was buttoned with a ruby rare:
And Marmion deemed he ne'er had seen
A prince of such a noble mien."

His splendid form, his eagle eyes, his light footstep, his merry laugh and speaking glance made him envied of men and adored of women. He joyed to linger in banquet bower, but often in the midst of wildest glee, a shadow and an expression of pain flitted across the handsome face. His hands instinctively clasped as he felt the pain of the

penance belt, worn in memory of his slain father. In a moment the pang was past, and forward, with redoubled zest, he rushed into the stream of revelry.

Courtiers said that Lady Heron, wife of Sir Hugh of Norham, held sway over the heart of the King. To Scotland's court she had come to be a hostage, and to reconcile the offended King to her husband. The fair Queen of France also held the king in thrall. She had sent him a turquoise ring and a glove, and charged him as her knight in English fray, to break for her a lance. For love of the French Queen, as much as for the rights of Scotland, he clothed himself in mail and put his country's noblest, dearest, and best in arms, to die on Flodden Field. For Love of Lady Heron, he admitted English spies to his inmost counsels.

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“And thus, for both, he madly planned
The ruin of himself and land.”

For these two artful women he sacrificed the true happiness of his home.

“Nor England’s fair, nor France’s Queen,
Were worth one pearl-drop bright and sheen,
From Margaret’s eyes that fell,—
His own Queen Margaret, who, in Lithgow’s bower
All lonely sat, and wept the weary hour.”

In gay Holy-Rood, Dame Heron, Lady of Norham, smiled at the King, glanced archly at the courtiers, and ably played the coquette. When asked to draw from the harp music to charm the ring of admirers, she laughed, blushed, and with pretty oaths, by yea and nay, declared she could not, would not, dare not! At length, however, she seated herself at Scotland’s loved instrument, touched and tuned the strings, laid aside hood and wimple, the better to display her charms, and with a borrowed simplicity well assumed, sang a lively air, Lochinvar.

“Oh, young Lochinvar is come out of the west,
Through all the wild border his steed was the best;
And, save his good broadsword, he weapon had none,
He rode all unarm’d, and he rode all alone;
So faithful in love, and so dauntless in war,
There never was knight like the young Lochinvar.

“He stayed not for brake, and he stopped not for stone;
He swam the Esk river, where ford there was none;
But ere he alighted at Netherby gate,
The bride had consented, the gallant came late;
For a laggard in love, and a dastard in war,
Was to wed the fair Ellen of brave Lochinvar.

“So boldly he entered the Netherby Hall,
Among bride’s-men, and kinsmen, and brothers, and all:
Then spoke the bride’s father, his hand on his sword,
For the poor craven bridegroom said never a word,
‘O come ye in peace here, or come ye in war,
Or to dance at our bridal, young Lord Lochinvar?’

“‘I long woo’d your daughter, my suit you denied;
Love swells like the Solway, but ebbs like its tide—
And now am I come, with this lost love of mine,
To lead but one measure, drink one cup of wine.

There are maidens in Scotland more lovely by far,
That would gladly be bride to the young Lochinvar.'

"The bride kiss'd the goblet: the knight took it up,
He quaff'd off the wine, and threw down the cup,
She look'd down to blush, and she look'd up to sigh,
With a smile on her lip, and a tear in her eye,
He took her soft hand, ere her mother could bar,—
'Now tread we a measure!' said young Lochinvar.

"So stately his form, and so lovely her face,
That never a hall such a galliard did grace;
While her mother did fret, and her father did fume,
And the bridegroom stood dangling his bonnet and plume;
And the bride's-maidens whisper'd, 'Twere better by far
To have match'd our fair cousin with young Lochinvar.'

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"One touch to her hand, and one word in her ear,
When they reach'd the hall door, and the charger stood near;
So light to the croupe the fair lady he swung,
So light to the saddle before her he sprung!
'She is won! we are gone, over bank, bush, and scaur;
They'll have fleet steeds that follow,' quoth young Lochinvar.

"There was mounting 'mong Graemes of the Netherby clan;
Forsters, Fenwicks, and Musgraves, they rode and they ran;
There was racing and chasing on Cannobie Lee,
But the lost bride of Netherby ne'er did they see.
So daring in love, and so dauntless in war,
Have ye e'er heard of gallant like young Lochinvar?"

