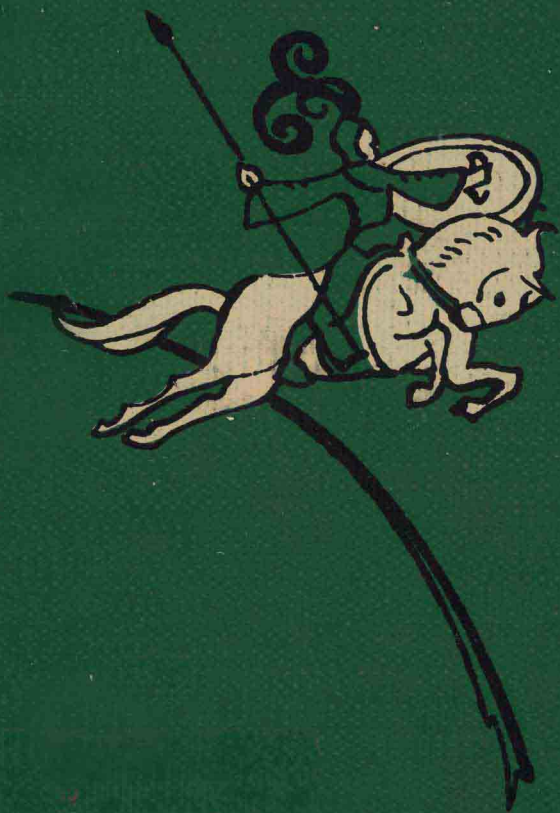


YOUNG WALTER SCOTT



ELIZABETH GRAY

Young Walter Scott

by

Elizabeth Janet Gray

"A stout heart to a steep brae."

—Scottish saying.

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Also by Elizabeth Janet Gray

SANDY

ADAM OF THE ROAD

THE FAIR ADVENTURE

PENN

BEPPEY MARLOWE

JANE HOPE

MEGGY MACINTOSH

THE CHEERFUL HEART

I WILL ADVENTURE

THIS BOOK IS FOR MORGAN

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First and foremost I wish to thank Sir Walter and Lady Maxwell Scott for their kindness to me at Abbotsford and for their great generosity in allowing me to have photographed for the frontispiece the hitherto unpublished portrait of Scott at the age of twelve, painted by an unknown artist at Kelso, which hangs in Lady Maxwell Scott's book-room at Abbotsford.

My thanks also go to the assistants in charge of the Edinburgh Room of the Edinburgh Public Library for their help in making available to me books, newspapers, and maps in that collection.

I should like also to acknowledge the aid I received from a pamphlet by the Reverend J. W. Jack, D.D., of Glenfarg, Perthshire, entitled *Scott's View from the Wicks of Baiglie*.

ELIZABETH JANET GRAY

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YOUNG WALTER SCOTT



‘HE DID SURVIVE——’

HE stood with his back to the wall and his lame leg drawn behind him and scowled at his brothers. They were not at all like what he had imagined brothers would be when he lived safely at Sandyknowe with Aunt Jenny and read the ballads and listened to tales by the fireside. Brothers died for each other, they went away to the Crusades when they had the misfortune to love each other's ladies, they shared horses and spears and last crusts. They didn't yell and jeer and point like this pack of loons.

John was the 'worst. Thomas was younger and Daniel was hardly more than a baby, but John was three years older. And three years bigger and stronger and more than three years better versed in the ways of this Edinburgh life that seemed so rough and cold and confusing after the simple cosy ways of Sandyknowe.

"Why did ye run home?" John was demanding. "A fine help you'll be in the bickers if ye run from the laddies in our own Square."

"I didna run from them!" He shouted the words at them as loud as he could and then was abruptly silent.

Run? How could he run, with his lame leg? He had walked home because there were so many of the George Square laddies, so many staring eyes, because—he felt the blood hot in his face—because they called him a lamiter. “I came home to get a book.”

“A book!” John’s exasperated voice shrilled high. “Ye don’t have to go to school till next week. Ye don’t have to go to the High School even then. You’re to go to a little, sweet, private school in Bristo Port till you’ve got used to being away from Aunt Janet. What do ye want with a book now, when you might be playing with the lads in the Square?”

All those eyes. He knew what was going on behind them. Walter Scott, the lamiter. He’ll be no good in a fight, and he can’t run. What use is he?

Well, they didn’t know what he thought of them. They didn’t know anything about the ballad of Hardyknute, or the border raids, or Jamie Telfer of the fair Dodhead and Wight Willie of Aikwood. He was suddenly overwhelmed with homesick longing for Sandyknowe, where a fire burned in the farm parlor and he and Aunt Janet read together. Or Prestonpans, where they had been for a holiday, and he and Captain Dalgetty had discussed the campaigns of the American war as man to man. Dalgetty respected his judgment; small use Dalgetty would have for these Edinburgh loons.

“I don’t like the George Square laddies!” he shouted. “They’re ignorant!”

Robert came sauntering through the room at that moment, his big brother Robert who was a midshipman

in the King's navy and wore the King's uniform. Robert could sing and could tell stories, funny and exciting both, of things that happened on the high seas; he could read a ballad so that it swept you off your feet—a great man, Robert, with his sixteen years and his splendid height and his uniform. A little uncertain in the temper. But he would understand how Walter felt.