The monarch hung over the wily singer, and beat the measure as she sang. He pressed closer, and whispered praises in her ear. The courtiers broke in applause, the ladies whispered, and looked wise. The witching dame, not satisfied to win a King, threw her glances at Lord Marmion. The glances were significant, familiar, and told of confidences long and old between the English lord and his countrywoman, guests of a Scotch King, on the eve of a great conflict between the two countries.

The King saw their meeting eyes, saw himself treated almost with disdain, and darkest anger shook his frame, for sovereigns illy bear rivals in word, or smile, or look. He drew forth the parchment on which was written Marmion's commission, and strode to the side of brave Douglas, the sixth who had worn the coronet of Angus. The King stood side by side with this brave Scotsman, who had been madly watching the pageant, the fire flashing from his stern eye. This very day he had besought his King to withdraw from the coming war, only to call forth the reproaches of his ungrateful ruler. Yet at this moment, James felt a pride in standing by the side of Bothwell's Lord, and placing in his custody Marmion, the flower of English chivalry.

"The Douglas' form, like ruin'd tower,
Seem'd o'er the gaudy scene to lower:
His locks and beard in silver grew;
His eyebrows kept their sable hue.
Near Douglas, where the monarch stood,
His bitter speech he thus pursued:
'Lord Marmion, since these letters say
That in the North you needs must stay
While slightest hopes of peace remain,
Uncourteous speech it were, and stern,
To say—Return to Lindisfarne—
Then rest you in Tantallon Hold;
Your host shall be the Douglas bold,



A chief unlike his sires of old.
He wears their motto on his blade,
Their blazon o'er his towers display'd;
Yet loves his sovereign to oppose,
More than to face his country's foes.

And, I bethink me, by St. Stephen,
But e'en this morn to me was given
A prize, the first fruits of the war,
Ta'en by a galley from Dunbar,
A bevy of the maids of Heaven.

Under your guard these holy maids
Shall safe return to cloister shades.”

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The proud heart of Douglas felt the keen thrust. It was true, he would not, even for the King he devotedly loved, draw sword in an unholy cause. As a burning tear stole down his scarred cheek, he turned aside to conceal what might seem weakness. This sight the king could not bear, and seizing the hand of Angus, exclaimed:

“Now, by the Bruce’s soul,
Angus, my hasty speech forgive!
I well may say of you,—
That never king did subject hold,
In speech more free, in war more bold,
More tender and more true:
Forgive me, Douglas, once again!”

While monarch and man embraced, while the aged noble’s tears fell like rain, Marmion seized the moment to restore himself to favor with both, and whispered half aloud to the King:

“Oh! let such tears unwonted plead
For respite short from dubious deed!
A child will weep a bramble’s smart,
A maid to see her sparrow part,
A stripling for a woman’s heart:
But woe awaits a country when
She sees the tears of bearded men.
Then, oh! what omen, dark and high,
When Douglas wets his manly eye!”

That a stranger should see his changing moods, and above all, should presume to tamper therewith, aroused in James the fierce spirit of revenge. Said the fiery monarch:

“Laugh those that can, weep those that may,
Southward I march by break of day;
And if within Tantallon strong
The good Lord Marmion tarries long,
Perchance our meeting next may fall
At Tamworth, in his castle-hall.”

Marmion felt the taunt, and answered gravely: “My humble home would be much honored if King James should visit its halls, but Nottingham has as true archers as e’er drew bow, and Yorkshire men are stern and brave.

“And many a banner will be torn,
And many a knight to earth be borne,

And many a sheaf of arrows spent,
Ere Scotland's King shall cross the Trent.”

Scornfully the Monarch turned away, and commanded the gayeties to proceed. He flung aside cloak and sword, and gallantly led Dame Heron in the dance, as the minstrels, at the King's command, struck up “Blue Bonnets o'er the Border.”

[Illustration: *Scott's monument, Edinburgh.*]

CHAPTER VI.

Now we leave the royal revels, and return to Saint Hilda and her maids. As they sailed back to Whitby, their galley was captured on the high seas by the Scotch, and the ladies were held at Edinburgh until James should decide their fate.

Soon, however, they were informed that they must prepare to journey to England, under the escort of Lord Marmion. At this, terror seized the heart of the Abbess and of Clara. The aged, saintly lady knew the fate of Constance, and for this, feared Lord Marmion's wrath. She told her beads, she implored heaven!

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The Lady Clara knew the sword that hung from Marmion's belt had drawn the blood of her lover, Ralph De Wilton! Unwittingly the King had given these defenceless women into the care of the man they most dreaded. To protest was hopeless. In the bustle of war, who would listen to the tale of a woman and a nun?

The maids and the Abbess were assigned lodgings joining those of Marmion, their guardian. While there, the unhappy, but alert, holy woman caught sight of the Palmer. His dress made her feel that she would here find a friend. Secretly she conveyed to him a message, saying she had a secret to reveal immediately concerning the welfare of the church, and of a sinner's soul.

With great secrecy she named as a meeting place, an open balcony, that hung high above the street.

Night fell; the moon rose high among the clouds; the busy hum of the city ceased; the din of war and warriors' roar was hushed. The music of the cricket, the whirr of the owlets, might easily have been heard, when the holy Dame and the Palmer met. The Abbess had chosen a solemn hour, to disclose a solemn secret.

"O holy Palmer!" she began,—“for surely he must be holy whose feet have trod the ground made sacred by a Redeemer's tomb,—I come here in this dread hour, for the dear sake of our Holy Church. Yet I must first speak, in explanation of a worldly love.” Here was related by unwilling lips, the story of Constance's fall, of De Wilton's death or exile after being proved a traitor, of Lady Clara's faithfulness to the memory of De Wilton, and of her desire to enter the convent of the Abbess.

“A purer heart, a lovelier maid,
Ne'er shelter'd her in Whitby's shade.’

“Yet, King Henry declares she shall be torn from us, and given to this false Lord Marmion. I am helpless, a prisoner, with these innocent maidens, and I fear we have been betrayed by Henry, that Clara may fall into the hands of his favorite. I claim thine aid.

“By every step that thou hast trod
To holy shrine and grotto dim,
By every saint and seraphim,
And by the Church of God!
For mark: When Wilton was betrayed,’

“it was by means of forged letters,—letters written by Constance de Beverley, at the command of Marmion, and placed, by De Wilton's squire, where they could be used against that noble knight.

"I have in my possession letters proving all this and more. I must not keep them. Who knows what may happen to me on my homeward journey? I now give this packet to thy care, O saintly Palmer! Bring them safe to the hands of Wolsey, that he may give them to the King, and for this deed there will be prayers offered for thee while I live. Why! What ailest thou? Speak!"

As he took the packet, he was shaken by strong emotion, but before he could reply, the Abbess shrieked, "What is here? Look at yon City Cross!"

"Then on its battlements they saw
A vision, passing Nature's law."

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Figures seemed to rise and die, to advance and to flee, and from the midst of the spectre throng this awful summons came:—"Prince, prelate, potentate and peer, I summon one and all to answer at my tribunal."

"Then thunder'd forth a roll of names:
The first was thine, unhappy James!
Then all thy nobles came;
Crawford, Glencairn, Montrose, Argyle,
Ross, Bothwell, Forbes, Lennox, Lyle,
Why should I tell their separate style?
Each chief of birth and fame,
Of Lowland, Highland, Border, Isle,
Foredoomed to Flodden's carnage pile,
Was cited there by name;
And Marmion, Lord of Fontenaye.

"Prone on her face the Abbess fell,
And fast, and fast, her beads did tell;
She mark'd not, at the scene aghast,
What time, or how, the Palmer pass'd."

The following day, Marmion and the brave Douglas journeyed to fair Tantallon. The Palmer still was with the band, as Angus commanded that no one should roam at large. A wondrous change had come to the holy Palmer. He freely spoke of war; he looked so high, and rode so fast, that old Hubert said he never saw but one who could sit so proud, and rein so well.

A half hour's march behind, came Fitz-Eustace, escorting the Abbess, the fair Lady Clare, and all the nuns.

Marmion had sought no audience, fearing to increase Clara's hatred. He preferred to wait until she was removed from the convent and in her uncle's care. He hoped then, with the influence of her kinsman and her King, to gain her consent to be the Lady Marmion. He longed to command,

"O'er luckless Clara's ample land,"

yet he hated himself when he thought of the meanness to which he stooped for conquest, when he remembered his own lost honor; for,

"If e'er he lov'd, 'twas her alone,
Who died within that vault of stone."

Near Berwick town they came upon a venerable convent pile, and halted at its gate. In answer to the bell, a door opened, and an aged dame appeared to ask St. Hilda's Abbess to rest here with her nuns until a barque was provided to bear her back to Whitby.