“What did I hear you say?”

“He said the George Square laddies were ignorant!” Thus, indignantly, Thomas.

“Ignorant!” The scorn in the midshipman's eye and voice made Walter wince. “You young pedant!”

He administered a brotherly cuff and went on, settling the ruffles at his wrist.

“If you want to get on in Edinburgh, my man,” said John, preparing to follow, “you won't be setting yourself up to call lads ignorant. Not unless you can ram it into their heads with your fists, and I doubt that Aunt Janet will have taught you much about fighting.”

Anne, who had come, as usual, in the trail of Robert, interposed. She was a gentle little girl, pretty, except for the scar at the edge of her fair hair where she had been so badly burned.

“Don't hurt his feelings,” she said. “He's new in the house, and he's lame.”

Her gentleness hurt more than the boys' roughness. They were trying—dimly Walter realized it through his smart—to teach him something, but she was pitying him.

At Sandyknowe with Aunt Janet he never had thought very much about being lame. It hadn't seemed to mat-

ter. He had had his pony Marian and had ridden everywhere upon her, galloping over the rough places and down the hills till his grandmother and his aunt had been frightened by his hardihood.

But here. . . . A wave of bitterness swept over him. He remembered way back, remembered something that he almost never thought of. He couldn't have been more than two years old when it happened, because it was before Aunt Janet had taken him away to the country. He had been climbing the stile in the Meadows, slowly, because of his lame leg, and his nursemaid had jerked his arm and scolded him because he wasn't quick like his brothers. . . .

His thick brown brows drew together. He felt alone, helpless, bewildered. Why had he said he disliked the George Square boys? He liked them. What if they were ignorant? They could run and fight and have bickers with the Potterrow lads—and how was a lamiter to keep up with them?

“Wattie, my lamb!”

He hadn't seen his mother come into the room. A warmth and a coolness both seemed to come in with her, the warmth of her heart and the coolness of her serenity, like a breeze blowing on the swollen, smarting hurt within him and soothing it.

“Run out, all of you, while the evening is yet light, every man of you but Wattie, I want him with me. It's almost bedtime, have your play out while you can. Be off with you.”

She swept them out. Walter's breath came more evenly. He was comfortable with his mother as with no other of these strangers who were his own family. Short, broad, plain, she had that quality his Aunt Janet called “innerliness,” and he responded to it gratefully, wholly.

“Come awa’ up to my dressing-room while I get ready for supper. Your father will be bringing guests tonight.”

Her arm over his shoulder, they paused before a big portrait above the mantel.

“Your great-grandfather,” she said. “You’re a wee bit like him in looks. You’ll have a deal of work to do in living up to him in character. He was a fine man.”

“Beardie,” murmured Walter. He knew all about his ancestor from Grandmother and Aunt Janet. He had a great brown beard that he had sworn never to cut until the Stuarts were brought back into power; he had bright blue eyes and round red cheeks, and he was tall and straight. “There were more Walter Scotts than him,” he went on eagerly as they turned away. “There was Walter Scott, first laird of Raeburn, his father, and Auld Wat of Harden who married the Flower of Yarrow, and the great Sir Walter Scott who rescued Kinmont Willie from Carlisle Castle under the very nose of Lord Scroope.”

“Aye, you’ve a name to be proud of.”

She was short enough to be comfortable to walk with. They went up the stairs together with their arms around each other, and he told her the story of Muckle-Mouthed Meg.

“I’ve got a big mouth myself. Likely I got it from her.”

"Very likely you did. Was it the William Scott that was lame that married her in scant preference to the gallows?"

Walter flushed. "I'm not just sure," he said. "Aunt Jenny would know."

Mrs. Scott's dressing-room had a bright little fire in the grate, for the September evening was frosty. The gray twilight twisted mistily against the window; shelves of leather-bound books stood half in shadow along the wall. Mrs. Scott brushed her hair and changed her cap.

"Is there no a ballad or some such thing about William Boltfoot?" she said.

"Aye. I know one verse:

"The Lord and Lady of Harden,
Betwixt them procreat was a son,
Called William Boltfoot of Harden—
He did survive to be a *man*.

"A fearless horseman, I've always heard he was."

"And a dangerous man with his spear, too. His name was known and feared all through the Borders."

"So I've heard," she said thoughtfully. "William Boltfoot." There was silence in the room for a whole minute. "Now, Wattie," Mrs. Scott went on briskly. "It's time for me to be going downstairs. You may read here till your hour for bed. The third book from the end there—no, this end—you'll find *Macbeth* in it. There are some graund witches there for ye."

After she had gone, Walter took the volume from its place and lay down on his stomach on the hearth rug,

where the heat from the fire toasted his back and one side of his face and its light fell red on the dim, foxed pages of his book.

William Boltfoot of Harden. A lamiter. . . .

He rolled over on his back, pillowing his head on his hands and cocking his good knee up in the air.

The Lord and Lady of Harden,
Betwixt them procreat was a son,
Called William Boltfoot of Harden—
He did survive to be a MAN.