The courtesy of the Scottish Prioress was most joyfully received, and the delighted maidens gladly left their palfreys; but when Lady Clara attempted to dismount, Fitz-Eustace gently refused, saying:

"I grieve, fair lady, to separate you from your friends. Think it no discourtesy of mine, but lords' commands must be obeyed, and Marmion and Douglas order that you shall return directly to your kinsman, Lord Fitz-Clare."

The startled Abbess loud exclaimed, but Clara was speechless and deadly pale.

"Cheer thee, my child!" the Abbess cried; "they dare not tear thee from my care, to ride alone among soldiers."

"Nay, nay, holy mother," interrupted Fitz-Eustace, "the lovely lady, while in Scotland, will be the immediate ward of Lady Angus Douglas, and when she rides to England, female attendance will be provided befitting the heir of Gloster. My Lord Marmion will not address Lady Clare by word or look."

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He blushed as he spoke, but truth and honor were painted in his face, and the maiden's fear was relieved. The Abbess entreated, threatened, wept, prayed to saint and to martyr, then called upon the Prioress for aid. The grave Cistercian replied:

"The King and Douglas shall be obeyed. Dream not that harm can come to woman, however helpless, who falls to the care of Douglas of Tantallon Hall."

The Abbess, seeing strife was vain, assumed her wonted state, composed her veil, raised her head, and began again,—but Blount now broke in:

"Fitz-Eustace, we must march our band;
St. Anton fire thee! wilt thou stand
All day, with bonnet in thy hand,
To hear the lady preach?
By this good light! if thus we stay,
Lord Marmion, for our fond delay,
Will sharper sermon teach.
Come, don thy cap, and mount thy horse;
The dame must patience take perforce."

"Dear, holy Abbess," said Clare, "we must submit to the separation for the present,

"But let this barbarous lord despair
His purposed aim to win;
Let him take living, land, and life;
But to be Marmion's wedded wife
In me were deadly sin.'

"Mother, your blessing and your prayers are all I ask. Remember your unhappy child! If it be the decree of the King that I return not to the sanctuary with thee to dwell, yet one asylum remains—low, silent, and lone, where kings have little power. One victim of Lord Marmion is already there."

Weeping and wailing arose round patient Clare. Eustace hid his tears, and even the rude Blount could scarce bear the sight. Gently the squire took the rein and led the way, striving to cheer the poor fainting girl, by courteous word and deed.

They had passed but a few miles, when from a height, they saw the vast towers of Tantallon. The noble castle was enclosed on three sides by the ocean, and on the fourth by walled battlements,

"And double mound and fosse,
By narrow drawbridge, outworks strong,
Through studded gates, and entrance long,

To the main court they cross.
It was a wide and stately square:
Around were lodgings, fit and fair,
And towers of various form.”

Here they rested, receiving from the host cold, but princely attention. By hurrying posts, daily there came varying tidings of war. At first they heard of the victories of James at Wark, at Etall, and at Ford; and then, that Norham castle had been taken; but later, news was whispered that while King James was dallying the time away with the wily Lady Heron, the army lay inactive. At length they heard the army had made post on the ridge that frowns over the Millfield Plain, and that brave Surrey, with a force from the South, had marched into Northumberland and taken camp.

At this, Marmion exclaimed:



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“A sorry thing to hide my head
In castle, like a fearful maid,
When such a field is near!
Needs must I see this battle-day:
Death to my fame if such a fray
Were fought, and Marmion away!
The Douglas, too, I wot not why,
Hath ’bated of his courtesy:
No longer in his halls I’ll stay.”

CHAPTER VII.

Each hour brought a different tale. Marmion fretted like the impatient charger that “snuffs the battle from afar.” It was true that Douglas had changed in his demeanor, had grown cold and silent. The dejected Clare sought retirement. Courteous she was to Lady Angus, shared in ceaseless prayers for the safe return of Scotch liege and lord, but borne down with sorrow, she loved best to find some lonely spot, turret, tower, or parapet, where she might retire alone to listen to the wailing waters, to hear the sea-bird’s cry, to recall her life at the Convent of Whitby, and to regret the loss of the loved garb of the nun. At the command of her kinsman, the Benedictine dress, the hood and veil, so much in harmony with her life, had been denied her, and she had been made to assume the costume of the world.

Her sunny locks were again unbound, and rich garments were provided, suited to her rank. Of the holy dress, the cross alone she was permitted to wear,—a golden cross set with rubies; but in her hand she always bore the loved breviary.

Pacing back and forth at evening, sick with sorrow, she came suddenly upon a full suit of armor. It lay directly in her path—the targe, the corselet, the helm, the pierced breastplate. She raised her eyes in alarm, and before her stood De Wilton, but so changed it might have been his ghost. The Palmer’s dress was thrown aside, the dress of the knight not resumed. He was neither king’s noble, nor priest. Not until he had been proven innocent of treason, and redubbed knight, could he honorably wear his spurs.

Long was the interview held between the astonished, delighted Clare, and the undisguised De Wilton. He began the story of his exile and travels, taking up the tale from the moment when he lay senseless in the lists at Cottiswold. The kind care of Austin, the beadsman, had restored him to health and strength. He described the long journeys in Palmer’s dress, his return to Scotland, meeting Marmion at Norham Castle, the tilt on Gifford moor, and the interview with the Abbess, when he received from her the letters proving his innocence.



Already, at Tantallon, he had told his story to Douglas, who had known De Wilton's family of old. That night, Douglas was to make him again a belted knight, and at dawn, he would haste to Surrey's camp to fight again for king and for country. The story heard from De Wilton, the letters showing the treachery of Marmion, accounted for the cold disdain shown by Douglas to his guest.

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The noble baron of Tantallon had promised to bring to the chapel at midnight the now happy, yet unhappy Clare, that she might bind on the spurs, buckle on the belt, and hear the magic words uttered which made her lover a noble knight. She was unhappy to think that so soon they must part, perhaps never to meet.

Sweetly, tearfully she pleaded:

“O Wilton! must we then
Risk new-found happiness again,
Trust fate of arms once more?
And is there not a humble glen,
Where we content and poor,
Might build a cottage in the shade,
A shepherd thou, and I to aid
Thy task on dale and moor?—
That reddening brow!—too well I know,
Not even thy Clare can peace bestow,
While falsehood stains thy name:
Go then to fight! Clare bids thee go!
Clare can a warrior's feelings know,
And weep a warrior's shame;
Buckle the spurs upon thy heel,
And belt thee with thy brand of steel,
And send thee forth to fame!”

At midnight, the slumbering moon-beams lay on rock and wave. Silvery light fell through every loop-hole and embrasure. In the witching hour two priests, the Lady Clare, Ralph de Wilton, and Douglas, Lord of Tantallon, stood before the altar of the chapel. De Wilton knelt, and when Clare had bound on sword and belt, Douglas laid on the blow, exclaiming as it fell:

“I dub thee knight.
Arise, Sir Ralph, De Wilton's heir!
For King, for Church, for Lady fair,
See that thou fight.”

De Wilton knelt again before the giant warrior, and grasping his hand, exclaimed:

“Where'er I meet a Douglas, that Douglas will be to me as a brother.”

“Nay, nay,” the Lord of Tantallon replied, “not so; I have two sons in the field armed against your king. They fight for James of Scotland; you for Henry of England.

“And, if thou meet’st them under shield,
Upon them bravely,—do thy worst;
And foul fall him that blenches first!”

They parted; De Wilton to Surrey’s camp, the Douglas to his castle to ponder on the strange events of the past few days, and Clare to weep in loneliness.

It was yet early when Marmion ordered his train to be ready for the southward march. He had safe pass-ports for all, given under the royal seal of James. Douglas provided a guide as far as Surrey’s camp. The ancient earl, with stately grace, placed the Lady Clare on her palfrey and whispered in her ear, “The falcon’s prey has flown.”

As adieus were about to be said, Lord Marmion began:

“In the treatment received, I, your guest, by your king’s command, might well complain of coldness, indifference, and disrespect; but I let it pass, hoping that,



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"Part we in friendship from your land;
And, noble Earl, receive my hand.'—
But Douglas round him drew his cloak,
Folded his arms, and thus he spoke:—
'My manors, halls, and bowers, shall still
Be open, at my sovereign's will,
To each one who he lists, howe'er
Unmeet to be the owner's peer.
My castles are my King's alone,
From turret to foundation-stone—
The hand of Douglas is his own;
And never shall in friendly grasp,
The hand of such as Marmion clasp.'"—

"Burn'd Marmion's swarthy cheek like fire,
And shook his very frame for ire,
And,—'This to me!' he said,—
'An 'twere not for thy hoary beard,
Such hand as Marmion's had not spared
To cleave the Douglas' head!
And, first, I tell thee, haughty peer,
He, who does England's message here,
Although the meanest in her state,
May well, proud Angus, be thy mate:
Even in thy pitch of pride,
Here in thy hold, thy vassals near—
I tell thee, thou'rt defied!
And if thou said'st, I am not peer
To any lord in Scotland here,
Lord Angus, thou hast lied!
On the Earl's cheek, a flush of rage
O'ercame the ashen hue of age:
Fierce he broke forth,—And dare'st thou then
To beard the lion in his den,
The Douglas in his hall?
And hop'st thou thence unscathed to go?—Up
drawbridge, grooms—what, Warder, ho!
Let the portcullis fall.'
Lord Marmion turned—well was his need,
And dash'd the rowels in his steed."

A swallow does not more lightly skim the air, than Marmion's steed flew along the drawbridge. The man drew rein when he had reached the train, turned, clenched his

fists, shouted defiance, and shook his gauntlet at the towers where so lately he had been a guest.

“To horse! to horse!” cried Douglas. “Let the chase be up.” Then relenting, he smiled bitterly, saying, “He came a royal messenger. Bold can he talk and fairly ride, and I doubt not he will fight well.”

Slowly the Earl sought the castle walls, that frowned still more gloomily, no longer brightened by the young and beautiful Lady Clare.

As the day wore on, Marmion’s passion wore off, and scanning his little band, he missed the Palmer. From young Blount he demanded an explanation of the guide’s absence.

“The Palmer, in good sooth, parted from Douglas at dawn of day. If a Palmer he is, he set out in strange guise,” replied the youth.

“What mean you?” quickly demanded Marmion.

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"My Lord, I can ill interpret what I say. All night I was disturbed in my sleep, as if by workmen forging armor. At dawn, hearing the drawbridge fall, I looked from a loophole and saw old Bell-the-Cat, wrapped in sables, come from Tantallon keep. The wind blew aside the fur mantle, and I beheld beneath it, a suit of rusty mail, which I am sure must have done bloody work against Saracen and Turk. Last night that armor did not hang in Tantallon hall. Next, I saw Old Cheviot, Douglas's matchless steed, led forth, sheathed in bright armor. The Palmer sprang to the saddle, Lord Angus wished him speed, and as he bowed and bent in graceful farewells, I could but think how strongly that Palmer resembled the young knight you overthrew at Cottiswold."

A sudden light broke upon Marmion. "Dastard! fool! I, to reason lost, when I rode to meet a fay, a ghost, on Gifford's moor. It was this Palmer fiend, De Wilton in disguise, I met. Had I but fought as is my wont, one thrust had placed him where he would never cross my path again. Now he has told my tale to Douglas. This is why I was treated with scorn. I almost fear to meet my Lord Surrey. I must avoid the Lady Clare, and separate Constance from the nuns.

"O, what a tangled web we weave,
When first we practice to deceive!
A Palmer too!—no wonder why
I felt rebuked beneath his eye:
I might have known there was but one
Whose look could quell Lord Marmion!"

Stung with these thoughts, he urged on his troop, and at nightfall reached the Tweed, closing the march of the day at Lennel convent. Here Marmion, his train, and Lady Clare, were given entertainment for the night.

"Next morn, the baron climb'd the tower,
To view afar the Scottish power,
Encamped on Flodden edge:
The white pavilions made a show,
Like remnants of the winter snow,
Along the dusky ridge.
Lord Marmion look'd:—at length his eye
Unusual movement might descry.
Their ranks inclining, wheeling, bending,
Now drawing back, and now descending,
The skilful Marmion well could know,
They watched the motions of some foe."

Even so it was. The Scots from Flodden ridge saw the English host leave Barmore-wood and cross the river Till. Why did Scotland's hosts stand idle? What checked the fiery James, that he sat inactive on his steed and saw Surrey place the English army

between Scotland and Scotland's army? O Douglas! O Wallace! O Bruce! for one hour of thy leadership to rule the fight! The precious hour passed,—the hour when in crossing the river, the English might have been destroyed.

“From fate's dark book a leaf been torn,
And Flodden had been Bannockbourne!”

Fitz-Eustace called to Blount, and both to Marmion,

“Lord Surrey's o'er the Till!”

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The spirit of war flowed in every vein. Marmion flung himself into the saddle, scarce bade adieu to the good Abbot, commanded the young knight to escort the Lady Clare, and dashed on to the Tweed. The river must be crossed. Down to the deep and dangerous ford, he ventured desperately. Foremost of all, he gallantly entered and stemmed the tide. Eustace held Clare upon her saddle, and old Hubert reined her horse. Stoutly they braved the current, and though carried far down the stream, they gained the opposite bank.

The train followed. Each held his bow high over his head, and well he might. Every string that day needed to be unharmed by moisture, that it might ring sharply in the coming combat.

Marmion rested a moment, only to bathe his horse, then halted not until Surrey's rear guard was reached. Here on a hillock, by a cross of stone, they could survey the field.

"The hillock gain'd, Lord Marmion stayed:
'Here, by this cross,' he gently said,
'You well may view the scene.
Here shalt thou tarry, lovely Clare:
Oh! think of Marmion in thy prayer!
Thou wilt not? well,—no less my care
Shall, watchful, for thy weal prepare.
You, Blount and Eustace, are her guard,
With ten picked archers of my train;
With England if the day go hard,
To Berwick speed amain.
But if we conquer, cruel maid,
My spoils shall at your feet be laid,
When here we meet again."

He waited for no answer, but dashed over the plain to Lord Surrey, who met him with delight.

"Welcome, good Lord Marmion; brief greeting must serve in time of need. With Stanley, I myself, have charge of the central division of the army, Tunstall, stainless knight, directs the rearward, and the vanguard alone needs your gallant command."

"Thanks, noble Surrey," Marmion said, and darted forward like a thunderbolt. At the van, arose cheer on cheer, "Marmion! Marmion!" so shrill, so high, as to startle the Scottish foe.

Eustace and Blount sadly thought,

“Unworthy office here to stay!
No hope of gilded spurs to-day.”

When King James saw that the English army by its skilful countermarch had separated him from his base of supplies, and from his own country, he resolved upon battle at once. Setting fire to his tents, he descended, and the two armies, one facing north, the other south, met almost without seeing each other.

“From the sharp ridges of the hill,
All downward to the banks of Till,
Was wreathed in sable smoke.
Volumed and fast, and rolling far,
The cloud enveloped Scotland’s war,
As down the hill they broke;
Nor mortal shout, nor minstrel tone,
Announced their march; their tread alone
Told England, from his mountain-throne
King James did rushing come.

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Scarce could they hear or see their foes,
Until at weapon-point they close.
They close, in clouds of smoke and dust,
With sword-sway, and with lance's thrust;
And such a yell was there,
Of sudden and portentous birth,
As if men fought upon the earth,
And fiends in upper air;
Oh, life and death were in the shout,
Recoil and rally, charge and rout,
And triumph and despair.
Long look'd the anxious squires; their eye
Could in the darkness naught descry."

At length the breeze threw aside the shroud of battle, and there might be seen ridge after ridge of spears. Pennon and plume floated like foam on the crest of the wave. Spears shook; falchions flashed; arrows fell like rain; crests rose, and stooped, and rose again.

"Yet still Lord Marmion's falcon flew
With wavering flight, while fiercer grew
Around the battle-yell.
The Border slogan rent the sky!
A Home! a Gordon! was the cry:
Loud were the clanging blows;
Advanced—forced back—now low, now high,
The pennon sunk and rose;
As bends the barque's mast in the gale,
When rent are rigging, shrouds, and sail,
It waver'd 'mid the foes.
No longer Blount the view could bear:
'By heaven and all its saints! I swear,
I will not see it lost;
Fitz-Eustace, you with Lady Clare
May bid your beads, and patter prayer,—
I gallop to the host."

To the fray he rode, followed by the archers. At the next moment, fleet as the wind, Marmion's steed riderless flew by, the housings and saddle dyed crimson. Eustace mounted and plunged into the fight, resolved to rescue the body of his fallen lord.



Alone, in that dreadful hour, a courage not her own armed the gentle girl with strength to play a noble part. She was thinking only of De Wilton, when two horsemen drenched with human gore, rode up, bearing a wounded knight, his shield bent, his helmet gone. He yet bore in his hand a broken brand. Could this be Marmion? Blount unlaced the armor; Eustace removed the casque; revived by the free air, Marmion cried:

“Fitz-Eustace, Blount,

“Redeem my pennon,—charge again!
Cry,—“Marmion to the rescue!”
‘Must I bid twice?—hence, varlets! fly!
Leave Marmion here alone,—to die.’
They parted, and alone he lay;
Clare drew her from the sight away,
Till pain wrung forth a lowly moan,
And half he murmur’d—‘Is there none,
Of all my halls have nursed,
Page, squire, or groom, one cup to bring
Of blessed water from the spring,
To slake my dying thirst!’”



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"O Woman! in our hours of ease,
Uncertain, coy, and hard to please,
And variable as the shade
By the light quivering aspen made;
When pain and anguish wring the brow,
A ministering angel thou!
Scarce were the piteous accents said,
When, with the baron's casque, the maid
To the nigh streamlet ran:
Forgot were hatred, wrongs, and fears;
The plaintive voice alone she hears,
Sees but the dying man."

She stooped by the side of the rill, but drew back in horror,—it ran red with the best blood of two kingdoms. Near by, a fountain played, the well of Sybil Grey. At this, the helmet was quickly filled, and accompanied by a monk, who was present to shrive the dying or to bless the dead, the Lady Clare hurried to the side of Marmion. Deep he drank, saying:

"Is it the hand of Constance or of Clare that bathes my brow? Speak not to me of shrift and prayer; while the spark of life lasts, I must redress the wrongs of Constance."

Between broken sobs the Lady Clare replied:

"In vain for Constance is your zeal;
She—died at Holy Isle."

Lord Marmion started from the ground, but fainting fell, supported by the monk.

The din of war ceased for a moment, then there swelled upon the gale the cry,
"Stanley! Stanley!"

"A light on Marmion's visage spread,
And fired his glazing eye:
With dying hand, above his head,
He shook the fragment of his blade,
And shouted 'Victory!
Charge, Chester, charge! On, Stanley, on!
Were the last words of Marmion."

The monk gently placed the maid on her steed, and led her to the fair Chapel of Tilmouth. The night was spent in prayer, and at dawn she was safely given to her kinsman, Lord Fitz-Clare.

All day, till darkness drew her wing over the ghastly scene, more desperate grew the deadly strife. When night had fallen, Surrey drew his shattered bands from the fray. Then Scotland learned her loss.

“Their king, their lords, their mightiest low,
They melted from the field as snow,
Tweed’s echoes heard the ceaseless splash
While many a broken band,
Disorder’d, through her currents dash,
To gain the Scottish land;
To town and tower, to down and dale,
To tell red Flodden’s dismal tale,
And raise the universal wail.
Tradition, legend, tune, and song,
Shall many an age that wail prolong:
Still from the sire the son shall hear
Of the stern strife, and carnage drear.
Of Flodden’s fatal field,
Where shiver’d was fair Scotland’s spear,
And broken was her shield!

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“Day dawns upon the mountain’s side:—
There, Scotland! lay thy bravest pride,
Chiefs, knights, and nobles, many a one:
The sad survivors all are gone.
View not that corpse mistrustfully,
Defaced and mangled-though it be;
He saw the wreck his rashness wrought;
Reckless of life, he desperate fought,
And fell on Flodden plain:
And well in death his trusty brand,
Firm clench’d within his kingly hand,
Beseem’d the monarch slain.”

Little remains to be told. Fitz-Eustace, faithful to the last, bore “To Litchfield’s lofty pile,” what he believed to be the pierced and mangled body of his once proud master. Here was reared a Gothic tomb; carved tablets were set in fretted niche; around were hung his arms and armor, and the walls were blazoned with his deeds of valor; but Lord Marmion’s body lay not there. Midst the din and roar of battle, a poor dying peasant had dragged himself to the fountain where died the Lord of Fontenaye, the Lord of Tamworth tower and town. Spoilers stripped and mutilated both bodies and the lowly woodsman was carried to the proud baron’s tomb.

Through the long and dreadful fight, Wilton was in the foremost and thickest. When Surrey’s horse was slain, it was De Wilton’s horse on which the noble leader was again mounted. It was Wilton’s brand that hewed down the spearsmen. He was the living soul of all.

In that battle, he won back rank and lands, adding to his crest bearings bought on Flodden Field. King and kinsman blessed fair Clara’s constancy. As he reads, each must paint for himself the bridal scene, and imagine that,

“Bluff King Hal the curtain drew,
And Catherine’s hand the stocking threw;
And afterwards, for many a day,
That it was held enough to say,
In blessing to a wedded pair,
‘Love they like Wilton and like Clare.’”